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Where is the body? – Funeral liturgy as catechesis

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Project Thesis

WHERE IS THE BODY? – FUNERAL LITURGY AS CATECHESIS

by

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to the honor and memory of the generations of funeral directors who have preceded me in this noble profession by caring for the dead, and the living who grieve. Those who physically care for the bodies of the dead know well the value of the body and have become the foundation of my understanding and dedication to the same care, until the Last Day, when they all shall rise.

Also, because of his encouragement in an inquisitive and intellectual exploration of faith, I dedicate this writing to the memory of The Reverend Dr. James Albert Flurer.

Acknowledgements

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ABSTRACT

The funeral is a liturgical expression of the church, visible and participatory in the public arena, and is therefore an excellent opportunity for catechesis. In the observation of funerals from the perspectives of funeral director and clergy, this study and parish resource provide a framework for understanding the value of the body in this catechesis and an opportunity to begin dialog between the three significant voices in funeral planning, namely the clergy, the funeral director, and the congregational member.

By use of the parish resource, a dialog can be led with the intention of answering the vital questions surrounding the body's place in liturgical function, the proclamation of the resurrection of the body with a Lutheran historical understanding, and the catechetical use of the liturgy itself for conveying the faith of the church to those present. These points are made using historical sermons and documents of Martin Luther and his contemporaries. The deep connection between the real presence of the Body of Christ in the Eucharist and the presence of the physical body at the funeral mass is vital to the presentation of what the church proclaims about death and resurrection of that body.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Chapter 1: Centrality of resurrection and Luther’s proclamation | 1 |
| Personal background: the intersection of funeral director and clergy | 7 |
| Chapter 2: Strong support – funeral proclamation and liturgical practice..... | 10 |
| The suggestion of a theme: resurrection of the body | 12 |
| Why is it important to address proclamation and liturgical authenticity?..... | 14 |
| What can be built on this foundation? | 19 |
| Chapter 3: Definition of the role of Funeral Director | 23 |
| Chapter 4: “No Better Comfort” – Foundations in Historical Literature | 26 |
| Resurrection of the body | 29 |
| The Creeds | 46 |
| Real presence of the body: Eucharist and Resurrection | 49 |
| What happens to the body? | 53 |
| Mere remembrance is not enough | 62 |
| Theological Loci: Proclamation | 66 |
| Hymnody and Holy Scripture | 69 |
| Funeral sermons of Luther and others | 70 |
| Chapter 5: Real Presence of the Body for STS Lutherans | 81 |
| Chapter 6: Analysis and Observation of the STS Study | 90 |
| Evaluation of Funeral proclamation and liturgical language | 92 |
| A Word about Liturgical Language at Death | 95 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| STS Survey Analysis | 98 |
| Chapter 7: Perspectives and Practice | 104 |
| Observation of funerals | 106 |
| Chapter 8: Introduction to the Parish Resource | 110 |
| Implications for a wider audience | 111 |
| “Where is the Body?” A Resource and Discussion Guide | 114 |
| Appendix I: Funeral Worksheet | 143 |
| References | 144 |
| Curriculum Vitae | 148 |

List of Abbreviations

| | |
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| LW | Luther's Works |
| STS | Society of the Holy Trinity |

Chapter 1: Centrality of resurrection and Luther's proclamation

The body is important. Early in the morning, after the silence of that Holy Saturday as Christ Jesus laid in the tomb, Mary Magdalene found that body missing, and was distraught.¹ His body was important; to her, to the disciples, and to the church. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the church began to mirror Mary's anxiety in the fear of losing the body of Christ contained in the Eucharist, and found comfort in a rethought symbol of Mary Magdalene.² When examining our bodily connection to Jesus Christ, I hope for similar comfort in the face of death. Perhaps by examining the importance of the body, we might find new ways to live out our faith in the promise of resurrection by proclamation, the liturgy, and study, so that future generations would understand more fully the hope which assuages our mourning.

The doctrine of the resurrection of the body, most especially the bodily resurrection of Christ Jesus, has been revered as the central mystery of our faith for centuries in the celebration of the Eucharist. I say central, as the place held in the example of the mystery exclamation of the Mass from many rites "Christ has died, *Christ is risen*, Christ will come again."³ It is upon the foundation of the bodily resurrection of Christ, and our connection thereto, which I build argument for an authentic adherence to a right

¹ Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-8; and John 20:1-18.

² Lisa McClain, "'They Have Taken Away My Lord': Mary Magdalene, Christ's Missing Body, And the Mass in Reformation England", *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 38, no. 1 (2007): 77-96.

³ Various translations of the memorial exclamation can be found throughout the Eucharistic liturgies of the Roman Missal, for example. Recent scholarship argues the translation and address of the personhood of Jesus Christ, noting its reference to 1 Cor. 15:26.

presentation of this in proclamation, liturgy, and study. I will attest, only by humble observance in my nearly ten years of ordained ministry, that the faithful and unchurched alike, are being catechized by the liturgy. This catechism of witnessing the church in various rites, may be more vital than formal study. The church does observe the liturgy as catechesis. I compare this to the use of vernacular language within the Mass which is “admittedly of great importance, for expressing more clearly catechesis on the mystery, a catechesis inherent in the celebration itself.”⁴ The liturgy at death, being witnessed by a wider community than the faithful alone, is an opportunity for the church to teach. In sermon, liturgy, and study, people may be drawn closer to the church, its teachings, and be supported in deeper study of one’s own faith and understanding. It is my hope that this work would draw attention to this opportunity, and accomplish the task of catechesis in these facets of ministry exercised when the church responds to death.

Martin Luther’s fine examples of the proclamation of the Gospel at the burial of the dead exist for us today.⁵ Lutheran preachers, especially my colleagues and members of the Society of the Holy Trinity, presiding at the burial of the dead, should follow Luther’s example in the right proclamation of the Gospel at the Mass of Christian Burial. This includes an authentic presentation of the belief in the resurrection of the body. This

⁴ General Instruction of The Roman Missal (3Rd Ed.) (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2003), 22.

⁵ For examples of Martin Luther’s funeral proclamation as he presided over the funerals of Duke John of Saxony, Elector Frederick the Wise. Addressed later in this work are examples of funeral proclamation by Luther’s contemporary, Johann Bugenhagen at Luther’s funeral.

includes a demonstration of the value of the body as it is intimately connected, through baptism and the Eucharist, with the real presence of the body of Jesus Christ our Lord, is based solidly on Holy Scripture and the Creeds,⁶ and remains steadfast in the centrality of the proclamation of the Gospel rather than an oration or eulogy. I address the Society of the Holy Trinity primarily because it is the ministerial order where my own theological and liturgical understandings are congruent with members therein. As a pan-Lutheran order, gathered by a rule, we are defined by certain theological, liturgical, and ecumenical commonalities.⁷ These commonalities provide the basis for an initial conversation partner. When considering the value of the body at the funeral and the catechesis provided therein, this commonality forgoes the need to argue for foundational theological loci, on which the members already agree. Outside this ministerial order, perhaps clergy of the Roman Catholic church fall closely into our commonality. An understanding of the theological foundations explored herein is necessary to fully engage the primary relevance of *bodily presence*, in the various expressions I will address.

I thought that within the Society of the Holy Trinity there would be some unanimity regarding the subjects of death, care of the dead and the bereaved, and the preaching and liturgical acts therewith associated. However, after presenting at a General Retreat of the group, and engaging the members in lecture and study, I have found that there are differences among us. I had assumed that the unifying rule of the Society, our adherence

⁶ The Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds.

⁷ The Society of the Holy Trinity, *The Rule*, adopted September 23, 1997, accessed March 11, 2018, <http://www.societyholyltrinity.org/therule.html>.

to the three ecumenical creeds, the primacy of Holy Scripture and the Sacraments, and a right distinction between Law and Gospel in accord with the writings of the reformers, most especially the Book of Concord, would safeguard against division and disunity. These observations, along with the daily observations of funerals across other faith expressions have caused me to pay close attention to what is done and said when caring for the dead, and those who mourn.

I have observed the growing use of the eulogy over the sermon, riddled with personal likes and dislikes, with little or no reference to faith or even a presentation of the theological foundation for Christians: the resurrection of the body. I use the example of the Society of the Holy Trinity, to confirm that the mutual accountability and unifying rule of belief provide a framework for a right proclamation, doctrinally sound preaching, and authentic liturgical rites at funerals, and this mutual accountability might strengthen our own work, and the world of the congregations we serve. The next step in this presentation, then, is an intentional deepening of the understanding of this example in congregations served these clergy by means of study and discussion. Beyond the Society of the Holy Trinity, these applicable concepts may find place in other Christian denominational structures and further deepen their understanding as well. And, most significantly, this work can engage congregations, their clergy, and their local funeral directors in genuine conversation so that all may see more deeply each other's role in the care of the dead and the bereaved.

I take note of the significance of study and discussion about the sensitive topic of death prior to the event, and all the details which need to be decided in a short period of time, once a death occurs. I present this study as preparation for building better relationships within the congregation, the clergy, and the funeral director so that the key individuals in the planning of funeral liturgies understand well the roles, needs, and expectations of the church, individual family of the deceased within the congregation, the clergy, and the funeral professional.

Finally, I hope that this study will lead clergy and congregation alike into a thoughtful and fruitful study of Holy Scripture, historical documents, theology, and finally, practice concerning the dead. A significant goal includes a better definition and understanding of the role of the body in general, and the ways in which we handle the body, within the context of the funeral rite. In all of its components, I continue to hold in distinct honor the nature of catechesis of the faithful, and the witness of the faith to those outside the church, through the actions within the rites, words spoken at the Mass and other funeral gatherings, and care of the dead in general within the community.

So often Lutheran clergy look to the writings of the reformers and their contemporaries in many situations. Even when time seems to have changed circumstances, and the secular world seems farther across the divide between the world and the church, the care of the dead is still a task which stands before us. Many of the struggles present in the lifetimes of Luther and other reformers are still present today when one considers the burial of the dead. And the church today can be addressed similarly; a bold and constant

call for faithful witness and authentic presentation so that the hope to which we cling, the message of the Gospel and its transformative power over sin, as revealed by the Law, continues to bind us together in the historical name by which we are known.

Luther's proclamation at funeral rites was most assuredly based in Holy Scripture, and avoided the mixture of oration of one's life and sermon. The various examples available today, which will be examined, make the distinction of oration or eulogy quite clear as it stands in difference from the proclamation of the sermon. Regarding details of the funeral rites, we have record that the sermon was distinct, and in many cases, more than one sermon was offered.

Luther and Melanchthon recommended a Latin funeral sermon on the evening before the burial, to be given by Melanchthon, and to have the "chief sermon" be given on the day of the burial. Under consideration of these proposals, a Latin oration was given by Melanchthon and a German sermon by Luther on the eve of the burial. On the day of the burial, Luther gave a second German sermon before the committal.⁸

For those clergy who continue to be authentic to the tradition, a careful understanding of this must be employed as planning for funeral rites take shape. Individuals and congregations, too, should recognize the separation of eulogy and proclamation. By doing so more intentionally, I think the catechesis at death can be fruitful.

⁸ Martin Luther and Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, introduction to the "Sermon for the Burial of Elector Frederick the Wise, 1 Thessalonians 4:13," *Luther's Works Vol. 56 Luther The Expositor: Introduction to the Reformer's Exegetical Writings*, (Saint Louis: Concordia Pub. House, 1959), 1.

Personal background: the intersection of funeral director and clergy

Five generations of a family business may seem impressive. Carrying on a particular interest in one career among diverse generational differences seems to defy any individualistic nature present in our current society. Yet, I am the product of such grooming. At least as well as family records can substantiate, five generations on one side of my family have all been funeral directors and embalmers. Not just the men, in fact, a significant number of women as well have played key roles in the continuous thread of funeral professionals. And I have been one of those licensed funeral directors for just over sixteen years. Some claim caring for the dead is just something flowing in my own blood, or something I've been destined to do. I claim it to be the witnessing of care for the dead and the living, in moments of deepest despair which has kept me in this line of professionals.

Perhaps as strong of an influence bestowed by that family career was the driving desire for a minister in the family. Despite my eagerness to finish mortuary school and sixteen years later taking the lead on the funeral homes here, my grandmother never stopped hinting at seminary. Having been active in the church as a choir director and council member, my connection to the church was strong as well. So, in 2005 I began a journey of education in theology, and intersected two worlds which since then have been permanently intertwined within me. The two most influential forces in my younger years, the care of dead bodies and the church, have formed me and remain in me as central forces today.

“Although much of those preceding generations make up who I am, my ordination as a pastor has marked me as different from those who came before me. At least I thought it marked me as different. I would imagine, if it were possible to interview a few of those preceding generations, that they would see a less defined difference than I do. In fact, as I have observed over the years, there are several similarities between the pastor and the funeral director. Many funeral directors define their careers as *callings*, and I think that they would consider much of what they do as *ministry* in some form.”⁹

This brief history, and the intersection of funeral director and ordained member of the clergy, is unique in its perspective, opportunity, and challenge. From this position, I see and hear clergy of so many different theological identities officiate at the final rites of the dead. As one who studied and continues to study theology, I am challenged by what I see and hear to refine my own proclamation, so that the authenticity of what I believe is always presented clearly. And, through this continual observation and study, I am afforded the unique opportunity to reflect on these challenges and experiences (from both intersecting points of my professional lives) to begin a dialog with others. I seek to lead both clergy and funeral directors to be more authentic in their own leadership for the sake of serving those who mourn, and more attentive to the nature of mourning, especially for those who mourn, but mourn with hope.¹⁰

These two professions occupy a central place in the care of the dead. The funeral director, whose training is so steeped in service to the dead, the grieving, and the

⁹ Nathan Corl Minnich, "Minister in the Morgue: A Reflection on the Caring for the Bodies of the Dead," *Let's Talk* 22, no.1 (2017): 25-28.

