Tarald Rasmussen / Jon Øygarden Flaeten (eds.)

Preparing for Death, Remembering the Dead



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With 78 figures

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Contents

Introduction 7

Volker Leppin
Preparing for Death. From the Late Medieval *ars moriendi* to the Lutheran Funeral Sermon 9

Peter Marshall
After Purgatory: Death and Remembrance in the Reformation World . . 25

Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly
Ruth, Judith, Artemisia – Models for the Early Modern Widow 45

Philipp Zitzlsperger
A Change in Forms and the Migration of Bodies in Rome – from the Cardinal's Tomb to the Cenotaph 67

Herman J. Selderhuis
Ars Moriendi in Early Modern Calvinism 109

Martin Wangsgaard Jürgensen
Spacing Death – Facing Death: Conceptualizing the Encounter With Death During the Early Modern Period 123

Claudia Resch
Reforming Late Medieval *ars moriendi:* Changes and Compromises in Early Reformation Manuals for Use at the Deathbed 153

Sivert Angel
Preachers as Paul: Learning and Exemplarity in Lutheran Funeral Sermons. A Motif – Perspective on Faith and Works in Face of Death . . 173

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Bridget Heal
Commemoration and Consolation: Images in Lutheran Saxony, c.1550 – 1700 199

Arne Bugge Amundsen
Funeral Sermons and Lutheran Social Practices. An Example from 16th-century Denmark-Norway 223

Kristin B. Aavitsland
Remembering Death in Denmark-Norway during the Period of Lutheran Orthodoxy 241

Zsombor Tóth
How to Comfort a Dying Family Member? The Practice of an Early Modern Hungarian Calvinist. A case study 265

Eivor Andersen Oftestad
"Let's Kick the Devil in His Nose". The Introduction of a Lutheran Art of Dying in 16th-century Denmark-Norway 281

Luca Baschera
Preparation for Death in Sixteenth-Century Zurich: Heinrich Bullinger and Otto Werdmüller 313

Herman A. Speelman
Melanchthon and Calvin on Confession, Contrition, and Penitence 329

Konrad Küster
Death and the Lutheran Idea of Becoming a Heavenly Musician 351

Leon van den Broeke
No Funeral Sermons: Dutch or Calvinistic Prohibition? 361

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Introduction

The Second RefoRC Conference was held in Oslo in May 2012, with the same title as this volume: *Preparing for Death – Remembering the Dead*, as the main theme for keynote speakers as well as for short paper presentations. Keynote speakers were invited in order to illuminate this broad research theme not only from different disciplinary angles (church history, history, cultural history, art history, archeology, literary history), but also from various geographical and confessional perspectives within a European context.

The two sides of the double approach – *preparing for death* as well as *remembering the dead* – may often be associated with rather separate fields of research. One field is investigating the uses and transformations of the Late Medieval traditions of the *ars moriendi* in Early Modern spirituality. The other is more interested in the transformations of the cultural memory of the deceased after the abolition of purgatory in the Protestant parts of Europe, or in corresponding transformations of the ways to remember the deceased within a confessionalized Early Modern Catholic culture.

These differences in approach are confirmed through the contributions of this volume. But at the same time, several contributions also point to continuities between the two research approaches, demonstrating for instance the interconnections between the "preparing for death"-genre *ars moriendi* and the "remembering the dead"-genre *funeral sermons*. Both represented the idealized version of a Christian life, a kind of pattern for a devout way of living, presented to people confronting death as well as to people remembering the dead, – be it in the immediate liturgical context of the funeral or in the printed collections of funeral sermons for uses beyond this context.

The broad multidisciplinary and multiconfessional approach of this volume has made it difficult to introduce a strict systematic order to the presentation of the contributions included in the book. The keynote lectures are presented in the first part of the volume (pp. 9 – 151). The second part includes a selection of the short papers.

The conference has been organized by RefoRC in cooperation with the Faculty

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of Theology at the University of Oslo, and here specifically in cooperation with the research project *Death in Early Protestant Tradition*, funded by the Research council of Norway (RCN). The RCN has also supported the conference with a specific grant.

Tarald Rasmussen,
The Faculty of Theology, University of Oslo

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Volker Leppin

Preparing for Death. From the Late Medieval *ars moriendi* to the Lutheran Funeral Sermon

Our only comfort in life and death should be Jesus Christ[1] – what the Heidelberg Catechism says in its first question not only concerns Reformed Christians, but is addressd to Lutherans as well and even to Catholics. It states the common ground of what we can observe in the Late Middle Ages and in Reformation times. There is someone to comfort, but there is also a very special situation demanding comfort: death. Obviously, there took place a change in the way this comfort worked. The following observations will try to understand this alteration. This cannot be done without a sketch of the broader lines.

Late Medieval Piety and its Polarities

Scholarship on the late Middle Ages always feels the shadows of later events. For decades, the interest in the late medieval period was inspired by the endeavor to understand the Reformation. Just to mention the most famous example: Heiko Augustinus Oberman would not have written on the Harvest of the Middle Age (Oberman: 1963) if he had not thought of the Reformation as spring – whatever might have been the winter in between. With his studies on the late Middle Ages somehow, he answered a Catholic concept that had been developed in the decades before by Joseph Lortz (Lortz: 1939/40) and Erwin Iserloh (Iserloh: 1967) to show the inevitability of the Reformation in a frame of understanding that would not blame the Reformation for being totally misguided. The more Lortz and Iserloh painted a dark picture of the Middle Ages, the more they could understand the Reformation as something right or at least understandable as a reaction against the Middle Ages which had failed to be Catholic in the proper

1 "[1.] Frag. Was ist dein einiger trost in leben und sterben? Antwort. Das ich mit Leib und Seele, beyde in leben und in sterben nicht mein, sondern meines getrewen Heilands Jesu Christi eigen bin" (Heidelberger Katechismus von 1563, ed. by Wilhelm H. Neuser, in: Reformierte Bekenntnisschriften, ed. by Andreas Mühling and Peter Opitz, Vol. 2/2: 1562 – 1569, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener 2009, 169 – 212.

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sense. However, although both were outstanding historians, this entailed a concept of Catholicism that stood somehow outside historical periods and was meant to be essentially the same for centuries. Even more, it included a concept of Catholicism as this was restored by the Council of Trent. This meant, however, that it was this modern Council that removed the casual reasons for the Reformation – and thereby made the consequences of the Reformation, namely, the Protestant churches, somehow needless.

Seen like this, the sympathetic understanding of the Reformation had its clear confessional core, and Oberman was one of those who felt that it was both necessary and a scholarly possibility to work along these lines. While for Iserloh, William of Ockham had been the destroyer *par excellence* of real Catholicism (Iserloh: 1956), Oberman showed that Gabriel Biel, the most important heir of Ockham, had developed an impressive system of grace (Oberman: 1963). Both agreed that Luther had his roots in late medieval scholasticism, but what for Iserloh was a blemish, honored Luther in Oberman's eyes. We should note that he was not the only Protestant scholar to reappraise the late Middle Ages. Another important contribution came from Bernd Moeller, who established the interpretation that the Late Middle Ages actually brought an intensification of piety (Moeller: 1991, 74).