¹⁰ 1 Thessalonians 4 speaks of grieving and hope and is the starting point for my theological understanding of mourning and the care of grieving Christians. It is also the choice of Holy Scripture used often by Luther in funeral sermons.

community; and the clergy whose training is formed in proclaiming the Gospel, teaching, and serving, are both vital to the care of people at a most difficult time. I live in this intersection and seek to contribute to the care of those who find themselves in mourning, and the support of those who provide such care. Yet, at the same time both must be challenged to not let the changing trends of the secular world destroy the foundations upon which we stand.

Chapter 2: Strong support – funeral proclamation and liturgical practice

The function of the liturgical gathering of the church, in this case at the funeral, is a *countervailing order*, even a *great gift*, and perhaps even remedy for a life of chaos and suffering or pain.¹¹ The liturgical foundation of the catechesis of those who witness the funeral liturgy engage the church in its response to the world and its chaos of death. This liturgy, which includes the real presence of the dead body (human), juxtaposed with the real presence of the once dead and now living body (Jesus Christ), positions the assembly in a timeline of the holy, beyond us in mystery, yet with us fully in time and place. It is a unification of the present moment *in time* with the church in *every time*. This union, I propose, is where catechesis happens. The union of this death, and the death of Christ, with the present assembly, and the church of every place, where every assembly is a “gathering is the catholic church dwelling in this place.”¹²

Grieving is a most natural response to death; nearly universal many would argue. Likewise, the proclamation of the church, founded upon Holy Scripture, has included grief; but not to grieve as those who have no hope, again remembering the words of St. Paul to the Thessalonians. A most transformative moment occurs when a Christian’s grief is redefined by hope. This powerful transformation experienced by those who believe,

¹¹ Gordon Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), 206-7.

¹² Lathrop, 207.

seen as foolishness¹³ by the hopeless, is an intersection of the reality of death and the proclamation of life.

As I live at this peculiar intersection, I observe countless numbers of clergy who have been given the privilege of proclaiming this hope. I recognize that what I observe has origin in difference (denominational, theological, practical, etc.). Yet, among these differences there is ground for commonality. I can most confidently begin by addressing the theological perspective of my current situation. These observations have caused me to write, teach, and guide within the structure of my ministerial order for the Lutheran clergy of the Society of the Holy Trinity.¹⁴ In 2014, I served as a teaching theologian for the order and have presented, written, and studied with this experience in mind since that time. Noting the commonality of the message of hope, in the resurrection,¹⁵ I can best define this hope, and our theological approach to it by acknowledging this theological starting point. It is my theological point of reference when observing other proclamation, rites, and decisions found in observation of the funerals of others. Noting this well, as not to be seen as judging, but merely observing what is said and done, I can only call into question the authenticity of those who ascribe to the same points of departure. For example, one who claims to be defined by denominational language or theology, should be consistent and authentic to the same. Those who identify themselves as Lutheran and

¹³ 1 Corinthians 1:18 (KJV)

¹⁴ The Society of the Holy Trinity uses its Latin name Societas Trinitatis Sanctae and is abbreviated “STS”

¹⁵ Romans 6:5

who would, in other instances, attempt to be consistent and authentic to Luther's own writing and example should well consider the value that can be found in Luther's own funeral proclamation. Luther, even as a highly regarded example of biblical exposition and theological interpretation, cannot be considered the only worthy example of funeral proclamation for modern Lutherans. Especially for those members of the STS, who regularly study the documents of the Roman Catholic magisterium, there are other examples of similar doctrine, proclamation, and theology in use where the differences are few. In referencing the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, there is considerable unity among otherwise differing viewpoints.

The suggestion of a theme: resurrection of the body

The theological foundations for the liturgies of the Lutheran church, at death, strongly suggest the theme of the resurrection of the body. This can be seen in the liturgical language found in the Lutheran Book of Worship¹⁶, and of course its predecessor books of worship upon which this text was founded. As will be explained later, the writings of Luther, also, suggest the theme of the resurrection of the body, a theme grounded in scripture and theologically sound. Certainly, the focus Luther continually made central to his writing was Christ crucified, and I understand that significance to be most valuable in acknowledging the incarnate nature of our Lord Jesus Christ. In later chapters, the writings of several theologians will be addressed. Some of whom have taken on the task

¹⁶ *Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978), 207.

of addressing resurrection proclamation at the funeral and have also suggested this central theme. What is essential therefore is a right proclamation the resurrection of the body, which can be understood as a theologically sound understanding of the significance of the resurrection of the body which may enliven a hope for faith and life, even in the face of death, while remaining authentic to one's own tradition and liturgy, and more specifically to biblical accuracy. By doing this, an attempt at authenticity to the same can be perceived by those engaged in the practices of the care of the dead. Authenticity, then, can be understood as a genuine care for the aforementioned details, and a desire to retain their significance for the task at hand, caring for the dead and the bereaved. There are complimentary issues which support and make visible the proclamation, yet a formative concern is authenticity. The authenticity given to the care of the dead body itself, within the scope of the church, and the church's liturgy make visible the connections between death and the proclaiming of resurrection. Finally, if this foundational theology (resurrection of the body), is clearly understood and clearly presented by the preacher, there is left less room for ambiguity. The resurrection of the body, squarely opposes a Platonic view of death¹⁷, and remains orthodox in the faith which we proclaim. From this theological tradition, it is important to ensure that Christ's resurrection is presented and connected to our own bodily resurrection. All of this builds a foundation to frame the connection of Christ's body (crucified, risen, and present in the Eucharist) and our own

¹⁷ This point is discussed later in the paper, but refers to the concept of the separation of the body and the soul at, the soul being eternal, and the body mortal. It speaks of no resurrection for the body, and no reunification with the soul.

body (joined in Baptism and Eucharist to Christ's body), which will be developed further in subsequent chapters. This requires however, that the body is valued, and witnessed as such in our proclamation. Beyond that right proclamation a serious consideration should be given to the physical presence of the body in our liturgical acts, so that a visible connection is made most certain.

Why is it important to address proclamation and liturgical authenticity?

I think the most significant opportunity for the church to respond to the changing trends of society can already be found within the proclamation at the burial of the dead. When so many find their first encounter with the church at *life-passage* events (i.e. funerals, weddings, baptisms) the church is uniquely positioned to proclaim its message, and should do so with authenticity and clarity. Moreover, as the quickly changing trends and desires of the secular world attempt to shape these *life-passages*, the church must be even more clear and authentic in its proclamation, liturgy, and study.

Take, for example, the confusion of sermon and eulogy, which was more clearly defined in Luther's time where examples exist in his printed works as noted earlier. Care was observed in making the distinction between an oration of one's life, and the proclamation of the church's message. The fluid transition of popularity between sermon and eulogy rises and falls throughout the centuries, but for Lutherans, the example remains clear. Recognizing the importance of eulogy as a commendatory oration or

writing especially in honor of one deceased,¹⁸ and finding its proper place within the rites associated with the burial of the dead is important. This distinction will aid in the clarity and authenticity of the proclamation of the church. The use of such acts of remembrances after the Mass can be important to the grieving, but useful as distinctly separate from the proclamation of the resurrection of the body, the faith and hope of the church, and of course the central act of the assembly, the Mass.

Because of an ever-increasing modern avoidance of death, not unlike the waves of change throughout history still evident today through changing practice and simple observation, opportunity for right proclamation of the resurrection may be at risk of erosion. If less care is given to distinguishing the theological proclamation of the resurrection (and most specifically the resurrection of the body) at death, and commingled with more secular remembrances of life, the clarity and authenticity of the church's message is at risk.

If the unchurched population encounters incomplete or unclear messages of what the church professes, an ever-growing divide develops. Within the concept of the resurrection, the nuances of the various descriptions of bodily resurrection can lead to confusion and a misunderstood theological presentation. It must be most concerning to all good clergy to understand the uniqueness of the funeral as an opportunity to speak to people far beyond the normal Sunday attendees, and carefully do so with intentionality and theological clarity. This event is the opportunity to impress a clear message upon

¹⁸ “Dictionary by Merriam-Webster: America’s Most-Trusted Online Dictionary”, *Merriam-Webster.com*, accessed March 14, 2017.

those who are *outside* the church. So often, as a funeral director, I hear families use the phrase “she was spiritual, but not very religious” to describe a loved one who has no church connection, or had one in the past that is no longer an important part of life. I think people use this phrase as a way of describing a lack of connection to the church. It can be disturbing if it is viewed as opposition to the church, and described as if spirituality without the church is risky at best, and highly individualistic. A funeral director, prepared with discussion tools and clergy already engaged in the discussion, can better address this comment for the benefit of the bereaved. The church, as custodian of faith traditions, can be comforting to those who are grieving because it professes faith in a bodily resurrection, and despite former connections has opportunity to teach, preach, comfort and care for those in need at the time of death. The opportunity of public funeral proclamation and liturgical expression can open dialog for those who recognize a spirituality in life, and seem to have lost connection with the church in general.

First, the initial hearing of the phrase *spiritual but not religious* by my ordained-minister ears reveals a troubling predicament. But, adding that I hear the phrase as funeral director gives even greater trouble. The funeral director hears this phrase as a way of defining someone’s faith when the more obvious church affiliation is missing. Most often this means the family will request the funeral director find a suitable officiant for the funeral of their loved one, carefully remembering the need for more spiritual and less church. Often, it means finding someone willing to just simply ‘say a few words’ as many ask for in these circumstances. The frequency with which I hear this phrase is

troubling, and it speaks volumes of the decline in church connection, and therein a decline in support for those who mourn.

Each instance of hearing this phrase means something different in the evaluation of where people generally stand on church and religion. It is cause for care in listening and planning for the funeral director, but for the clergy it is commentary on the church in general. To hear it from regular church-going members would be frightening. For those whom I encounter at Mass each week, or in regular attendance, connection, and membership of the church, the statement would be a reflection on the ministry where I serve. If a regularly connected person were to use the phrase to describe themselves, I would seriously consider action for myself and perhaps even the council of the church. When it comes to regular church members it would be so startling to hear, for any clergy, that something immediate would be done.

This is precisely the reason, I think, that the statement is found most often used by those who are *outside* the church. I say *outside* to define one who would be separated from what we may call religion, or religiousness, by action and dedication.

Evident in those who are outside the church and use this phrase is a painful reminder that the church itself is sometimes a significant deterrent for those who may come to faith. The impact then, beyond effectiveness within the confines of a particular ministry, is found quite significantly in those who live *outside* the church.

When someone finds spirituality, and stops short of the fullness of the church, I find myself asking “why?” I do not believe those who use the phrase and are outside of the

church to be completely lost, but rather they are those to whom the church should be speaking, particularly in gatherings like funerals. In short, the church needs to look to those who have a spirituality and draw them closer to the faith of the church. The authentic funeral and corresponding proclamation and theology may just be what is needed to move someone from simply ‘spiritual’ to a deeper faith, trusting in the authenticity of the message and its uniqueness as distinctive from the secular world.

Evangelism seems difficult to many, and much more so when approaching those who have no language for things spiritual. Although an explicit evangelism at funerals is not what I commend at all, the liturgy, preaching, and care of the dead with authenticity may be more evangelism than what might be imagined. However one uses the phrase “I’m spiritual but not religious,” the very vocation of our ministry calls us to engage, but engage with clarity and authenticity.

Those who have fallen away from the church into spirituality alone, perhaps then influenced by secular, humanistic views of life and death, may be most in need of a clear message of hope. The very message of hope the church continues to proclaim. Those who have not yet come to the church and identify a spirituality in life stand on the cusp of faith.

As Lutherans, we believe that those who identify a spirituality do so because the Holy Spirit has given rise to a sense of presence within them and, as taught well in Luther’s Small Catechism, without the call of the Holy Spirit we cannot, on our own, come to

Christ, nor to the Father. I see that spirituality as one which provides an open door; a working of the Holy Spirit which leads, directs, and calls.

My ministry is impacted by this two-edged sword in ways of which I am only minutely aware. Because one phrase can cause the honing of ministerial skills so to understand how the church connects to the religious understanding of parishioners, I must be acutely attentive. Because one phrase can cause the opportunity of welcoming the spiritual awakening in others to more deeply understand the spirituality of the church, I must be acutely attentive. In both, the message must remain constant, faithful to Holy Scripture, and authentic in action. In an age in which questioning is more prevalent than in most of church history, the church and the clergy must be ever ready with clarity in dialog, and authenticity in care. Clergy, who are prepared for such dialog, may be able to engage and transform the initial response to death so that a fruitful response by all engages those most in need at the time. Having the dialog prior to the immediacy of death, decisions might be given greater care and understanding by all parties therein involved.

What can be built on this foundation?