Scholarship thus arrived at a strange situation: The Middle Ages, blamed by the reformers as the darkest age of Christianity, had got a positive image in the eyes of Protestant researchers, while Catholics tended to see it in an even worse light than the Reformers had done. One need not be a Hegelian to see that this thesis and antithesis demands a new synthesis, and indeed this may been established in the research in recent years by Berndt Hamm and myself (Hamm: 2004; Leppin: 2005; Leppin: 2008, 178 – 228). The clue seems to be that we have to avoid one-sided pictures of the Late Middle Ages. It does not help to understand this time, if we see it just as a counter-image, positive or negative, for what happened in the Reformation. If there thus is no need to see the Late Middle Ages as either black or white, we must see this period as multicolored. There is not just one line of development in the late Middle Ages, but many. The Reformation was not the answer to just one tendency; rather, but it could be the heir to a multifold religious world in which there were elements to reject and elements to adopt. Indeed, the late medieval world is characterizeded by differences which we can (for simplicity's sake) order by polarities. We have the polarity of those who pleaded for strengthening the central function of the popes or councils, and those who saw the church mainly as a matter of local organization and governance, as can be seen in France, for example, where the king established his own rule over the national church. This polarity of centrality and polycentrality is not the only one to be seen in late medieval society. Another important polarity is that of laity and priesthood. In debates on Reformation history, the notion of

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"anticlericalism" played a major role for a long time (Goertz: 1995). Those who criticize this concept as too narrow to explain the Reformation (Moeller: 2001a) may be right – but there is no reason to deny the reality behind it completely. Indeed, there were harsh tensions between lay people and the priesthood, even if in particular matters it was mainly the higher clergy who were criticized by the people for their wrong behavior. What can be seen throughout the Middle Ages is a struggle between lay people who organized their religious life on their own and clerics who tried to keep them under control. The most famous case is the Beguines, where the status question clashes with the gender question. In their context, however, all those aspects of medieval life that Moeller has listed in his depiction of a vivid epoch, such as brotherhoods, preachers in the cities and other forms of civil participation (Moeller: 1966, 33 f), have to be seen as part of this broader tension. This social tension is sometimes quite directly connected with a more religious one, namely that of internal and external forms of piety. Again, the traditional, negative picture of late Medieval times is focused on special external forms of piety. "Indulgences" might be the keyword here to understand what is meant by this. In them is concentrated all the negative aspects of late medieval piety that can be identified: the quantification of deeds and punishment, as well as the financial reshaping of piety. But in reality, this is just one side of late medieval piety. The other branch of it is represented by mystics or the *devotio moderna,* both of which mean that there is a strong tendency in the late Middle Ages to locate internal aspects of spirituality at the center of the relation to God. There is no quantification or gradualism, but an attempt to reach and feel directly God's contiguity to man, a contiguity that cannot be seen in any outer sign, but only in the center of the human heart. The deepest expression of this is the notion of God's birth in our souls, which is found in Johann Tauler[2] and others.

However, the understanding of death has to be given its place in this general sketch of medieval piety. Indeed, there is a strong connection. Obviously, the concept of the topography of the world beyond, where the souls of the dead are, is strongly connected with the question of indulgences: after Pope Sixtus IV in his bull *Salvator noster* had made it possible to transfer indulgences *per modum suffragii* from earth to beyond (DH 1398), indulgences were the main link for the solidarity of dead and alive. However right or wrong his narration was: When Luther recalled his Rome experience, pointing out that he wanted his grandfather to be dead, in order to have the possibility to free him from purgatory, this

2 See his sermon about the threefold birth in eternity, in the stable of Bethlehem and in our souls: Die Predigten Taulers. Aus der Engelberger und der Freiburger handschrift sowie aus Schmidts Abschriften der ehemaligen Straßburger Handschriften ed. by Ferdinand Vetter, Berlin: Weidmann 1910, 7 – 12.

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gave expression to a common experience that believers were able to help their ancestors by means of indulgences. Since this is so clear, we are enabled to see death preparation as a part of the above-mentioned external piety.

This can also quite explicitly be a part of the *ars moriendi*. In 1497, the Strasbourg preacher Geiler of Kaysersberg wrote "*Ein ABC. Wie man sich schicken sol zů einem kostlichen seligen Tod.*"[3]. In this short text, he gave twenty-seven rules one had to observe in preparation for one's death. The seventh of these runs as follows:

> "Gnadrychen ablas Erlangen. Unser sünden ist vil on zal. dorumb wir pflichtig sind grosse pen zůleyden hie oder in dem fegfür. Die mǒgend wir ablegen/durch rechten ablas/der in krafft deß genůgtůns unnsers lieben herren Jesu Christi und siner lieben heilgen würckt."[4]

Whoever seeks for a confirmation of the strong relation between indulgences and death preparation, should read this passage in Geiler's tract. And he will also find other hints of an externalized piety, namely, the stress Geiler laid on the reception of the Eucharist[5].

But this was not the only thing an *ars moriendi* had to offer. The first example of this genre, notably had the title: "La médicine de l'âme", written in French by John Gerson[6]. We can see the distance to those branches of outer purgatory when we look at Gerson's note on purgatory, when he writes about the exhortations to be addressed to the dying:

> "Mon amy ou amie, advise que tu as fait plusieurs pechés en ta vie pour les quelx tu as desservi estre pugny ; si dois bien prendre la painne de ta maladie et la douleur de ta mort en bonne pacience, en priant Dieu que tout e tourne en la purgacion de ton ame et la remission de tes pechez ; que ce soit yci ton purgatoire, car tu dois mieulx aymer estre pugny en ce monde qu'en l'autre"[7]

This quotation shows impressively the shift within late medieval piety between internal and external forms of religion. Gerson, like Martin Luther one hundred years later, integrates purgatory into the spiritual life on earth. We encounter a completely different religious attitude here than in the sermons about indulgences, and this also means that we find a different attitude towards death. Man's sorrow, caused by his sins, has somehow, in a very dialectic way, its goal in

3 Johannes Geiler von Kaysersberg, Sämtliche Werke, ed. by Gerhard Bauer. I/1: Die zu Geilers Lebzeiten erschienenen Schriften. 1, Berlin/New York 1989, 99 – 110.

4 Geiler, Werke I/1/1,103, 21 – 25.

5 Geiler, Werke I/1/1,105, 8 – 13.

6 Jean Gerson, Oeuvres complètes, ed. by Palémon Glorieux, Vol. 7: L'œuvre Française (292 – 339), Paris et al. 1966, 404 – 407. For the circumstances in which Gerson wrote this tract, see Rädle, 2003. The most influential version was in fact the Latin one (see Akerboom: 2003, 215). For the broader context in Gerson's theology, see Burger: 1986; Grosse: 1994; Burrows: 1991.

7 Gerson, Oeuvres 7/1, 405.

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itself. Punishment is awaited beyond our death, but the more we are afraid of it, the more it is anticipated in our life. In this way, that which lies beyond death becomes part of our earthly existence. Indeed, it becomes part of a widespread intensification of the spirituality of penitence. Many of the mystics, and Jean Gerson too, can be seen as teachers who preach the necessity of penitence as the real and right attitude of man towards God. This penitence is not the same as the sacrament of penace is, but it is, as in the quotation from Gerson, very much concentrated on inner contrition. This does not abolish all traditional forms of death preparation, but it gives another direction to them. And the most important point for our question is that Luther and other Reformers could directly continue this line of internal spirituality, when they attacked the external forms of death preparation. Seen in this perspective, the early Reformation continues an internal medieval struggle, although in the long term it found its own questions and answers.

The Lasting Impact of *artes moriendi*

Obviously, the first shock of the Reformation was its attack on indulgences and thereby against the established system of solidarity between the living and the dead (cf. LeGoff: 1984, 22 f.). And this did not stop there: when the Reformers unanimously rejected the concept of the Eucharist as a sacrifice (cf. Simon: 2003), they simultaneously removed the possibility of allowing the dead to benefit from the Mass. The Requiem Masses, so long a hinge between the earthly world and beyond, became an atrocity in the eyes of the new theology!

It is in fact astonishing that this change did not affect the Reformation's success. The Reformation entailed a lack of possibilities of providing for one's ancestors, and it made no efforts to compensate for this. The question of death did not give rise to deeper debates. When Melanchthon published his *Loci communes* in 1521, there was no treatment of *De novissimis* in this early textbook at all. Indeed, this gave some freedom for dealing with death, as we can see in Luther's letter to his son Hans, written in 1530. Luther here compares paradise with a fair, where his four-year-old son would have joy with his friends[8]. He could use this very free metaphor, because there was so little defined by the biblical texts. The world beyond was free for speculation and free from any strict definition.

In particular, it was free from any influence of the living on the dead. This made the necessity of good preparing for death even stronger: When Luther in 1519 wrote his tract "Von der Bereitung zum Sterben" (cf. Brunner: 1978;

8 WA.B 5,377 f [Nr. 1595].

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Hamm: 2010, 115 – 182), he did nothing else than write a new *ars moriendi*[9], but as I have shown above, *artes moriendi* could have different places within the framework of late medieval piety. And Luther's tract evidently belongs to the internalization of piety we could observe in an important strand of late medieval religion. In fact, his approach is not radical in this sense, as we can see in the way he deals with the sacraments. He does not deny the use of them, but he denies their absolute necessity:

> "Solch zu richten und bereytung auff diße fart steht darynne zum ersten, das mann sich mit lauterer beycht (…) und der heyligen Christenlichen sacrament des heiligen waren leychnams Christi und der ǒlung vorsorge, die selben andechtig begere und mit großer zuvorsicht empfahe, ßo man sie haben mag. Wo aber nit, soll nit deste weniger das vorlangen und begere der selben trostlich seyn und nit darob zu seher erschrecken. Christus spricht, alle dingk sein mǒglich dem der do glaubt, Dan die sacrament auch anders nit seyn, dan zeychen, die zum glauben dienen und reytzen."[10]

This is a quite subversive argument, typical of mystical texts in the Late Middle Ages: You should receive the sacraments, but never mind if you cannot receive them in reality. With this, man's senses are led to his inner mind. So, the whole tract centers on this inner status, insight into our sinful nature, and on our savior Jesus Christ. All that we have and all that is in us should simply look at him hanging on the Cross and winning the battle against death, sin and hell[11]. For those who are interested in the evolution of Luther's Reformation theology, it should be noted that this tract was written in the fall of 1519 – even those who plead for a late breakthrough of the Reformation insight in Luther would admit that this must have happened at this time. But Luther's reasoning on death preparation cannot be read as a contrast to late medieval counsel. On the contrary, his tract is one of the profoundest exemplars of *ars moriendi* in late medieval theology. Its focus is set by the spiritual admonitions Luther got from his confessor John of Staupitz. It was he who had given Luther's thinking the direction to Jesus Christ alone, and Luther now adopted this with an impressive

9 It is astonishing that Moeller: 2011b, 265 could take exactly this tract as a symbol for the "ganze reformatorische Umbruch", whereas it is nothing more than a slight, but important transformation of late medieval dying culture, as one could show more in greater detail in a comparison with the *ars moriendi* of Johann Staupitz: Ein buchlein von | der nachfolgung des williger ster| bens Christi/Geschriben durch den wolwirdigen va| ter Joannen von Staupitz/ der heiligen | schrifft Doctorem der bruder einsid-| lerordens scti Augustini Vicarium. |, Leipzig: Melchior Lotter d.Ä. 1515. Luther himself was not as afraid as his interpreters to admit the continuity with late-medieval consolatory literature, when he recommended this Staupitz tract to Markus Schart, who had asked him for something like this (WA. B 1,381,17 f [Nr. 171]).

10 WA 2,686, 9 – 17.

11 WA 2,690, 37; 691, 12 – 15.

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consistency: Indeed, all is done in Jesus Christ. All comfort is given in the cross[12]. This provides us with all that we need, and prepared by Jesus Christ, we can stand firm, whatever may come. Even hell has lost its dread. What is so astonishing is that with this late medieval text of Martin Luther, we have one of his most successful publications in hand: The Weimar edition counts 22 printings up to 1525. The secret of Luther's success lies in the combination of the familiar and the new. The same author who was known as an enemy of the hierarchical system of the church could here be read as a comforter who did not break with late-medieval expectations, but set them forth and gave them what Berndt Hamm calls a clear normative centering (Hamm: 1992).

Death is not a field for experiments. So, there might be some reasons to see the question of death as one of those which needed some caution, when anything was to be changed. When we look at the *ars moriendi* tradition, we see that Luther is not alone in following a quite traditional path. At least at first sight, the anonymous "Evangelisch lere" printed by Wolfgang Stoeckelin 1522[13], one of the texts which Austra Reinis analyzed in her marvellous study of the *ars moriendi* in the Reformation period (Reinis: 2007, 143 – 159), appears to be very traditional. It contains not only an exhortation to receive the sacraments, but also counsel about how to say a prayer to Mary the mother of God, invoking her for help in our sins and desires. The preparation for death in this text is far more externalized than in Luther's "Bereitung zum Sterben", with a very interesting addition to traditional material: The author gives counsel about how to deal with a priest who asks the dying person if he is a Lutheran. Stöckel's aid is the counsel not to answer directly:

> "ich wolt das ich gutt christisch wer/Luther ist far mich nitt crewtzigt/so bin ich in seym namen nit getawfft/ich glaub in gotvatter almechtigen etc."[14]

In the author's vision, the fictional dialogue does not end at this point. The priest insists more and more, but again and again, the dying person should evade this question by directing his senses to God and Christ. This text, printed in the still Catholic Albertine Saxony, gives a clear impression of the situation in which Lutherans found themselves, in a context where they could only have recourse to Catholic Priests for their spiritual needs. It does not need much fantasy to imagine that it is once again death that raises the question of right behavior, and what the author suggests is a kind of threefold assurance: One should first stand fast in the Protestant faith. Second, one should be conscious of receiving the

12 WA 2,607, 14 – 30.

13 Euangelisch lere | vnd vermanung/eines ster|benden menschen/zů den sa| cramenten und letzten hinfart. (…), Leipzig: Wolfgang Stöckel 1522.

14 Evangelisch lere 3^{v}.

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sacraments in order to participate in Christ's salvation. But thirdly, one should avoid direct lying, in order not to commit new sins in the hour of dying.

Together with Luther's tract, this shows us the quite hesitating transforming of the *ars moriendi* in the Reformation era, and again I would like to recall Austra Reinis' work on this process (Reins: 2007) that describes it in a far broader way than I can do here. We can see how deep and effective the afterlife of *artes moriendi* was in the testament of the young Johann Gerhard, edited by Johann Anselm Steiger some years ago (Steiger: 1997). Not surprisingly, Gerhard still adopts a mystical comfort to comfort himself. It was Johann Arndt who had inspired him and who was the most important author to transfer mystical theology into 17th-century Lutheranism. Thus, Gerhard was an heir of the same late medieval piety as Luther had been. The tradition went on.

Nevertheless, the observation of a long lasting impact of *ars moriendi* in Protestant piety should not lead to a single-sided theory of continuity. We should not forget that this productive rewriting and further development of the *ars moriendi* accompanied a deep alteration in the understanding of death, as I have mentioned: The abolition of indulgences and, with it, the rejection of purgatory had broken the deepest ties between here and beyond. The impressive effort of the Protestant *artes moriendi* was to compensate for this new lack of death preparation and care for death. The argument of comfort in Jesus Christ must have been felt quite strongly among the believers as some kind of substitute for what had been lost. However, we also have to admit that we see not only the continued existence of the *ars moriendi* , but also a cessation of its relevance. It is not easy to explain why the success of Luther's "Bereitung zum Sterben" ended in 1525, with no more prints in the 16th century after this year. Indeed, in general, Luther's early spiritual writings lost their importance for the book market in these years, and the "Bereitung zum Sterben" is one of those printed over the longest period. Nevertheless, this also came to an end (cp. Schottroff: 2012, 29), and we have to ask what took their place.

The Funeral Sermons as Individualized *ars moriendi*

This is the point where the funeral sermons come in. It is impossible to understand what happened in Lutheran piety without bearing in mind that there was one person who provided an example for every stage of life. Although he was not the first to get married, Luther provided the image for married pastors, and this should be understood literally: The portrait of Martin and Catherine made it obvious that there was a way of life for pastors within the bounds of civil matrimony. And in the same way Luther's death became an *exemplum* teaching Lutherans how to die. The medium for this was not primarily pictorial, but

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textual. To put it more precisely: There were two kinds of texts that propagated Luther's death as exemplary. The first was the careful report of Justus Jonas about Luther's death, the second were the funeral sermons, with Bugenhagen's the most important. Both can be seen as transformations of the *ars moriendi*, but each under a special aspect. In the *artes moriendi* of the late Middle Ages, we see both moments of concentration on the last hours of life and counsels for leading the whole of one's life under the sign of Jesus Christ, and the report and the sermon take up these aspects: The report gives insights into how a Christian has to behave in his last hour, while Bugenhagen interprets the Reformer's life as a whole as fulfilling God's plan.