As members of a theological tradition that has historically confessed faith in the bodily resurrection, things said or done in contradiction to that belief, most especially when speaking to large communities of listeners of varied theological backgrounds, could be detrimental to the faith which we profess, or at least damage the authenticity of our message as seen by others. This authenticity, a combination of a genuine care of the dead

and the bereaved alongside the faith and tradition of the church, may provide a solid comfort in a time of grief. The Society of the Holy Trinity has made efforts to preserve our theological heritage in other constructs of the church's rites (individual confession for example). By engaging in study, producing and using written materials, and by mutual care and accountability, the members have cared for our heritage and strengthened our adherence thereto. I intend to build on this foundation, and engage the study of the resurrection of the body within our rites at death. We might carefully consider adhering to an authentic presentation of the resurrection of the body in much the same way; learning, discussion, and practice. As the examination and efforts to preserve or revive other facets of our traditions have proven successful, so then I hope to add to the preservation of these traditions and provide practical ways to accomplish this in our clergy members and their congregations as faithful witness to the communities in which we live.

The attention given to the body at baptism is due to the same body at death. As in the baptismal liturgy, which usually involves a larger gathered assembly, the funeral also provides a most poignant way to speak of the resurrection of the body while gathered in the presence of that same body which has died. In this way, the world comes to understand what the church believes, through what the church both says and does, in concert together, through word and action, proclamation and acted-out faith.

I hope that by examining the theological discourse on the primary loci related to the resurrection of the body, this work would equip clergy for conversation, lead further

discussion, and begin the tangible work of authentically proclaiming the resurrection of the body as was done by Luther, from whom we Lutherans take our name (and thus should consistently give attention to Luther's theology). When clergy begins leading discussion within his or her own congregation, a mutual learning and growth can take place whereby pastor and congregation fully understand why the church says and does what it does when someone dies. In further study and discussion, the congregation will be given the tools needed to instruct others when asked about their faith, beliefs, and practices. I intend for the members of my ministerial order (STS) to use this study to evaluate the ways in which we address gathered assemblies at death, and become more attentive our use of theological discourse when speaking about the resurrection of the body, and its place within the rites of the church. Finally, I hope that this becomes a resource for clergy to use when building relationships with their most intimate partners in caring for the dead, their local funeral directors. When clergy and funeral directors understand well their roles in the care of the dead and the bereaved families, and understand the theology and professional conduct of each position, a better relationship and thereby a more authentic care can be administered.

Both professionals are trained to serve the community in their care (the dead and the living). As trained teachers of theological thought, the clergy can carefully instruct the funeral directors who serve their members with confidence and authenticity. In this way, everyone involved in the rites of the church at death, understand the rites and the theological implications of carrying them out with sincerity and love.

The analysis and examination of this project will provide background preparation for both clergy and congregation. For the practical work in addressing change a resource based upon the analysis contained within this project is presented herein. As reference material to aid in building discussion about the value of the body, its place in the rite, and the proclamation of resurrection apart from simple oration of one's life, this resource can be an invaluable tool for discussion and understanding.

I would urge the clergy to invite their local funeral directors to the discussions within the congregation to build goodwill and strengthen relationships. This entire resource provides a practical way of beginning the discussion about the body, examining the current practice (views and traditions), and produce well defined methods of funeral proclamation, theology, and practice; authentic to the Lutheran examples and our commonalities in faith.

Most importantly then, the congregation, the clergy, and the funeral director will understand that, in many cases, the proclamation of the resurrection of the body can and should inform and guide the choices made at death. In this transformative way, the gospel message may guide families to make choices more authentic to faith, and will allow those who serve (clergy and funeral director alike) to aid in this process with authenticity and care in mind. I can only imagine the fruits of our labor when our choices are guided by faith and proclamation, not by likes nor dislikes, societal pressures nor personal judgments, but by faith, hope, and love.¹⁹

¹⁹ 1 Corinthians 13:13

Chapter 3: Definition of the role of Funeral Director

The role of the modern funeral director is steeped in history and has evolved through the wants and needs of consumerism. When changing trends attract the attention of both the insiders and outsiders of the profession, the discernment of cause seems to take center stage. Among the countless changes, best observed as ebb and flow across decades and even centuries, funeral directors have attempted to analyze and interpret the causes of the variety of changing practice. Even with a quick survey of recent decades of data collected by the National Funeral Directors Association²⁰ and other trade associations and groups, one can observe the profession asking “why” and the data pointing squarely at the consumer’s own choice. This trend is not new. As noted in the broader discussion contained herein in myriad ways, the funeral director seeks to serve (and has been trained to do just that) the deceased’s family and their wishes, directions, and needs.

Some of the changing trends, the wishes, the directions, and the needs of families have resulted in displays both pompous and simple, with nearly everything in between. In response to criticism from within the profession, funeral directors attempt to offer everything they can to those who call upon their service, attempting never to single out one service over another. In response to criticism which comes from outside the profession, funeral directors must attempt to *justify* offering the most inexpensive to the most elaborate while fulfilling all the choices of the people. But who is tasked with

²⁰ The National Funeral Directors Association has been the leading professional association collecting data from its members for decades. Its various surveys and questions are found in nearly every edition of its magazine, and are readily available to the profession and the public alike.

guiding, directing, or shaping the choices of a given community? It is nearly impossible for the funeral director to fill this role, and still provide everything needed for everyone served. That double-edged sword of offering, yet guiding, can be most dangerous to the business, its reputation, and the relationships built in a certain community which are the foundation for the very business itself.

It is the duties of those who lead the community, which may be clergy leading a community of faith, or a matriarch leading a family unit to guide, shape, and direct choices best for one's own people. When no professional is prepared to lead, and the funeral director provides as requested by the public, there develops an endless array of choices, options, and costs according to everyone's own desires. When this happens, history reveals that even the clergy criticize harshly the business of funeral director.

From the reformation to the present, representatives of various denominations have sometimes criticized funeral customs, funeral expenses, and the behavior of undertakers, comparing the funerals of more recent dates with the funerals of primitive Christianity, and alleging that some of the pomp and majesty of the traditional feudal funeral represented a reversion to pagan worldliness and was therefore unbefitting to Christians. The sable false front of the post-feudal funeral, with its mummers, hired-by-the-job retainers, its plumes and paraphernalia could not help but lend logic to such strictures, particularly when these goods and services were bought, rented, or hired with the widow's mite. Yet, at worst, 17th, 18th, and 19th century undertakers, like any other tradesmen, sold people what they demanded.²¹

²¹ Robert Wesley Habenstein, William M Lamers and Howard C Raether, *Funeral Customs the World Over*, (Milwaukee, WI: Bulfin Printers, 1994), 112.

In my over fifteen years of licensed funeral directing, and the life-long exposure to the family business, I have seen the very vicious and condescending critique of both friend and foe! In the attempt mentioned here to offer what the public asks for, I have experienced the internal frustration between funeral directors as price wars, public opinion, changing trends, and personal desires, begin to dictate how we define ourselves. It is infinitely more difficult to rest a reputation on quality, caring, and professional attention to the families one serves, when surrounding colleagues base their business on inexpensive and impersonal. In a consumer-driven society, relationships and reputations are nice, but cost drives decisions. However, the criticism from outside the funeral profession can sometimes be even more difficult.

To invite the funeral professional along on this journey of theological study, practical application, and faithful catechesis is to befriend those who are trained to serve, and serve with sincerity and understanding. When the one who serves in this role better understands the community he or she serves, both can experience the funeral in ways which provide comfort and peace. The funeral director, through the learning received with congregation members engaged in this study, will become a partner in the authenticity and catechesis of the funeral for the faithful, for those who witness, and for the entire community.

Chapter 4: “No Better Comfort”- Foundations in Historical Literature

The fact that Jesus Christ died is more important than the fact that I shall die, and the fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead is the sole ground of my hope that I, too, shall be raised on the Last Day. Our salvation is ‘external to ourselves’.²²

Only God knew *how* the resurrected body of Jesus Christ would come out of the tomb; part of the mystery held within the faith we proclaim as Christians. For some, the resurrection mystery is paramount to the understanding of everything else upon which the foundation of their faith has been built. The incarnate presence of the Messiah changed the course of humanity forever. Every detail of his annunciation, birth, life, growth, teaching, ministry, passion, resurrection, and ascension (known and unknown) contribute to the whole of this mystery. We do believe that his body taken down from the cross, prepared, and laid in the tomb, bore the marks of the crucifixion²³ and that he came forth from the tomb with a body that still bore the same.²⁴ From this account, preserved in Holy Scripture, one can be assured that the gospel writer considered these details to be of significance for the faith, and the church.

Beyond these recorded statements mystery encapsulates the rest. Because of the vastness of theological discourse on the topic of the resurrection I will attempt to build a foundation of thought which is centered in the theological understandings of my primary

²² Dietrich Bonhoeffer and John W. Doberstein, *Life Together*, 5th ed. (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1954), 549, Kindle.

²³ John 19:17-42

²⁴ John 20:24-29

audience, the unanimity of theological thought found within the ministerial order to which I belong. Yet, there is a wider audience who adhere to many of the same theological precepts and thus able to enter the conversation. “Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.” That statement describes again the principal article of faith in my own context and as a member of the Society of the Holy Trinity, which contained within its rule is the desire for the completion of the work of the sixteenth century reformation and the reconciliation and reunification with the bishop and church of Rome. Therefore, drawing upon liturgical language and literature of the reformation, especially Luther and his contemporaries, I will find a commonality with that audience. For an order whose rule indicates a continuation of the work begun five hundred years ago, a strict adherence to the tenets of faith described within the rule is paramount. In addition, authors whose theological center is in concert with the magisterium of the Church of Rome will remain congruent with those of the STS, and with my writing.

The three primary areas of theological discourse which are central to my case for authentic and clear proclamation of the resurrection, according to the tradition to which I subscribe, concern the *resurrection of the body*, the *real presence of the body (Eucharist and Resurrection)*, and the *proclamation of the Gospel at death rather than eulogy of past life*. Through a careful review of such literature, one can be better acquainted with this position and context, and therefore better able to participate in the discussion which will follow. The literature regarding the resurrection of the body is vast with theological differences abounding. To be clear, the theological position I am taking here is the

physical resurrection of the body, not simply a spiritual resurrection indicated by some whose descriptions of the resurrection more accurately align with the Platonic understanding of body and soul popular among many groups throughout various times in history, even to the present day.

There is a correlation that emerges when examining the churches who claim to value the Body and Blood of Christ in distinct ways as found in the Eucharistic elements, and the ways in which those same churches live out a value and care of the human body at death. The authentic presentation of this correlation strengthens the clarity witnessed by the public, as well as those attempting to understand the theology of a Christian community by the words and actions of their liturgy, teaching, and death practices. A community whose actions and words reveal an authentic value of the flesh, understood in the Eucharist and the individual human body, will also authentically proclaim rightly the resurrection of the body in a presentation of that gospel message at the burial of the death. Therefore, the three, I think, are inseparable parts of the whole. The authentic representation begins with this theological understanding, and is carried out by words and actions which confirm and proclaim that truth.

Resurrection of the Body²⁵

The Church teaches that every spiritual soul... is immortal: it does not perish when it separates from the body at death, and it will be reunited with the body at the final Resurrection. (CCC 366)²⁶

Observed as a general theme throughout his funeral proclamation, in these instances Luther remained steadfast in the inseparable nature of body and soul, and that the resurrection needed both, a mystery to be sure, but a confidence of faith in a resurrection like that of Jesus. Although there are irreconcilable tensions in Luther's thought on the state of the dead, again a mystery of which we know little, death may terminate human action, but it cannot limit divine agency, and therefore human existence.²⁷ The paschal mystery then is essential to faith, and "in proclaiming [it] we connect the threads of our present lives and hopes for the future to what the saving work of Christ was all about in the mind of God."²⁸

Luther felt the need to argue that even because of works (and the reliance thereon asserted by his adversaries) that eternal life and the resurrection of the body is founded

²⁵ Having already addressed the nature of the STS, its study of materials from the Roman Catholic Church, it is significant to note where Lutheranism agrees doctrinally. Although there are multiple supporting arguments herein contained (scripture, church councils, etc.) the use of the catechism is more applicable for use with laity, and examples like this prove helpful to show agreement across denominational lines.

²⁶ "Catechism of the Catholic Church", *Vatican.va*, last modified 2018, accessed March 11, 2018, http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P1B.HTM.

²⁷ Ittész Gábor, *The Doctrine of The Soul's Immortality in Sixteenth-Century German Lutheran Theology* (Th.D. diss., Harvard University, 2018), 59. See further this entire dissertation for a comprehensive examination on the doctrine of immortality in Lutheran Theology.

²⁸ Frank C Senn, *Eucharistic Body* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017), 74.

alone on scripture. This, made known while opposing the need for the doctrine of the immortality of the soul (Apostolici regiminis - a product of the fifth Lateran Council) in his sermon on Searching Scriptures on August 5, 1545.²⁹ He explained that the head cannot rise without the body, and if Christ is the head, then our resurrection is necessary. He went on further to say that to deny our own resurrection is to deny Christ's.³⁰

In his sermon on 1 Corinthians 15:35-38 Luther presents the his basis for the theological argument I make in this work. Luther wrote "For our Lord Jesus Christ began the resurrection in His own body, but the resurrection is not completed unless we, too, are raised... so also His resurrection is not yet brought to completion or fulfilled unless we follow after Him and rise from the dead."³¹ This bodily resurrection is the foundation upon which I understand the way in which we should preach, teach, and demonstrate at the burial of our own dead. Luther also makes the significant claim, that all these concerns (baptism, the Lord's Supper, the virgin birth, resurrection)³² are all connected and refer to the statement of faith found in the creeds, all of which begin with Almighty God, and the power to speak, and have that which is spoken come into reality. They all "hang together like a chain" Luther contended, and to which I agree.