According to the report Jonas gave to the elector, there was no sacramental paving of the way. Everything was centered around praying and confessing. Luther himself laid his life before God, remembering his work for Jesus Christ and against the godless[15]. As in his "Bereitung zum Sterben," it is Jesus Christ who stands in the center of this retrospection. Although we have here, as said before, counsel for the last hours of one's life, Luther's whole life and the moment of death come together at once: Christ was in the midst of Luther's life, and Christ is the one to bring men near to the Father. This is also expressed by the following quotation from the Bible: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (Lk 23:46; Ps 31:6). These words from Psalm 31 are very important as one of the words of Jesus hanging on the cross, according to Luke 23:46, and the dying Luther underlines this, adding: "For God so loved the world"[16], an open allusion to John 3:16 and God Father giving his Son to death. Nor is this all: after Luther lost consciousness and then began to breathe again, the two witnesses, Michael Coelius and Justus Jonas, asked Luther about his faith, if he would confess Jesus Christ as his savior, and Luther answered clearly: Yes[17]. With this confession on his lips, he could die without saying any more. Thus Luther's death became exemplary for how to die with and in Jesus Christ. Seen against the background of the *ars moriendi*, one could say: this was the performance of a good death.

Indeed, here we may have the key to the shift in the reasoning about death and death preparation in Protestantism. The *ars moriendi* had always been a common, general form of preparing for death. The texts showed how everyone had to die[18]. Indeed, this was one of the most impressive experiences in the late Middle

15 Die Berichte über Luthers Tod und Begräbnis. Texte und Untersuchungen, ed. by Christof Schubart, Weimar 1917.

16 Schubart, Berichte über Luthers Tod (cf. n. 15), 5.

17 Schubart, Berichte über Luthers Tod (cf. n. 15), 5.

18 See Gerson, Oeuvres 7,405: " Mon amy ou amye, pense la grace que Dieu te faist. Nous sommes tous et toutes en sa main. N'est homme, roy ou prince ne aultre, qui ne doye passer par ce pas (…)" ; Geiler, Werke 1,6 : "Lieber frundt nym war das wir all underworffen sind

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Ages: the fact that death would not spare anyone. Those who could not imagine this, saw it depicted in the dances of death, which were widespread throughout Europe and were connected by one theme: that death took everyone, whether Pope, Emperor or beggar. This common tendency still marked Luther's "Bereitung zum Sterben" and other Reformed texts. But with the exemplary death of Luther, one had an individual death in which the general should be seen. Even if the setting had a feeling of hagiography, the focus was not (or not only) on presenting Luther as a holy man. Indeed, there was something quite personal in these forms of report: Luther's followers wanted to protect their hero against any defamation. To state that his death had been calm and pious was meant to show that he had lived and died in God. But of even more importance was the exemplary aspect. Describing Luther's death was meant to show how a Lutheran could or should die. He should die praying to God and Jesus Christ, and he even could die without any sacrament, omitting not only the Last Rites, but also the Lord's Supper. This behavior did not become a general rule in Lutheranism, nor was it meant to be. There was no need to quit the sacraments, but, Luther himself had to learn, there was no need to receive them in the last hour of one's life. However general or individual this report on Luther's death may have been – this was not the genre with a long-lasting impact. The most important medium to deal with death was the funeral sermon. Luther certainly was not the first to get a funeral sermon – he himself had held two sermons for the burial of Frederick the Wise in 1525[19] – but his sermon was exemplary and weighty. What we have to deal with here is not just one funeral sermon, but at least four them. The day after his death, February 19th 1546, Justus Jonas preached over Luther's body in Eisleben, and one day later, Michael Cölius did the same. Both sermons were soon published together[20]; Jonas' sermon was slightly altered, picking up the text he used on April 8th at Halle[21]. The most important celebration, obviously, was the one held ad Wittenberg four days after Luther's death, with Bugenhagen and Melanchthon as preachers. Again, both sermons were printed within the same year[22].

der gewaltigen hand gottes und sinem willen .das wir alle wie wir genant sind keyser . kunig und fursten . rich und arm muessend bezalen den zinß des todes". This sentence is not part of the ABC, but of another text of Geiler, *Wie man sich halten sol by eym sterbenden menschen* of 1480/81, which is nearly a translation of Gerson's *ars moriendi.*

19 WA 17/1,196–227.

20 Zwo Tröstliche | Predigt/Vber der Leich/| D.Doct: Martini | Luther/zu Eissleben den XIX. | vnd XX. Februarij gethan | Durch D. Doct: Justum Jonam. | M. Michaelem Celium | ANNO 1546.|, Wittenberg: Georg Rau 1546.

21 Schubart, Berichte über Luthers Tod (cf. n. 15), 17.

22 Eine christliche | Predigt/vber der Leich vnd be-| grebnis/des Ehrwirdigen D.| Martini Luthers/durch Ern Jo-| han Bugenhagen Pomern/(…) gethan, Wittenberg: Georg Rau 1546; ORATIO IN | FVNERE REVEREN/| di viri D. Martini Lutheri | recitata a Philippo

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This is not the place to recall the reflections of both preachers, which are quite interesting for the development of a special Luther memory, something I have elsewhere called monumentalization. The point here is that the genre of funeral sermon had an impressive success in Lutheranism from that time onwards. But research is mainly focused on the prosopographical impact of the data collected here. From a theological point of view it seems to be interesting to look at what these funeral sermons might stand for, at what actually happened with a funeral sermon.

It is widely known, that funeral sermons had two parts which occupied separate places in the liturgy. On the one hand, the life of the deceased person had to be recalled, honoring his deeds and showing God's effects in his life. The second part was the sermon in a stricter sense, interpreting the life in the light of a biblical verse. This was the theological part. Both parts had their place at the grave of the dead person, accompanying him to eternal life and keeping him present in the community and among the bereaved. There might also be sociological factors determining the type of remembrance. In this sense, the funeral sermons are part of a culture of memory, as can be seen in the case of Martin Luther, mentioned above. Many people, adherents as well as enemies, wanted to know how the hero of the Reformation had died. There might also have been an interest to know how a prince had died and how his life could be seen in the light of God. To a certain extent, this might explain the medium of funeral sermons in a perspective of cultural history. Indeed, in this context, we can point out the special function funeral sermons had in the culture of memory: when printed, they spread the memory of the dead. They produced a monument with no local or chronological borders. While the burial itself, including the orally spoken funeral sermon, was effective at a special moment to a special group of men and women at a certain place, the printed sermon came to an anonymous public in the whole world that shared the language used in the sermon. This was also an advantage over gravestones and epitaphs. Both of these were bound to a special place, while the sermon could be read elsewhere and by everybody.

From the point of the authors who felt responsible for the memory of the deceased person, it therefore made sense to publish these sermons. In the case of someone like Luther, this also made sense from the perspective of a printer who already had to think about a public interest keen enough to prompt people to buy funeral sermons on people they had never heard of. What, for example, gives such a public interest to Johann Balthasar Geymann (ca. 1573 – 1590), a student who died at the age of 16 years at Jena and was buried there in the parish church?

Me/| lanthone.|, Wittenberg: Josef Klug 1546; the text of Melanchthon's speech is edited in: CR 11,726 – 734.

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He had not had the time to become famous in any respect, nor was he a member of a famous family. Nevertheless, there must have been some reason that made the printer expect to sell the funeral sermon[23]. One of those reasons might have been the preacher, Samuel Fischer. As a superintendent and professor of theology, he was not unknown, but he was not a celebrity in his own days. And it is he himself who suggests another reason for printing and for the public interest: in a long preface, addressed to the father of the deceased, he points out that young Johann Balthasar was an example to others who died young, and even more, to other parents who saw their children dying so young[24].