Luther mentions Karlstadt in this sermon on the resurrection of the dead, a

²⁹ Martin Luther and Christopher Boyd Brown, *Luther's Works Vol. 58*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publ. House, 2010), 247.

³⁰ Luther, *LW*:58, 102.

³¹ Luther, *LW*:58, 102.

³² Luther, *LW*:58, 118.

contemporary of Luther's I address in greater detail below, and the connection between the resurrection and the other articles of faith. In the example of the Eucharist, Luther writes that Karlstadt "failed on this point as well, [when he said] 'I will never let myself be convinced to believe that God opens heaven and lowers His Son down and closes Him up in bread, so that he is distributed in the Sacraments.'" The response to this from Luther is most significant. He writes "[This] is what unbelief does. But what is the cause of such unbelief? The cause is this: man does not consider God to be almighty."³³ When we call into question any of the things God said, we call into question the first article of the creed and God's almighty power of all things.

Beyond the commentary of Luther himself, a primary beginning for this study must be a solid foundation for defining the theological locus of the resurrection, and more specifically the resurrection of the body. By defining the resurrection to mean *of the body* specifically, I recognize the exclusion of those who would define the resurrection in terms of spirit alone, or of those who may attempt to define *resurrection* and *resurrection of the body* differently. The theological position which aligns with those in the STS is a careful understanding of the resurrection *of the body*, and grounded in the statement; "united with Him in a death like His... we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His." In this sense, I am positioning securely the model of resurrection of the body to be unique alone to that of Jesus Christ.

In the modern era, Oscar Cullmann (1902-1999) - professor of New Testament at Basel

³³ Luther, *LW*:58, 110.

Reformed Seminary and of theology at the Sorbonne, Paris - wrote an influential book *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead: The Witness of the New Testament*. His detailed and biblical case for recognizing this dichotomy is a concrete example of the struggle that faces many preachers. An increasingly popular and secular desire for a simple presentation of the immortality of the soul is addressed clearly in Cullmann's text. Despite the evidence available to Christian preachers, I agree with Cullmann, in my work I have observed a great number who fall victim to the desires of a secular view of the simple immortality of the soul, and avoid speaking of the resurrection of the body altogether. Oscar Cullmann³⁴ returns to this point clearly when referencing Romans 8:11 at the end of his text to define the resurrected body which the Holy Spirit has already begun its 'quickening' work: 'If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also, through his Spirit that dwells in you.'³⁵

I address the resurrection of the body, and therefore Holy Scripture, through the particular lens that may be far-removed from the apostles' lives, and countless numbers of saints whose flesh has died, and now rest in peace awaiting the completion of the resurrection. A lens which colors all creation with the knowledge that "Christ has died,

³⁴ Oscar Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead?* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010), 57.

³⁵ Romans 8:11 (NABRE)

Christ is risen, Christ will come again.” Cullmann describes eloquently this knowledge as we consider Holy Scripture:

The whole thought of the New Testament remains for us a book sealed with seven seals if we do not read behind every sentence: Death has already been overcome (death, be it noted, not the body); there is already a new creation (a new creation, be it noted, not an immortality which the soul has already possessed) the resurrection age is already inaugurated. Granted that it is only inaugurated, but still it is *decisively* inaugurated. Only inaugurated: for death is at work and Christians still die.³⁶

Outside the Holy Scriptures and the creeds, the fragmented writings of Justin Martyr, second century Christian apologist, speak specifically to the value of the body and its relationship to the soul, before and after the resurrection.³⁷ Certainly the works of Augustine of Hippo were foundational for Luther and his own theology and writing. We can turn back to Augustine and see again, that this struggle of understanding the resurrection is not new, and has plagued the church for centuries. Many scholars reference Augustine’s work in *City of God* (book 22) and other works in which he addresses details of this resurrection idea, and more specifically how it works in the understanding sought by humans. Augustine promotes the idea of resurrection including the flesh of the body, but intimately intertwined with incorruption.³⁸ This concept may be

³⁶ Cullmann, 41-2.

³⁷ Saint Justin Martyr, *Fragments of The Lost Work of Justin On the Resurrection* (Roberts-Donaldson), Earlychristianwritings.Com, accessed February 25, 2018, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/justinmartyr-resurrection.html>.

³⁸ Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 95.

difficult to put into definite and understandable terms, except that Augustine continues to describe corruption as simply, decay. For him, the removal of decay, or stated differently the instituting of a stasis, and as noted in sermon 155, he proclaims “Take away death and the body is good” where Caroline Bynum notes that he makes significant connection between *death* and *corruption or decay*.³⁹ Although Augustine seemed to detest the decay of the flesh, his hope was in a redemption of that same organic resurrect-able body, and the hope for stasis or a hope in the “impossibility of non-stasis,” as Bynum notes, and references further that the Augustinian view of a soul, and that soul’s desire for a body, became a “major source of a dynamic view vision of heaven in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.”⁴⁰ Augustine’s understanding of the value of the body is evident, and by describing as “beautiful” that which is here below, in reference to a heavenly beauty, he adds value to the flesh of man. This value is so significant that in his sermon 173 he “understands the parable of the lost sheep as a description of the collection of the dispersed limbs [of the body].”⁴¹

Augustine’s most significant contribution to the topic at hand, I found to be in his assertion that “no destruction, digestion, or dissolution can really destroy the body.”⁴² Here it seems that he sees in the process of decay a natural, and even a “peaceful and

³⁹ Bynum, 96-97.

⁴⁰ Bynum, 97.

⁴¹ Bynum, 99.

⁴² Bynum, 103.

harmonious” process by which the earth, as part of creation, works in concert with the promise of the resurrection. His words give comfort to those who fear a natural destruction of the body in this way by assuring his hearers of God’s power to “recast” all the bits of our being in the resurrection. In the longer discussion of consumption in general, Augustine asserts that just as the “eye knows how to feed on light without diminishing the light” neither does the consumption of that which is holy diminish what is seemingly consumed.⁴³ I think we can, with Augustine, assure ourselves of this correlation: as the very body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ is not diminished by our consumption in the Eucharist, then also our own bodies (made holy by His) are not diminished by the process of their decay, but rather continually in that process throughout life awaiting the stasis of the resurrected body. Confirmed in book 4, chapter 3 of his *De Trinitate*, Augustine regards the aging body as such, constantly through age and illness, to be deepening into corruption until death.⁴⁴ Only to arrive at the significance of the body even in death, Augustine praises our concern, in his “psychologically perceptive treatise on the care of the dead” as Bynum states, by calling our care of the dead “natural and pious human instinct” and equates this with the fear we naturally hold in the stark contrast of the promise of the resurrected body. Without following the theological history of this bodily resurrection discussion beyond the scope of this discussion, it is worth noting that the discussion continues even into the minutia of how, why, where, and when

⁴³ Bynum, 102.

⁴⁴ Bynum, 101.

the body will rise. These discussions gave rise to “relic cults, and Asceticism”⁴⁵ within the timeframe of Augustine and his contemporaries, all of whom shaped the discussion for the decades and centuries to come. To conclude this formative theology of the resurrection of the body, pertinent to this discussion, Augustine laid a foundation which did what all good pastors attempt to do: proclaim the gospel message of the resurrection of the body, in the face of death and decay, comfort the bereaved, and remain authentic to the rites of the church at death. He maintained an “emphasis on integrity - wholeness - in resurrection”⁴⁶ which, provides a framework for our care of the dead. He addressed the natural decay, which began in life and extended through the grave, as being under God’s control, and affirmed that the bodily resurrection will include a wholeness that this world cannot destroy. Augustine limits his consideration of decay to natural destruction; he does not address the purposeful destruction at human hands such as cremation, which can be addressed with pastoral care when the issue arises. A constructive dialog to address this topic can start here, but would be most productive, to remain focused on the intent of what is done with the body, and what those actions say about belief.

The pervasiveness of the Greek philosophical dichotomy of immortal soul, trapped within a mortal (and even disposable) body has plagued Christian thought for centuries. It is no less pervasive than it was at the time of Plato. Cullmann addresses this in his text, and clearly examines the difference, and why this is a problem for Christianity. One can

⁴⁵ Bynum, 104-114. The continuation of Augustine’s theology and others can be found here with further theological discussion on the relics and asceticism which followed.

⁴⁶ Bynum, 105.

gather from the preface that Cullmann is confidently addressing the copious amount of negative reactions to his work, which confirms once again that this argument is certainly not new, nor does it seem to slip by without evoking serious responses. He specifically begins with a point which, I think, is central to the concerns raised above with the way in which people make decisions at death, and Cullmann understands this from the point of view of those who criticize Christianity. When what we do and say present more of what we *wish* to happen at death, the opponents call faith a mere projection of personal desires.⁴⁷ Noting well the negative reactions, which I have also encountered when opening the discussion of the resurrection of the body, I agree fully with Cullmann's assessment of beginning without ambiguity and seeking only to better understand the hope of the New Testament authors and placing securely our resurrection within the framework of a cosmic redemption of the universe, and to use that framework to better understand and use our personal desires toward the same end.

To better understand the resurrection of the body, so that continued study and discourse can ensue, Cullmann first attempts to understand the placement of death within the cosmic redemption and define its place in relationship to our physical death. For one's own study of death in general, the faithful Christian is invited to attempt the same, and seek to understand the place our bodies hold in relationship to the whole of those whom Christ Jesus sought to redeem. First, he notes that the Christian understanding is entirely wrapped up in the "Christ-event" and that because of this fact the Greek philosophical

⁴⁷ Cullmann, 9.

understanding, is completely incompatible with our faith, and most certainly the intent of the New Testament and the early church.⁴⁸ Death is not a friend, but rather the last enemy to be destroyed, as Holy Scripture reveals. Living in the timeline of Christ Jesus which is now post-Easter which refers our thought and discussion alone to a solitary event in history, in which Christ rose from the grave and subsequently showed his flesh to his followers. Because this event is a definable point in time, a point in time which made a distinct change in the world, the departure from the Greek thought, and the personal desires of what we *wish* would happen for us after death could not be farther apart. Yet, even within Christianity not confined to one denomination or theological ideal, the widespread Greek falsehood exists, denying the work of Jesus Christ (and specifically His resurrection) as being the defining moment of immortality for the human soul *and* the human body. Cullmann brings to the idea of time, not just the “Christ-event” but our own resurrection, situated in a specific time. The act of resurrection as creation places the work in the hands of the Holy Spirit, who took hold of our being and has been dwelling therein as a temple (as St. Paul notes in 1 Corinthians chapter 6), working foretaste victories over death, and who completes the work begun not at our individual death, but only on the last day, the *End*.⁴⁹

This timeline becomes entirely significant when we attempt to describe the resurrection within the death of each individual believer. To locate these details only in the life of an

⁴⁸ Cullmann, 15.

⁴⁹ Cullmann, 38.

individual is to misinterpret the cosmic redemption mentioned already, that same timeline in which the “Christ-event” enacted the change; the gift of incorruption. So often one can observe the talk of death and resurrection being placed within the lifespan of the individual, rather than placing the individual within the broader redemptive plan of resurrection. We are *changed* in a moment, St. Paul wrote, but surely he gave warning of when the change will take place, at the last trumpet. Cullmann refers to this as the whole process of redemption, a transition from the present age to the future, not an individual death but an individual death within the whole of the process. Yet, to place a human timeline on God’s time is futile effort, but worth noting that our attempt to ascribe to timelines our individual death, and the entire process is equally futile.

Oftentimes I hear death described as a blessing. Countless numbers of families sit down to make the arrangements for the funeral of a loved one and the beginning of the conversation is a description of the last few weeks, months, or even years, and then death as a welcomed release from struggle. Although there is credibility in noting the end of physical suffering, what follows is entirely Greek philosophy even from the most faithful Christians (and their pastors). Phrases and platitudes abound saying that loved ones are “in a better place” or “looking down on us now” or even that they may have sprung wings from their souls and metamorphosis has made them “angels.” The complete disregard for the rest of the blessed dead where, yes suffering has ended, but where our flesh awaits the final trumpet blast, but rather that death (the friend) has set them free from the prison cell of the flesh which confines the soul. When addressing the topic of

resurrection, it is extremely useful to take some time and read the words of Plato in the description of the death of Socrates from his work *Phaedo*. It is undeniably striking in comparison to modern theological understanding even within the framework of Christianity, and perhaps is beginning to become more prominent than the resurrection, and the value of the flesh. Jesus weeps in the face of death, begs his disciples to not leave him alone, and pleads with the Father to let the cup pass from him, because he knows death to be the enemy. To be in the grasp of death is truly to be in the hands of the enemy of God, and Jesus knows that to suffer this abandonment, he will be separated from God; a “condition really to be feared.”⁵⁰ Death, then, brings with it the very thing which Jesus had never encountered, a separation from God. At the point of death Jesus cries out “Why has thou forsaken me?” and into the very hands of the enemy he went. From the very beginning of the early church, and as Cullmann continues, even as early as the beginning of the second century, people were offended...they were “of Greek provenance” and in early Christian history called Gnostics, and refused the notion that Christ Jesus underwent separation and death.⁵¹

Father Raymond Brown agrees with this concept, and agrees that Jesus experienced the fullness of separation on our behalf.⁵² In his study *The Death of the Messiah* he notes

⁵⁰ Cullmann, 25.

⁵¹ Cullmann, 25.

⁵² James Martin, SJ, *Seven Last Words: An Invitation to A Deeper Friendship with Jesus* (New York: Harper One, 2016), 65.

how some Christians reject this separation, but posits that even in the language of Jesus' words we can understand the separation or feeling of abandonment. In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus cried out to God by calling him *Abba*, the name of Father in a close and loving relationship. But, on the cross, in the moment of agony, Jesus cries out to the same Father with the name "Eli" (Hebrew formal for My God) and "the more formal *Eloi* on the cross is heartbreaking. Jesus' feeling of distance, then, reveals itself not only in the scream and not only in the line of [Psalm 22], but also in the word *Eloi*."⁵³

In the fear that Christ Jesus exhibited in the face of death we can understand the fullness of what dread lies before Him in the task of defeating death. Jesus knew that there was something to be feared; the separation from God. When he explains, as St. Matthew records in chapter ten, that we must fear God who can kill both the body and the soul in Gehenna. If we need not fear those who can kill the body, the flesh, but cannot destroy the soul, we are assured that physical death is not the end. However, to fear the one who can destroy both body and soul, God (and God alone) is to understand what Jesus feared. The separation from God, in a permanent state or being completely given over to death, is most surely to be feared. What is feared though is *not* the death of flesh, but the separation from God, and that God might not resurrect both to everlasting life.⁵⁴ The value of the resurrection then is that we not experience separation, nor corruption!

⁵³ Martin, 66-7.

⁵⁴ Cullmann, 36.

A seminal point of Cullmann's argument places this "Christ-event" and death in an entangled intersection of history and of future, of life and of death, and from this intersection Christ rose victorious, not over the body, but over death itself. Cullmann concludes that this event defines specifically what the faithful must proclaim. "No distinction is made: even the life of our body is true life; death is the destruction of *all* life created by God. Therefore, it is death and not the body which must be conquered by the Resurrection."⁵⁵ Placing faith in everlasting life at the intersection of Christ's death and resurrection will undoubtedly keep the faithful focused upon the connection between the flesh (and humanity) of Jesus, and his power (divinity) to destroy death, this flesh and power could both walk from the sepulcher in resplendent glory. Finally, Cullman proclaims death as horror still, not a friend, but enemy, conquered by this event in the work of Jesus Christ, by saying "whoever paints a pretty death can paint no resurrection."⁵⁶ The value found in the flesh rising from the grave is gathered from the horror which placed it there, victory sweetened only by what has been conquered.

Christ Jesus won the victory over death not a victory over the body, and therefore the value of the body can be seen through the eyes of God; as good. Sin brought corruption to the flesh and the wages of sin is death as St. Paul wrote. I can imagine then how Augustine saw corruption as something that can be cured in the resurrection. If the salvation of our souls is the forgiveness of sins and the resurrection is the healing of the

⁵⁵ Cullmann, 26.

⁵⁶ Cullmann, 27.

flesh from corruption, then we can surely say that the flesh has value; the body, as created good, can be restored from that which is destructive. Cullmann goes so far as to say that even small healing, throughout life can be seen as a partial victory over death, furthering the point that the resurrection is visible even in our own bodies now.⁵⁷ Perhaps he seeks to understand the “Christ-event” as the true revelation of God’s plan for making perfect again, the corrupt flesh made well, even with moments of divine while corruption still has a tight grasp upon the flesh. Why is it then that we celebrate healing so much, and cling to the added time of the current life without seeing these moments of foretastes of the resurrection yet to come? I see here a great correlation in the language of the church. Can healing as foretaste of the resurrection prove our worth just as the reception of the Body and Blood of Christ Jesus proves our value in that foretaste of a feast yet to come?

Here is found a foundation for a proclamation of the resurrection: there is no distinction between the body and the soul, but by the quickening power of the Holy Spirit the inner/outer person is a whole. Cullmann notes St. Paul’s letter to the Romans (chapter 8:11) to point out the confirmation that this same quickening can happen also to the mortal body, that which has already happened to the ‘inner’ by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁸ Here is found the confirmation that the soul is *not*, in and of itself, immortal. Without the Holy Spirit, or by the one who has the power to cut off the soul in Gehenna (God, and God alone), the soul is in grave danger! But, by the inseparable union of body

⁵⁷ Cullmann, 29, 35.

⁵⁸ Cullmann, 26.

and soul into the whole person, and by the quickening of the resurrection begun by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the body must be raised, Cullmann declares, as “the soul cannot always remain without a body.”⁵⁹ He continues “There must be a resurrection for both; for since the Fall the whole [person] is ‘sown corruptible.’”

The understanding of Christ’s resurrection described by Cullmann is pivotal for the church’s understanding of the resurrection of the body. As Christ Jesus is the first-born of the dead, “His body [is] the first Resurrection Body...[and] where this conviction is present, the whole of life and the whole of thought must be influenced by it.”⁶⁰ The example of this type of body, revealed in the New Testament, is the first and only example of what is promised for those who will be resurrected on the Last Day.

Understanding this interim time between the one who is the first (Jesus Christ) and those who will rise at the last, is crucial to the conveyance of faith in the resurrection of the body when in the end time we shall join Him in a resurrection like His. We come closest to the Resurrected Body of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, and Cullmann points the reader to St. Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians in the eleventh chapter, and draws attention to the Lord’s Supper and the effectiveness of Christ’s body.⁶¹

But finally, there is what I see as the greatest stumbling block of all resurrection understanding, and therefore proclamation: *time*. Cullmann addresses this most

⁵⁹ Cullmann, 36.

⁶⁰ Cullmann, 41.

⁶¹ Cullmann, 45.

definitively and argues strongly against Barth and others, insisting upon the New Testament foundational understanding for those who “are asleep.”⁶² He cites Holy Scripture which places the dead within time, and argues against the erroneous instantaneous resurrection of those who have died. Rather, those who *are asleep in death*, cry out in their waiting “How long, oh Lord?”⁶³ Those who have died, and await the Last Day, rest in “special proximity” to Christ as Cullmann states, an explanation of the phrases used to describe the immediate post-death experiences of ‘in paradise’ or ‘in Abraham’s bosom’ or ‘under the altar’.⁶⁴ I fear that one of the reasons behind the reluctance to speak of the resurrection of the body is rooted in this issue of time, and speaking of the tension between the first-born of the dead, and the time when the Last Day arrives prevents the fullness of resurrection talk to take place. The discussion specifically aimed at understanding the body which follows this exploration is intended to draw the participants into a discussion where these issues may be better understood, and perhaps even resolved, so that the fullness of the resurrection of the body can be preached, taught, discussed, and seen in authentic liturgical acts in the face of death.

The ways in which we can begin to understand the value of the flesh, absent from the earthly timeline in which we seem bound, are shaped by the recognition of the wholeness of our body *and* soul, as one in the eyes of God. Pope John Paul II, noted “I don’t *have* a

⁶² St. Paul refers to the dead in this way, for example 1 Thessalonians 4:13, which is the scripture addressed by Luther in the examples given in the proclamation section of this work.

⁶³ With reference to Revelation 6.

⁶⁴ Cullmann, 51.

body, I *am* a body” and so if God is going to transform our minds it must be done through the body, the very role of the sacraments, and their impact on the flesh.⁶⁵

The Creeds

Beyond the evidences in Holy Scripture, there are other texts held as authority for the members of the STS which speak of the resurrection of the body. First and foremost, in this category would be the three ecumenical creeds, held in highest regard and part of the agreed “sound doctrine of the church” as found in chapter six of the rule. The Apostles’ creed specifically names the resurrection of the flesh (*carnis resurrectio*), yet Luther notes in the Large Catechism this produces for Germans nothing more than thoughts of the butcher block, and that resurrection *of the body* is “not a big issue, as long as we understand the words right.”⁶⁶ He means to be sure that we understand the body must rise, the flesh itself despite the negative thoughts brought to mind in the vernacular translating. The Athanasian creed addresses the time of the resurrection and the substance in one statement. Specifically noting that “at His coming all people will rise again with their bodies.”⁶⁷ These two universal or ecumenical creeds, accepted by the church as definitive statements of the faith speak directly of the bodily resurrection. There is no

⁶⁵ Frank C Senn, *Embodied Liturgy* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2016), 8.

⁶⁶ Paul Timothy McCain, W. H. T Dau and F Bente, *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions a Reader's Edition of The Book of Concord* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Pub. House, 2009), 432.

⁶⁷ McCain, 44.

question in these creeds that bodily resurrection was the norm of understanding. We must acknowledge as Luther noted a right understanding exists also in the Nicene creed naming the resurrection of the dead (per the translations published in the accepted liturgical book of the STS, namely the LBW).

Even in the “good German wording” as Luther notes in Part II of the Large Catechism, the final words of the Apostles’ Creed speak of the resurrection of the body, the final preservation of the whole. Those things already accomplished (creation and redemption) are brought to fullness when the flesh is made incorruptible in the resurrection, as the Holy Spirit, Luther notes, “carries on His work without ceasing to the Last Day.”⁶⁸ As one reads the descriptions St. Paul writes in his first letter to the Corinthians in the fifteenth chapter, it becomes evident that he too was attempting to explain what exactly will happen to our flesh, but notes the variety of flesh given to all of creation, and he notes well the difference in heavenly bodies and earthly bodies. Luther comments on this change noted in the 52nd verse of that chapter in its instantaneous change. An explanation as the inclusion of increased holiness granted while living, and the fulfillment of the forgiveness of sins, all brought together in the bodily change of the resurrection! From this one may argue that Luther was confirming the importance of the body, the change at resurrection, and the completion of the work of the Holy Spirit begun and continued throughout life. This change is most important to note. For this commentary on the creed, and Luther’s reference to 1 Corinthians 15, our hope is not in a disembodied spiritual life,

⁶⁸ McCain, 431-2.

but the very flesh (to disagree with the “good German” Luther references) to take on incorruption whereby we no longer look upon our flesh as if it mere meat, but the substance of sin removed and made clean; something holy.

Luther asserts that the Apostles’ creed, and namely the first article therein contained, is an article of paramount importance pertaining to creation and the nature of God. By calling this the *children’s creed* in his sermon on 1 Corinthians 15:35-38, he is certainly setting the stage for understanding this chief article with childlike faith.⁶⁹ The creeds become vital to the understanding of faith. Luther continues by saying that nothing else matters except to pray the creed with young children, for if we doubt the resurrection, we doubt the first article of the creed, we doubt God’s creative authority and even lack faith like that of the little children.⁷⁰ Just by virtue of the creed, then Luther asserts that to deny (by any form of reason), or to engage in the silly questions about how the body will be resurrected, is really denying the first article of faith, that God is, in fact, Almighty.⁷¹ Those who deny by human reason alone, devoid of a childlike faith, speak against God’s word and omnipotence, evidenced by the words of St. Matthew, “Even if I die, God will raise me from the earth and will again bring me forth from the dust, so that I will shine like the sun. I have no doubt of this. He is almighty and is able to do it,” Luther notes.⁷²

⁶⁹ Martin Luther and Christopher Boyd Brown, *Luther’s Works Vol. 58* (St. Louis: Concordia Publ. House, 2010), 106.

⁷⁰ Luther, *LW*:58, 108-9.

⁷¹ Luther, *LW*:58, 104.

⁷² Luther, *LW*:58, 114.

You cannot say you believe, and then by human reason, call into question that which God spoke.⁷³

Real Presence of the Body: Eucharist & Resurrection⁷⁴

Much like the figures of history, who, through similar processes found themselves examining, comparing, and discussing theological points of interest for the formation of faith, modern theologians also have the very same opportunity. Witnessing the practices of a people in simple observation is a cornerstone of anthropological study, and to do so with theological interest is a first step in understanding spiritual practices through visible actions and responses to life events. In this case, death; and various responses observed.

We the people of Christ proclaim death in the sacrament so that Jesus Christ may proclaim resurrection in the tomb of our own bodies on the last day, when *the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable*.⁷⁵ Then will we *not* see a remembrance of the body, but rather be re-embodied in the newness of Christ's kingdom.

Of particular focus for my current contextual study of human theological understanding is the reaction, handling, and value of death in the midst of life and its impact on faith.

Then, the way in which faith is observed as lived out in these responses. I have observed

⁷³ Luther, *LW*:58, 117.

⁷⁴ The foundation for this evaluation was part of the course "Radical Christian Spiritualities" BUSTH completed as part of the D.Min. coursework at the Boston University School of Theology.

⁷⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:52, ESV

some of the truest revelations of human response to death when the safeguards of the mind, and the coping mechanisms of the psyche are preempted by the very real struggles of grief and mourning. Much can be said about a people who care for their dead in particular ways. It speaks volumes of their various understandings of life in general, and in most cases life everlasting. The great British statesman Sir William Gladstone is supposed to have declared, “Show me the manner in which a nation cares for its dead and I will measure with mathematical exactness the tender mercies of its people, their respect for the laws of the land and their loyalty to high ideals.”⁷⁶ I, then, may be inclined to draw similar conclusions in the realm of preaching life, in the face of death, by word and action, most especially in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar. If one were to show the manner in which a faithful people cared for the real presence of Jesus Christ’s body in the Eucharist, I would attempt to measure the belief in and of a real bodily resurrection. Measuring this faithful belief as a key concept of Christianity must begin with a commonality as such. Because the range of theological understanding is vast and deep across theological lines, I will attempt this measuring within the concept of the Sacrament of the Altar and a value in real presence of the true body and blood of Jesus Christ as a means for proclaiming the bodily resurrection and benchmark of faith. Noting significantly, this is not a new concept, nor modern issue standing in the face of

⁷⁶ Attributed to William E. Gladstone, “Successful Cemetery Advertising,” *The American Cemetery*, March 1938, 13.

theologians today. Even in the very beginnings of the reformation movement real presence came into question.