So this case is different from Martin Luther's and nevertheless similar: The interesting factor here was not, as in Luther's case, celebrity, but just as Luther's death had shown how to die as a Protestant, so too anyone could learn from Johann Balthasar Geymann's case, how to endure the fate of losing a child. This meant: What made his case interesting, was not his person, but a special situation of dying. Because his case is so peculiar, this can be seen here quite clearly. But we also can draw further conclusions from this. The question, what makes a funeral sermon interesting, can be asked in many cases. And we have a range of answers for this, starting from the argument of celebrity and also including the simple phenomenon of curiosity. But one has to ask if this is enough to explain the overwhelming popularity of the funeral sermons in Early modern Times, as we see in the many printings of the well-known collections of funeral sermons. Regarding this, before making funeral sermons the forerunner of the modern yellow press, we can see in Geymann's case another, theological reason: The individual death showed in an exemplary manner universal aspects of death. By reading about another's death and mourning and, even more, the theological interpretation of both, people could identify in the individual story the grounding story of man being prepared for death. And they could relate their own life to what they read about others, if not directly imitating them, at any rate learning from them what death meant for the person mentioned in the funeral sermon, for man in general and for the reader in particular.

Here, we have the context of the Lutheran funeral sermons. Obviously, reading a funeral sermon could serve the same needs as the *artes moriendi* had

23 Leichpredigt | BEy dem Begreb=| nuss/des weiland Gestrengen/Edlen vnd | Erhnvesten D. Iohannis Balthasari Geymans/| Des auch | Gestrengen/Edlen/vnd Ehrnvesten/Herrn | Johann Christophori Geymans/zu Galsbach/vnnd | Traetteneck/auff Wahlen/der Roemischen Keyserlichen … | … maiestet/etc. Forneh=| men/vnnd des Ertzhertzogthumbs Osterreich/ob der | Enss/Landt Raths/Hertzliebsten Sons: | Welcher den 30. Septembris … | … in … | Jena/ ent-| schlaffen/vnd den 1. Octobris/in die Pfarrkir=| chen daselbs gelegt ist/| Gethan durch | Samuelem Fischerum, der heiligen Schrifft Docto =| rem/Professorem, Pastorem vnd Superintendenten | daselbsten.|, Jena: Tobias Steinman 1590. See also Leppin: 2011.

24 Fischer, Leichpredigt Balthasar Geymann (cf. n. 23), Fiii^{v}.

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done before, and still did in some contexts. But it did it in another way. The *ars moriendi* had provided general rules, which each individual life could adopt,[25] trusting that a Christian life had to have a certain structure, even if the *artes moriendi* in themselves did not absolutely agree on the form this would take, and were oriented more to internal reasoning or more to such external means as sacraments. Both aspects continued into the Protestant funeral sermons, but the stronger accent was laid on what had been the part of internal reasoning before: on the individual relation to God that could take a different form in each individual life.

Taking up the internal aspects of late-medieval death preparation, the funeral sermons integrated the modern individualization. Preparing for death no longer meant fulfilling general rules, but looking at the pluriformity of possibilities for a life that made its way towards death. In this sense, it could replace the *ars moriendi* as the most popular literal medium for death preparation, but at the same time, it translated what the *artes moriendi* had given to the believers into a new context.

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25 For the quite general scheme of late medieval *artes moriendi* , see Wicks: 1998, 346 – 354, working mainly on the *artes moriendi* of Gerson, Peuntner, Geiler and Paltz.

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Peter Marshall

After Purgatory: Death and Remembrance in the Reformation World

Wherever it took hold, the Reformation changed the meaning and experience of death. More specifically, it picked apart a rich, complex cultural grammar of commendation and commemoration of the dead. This grammar involved ritual, doctrine, liturgy, material objects, as well as deeply ingrained habits of thought, language and gesture. What bound it together was the conviction that the dead were in a dynamic condition of change and improvement in the next life, something which kept them connected in intimate ways with the motives and actions of those left behind in the world. The living had responsibilities towards the dead, to remember them in specific ways and in specific contexts. The aim was not to bind, but to release them, to help see them safely to journey's end and to their final heavenly home. To pray for the dead was to partake in the process of their redemption, and in so far as society was geared up and equipped for this task, it collectively volunteered itself to support the salvific work of Christ.

The great strength of the medieval scheme of commemoration was that it aligned an emotional impulse to do right by the dead with a cosmological explanation of their condition and location. Purgatory – that crowning achievement of the medieval social imaginary – was at once a place of confinement, a state of being, and a clarion call for acknowledgement and response. Death, paradoxically, served to affirm the claims and character of common humanity, exemplified in the ubiquitous medieval legend of the three kings who encounter a trio of animated rotting corpses: "What you are, so once were we; what we are, so you shall be." (Daniell: 1997, 69). Such imagery, in addition to its memento mori function, pointed towards the powerful unwritten contract between generations past and present. Precisely because the living would come to share the fate of the dead and their condition of need, they must not forget them, but stir themselves to action to alleviate their plight. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

But right across Europe in the course of the sixteenth century, that contract was challenged, tested at law and found to be invalid. Purgatory – so the reformers taught their congregations – was a lie, a fiction, and an invention.

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Moreover, Europe's disparate reform movements were remarkably unanimous in this conclusion from an early date. Unlike the eucharist, baptism or predestination, the question of purgatory was hardly ever a cause of doctrinal dissension among Protestants. It may have taken Luther more than a decade from the time of his protest over indulgences in 1517 to finally and explicitly deny the possibility of any middle state for souls in his *Widerruf vom Fegefeuer* (Repeal of Purgatory) of 1530. But already in 1521 he was denouncing masses for the dead, and soon came to regard all forms of post-mortem intercession as *Gaukelwerke*, works of trickery (cf. Koslofsky: 2000). Other early reformers were still less hesitant. In the preaching and polemic of English evangelicals like William Tyndale or Hugh Latimer, purgatory was simply "purgatory pickpurse" (Marshall: 2002, 55 – 6). In a still more resonant phrase, the early Swiss reformers Pamphilius Gengenbach and Nicholas Manuel denounced traditional teaching about the afterlife by the Catholic clergy as *Totenfresserei*, feasting, or rather guzzling, upon the dead (cf. Ozment: 1975, 111 – 16). The ferocity of such assaults has perhaps never been thoroughly accounted for. It is often pointed out that Purgatory had uncertain scriptural foundations, but then so did other doctrines largely uncontentious within magisterial Protestantism, such as Infant Baptism and the Trinity. The rage seems to come from a deeper place – a sense of anger and betrayal at being hoodwinked by the clergy, certainly. Or was the revulsion in any way fuelled by ambivalent feelings towards the dead themselves, that fear and resentment which can accompany the grief of bereavement? Whatever the psychological imperatives in play, wherever Protestantism came to power, it was agreed that the dead had no right to demand the prayers of the living, and the living had no obligation to supply them. In the space of a few years, the doctrinal rationale for a plethora of ritual observances and material constructions was entirely swept away, and the whole basis on which the dead were to be honoured and remembered was open for renegotiation.

For Catholic observers, this was frequently an occasion of bewilderment, shock and trauma. Johann Leyp, the last remaining Catholic pastor in Chemnitz in Lutheran Saxony, looked around him in 1534 and saw how "the dead are buried without a cross or candles in silence, like senseless beasts, like dogs" (Koslofsky: 2000, 90 – 1). Similarly, in France in 1556, a Catholic writer caustically observed how Huguenots would "throw the body into the grave without saying anything or making any more ceremony than for a dog or a horse." (Benedict: 2002, 494). Another French Catholic considered the heretics' "miserable treatment of the dead […] tearful to see" (Roussel: 2002, 200). The Elizabethan English Catholic, William Allen, looked across the channel from exile in 1565 and lamented that "nowe there is no blessing of mannes memorie at all" (Marshall: 2002, 265). Towards the end of the century, the Dutch humanist Arnoldus Buchelius bewailed the fact that Protestants "neglect the monuments

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of the ancients, and do not attend to the memorial masses of our ancestors, saying that their names have already been written in heaven, so that some of them seem more barbaric than the Goths themselves." (Pollmann: 1999, 86). Such statements suggest an immediate reaction to sacrilegious transgression, in the setting aside of familiar and valued rituals, but they also point to a wider unease about a kind of social amnesia, an abandonment of the crucial symbolic connections between current and past tenants of the earth.