To best understand how Luther's contemporaries distorted the value of the body, I turn to the writings of Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt. We can gain insight into the discussion by examining how, even in the time when Luther was active in writing and teaching, others responded to him. The distortion is not necessarily a modern phenomenon, but plagued the church for centuries. Karlstadt contributed to an idea which further separated the body, soul, and connectedness therein contained.

Death seemed as if it were a supreme release for Karlstadt; it was a release from the bonds of this world and all its sins, desires, flaws, and persecutions. To follow Christ into death, and to see such following as an attainment of something greater, continues to pervert the means of righteousness gifted by Christ to those who accept death. Accepting death is quite different than cheerfully following into death, as described in his *Tract on the Supreme Virtue of Gelassenheit* by Karlstadt.⁷⁷ His development of spiritual understanding, which led to practice, added to the fallacy of achieving some supreme status in life everlasting through one's own actions or virtues. Strangely enough, when taking seriously the references of Holy Scripture which speak of hating this soul (Luke 14:33) to refocus one's own attention upon the merits of Christ's gift of eternal life,

⁷⁷ Andreas Rudolf-Bodenstein Von Karlstadt, Wayne H. Pipkin and E. J. Furcha, *Essential Carlstadt: Fifteen Tracts by Andreas Bodenstein (Carlstadt) From Karlstadt* (Waterloo: Herald Press (VA), 1995), 527, Kindle. (Beyond Karlstadt, a deeper exploration is needed to support this claim more fully for example: Carter Lindberg, *The Third Reformation? Charismatic Movements and the Lutheran Tradition*, (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1983).)

Karlstadt pressed on toward a definition of “how detachment ought to be.”⁷⁸ Karlstadt begins to devise a distorted understanding of the body and the soul seeing both as hindrances to his eternal salvation, not as instruments by which Jesus Christ can impart salvation, for both his body and soul. “I must develop a tough, serious, and rigorous hatred and envy against myself when I hear the voice of my Lord and note how my soul draws me away and blocks me. No, dear soul and body, though you dislike to die and though you want me not to follow the word of God, I shall nonetheless follow Christ cheerfully unto death.”⁷⁹ Here Karlstadt brings to light the beginning of a hatred of the body, as if it cannot be redeemed and must be discarded so that eternal perfection in Christ can come. Yet he goes so far here to state even that the soul itself is to be denied to obtain a yieldedness, that he claims possible for anyone, no longer restricting that level of yieldedness to the one who was able to accomplish it for us in full on the cross, Jesus Christ our Lord.

I propose that what develops into Karlstadt’s radical spirituality of hatred toward the self is exactly what alters the prevailing understanding of the spirituality of Jesus Christ’s connectedness with humanity. It is the very essence of the fully human and fully divine connectedness unique to Jesus, which sets him apart, above, and yet truly a part of, each and every human being. Be that as it may, Karlstadt did not see a massive movement from the norm, but rather saw only one small avenue for spiritual difference from Luther

⁷⁸ Karlstadt, *Tract on the Supreme Virtue of Gelassenheit*, 526.

⁷⁹ Karlstadt, *Tract on the Supreme Virtue of Gelassenheit*, 527.

and the Roman Catholic Church. However, this concept is found at the very root of various other thinkers, reformers, and spiritual leaders since; a small seed planted which has spread into far reaching thinkers in several other traditions. The detachment he speaks of becomes a central problem in his theological split from the church at the time, and with Luther.

What happens to the body?

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

He's a terror, that one-
Turns water into wine,
Turns wine into blood-
What on earth does he turn blood into?⁸⁰

Only Jesus Christ knew how the resurrected body would come out of his tomb; part of the mystery of faith we proclaim as Christians. For some, the resurrection mystery is paramount to the understanding of everything else upon which the foundation of their faith has been built. The incarnate presence of the Messiah was needed to change the course of humanity forever. Every detail of his annunciation, birth, life, growth, teaching, ministry, passion, resurrection, and ascension (known and unknown) contribute to the whole of this mystery. And, I propose, that the incarnate presence of the resurrected Messiah in the Eucharist, which has been denied by some throughout history, has compromised the understanding of death, and life. Theologians have defined death by their radical interpretation of Christ's death, resurrection, and presence in the Eucharist,

⁸⁰ Peter Kreeft, *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Heaven-- But Never Dreamed of Asking* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 98.

thus misshaping a human understanding of death and eternal life. The immeasurable value of the flesh, underestimated in theological understanding by radical reformers, has been reduced to a controllable force within human understanding, memory, and mere remembrance.

The practice of attending to the death of a loved one is spiritual in a multitude of facets. Whether to give reverent honor to the one who has died, or to work through a practice of faith which may affect one's own formation of faith, the practice itself does more for the living than it does for the dead in any spiritual manifestation. In the observation, and explanation of practices contained herein, I shall attempt to argue from a particular historical place of the early reformation, namely the division of the reformer Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt and reformer Martin Luther. Karlstadt began writing several tracts describing his understanding of the absence of the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar. Karlstadt wrote several tracts regarding yieldedness and used this yieldedness and the lack of the real presence in the sacrament of the altar, both of which discuss various forms of *being dead*, but do not specifically address death itself, nor the physical death of the human body. In the analysis of the Karlstadt's various descriptions of being dead to sin or to the worldly desires of the flesh, as examples, it may be found that a correlation can be drawn between these concepts and physical death. I would like to discover if there is a connection between Karlstadt's understanding of the "simple meal of remembrance" and the desire to simply remember the dead as is observed in some mourners of today. Could the early differences between the church and

the first reformers have begun a dichotomy of belief that is not limited to the sacraments, but rather permeates the whole of life? Even among various reformers the divisiveness exists. The cleanliness of remembrance alone, as superior to the messy incarnate flesh and blood, which actually cleanses sin, I suspect is similar to the thinking employed by those in my own context (and in immensely wide circles of society as well) to justify avoiding or destroying the flesh for the sake of memory alone.

My own context being of the Lutheran tradition, yet on the very edge of Roman Catholicism, it seemed evident early in the discussion of this concept, how Luther would have backed away from going this far into such a practice. Breaking from the tradition of the church to enter a life totally consumed with a personal virtue would have been a spiritual place in which one would not find the church of the time, outside monasticism. Yet, this may be understood as a radical form therein, and an intensification beyond monastic life. Reform is a noble goal in the face of difficulty, however, the complete separation implied and practiced in Karlstadt's spirituality is quite another. I suspect that when seen from the outside, this virtue may be viewed negatively. By this, I simply mean that we are all on various places on a spectrum of spiritual practices. And on this spectrum one would find zealous spiritual practices and others that may be so shallow one could hardly call them spiritual. The concept of detachment, though noble in its description by Karlstadt, may be viewed as a self-righteous transcendence from worldly things to a better state, even through death.

The separation from the church, in Karlstadt, leads him to proclaim that Christ cannot even be found in the places he promised to be without the loss of the self. “Christ cannot be found amidst friendship, but in his temple within which his word rings out, so that the Pharisees and hypocrites, the pope and all his ninnies shall marvel and go nuts. In that same temple (which is a yielded person), God is.”⁸¹ The yielded person has taken a more significant role within the mind of Karlstadt and his claim to find Christ through yieldedness (*Gelassenheit*) goes just too far into the self-righteousness of the human mind. In his claim, understanding the ability to yield, he has most certainly lost sight of reform and entered Gnosticism. When one would believe that he or she has the ability, knowledge, skill or even perception of true yieldedness the self has conquered the Christ! So, begins a downward spiral.

Without the eminent threat of death Karlstadt presses onward with the idea that choosing a physical death is the virtue by which he may gain admittance into everlasting life, simply for following Christ. He seems to stop short of physical harm to one’s self as a means of achievement, but yet continues to speak of the great benefit of death. “I beg of you, do not hurt and afflict yourselves because of the temporary shame, the tribulations and anxiety that surround me on all sides. I see two deaths before my eyes, one of which I must suffer. On the right, death threatens to destroy and kill my spirit and torture me forever. On the left, stands the death to my flesh. I must accept one of them.”⁸² The

⁸¹ Karlstadt, *Tract on the Supreme Virtue of Gelassenheit*, 459.

⁸² Karlstadt, *Tract on the Supreme Virtue of Gelassenheit*, 385-6.

detachment seen here is the inhuman ability to actually choose one over the other, which would have been attributed to Christ alone. For, even if we were to choose the death on the right and reject faith and hope, still ever sure the death on the left would still take hold of our flesh. We do *not* have the ability to choose something that will not mean death of the physical body, except through Christ. The very paradox, which Karlstadt is missing, shines brilliantly here. Seeking to connect one's self with Christ through death is unnecessary since through baptism we do just that. Thereafter the Christian is called to actually be the physical body of Christ (carrying that physicality within in the form of His body and blood in the Eucharist) and engage the world. There is a lack of distinction in the model Karlstadt speaks of and it is a distinction of timelines. In response to the death of the "righteous St. Andrew," Karlstadt seeks a similar death; a desire to die as if through this sinful desire to be like Christ, he might obtain righteousness. "If I flee physical death, the eternal hellish death shall destroy me - body and soul. Christ died in bitterness and he rose again so that he might sweeten death for us and remove its sting."⁸³

There needs to be a greater understanding for the timeline of human death as it falls within the limitless timeline contained completely within God's hands alone. This is important so that the desire of Karlstadt and his radical spirituality, one that I claim is inseparable from the Gnosticism which permeates societies into the current time, does not lead us to *seek* death but rather grow to *accept* it with faith. The difference here being that when death is eminent by illness or the sword, accepting it with faith as our end

⁸³ Karlstadt, *Tract on the Supreme Virtue of Gelassenheit*, 392.

approaches will be accomplished with the comfort that the sting is truly gone through faith in Him who caused its removal. Seeking death and the denial of body and/or soul along the way in the hope that through this human virtue, mimicking God's own son and *His yieldedness* unobtainable to us, causes us to merit our ability of mind, over the flesh and soul, which Christ died to redeem. "Death shall be to me as a healthy medicine"

Karlstadt writes and quotes comforting passages of Holy Scripture therein to justify his radical opinion of life and death as the virtue that waits when physical life ends.⁸⁴ If life itself is so terrible to need the medicine of death, then surely one can see the inner struggle with which Karlstadt struggles. Escapism becomes the radical theology, which will set the tone for much of his work. Rather than continuing to work, live, and grow in this world he seeks detachment. This begs the question to be asked of all the faithful, if faith needed only yieldedness in humanity to make the connection to the sufficient atonement for the whole of sin in the entire world from the beginning of time, then why did Jesus Christ need to be human at all? Could not the divine spark of enlightened hope be placed within the very mind that seemed capable of the same yieldedness? If humankind possess the ability of yieldedness to the extent found in Jesus Christ, perfected human by inseparable divine and human natures, why then would God join the flesh in Him, much less hang him from the tree for the forgiveness of sin?

In other religions, this concept is not foreign, nor to cultures across the globe who do not hold the bodily resurrection as the final destination of everlasting life in the kingdom

⁸⁴ Karlstadt, *Tract on the Supreme Virtue of Gelassenheit*, 539.

beyond the current life. In fact, many religions await the death of the flesh in order that they might find a different flesh, higher in the order of worldly things, and even no flesh at all in the pure spirit realm of something other than what can be experienced in this life. In Christianity, however, one can easily see how it may be labeled radical, most especially when it leads in directions entirely foreign to the current theological understandings of the time.

As time went on, Karlstadt clarified these spiritual desires for death as an ultimate and supreme virtue. It seems as if this was warranted due to some continuing confusion in the public discourse which caused him to write the tract *The Meaning of the Term Gelassen and Where in Holy Scripture It Is Found*. This tract of 1523 describes more greatly the typology of human personality that will be developed as one approaches yieldedness in this form, and became an influence to the other reformers of the time who sought deeply the detachment from this world in pursuit of virtues supreme to others.⁸⁵ In the time since the *Tract on the Supreme Virtue of Gelassenheit* of 1520 Karlstadt sees his work as one that may be of interest to a wider circle of Christians and defines these terms in ways that seem not to lead people to desire death, but more closely defines the virtue as acceptance when it comes. Detachment then is not linked closely with the flesh and life itself, but linked rather with the attention and attraction given to worldly things and the preservation of ourselves.

⁸⁵ Karlstadt, *The Meaning of the Term Gelassen and Where in Holy Scripture It Is Found*, 2347.

The detachment is slightly easier to consider as now he describes the virtue in means, which can be understood and followed by many of differing levels of yieldedness. The image of matrimony allows Karlstadt to speak of attachment for “if we love ourselves and what is ours, we have not yielded everything, and we will not be of one spirit or will with God our husband from whom all matrimony is derived in heaven and on earth.”⁸⁶ Although Karlstadt continues to understand the virtue of Gelassenheit in highly revered ways, it seems as if he remains constant in his assumption that humankind is able to achieve such yieldedness. Not to the point of harming or ending life, but rather hating so that it perhaps can be understood as death. He writes “Gelassenheit is not grounded in a person letting go of everything as one lets go of a nickel. Who is able to let go in such a way?”⁸⁷ When one may think he is admitting the ability of Christ and His flesh to do what we cannot, he continues to what may seem just as difficult in letting go, one I propose to be so radical that Luther and other Roman Catholics would hold fast to the notion that even these are possible only in the flesh of Christ. Karlstadt continues “But we must not, of course, kill either father or mother, or commit suicide. Hence, this Gelassenheit is a cutting off from love, pleasure, worry, trust and fear, which we may have in and for ourselves and the things that are ours. In short, such letting goes to destroy all we are and a turning away from everything that we might covet, so that God

⁸⁶ Karlstadt, *The Meaning of the Term Gelassen and Where in Holy Scripture It Is Found*, 2420.