Modern scholarship does not in the main share the spiritual anxieties and regrets of sixteenth-century Catholics, but it has been inclined to echo the perception that in this area, even more than in others, the Reformation initiated dramatic and long-lasting patterns of change, with implications far beyond the bounded world of ecclesiastical ritual and doctrine. It is commonly asserted, for example, that the Protestant reformers effected a profound redefinition of human community, severing all connections between the living and the dead, and casting out the latter from the position they had enjoyed as an honorary "age group" in medieval society (cf. Cressy: 1997; Duffy: 1992; Karant-Nunn, 1997). The dead were not just dead; they were dead and gone. This did not necessarily mean that they were forgotten, but rather that they were remembered in profoundly new ways, ones which effected far-reaching changes in the meaning of memory itself. Medieval concepts of memory were profoundly structured by what, in a classic discussion, the German historian Otto Gerhard Oexle (1983) called "Die Gegenwart der Toten" – the presence of the dead. Subsequent scholarship has done much to elaborate the concept of *memoria* as an organising principle of medieval social and cultural life, noting how it was constituted through a multitude of gift exchanges, and a ritualised refiguring – literally remembering – of the dead through recital of their names in a variety of liturgical and quasi-liturgical contexts (cf. Van Bueren/van Leerdam: 2005; Weijert/Ragetli/Bijsterveld/van Arenthals: 2001).[1] Medieval *memoria*, it is argued, served to collapse the gap between past and present which is central to modern ideas of memory. The Reformation, however, by ejecting the dead from a ritual and intercessionary "present", demarcated the past more clearly and endowed it with a new ontological status. "The rejection of *memoria*", suggests Craig Koslofsky, "was essential to the modern order of memory based on linear, directional time and a past of dead individuals, absent, with whom the living could have only the most disturbing contact." (2002, 31; cf. Sherlock: 2010). Thus, it would seem, the origins of the modern discipline of history itself turn out to be closely entwined with the eschatological concerns of the Reformation.

Such models of explanation are based in part upon developments in twen-

1 See also the website of the project on culture of commemoration in the Netherlands, "Medieval Memoria Online": http://memo.hum.uu.nl/.

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tieth-century art-historical theory, particularly around the interpretation of tombs and monuments. A seminal study of *Tomb Sculpture* by the German art historian Erwin Panofsky argued that post-Reformation monuments were fundamentally "retrospective", seeking to enumerate and commemorate the achievements of the dead person during a life now terminated; quite unlike the "prospective" monuments of the middle ages, with their evident concern for the still mutable condition of the deceased in the afterlife (1964, 62 – 76). This, then, was a new idiom of commemoration with potentially far-reaching social and cultural consequences. One line of development scholars have spotted leads towards a greater emphasis on the lived identity of the dead person, and connects with the rise of modern individualism (cf. Gittings: 1984; Finch: 2003; Eire: 2010, 151 – 2).[2] Here, attention to the greater biographical emphasis in commemorative forms comes together with a perception of the abandonment of collective rituals for the achievement of a good death, and a successful navigation of the shoals of the afterlife. For had not Luther preached in a sermon of 1522 that "everyone must fight his own battle with death by himself, alone"? (Koslofsky: 2002, 29).

A second and related argument sees the retrospective and this-worldly character of Protestant memorial culture as a symptom of a larger process of conceptual reorientation, one of desacralization or secularization. Funerary monuments in churches came to be much more about celebrating honour and lineage, and articulating the social and political order, than about providing symbols of Christian hope (cf. Llewellyn: 2000; Meys: 2009; Brinkmann, 2010). It is not hard to find examples to support the thesis, whether in the apparently excessive concern with heraldic display that can be found on elite monuments across northern Europe, or in seemingly merely naturalistic and unspiritualised representations of the recumbent form. It was of such sepulchres that the English playwright John Webster was thinking when he has a character in *The Duchess of Malfi* exclaim: "Princes images on their tombes / Do not lie, as they were wont, seeming to pray / Up to heaven: but with their hands under their cheekes, (As if they died of the tooth-ache) […] not carved / With their eies fix"d upon the starres; but as Their mindes were wholly bent upon the world / The self-same way they seeme to turne their faces." (cited in Marshall: 2002, 276). It has seemed, moreover, to some modern commentators that in promoting a stronger sense of the finality of judgement at death, the Reformation sharpened a contrast between worldly achievements to be celebrated and conserved, and the dark oblivion that awaited beyond (cf. Attreed: 1982, 65; Somerville: 1992, 88; Neil: 1997, 3, 38 – 40, 48, 306). In his brilliant and provocative recent *Very Brief History*

2 See also the broader comments on connections between modern sense of individualism, and the Reformation's rejection of communal strategies of salvation in Taylor: 1989, 215 – 30.

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of Eternity, Carlos Eire suggests that the abrogation of purgatory and what followed from it was no less than "a significant first step toward the elevation of this world as the ultimate reality and towards the extinction of the soul." (2010, 153).

It should be clear, then, that the Reformation's rethinking of the meaning of commemoration, in the light of the unmasking of purgatory, has been asked to do a lot of historical work. As an important foundational component, both of a modern sense of individual selfhood, and of a profoundly secularizing impulse, it seems as if the abolition of purgatory is being made into one of defining conditions of modernity itself. It is of course the task and responsibility of historians to construct explanatory models of historical development, to suggest connections between disparate synchronous phenomena, and to identify the processes and dynamics at work in effecting changes we might well want to regard as epochal. But, attractive though they are, grand theories about the relationship between the assault on purgatory and the emergence of the modern world pose some significant problems, as grand theories always do. In the first place, there is the need to consider the existence of the very different patterns of funerary ritual and commemorative culture to be found in different parts of the Protestant world. Secondly, and still more pertinently, such theories have a convenient tendency to forget that most parts of western Europe did not abandon purgatory, because they did not ultimately adopt the Reformation. In much of Catholic Europe, as several studies have noted, interest in post-mortem intercession and the cult of the holy souls actually intensified in the post-Reformation era (cf. Eire: 1995, 168 – 231; Nalle: 1992, 202 – 5; Tingle: 2009). So if radical reform of the afterlife is made the condition of modernity, then Catholicism is by definition excluded from a role in the making of modernity, which seems not so much discriminatory, as deeply implausible. Thirdly, now that historians have caught up with sociologists of religion in becoming sceptical about the secularization thesis itself, and as it has become increasingly evident that secularity is hardly the most prominent feature of the world we collectively inhabit, a need to identify so emphatically its putative historical roots is arguably a less pressing task.

In the rest of this chapter, I want to probe some of these concepts a little further, asking what patterns of mortuary and commemorative practice in the post-Reformation world can tell us about the priorities of different reform movements, about the interplay of social and spiritual motives in the continuing response to the biological imperative of death, and about the sometimes remarkable plasticity and adaptability of reforming initiatives in particular cultural and geographical settings. The story, without doubt, is a much untidier and more perplexing one than any simple "before" and "after" binary might suggest.

Let us then return to the headline suggestion of historical interpretation: that

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the Reformation acted to sever connections between the living and the dead. There are some senses in which that is obviously true. Reformed doctrine insisted that the dead had no awareness of what was transpiring in the world, that they were insensible of, as well as unable to respond to or benefit from, the prayers or devotions of the living (cf. Marshall: 2002, 210 – 15). The motive here was in fact a desire to undercut the cult of the saints, as much as it was to prevent people making representations to or for the more ordinary dead. Yet in other ways and contexts the metaphor of the severed connection begs some serious questions.

Was, for example, this separation of the dead from the living purely metaphysical and conceptual, or did it have a physical, spatial component? For Germany, the case has been strongly made that it did, for example, by Koslofsky and Susan Karant-Nunn. They note that in many parts of Germany and Switzerland through the sixteenth century and into the seventeenth, the traditional graveyards encompassing the parish church were being closed down and relocated outside town and city walls (cf. Koslofsy: 2000, 40 – 78; Karant-Nunn: 1997, 178 – 9). Here, the removal of cemeteries is symbolic of a spiritual shift, a parallel distancing of the bodies and the souls of the dead from the habitats and habitus of the living. But as these authors are compelled to admit, the story is a little more complicated than that. Although Luther was in favour of extramural burial on the basis of both scriptural mandate and decent pious practice (cf. Leroux: 2007, 259 – 65), the stated reasons for closing traditional graveyards always involved public health arguments rather than theological ones – graves were believed to exude foul and dangerous miasmas – and it was a process that had begun already in the fifteenth century. Moreover, it was patchily implemented, and sometimes fiercely resisted (cf Beyer, 1996). Even in Germany, the relocation of burial sites was an exclusively urban phenomenon, and it was far from normative for the wider Protestant world: Carlos Eire exaggerates when he states that the removal of bodies to suburban churchyards was a composite "spiritual apartheid and physical apartheid", which "came into existence rapidly and thoroughly wherever Protestantism took root" (2010, 123). Burial in traditional medieval churchyards continued, for example, in both Lutheran Sweden and Calvinist Scotland, though here individual grave markers were becoming more common in the seventeenth century than they had been before the Reformation (cf. González: 2005, 209; Todd: 2002, 338 – 9). In Protestant England too, even in towns, burial in the ancient churchyards remained the clear pattern throughout the sixteenth century. In London, as Vanessa Harding (2003) has shown, some new suburban parish cemeteries were established, but they were largely shunned by parishioners of status, and became repositories for the marginal dead: strangers, paupers, and victims of the plague.

Social status had of course always been a prime determinant of burial loca-

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tion, and across Europe the pattern here seems to be one of broad continuity, rather than of innovation. In medieval times, the most desirable location was inside the parish church itself, preferably in the chancel near to where the sacrifice of the mass was offered (cf. Daniell: 1997, 87 – 115). Burial within the church continued to be the aspiration for local social elites in Protestant England, Lutheran Germany, the Reformed Netherlands, even some Swiss cities like Basel (cf Marshall: 2002, 295 – 6; Zerbe: 2007, 118; Spicer: 1997, 174 – 8; Burnett: 2006, 247). As Diarmaid MacCulloch has put it, "far from tombs disappearing from church buildings, in most European settings the protestant dead made their presence felt ever more stridently and in greater numbers." (2003, 579).

Yet this was neither an inevitable nor an uncontentious development. The case of Scotland is instructive here. Leaders of the Kirk took the line that the dead had no place among the worshipping community of the living. Since kirk-burial originated from a desire for proximity to saints' relics, and for benefitting from masses and prayers, its continuation was a dangerous invitation to popish relapse. Prohibitions of the practice were passed at General Assemblies in 1588, 1597, 1638 and 1643 (cf. Colvin: 1981, 296 – 303; Spicer: 2000). Serial prohibitions, of course, are usually an indication that a policy isn't working, and so it proved in Scotland. There was an official and legitimate way of circumventing the ban: the construction of aisles or small transepts on the side of churches as the site of often very elaborate family mausolea. These were not technically part of the church, but allowed landowners to continue to reap the prestige associated with burial at the heart of the worshipping community (cf. Spicer: 2000; Brown: 2000, 269). There was also much simple defiance of the ban. In response to popular demand, and in return for an appropriate fee, local kirk elders regularly allowed the placing of bodies and monuments within the building itself. Such monuments were not invariably modest and discreet, as can be seen, for example, from the imposing figural tomb placed by Sir George Bruce in the former monastic church turned parish kirk at Culross in Fife (cf Todd: 2002, 336). Commenting on the burial ban, the American historian of Scottish Protestantism, Margo Todd, remarks that "there is surely no louder testimony to continued lay reverence for sacred space […] than the utter failure of this effort in the face of popular insistence on kirk burial, and its eventual transformation into yet another fundraising device." More speculatively, she adds that the annual payments of so-called "burial silver", required to keep the body in its place, seem "reminiscent of the expense of those pre-Reformation commemorative masses, the "months minds" and obits on the anniversary of a death." (2002, 333 – 4).

This raises the key question of cultural meanings, both those explicitly declared and those implicitly assumed. The continuities in physical patterns of burial need not imply or require the persistence of pre-Reformation habits of religious thought. It is here indeed that advocates of a secularised concept of

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commemoration anchor their case, supposing that tombs and monuments assumed overwhelmingly social and political functions, entirely divorced from their original spiritual rationale. To what extent, however, does it make sense to characterise Protestant memorial culture as fundamentally secular in intention and expression?

Commemoration of the dead began, of course, with the funeral, just as it had before the Reformation. Here, diversity and disagreement within the Protestant camp about the permissible extent of religious ceremonial was at its most marked. German Lutheranism, predictably, was at one end of the spectrum, building on Luther's own understanding of the honourable burial of the dead as a required act of Christian piety (cf. Koslofsky: 2000, 93 – 4). As it developed in the Empire, Lutheran funeral ritual retained numerous ceremonial elements of a traditional stamp, most evidently in the solemnity of a communal procession to the graveside led by the clergy (cf. Koslofsky: 2000, 90 – 4); Karant-Nunn: 1997, 181 – 4). The burial service of the Church of England similarly had discernible roots in the medieval services. In both England and Germany, patterns of ritualised almsgiving to the poor remained a notable feature of funerary practice (cf. Gittings: 1984, 161 – 4; Karant-Nunn: 1997, 181). To Calvinist observers, much of this looked unacceptably popish still. Within the English church, there were persistent tensions around the form of the burial service, with puritans taking particular exception to the phrase appearing to offer all the recently deceased "sure and certain hope of the resurrection" (cf. Marshall: 2002, 151 – 3). When English Puritanism enjoyed a short moment of political triumph during the mid-seventeenth-century civil wars, the Directory of Public Worship which replaced the Anglican Book of Common Prayer mandated that corpses were to be "decently" attended to interment, but without any prayers, readings or singing (Houlbrooke: 1998, 277 – 8). This was the ideal of Reformed practice. When Calvin himself was laid to rest in Geneva in 1564 it was without pomp, and by his own request in an unmarked grave (cf. Gordon: 2009, 336 – 7). Reformed burial rites, suggests Philip Benedict, were performed with "breathtaking restraint". In France, ministers might take part, but only as private individuals. Both here and in Scotland, set readings and singing of hymns were prohibited because of the fear that, as the Scots First Book of Discipline put it, "some superstitious think that singing and reading of the living may profit the dead" (Roussel: 2002; Benedict: 2002, 506 – 7).

Yet the ultimate logic of burial as an entirely civil and secular occasion was virtually nowhere observed, outside of a few small separatist and sectarian groups. And there seems to have been an almost universal tendency for ritual elements to seep back through the cracks of Reformed doctrinal rectitude. Ringing was a case in point. Protestant orthodoxy was usually suspicious of bell-ringing because of its historical legacy as a Catholic sacramental, and as a tra-

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ditional form of intercessory action. Ecclesiastical authorities thus sought to regulate its practice and extent, but without much effect. In England, parish performance stretched to breaking-point, and several hours beyond, the episcopal directives that there should be only a "short" peal of bells after the funeral. Reformed synods in France found themselves unable to prevent the ringing of church bells during the funeral procession, while in Scotland, and in defiance of ministerial opinion, local kirk sessions set about pragmatically establishing fee structures for different levels of tolling(cf. Marshall: 2002, 162 – 8; Benedict: 2002, 507; Todd: 2002, 340).

The clergy were more directly implicated in another concession to lay expectation with links to the pre-reformed past: the preaching of funeral sermons. It was of course unlikely that the Reformed ministers would willingly forgo any opportunity to expound the Word of God to an audience. In some churches formalised funeral sermons were discouraged for seeming in their timing and function uncomfortably close to Catholic invocations. This was the case in Zurich and Geneva, in France and Scotland, and in England under the regime of the 1645 *Directory*. But in all these places ministers were still permitted to make an "exhortation" or "remonstrance", putting people in mind of their Christian duties. (cf. Benedict: 2002, 507; Todd: 2002, 340 – 1; Houlbrooke: 1998, 277). Puritan anxieties about funeral sermons being "put in the place of trentals" signally failed to dampen growing enthusiasm for them in later sixteenth century England (Houlbrooke: 1998, 295 – 330). Even in Scotland, the distinction between an impromptu exhortation and the fully-fledged funeral sermon was far from rigidly observed, and John Knox himself preached at the funeral of the Earl of Moray in 1570, just as Luther had preached at the funerals of those earlier political patrons of reform, Frederick the Wise and John the Constant (cf. Todd: 2002, 341; Burnett: 2005, 38).