⁸⁷ Karlstadt, *The Meaning of the Term Gelassen and Where in Holy Scripture It Is Found*, 2653.

[alone] is our love, pleasure, worry, trust, help, fear, and everything; to him we must cling.⁸⁸

Karlstadt even seeks to alienate himself, from himself thus not just rejecting the world but also his own very being. Therein lies his root. The radical nature of his thought was the selfless giving of life by Christ on the cross. He eventually points to death as the final destination of the faithful person. Yet, central to Christian thinking and practice right up to the time of the very beginnings of the reformation, and still today in some theological thought and practice is that the flesh of Christ Jesus is the only flesh capable of such selfless life giving action. If the same might be accomplished in all people, why then does the world need Jesus Christ to live out this yielding?

The root of spiritual practice needs death in its line of sight, especially when that root is Christ and his salvific actions for all creation. In the end, this practice of learning to yield becomes a way to cling to the life everlasting, won by the glorious resurrection of Christ, instead of clinging to the flesh, yet it must stop short of achievement. If the chief spiritual practice of a Christian community is a process by which Christians learn to deny the flesh so perfectly that they can grasp hold of true yieldedness and become one with God in that yieldedness, then the world will encounter a people who live alone in the spiritual realm of a bodiless existence. These people have no need for the flesh.

Karlstadt, in connection with the discussion surrounding the death and resurrection of Christ, describes where the nature of the body plays its most important *dual* role. It is also

⁸⁸ Karlstadt, *The Meaning of the Term Gelassen and Where in Holy Scripture It Is Found*, 2653.

the place where, I think, his theology falters from that of the church, and where his spirituality becomes radical beyond reform and slips into heresy. Yet, in the later writing of 1524, *Dialogue or Discussion Booklet on the Infamous and Idolatrous Abuse of the Most Blessed Sacrament of Jesus Christ*, the following *conversation* reveals Karlstadt's true understanding of the dead, and the post death experience. "Gem: Do we have [...] righteousness through the resurrection? Pet: No. We have the righteousness of our dying through the death of Christ and not through the resurrection. Gem: It is written that Christ was raised for the sake of our justification. Pet: That is the righteousness of the resurrection of the spirit which here has its beginning only and will break forth after an accomplished death. The righteousness of dying comes first; the other follows."⁸⁹ Here one can see that he believes that the body of the physical life and the body of the resurrection are *not* the same body, and that the soul *begins* its life when the body dies and releases it onward. If the flesh is a mere wrapper for the true nature, then we need only a memory of that said wrapper and what happens to it is inconsequential.

Mere remembrance is not enough

When the flesh itself becomes terribly ineffective in the faith and life of a Christian, the remembrance thereof is neither sufficient nor worthy either. It is not surprising then that theological thought in the reformer's mind has led to a pervasive understanding of the value of the flesh, which looks more toward the past experience of the flesh than that of

⁸⁹ Karlstadt, *Dialogue or Discussion Booklet on the Infamous and Idolatrous Abuse of the Most Blessed Sacrament of Jesus Christ*, loc. 5805, Kindle.

the flesh itself. In those past experiences are the human actions, which divest of the flesh and attempt to yield to God.

Karlstadt denies the value of human flesh altogether in his theological understanding of human salvation in Christ, leading to the understanding of the achievement of yieldedness, which encompasses well his denial of the presence of the flesh and blood of Christ in the Eucharist. When the flesh of the human is of no value, then there remains no need for the continual interaction with the flesh of Christ in the Eucharist. On the contrary, the very thing, which makes effective the work of Christ, is the connection of his flesh and divinity in the incarnation. The deepest connections we have with Christ are in the flesh, and in the connections, we experience in the inseparable nature of our own flesh and soul. The incarnate Christ in the flesh is the central factor in the salvation of man, and when human memory fails, Christ Jesus is the constant and permanent reality which cannot fail. I am reminded of a hymn written to address the frailness of the human mind. So fickle our memory can be, why then would anyone argue that our memory is enough, for remembrance of the dead, and for anamnesis in the Eucharist.

Within your spirit, goodness lives unfading.
The past and future mingle into one...
Your mind enfolds all finite acts and offerings.
Held in your heart, our deathless life is won...
Your arms, unwearied, shall uphold us still.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), Hymn 792.

Memory is not enough. Simply remembering the actions of Jesus at the Last Supper are not sufficient. Christ spoke words, which He command us to speak as well saying “this is my body” and “this is my blood” and the speaking of these words in remembrance represents the same body and blood. Extreme value is then obvious in the body with which the apostles were eating and drinking, and which we eat as well. The resurrected body, the Sacrament body, and the living body of Christ are all of the same nature and of extreme value.

In the introduction to the *Dialogue or Discussion Booklet on the Infamous and Idolatrous Abuse of the Most Blessed Sacrament of Jesus Christ* it is noted that Karlstadt “focus[ed] on the alleged abuses that had turned the simple ‘meal of remembrance’ instituted by Jesus into an ‘idolatrous mass.’” This theological view and subsequent spiritual practice changed the way those who followed Karlstadt handled the Sacrament and the level of reverence held for the elements therein presented. If the reverence for the body of Christ is diminished, do we stand with no hope in defending the reverence for the human body? Luther was most certainly clear, and no so-called Lutheran can possibly deny the real presence of the flesh of Christ, present in the Eucharist, defend it as such, and revere it as most Holy. The foundational documents of the Lutheran Confessions detail this doctrine clearly, and even in defense thereof against other reformers, The Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration (1577) reinforces repeatedly the real presence of Jesus Christ, in the flesh, present in the Sacrament of the Altar. Here Lutherans find a comprehensive defense of what was taught by means of the Augsburg Confession, Small

Catechism, Large Catechism, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, and Luther's Works.⁹¹

Although Karlstadt's writings and theology deny the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist, and his practice led to a denial of the flesh for the ability to yield completely as Christ to the will of the Father, he did retain a strong understanding of the incarnation. Why did the incarnation not retain its influence for Karlstadt after the resurrection? Many questions remain unanswered, yet one can take comfort that he understood the incarnational perfection of fully human and fully divine, but in attempting to understand the great mystery of faith, lost sight of the true presence of the same at the Holy Supper of the Lamb. "He is the one in whole the Godhead dwells bodily and essentially [Col 2:9] as St. Paul says of Christ" Karlstadt writes "He did not consider it robbery to be equal to God, but lowered himself [Phil 2:6-7]. If we say Christ is equal to God, we speak correctly, for he is in truth of one nature with God the Father and the Holy Spirit."⁹² In his farewell, 1534, Karlstadt speaks the truth of the bodily dwelling of God, equal to the Father and to the Holy Spirit. And, just by chance other intellectual efforts of humanity attempt to explain away mystery I am reminded of why mystery is important. It is not the opposite of knowledge, and is certainly not "intellectual laziness, or

⁹¹ Paul Timothy McCain, W. H. T. Dau and F. Bente, *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions a Reader's Edition of The Book of Concord* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Pub. House, 2009), 591-611.

⁹² Karlstadt, *On the Incarnation of Christ. A Sermon Preached by Dr. Adreas Bodenstein from Karlstadt, Archdeacon at Zurich, on the Occasion of His Farewell, in the Year of the Lord, 1534*, loc. 7176.

acquiescence to superstition,” rather mystery leads to a recognition of the Holy where the “interior remains hidden” and the holy therein contained in the hiddenness.⁹³

Yet, the pervasiveness of memorial only, and a consideration that remembrance is enough, must be confronted firmly to oppose the radical interpretation of these concerns. When many Protestants around the world hold fast to Zwinglian understandings of memorial reenactments for the Lord’s Supper,⁹⁴ Lutherans must lead with confidence and steadfastness in the real presence in the Eucharist and the importance of that doctrine in living out the paschal mystery. There is little basis to argue for the validity of value in the flesh, if the flesh of Christ is denied or explained away from our foremost gathering.

Theological Loci: Proclamation

A careful examination of actual proclamation from Luther and his contemporaries is necessary for substantiating the claim that key examples exist for Lutheran preachers today.⁹⁵ The funeral sermons preached by Martin Luther at the funeral of the Elector, Duke John of Saxony, on I Thessalonians 4:13–14, August 18, 1532 are excellent examples of his own work specifically for the purpose at hand. As a contemporary of Luther, Johann Bugenhagen's funeral sermon for Luther’s own funeral provides further example of funeral proclamation at that time. By the calling of attention to these works as

⁹³ Laurence Hull Stookey, *Calendar: Christ's Time for The Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 35.

⁹⁴ Frank C Senn, *Eucharistic Body* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017), 139.

⁹⁵ See footnote number 5.

exemplars I intend to magnify the significance of the practice, and note well the use of oration of one's life or eulogy following the Mass, as it was experienced in Luther's time and its application today. In recognizing that one must look for the message of the Gospel in all of Holy Scripture, the use of such then becomes a sound beginning for funeral proclamation, whatever the selection of Holy Scripture might be for the occasion. I see proclamation as a task of practical theology and that task is a "discipline which is fundamentally hermeneutical, correlational, critical, and theological."⁹⁶ As all good followers of Luther's theology would agree, the hermeneutical lens through which we see the entirety of scripture is the lens of the Gospel, therefore the use of *any* passage of Holy Scripture, for the comfort of the bereaved in the proclamation at the funeral, should point toward the promise of that same Gospel message, the resurrection of Christ Jesus completed in our bodily resurrection at His coming again.

To examine the proclamation at the funeral we must first define a common ground for the gospel message and its centrality to proclamation. My sense of gospel begins with the understanding that there is gospel in a myriad of revelations throughout the whole of Holy Scripture. The gospel as good news that speaks of salvation, redemption, and the fullness of that which has been planned since creation, through Jesus Christ, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit. Yet sin separates us from the fullness of relationship with God, creating a need for reconciliation and salvation. Throughout life this relationship is not yet fully revealed to us, and we are left with an ever-changing encounter with the

⁹⁶ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (Norwich, UK: SCM-Canterbury Press Ltd, 2006), loc. 1463, Kindle.

good news as exposed in the myriad of life situations wherein the gospel is applied, causing us to seek or recognize the message, and the very presence of the divine even in the face of death and grief.

Of course, each day one may find countless valuable encounters with seeking or recognizing gospel. If I were to produce a hierarchy of these encounters, built upon the Holy Scripture as a primary source of gospel recognition, paramount to may be that final moment of encounter in this life, our own physical death. If the gospel message speaks of death, and God's answer to death for us, then I am confident that the gospel can speak for all things, which seem to separate us from God's love. In this way death occupies the one of the highest of human concerns regarding the good news of salvation, simply because it can be perceived as a final separation in which the hope of the gospel message must otherwise convince.

To speak of the gospel in the face of death is most assuredly to speak of life when the world believes it has stopped. The gospel then is so much more than an answer to a human problem, and becomes more of a revealed plan for something larger than the entirety of life itself. The church most literally says to someone that there is good news, when physical death occurs; at a moment, which seems like the world is consumed with bad news. And this message continues to be counter to the prevailing cultural and humanistic norm easily observed in everyday life. Yet, this is the task of the church, which claims to profess the very gospel upon which it relies. God has done something

immeasurably great for humanity, conquered death through the resurrection of Jesus Christ! This is good news to one for whom death has now seemingly ended life.

Hymnody and Holy Scripture

The understanding which emerged in the sixteenth century of the resurrection of the body was shaped by song and art, the Requiem Mass and the Office of the Dead, the shadows and the light. The once enduring ties had been transformed into fundamental divisions, and “together in song, they re-envisioned how Christians were to believe in the resurrection of the body and reimagined the community that was to live together on earth and endure beyond the grave.”⁹⁷

I think it is fundamental to our discourse to include also the hymnody and use of Holy Scripture as applies to the burial of the dead, their good use, recommendations, and theological application. Luther set forth his recommendation for hymnody and the use of Holy Scripture in his *Preface to the Burial Hymns 1542*. He returns the attention of the faithful to St. Paul’s exhortation in 1 Thessalonians chapter four, referring again to the hope of the Christian even in the face of death. His direction for funerals is sure:

For it is meet and right that we should conduct... funerals with proper decorum in order to honor and praise that joyous article of our faith, namely, the resurrection of the dead, and in order to defy Death, that terrible foe who so shamefully and in so many horrible ways goes on to devour us. Thus the holy patriarchs...conducted their burials with much splendor and left explicit directions concerning them. Later the kings of

⁹⁷ Erin Lambert, *Singing the Resurrection: Body, Community, and Belief in Reformation Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 46.

Judah made a great show and pomp over the dead with costly incense and all sorts of rare and precious spices, all of which was done to spite the sticking and shameful Death and to praise and confess the resurrection of the dead and thus to comfort the sad and the weak in faith. . . .the bodies are carried in state, beautifully decked, and sung over, and that tombstones adorn their graves. All this is done so that the article of the resurrection may be firmly implanted in us. For it is our lasting, blessed, and eternal comfort and joy against death, hell, devil, and every woe.⁹⁸

Luther completed this preface with a list of twenty two suggested passages of Holy Scripture for use on headstones, and reminded the faithful that these “would more fittingly adorn a cemetery than other secular emblems, such as shields and helmets.”⁹⁹ As mentioned above, funeral directors have been criticized throughout history for the pomp and show at the funeral, and yet here we have Luther himself commending the actions of the burial liturgy, the funeral in all its fine details, and the decorum of resurrection joy in the face of death and decay. He did not find this joy in the requiem masses of his time, nor did he take comfort in the intercession for the dead, but rather, he showed a “confident trust”¹⁰⁰ in our hope not doleful sadness.