It was above all in Lutheran Germany that the Protestant funeral sermon established its definitive form, and a secure place in the ritual management of death. Pastors were in fact generally required by the authorities to preach at the funerals of parishioners, and literally hundreds of thousands of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century funeral sermons have survived in printed form. Unsurprisingly, this genre has attracted considerable scholarly attention (cf. Karant-Nunn: 1997, 156 – 62; Winkler; 1967; Moore: 2006; Haemig and Kolb: 2008). Much of the interest has been occasioned by funeral sermons' utility as a source for social, cultural and gender history, with much close reading of the biographical and obituary elements of the texts. But these were not in intention eulogies, and a recounting of the life and character of the deceased was usually only one element of a larger scheme which sought to expound doctrinal messages about death and the hope of resurrection. It thus seems quite safe to assert that virtually nowhere in the Protestant world around the turn of the seventeenth

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century can the experience of attending a funeral be usefully characterised as a notably secular one.

The same can surely be said of the experience of anyone contemplating a funeral monument or other type of commemorative epitaph in a post-Reformation parish church or cathedral. It seems scarcely contentious to assert this for those parts of Lutheran Germany and the Baltic world where textual or heraldic commemorative cues were regularly included on elaborate votive altarpieces (cf. Boettcher: 2009; Rast: 2011). In the Reformed churches there was much greater anxiety about all forms of imagery and representation, and about the possible dangers of idolatry. A consequence was that carved or painted likenesses of the human form on funerary monuments were sometimes the only form of directly representational imagery to be found in the church. This could in itself represent a source of anxiety, and invite the attention of over-scrupulous iconoclasts. It was to head off this possibility that Elizabeth I of England issued a proclamation in the 1560s asserting that monuments to dead persons in churches were a matter solely of civil honour and respect: they had been "set up for the only memory of them to their posterity […] and not for any religious honour" (Marshall: 2002, 278). But the medieval tombs and brasses found in countless English parish churches, and protected from damage under the terms of the proclamation, often had inscriptions asking bystanders for prayers to ease their passage through purgatory. Nor was the survival of large numbers of medieval Catholic monuments in Protestant churches by any means an exclusively English phenomenon (cf. Marshall: 2002, 174 – 5; Staecker: 2003, 419). New monuments placed in churches did not ask for prayers, or only very rarely. Neither – in Reformed settings – did they include representations of Christ or the saints, though there is some evidence of angels finding their way back onto memorials in Calvinist settings (Marshall: 2002, 277; Tarlow: 1999, 187). Post-Reformation monuments were, like their late medieval predecessors, often freighted with statements about family and lineage. But this in itself hardly renders them deracinated of religious meaning. In the first place, we might well suspect that the messages about virtue and honour with which early modern tombs are imbued are really inexplicable without reference to the biblical and Christian humanist culture within which they were formed (cf. Bartram: 2007). Moreover, it seems simply unlikely that any culturally complex artefact, situated within the spatial relationships of a church building, and endlessly washed over with the utterance of prayer and the mimetic codes of ritual performance, could remain entirely innocent of religious meaning (cf. Deiters: 2012). Here we might reflect on how new and emerging forms of commemorative media – epitaph paintings, and half-length effigies in relief, for example – were being placed in churches in positions from which earlier religious imagery had been removed or

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obscured: frequently on the white-washed walls of the nave (cf. Ekroll: 2012, 295 – 6; Pounds: 2000, 496).

In any case, the textual and iconographic features to be found on post-Reformation funerary monuments do not generally require much deep or counter-intuitive interpretation to establish that these were in quite evident ways still sacral objects, with important religious messages to impart. Panofsky's influential notion that Protestant tombs were typically "retrospective" constructions, overwhelmingly concerned with the record of an historical past rather than with the prospect of an eschatological future is hard to reconcile with a trope which emerges with great clarity from a wide variety of commemorative media: an expression of faith in the resurrection and a concern with the ultimate destiny of the resurrected body. Studies by myself and by Peter Sherlock identifying this as a pre-eminent theme of English monumental inscription are paralleled by Jörn Staecker's analysis of sixteenth-century Danish grave slabs, Joseph González's work on sixteenth-century Swedish memorial inscriptions, and Doreen Zerbe's reading of Lutheran memorial art in Germany (cf. Marshall: 2002, 229 – 30; Sherlock: 2008, 110 – 11; Staecker: 2003, 421 – 2; González: 2005, 206 – 7; Zerbe: 2007, 140). The resurrection was hardly a doctrinal discovery of the Reformation, of course. But it does seem that this was often a relatively subordinate theme in the material culture of commemoration in the late middle ages, when so much emphasis was placed on intercession for the intermediate period. However, it asserted itself with greater confidence in the post-Reformation decades. The resurrection, unsurprisingly, was also a central theme of funeral sermons (cf. Haemig and Kolb: 2008, 131).

Closely linked to this was the growing tendency to employ the metaphor of sleep to characterise the condition of the body over the period between death and resurrection. Soul-sleeping, the idea that the dead had no consciousness of any kind before the Last Judgement, was widely regarded in later sixteenth-century Europe as an Anabaptist heresy, despite the fact that Luther himself had been drawn to the notion. But any anxieties that using the language of sleep might undermine the idea of an individual judgement on souls at the point of death seem to have dissipated fairly quickly, in the Reformed as well as Lutheran churches. It was certainly ubiquitous in English memorial culture, and by one recent calculation the comforting term "avsomnat", fallen asleep, had replaced "died" on a quarter of Swedish gravestones before the end of the seventeenth century (cf. Cressy: 1997, 385 – 6; González: 2005, 217). As well as being pastorally reassuring for the dying and the survivors, the imagery of death-as-sleep had the advantage of being able to draw on strong scriptural precedents: both Old and New Testaments are full of references to the dead sleeping in the Lord.[3] It

3 For example, Deut. 31:16; 1 Kings 2:10, 11:43, 15:8; Ps. 4:8; Isaiah 28:20; Daniel 12:2;

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also constituted an ongoing argument against the existence of purgatory, for the dead could hardly be resting in the Lord if they were being tormented with purgatory fire.

The awakening which came after sleep, so the clergy taught, was to a wrapt contemplation of the Godhead through all the senses of a resurrected and perfected body. But quite possibly this was not what all laypeople were looking forward to most. A striking feature of Protestant memorial discourse is the interest which many monuments and funeral sermons display in the prospect of the reunion of spouses, parents and children in the next life. The poignant question "shall we know one another in heaven?" was generally answered in the affirmative by preachers and pastors in the early modern era (cf. Marshall: 2000; Lang: 2011). This surely makes further nonsense of the idea that the post-mortem gaze of the post-Reformation was solely retrospective, or that it contemplated the land beyond death as a vista of darkness and annihilation. It also argues against the notion of the key signature of Protestant commemoration being a heightened individualism, at least in its strictest sense. For family – in either lineage or nuclear forms – was almost everywhere a dominant motif of monumental sculpture and epitaph paintings.[4] The families in question, moreover, were not historically correct and chronologically ordered ones, but composite and reconstituted families, in which dead as well as living children have their place, and serial wives sit or kneel patiently alongside each other together with their common husband. Perhaps the aim was to draw attention to the fruitfulness of a successful patriarch (cf. Sherlock: 2008, 63). But it is hard to think that we are not looking on scenes in which enduring human relationships are at once celebrated, idealised and projected forwards onto an imagined future. Just how the donors envisaged the domestic arrangements in heaven working out is a question on which, alas, our sources are generally silent.

All of this should, I think, remove any lingering suspicion that the commemorative culture of Protestant Europe was a simply residual one, its structure and logic determined solely by the fact of a purgatory-shaped hole. There were distinct, and distinctively Protestant, repertoires of mortuary and memorial practice, responding to a variety of social, psychological and religious needs. Perennial spiritual questions were addressed in new ways, and new patterns of iconography were pressed into service. Naturally, there was a complex blend of continuity and innovation in all of this, as there was in virtually all aspects of the Reformation's impact on society. The point which is often made – that post-Reformation commemoration of the dead was deeply concerned with status display, and with articulating the social and political order – seems likely be

John 11:11; Acts 7:60; 1 Cor. 15:6; 1 Thess. 4.13; Rev. 14:13.

4 Very many of the works listed in the bibliography will attest to this.

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