Funeral sermons of Luther and others

In August of 1532 Dr. Martin Luther preached two funeral sermons for Elector John of Saxony, at Castle Church, and these sermons based on St. Paul’s letter to the

⁹⁸ Martin Luther, Helmut T Lehmann and Ulrich S Leupold, *Luther's Works: Vol. 53: Liturgy and Hymns* (Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1959), 326-7.

⁹⁹ Luther, *LW*:53, 330.

¹⁰⁰ Luther, *LW*:53, 325.

Thessalonians were the second set of two funeral sermons preached on this text.¹⁰¹ Duke John's brother, and predecessor, died in 1525 and Luther preached two funeral sermons on that occasion as well.¹⁰² It seems as if Luther continues to hold fast to the scriptural description that death for the faithful is sleep, and heavily relies upon St. Paul when preaching about death, resurrection, and the hope of the faithful. In the introduction to the first funeral sermon for John of Saxony Luther reminds the faithful that their sorrow is sure, but their sorrow is moderated by hope. Although grief is real, the Christian is not overwhelmed by sadness (nor hard of heart that no emotion is revealed) but it is the hope which St. Paul speaks of that makes the distinction of how Christians grieve when compared to the "fabricated sectarian and heathen virtues"¹⁰³ of which he condemns.

The sermon continues by Luther's assertion that there is a distinct difference between the death of the faithful and the death of those who do not believe. Beyond the difference seen in grief, it is the hope in something different that proves significant. Luther argues that our death, sleep, is only possible because Christ's death was more than sleep. Only because He experienced the fullness of death do we experience only sleep. I think this is a most profound way of giving comfort to those bereaved and at the same time addressing the issue of time, that although we sleep, and wait for the bodily resurrection

¹⁰¹ Martin Luther, Helmut T. Lehmann and John W. Doberstein, *Luther's Works Vol. 51* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 231-255.

¹⁰² Luther, *LW:51*, 231.

¹⁰³ Luther, *LW:51*, 232.

on the last day, sleep is not that bad! Luther calls attention to this point by saying “Note particularly that [St. Paul] does not say: Since you believe that Christ fell asleep. He rather speaks more sternly of Christ’s death than ours and says: Since we believe that Christ died. But of us he says that we do not die, but only fall asleep.”¹⁰⁴

I find it necessary here also to conclude that in this sermon Luther makes correlations between our deaths, seen as mere sleep when compared to the death of Christ, and that of Christ Jesus, which was “the most grievous and cruel of all.” As noted in the discussions above concerning the natures of this discussion: at death proclamation including the articles of the resurrection of the body and the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and their correlation to our own circumstance, I find congruency with Luther’s comforting words. The union between our experience, our real presence, our death with that of Christ Jesus is what sustains us in the hope we read in St. Paul’s letter. Luther raises the following point which I think is quite moving. If we grieve so much at the death of a friend, why are we not weeping for the death of Christ in the same way? Luther calls this a point of “no better comfort” when contemplating the death of Christ in light of the deaths of men.¹⁰⁵ I think Luther is making the foundation for this study: our correlation with Christ (namely His real presence, His death, and certainly His resurrection) will solidify our hope in the one who is the first fruits of the resurrection.

¹⁰⁴ Luther, *LW:51*, 233.

¹⁰⁵ Luther, *LW:51*, 234.

The entirety of this first sermon, and the second to follow, complete the task of preaching the resurrection of the body, and a hope in the face of death, as the message of the gospel. Only in great scarcity do we find much of the details of the one who has died, except to name them and acknowledge the reason for the assembled people. There is no eulogy found in Luther's examples of funeral proclamation except to set the context for the gathering of the people, and what follows is scriptural preaching at its best; the message of the gospel, comfort for the grieved, and in so doing a distinction with those who have no hope! I think Luther understands, as should we, that the funeral sermon is catechesis, evangelism, and faithful exposition of scripture in a pure form of loving comfort for those afflicted with death, and by means of the distinction perhaps, affliction for those all too comfortable with death as if there is nothing beyond its seemingly final certainty.

In the second sermon, Luther draws on other examples of Holy Scripture to further the point of sleep, and not death. Examples of Cain and Abel, the patriarchs of old, the saints, and all those who have fallen asleep have a nearness with God. This type of hope stretches beyond the grave. For God heard the voice of Abel's blood crying out from the ground,¹⁰⁶ and assures that death itself is precious, and that God will not leave us to perish, but will raise our bodies again from the ground, avenging death itself, and granting "life with Christ in everlasting light and glory."¹⁰⁷ Luther cites, what I contend is

¹⁰⁶ Luther, *LW:51*, 246.

¹⁰⁷ Luther, *LW:51*, 248.

one of Jesus' greatest prefigurements of the resurrection of the body while he lived among the apostles, that to cause us to rise from this sleep will only require the voice of command. As to Lazarus "come out" (John 11), the girl and young man "I say to you, arise" (Matthew 9 & Luke 7), and further in John 5 "the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice come forth"¹⁰⁸ Christ Jesus prefigures the power of the Word of God, even over death!

A glimpse into the timeline of death and resurrection, one which becomes a stumbling block when humans try to place our time onto this article of faith, the rising of the body. For us, days seem long, but throughout Holy Scripture we are reminded of the shortness of time in the sight of God, as compared to ours. Luther reminds the faithful at Castle Church in his second sermon that this flash of time is sure. "Just as Christ also, though he lay in the grave, yet in a moment he was both dead and alive and rose again like a lightning flash from heaven. So, he will raise us too in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, out of the grave, the dust, the water, and we shall stand in full view, utterly pure and clean as bright as the sun."¹⁰⁹ Luther is certain, as was St. Paul, that our *bodies* will rise even from wherever they lay in death. And, if we are still alive when this twinkling takes place, rest assured, even in life we shall be brought with him, in the final victory over sin, death, and the devil.

¹⁰⁸ Luther, *LW:51*, 254.

¹⁰⁹ Luther, *LW:51*, 250.

Luther continues the explanation, and use of St. Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, in other sermons preached at notable funerals of noble contemporaries. The sermons preached at the burial of Frederick the Wise on May 10-11, 1525 at Castle Church, Wittenberg follow the same example. As noted earlier as requested by Spalatin, Luther, Melanchthon, and Zwilling, gave direction on the funeral details for Elector Frederick. The format of the liturgical expression was instructive in nature, and the Latin oration (or eulogy customary for notable figures) was kept separate from the preaching of the Word. Noted in the introduction to this work, the logistics and physicality of the speaking were also instructive as to their liturgical function. Melanchthon, who delivered the eulogy, did so from a place near the body, and Luther, who preached the funeral sermons, did so from the place of authority in the church, the pulpit.¹¹⁰

Luther's sermon again remained steeped in the theological point St. Paul makes, and comforts the hearers with those words. He reminds them that death is not a state of suffering or pain filled with troubles, rather a sleep of rest and peace. Luther states clearly that the Elector's "virtues have been taken back in God and with God, who gave them to him. They now lie there and rest until the Last Day, when we shall see them more radiant and glorious than heretofore..."¹¹¹

The separation from God in death, as seen by the heathen or the godless, is refuted in Luther's preaching. Funeral proclamation as a facet of the liturgical catechesis must then

¹¹⁰ Luther, *LW*: 56, 1.

¹¹¹ Luther, *LW*: 56, 6.

address what sets the Christian apart from the world, even in death. Luther comments on this distinction by referencing this difference. He claims that “[t]his paroxysm has befallen and impacted [the faithful] alone.”¹¹² Thus, the hope of the Christian is decidedly different from those who live apart from God, and yet not even separated from each other by death, but different and befallen by an existence explained by faith. Luther continues in reference to St. Paul’s letter to the Romans by adding that Christ’s redeeming act is surely two-fold, in that he died for the sake of our sins in order to save us, and that he rose again to justify us. Thus, by the two-fold death *and* resurrection Christ might make our sinful bodies both faithful *and* holy.

More than this, one can see that Luther believes the sermon at the funeral to be truly that, a sermon and not simply eulogy, which, in all its facets, also begs for action on the part of the hearer. The end of Luther’s first sermon is most assuredly a call to action against the judgement which is to come. While keeping the hearer focused on the end of time and judgement, he speaks vehemently about the action of prayer in the face of this world, even in the face of death, so that a reinforcement of the hope preached herein, might be seen even in the call to stand against that which seems to destroy. These fine examples of Luther’s funeral proclamation provide solid foundations for the funeral proclamation to truly be an active event of building up of hope, strength in the face of death and evil, and a cultivation of hope (that seen in 1 Thessalonians 4) as the sustenance for such perseverance.

¹¹² Luther, *LW*: 56, 6.

Finally, in the practice of speaking to those who will learn from funeral sermons, Luther sets forth an excellent example of pragmatic explanation (so far as in Holy Scripture presents) of the bodily resurrection on the Last Day in the conclusion of the second sermon. He preaches that day that the condition of the body, in a wonderful expression of its value at its transformation in the resurrection, will be “free from all vice...and not even stink or sweat, but will smell exquisitely good and become a wondrous thing.”¹¹³ Here, Luther joins the theological discussion, as did Augustine, of answering the pragmatic questions about the body and its transformation at the resurrection on the Last day. This is instruction at its finest in funeral proclamations in its rightful place within the Mass at the burial of the dead, proclaiming the bodily resurrection over the present body of the dead for faithful instruction of the gathered community in the up-building of the faithful in hope even in the face of death.

Funeral proclamation rightly addressing the bodily resurrection central to the faith of the Christian is then the liturgical catechesis needed for the grieving community. If this were the norm of Christian practice the powerful message contained therein would surely comfort the grieving who gaze upon a dead body with hope. Luther concludes, “yes, if we were Christians and had impressed this upon our hearts, who could make us fearful? If you believe in Christ, this is what will happen to you, and it is not far off.”¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Luther, *LW*: 56, 16-17.

¹¹⁴ Luther, *LW*: 56, 17.

As a fitting tribute, then, to the theology and preaching of Luther, the scriptural reference upon which Johann Bugenhagen Pomeranus, doctor and pastor of the church in Wittenberg, built his sermon for Luther's funeral is that of 1 Thessalonians 4. He acknowledges the grief that is surely before them, but dares even to question how a sorrowful preacher can preach through tears, and a large community, even wide throughout Christendom, not be sorrowful at the death of this man. Naming the multitude of reasons for mourning, making real the death lying before them¹¹⁵, Bugenhagen still points to the words of hope written by St. Paul to the Thessalonians. It seems as if, despite the Latin oration delivered by Melancthon, Bugenhagen cannot avoid details of Luther's life and ministry as he introduces his sermon, yet they are not superfluous musings on Luther's life, they are direct and pointed, addressing specifically the ministry of their beloved Dr. Luther. Quickly however, he speaks of the *better life* where Luther, and the community to which he speaks will be awakened in eternity.

Bugenhagen's seems willing to teach through the sermon at the occasion of Luther's funeral. His explanation of the spirit/body dichotomy and the state of the soul until the day of resurrection, is founded upon Holy Scripture (Philippians 1, Luke 16, Acts 7, Luke 23) and congruent with Luther's theological understanding of that period.¹¹⁶

Acknowledging, rightly, that we cannot on the basis of scripture say definitively what the

¹¹⁵ Johann Bugenhagen and Kurt Karl Hendel. *Johannes Bugenhagen, Selected Writings, Volume I And Volume II* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 111-12.

¹¹⁶ Luther's presentation of the state of souls between death and the resurrection at the last day, see, e.g., *Church Postil* (1540-440), sermon for Lent 5, *LW* 76:412-13.

manner of rest or torment awaits the faithful or godless, Bugenhagen returns to St. Paul's language of sleep. In deepest comfort, he likens rest in the grave to our rest in bed asserting that "just as in natural sleep those who are healthy rest in sweet repose and are refreshed and made stronger and healthier by sleeping, whereas the unhealthy and troubled...sleep poorly, with terrifying dreams, and restlessly."¹¹⁷ For this sermon resting in peace awaits the faithful, most certainly.

There is certainty in the words of the preacher on the day of this sermon, despite the overwhelming sorrow that befalls him, Bugenhagen tells of an interplay between him and the beloved Dr. Luther about impending death. I trust that this illustration, used while preaching over the dead body of Luther, secured a comfort in the minds of the afflicted regarding death and importantly for the occasion, the how their beloved viewed death himself. Upon hearing a loved one speak of their readiness or willingness to die, one might experience the "discomfort" felt by Bugenhagen when Luther spoke of his own death. Yet, this is the central confidence to which all Christians should cling, impending death or not. Yet, confidence in death is not to be seen as a simply release, but rather a hopeful confidence that death is not the end of the soul, nor of the body. Moreover, it is certainly necessary for those who might preach the resurrection of the body, in the presence of death. Such confidence comes only in confession of Christ Jesus as Bugenhagen recalls in Dr. Luther:

Not long after Master Ambrose was buried in January of the harsh winter of 1542, Dr. Martin was passing by the grave with me, when, indicating

¹¹⁷ Bugenhagen, 116.

the grave with his hand, he said, “He did not know that he was sick, nor did he know that he died, and yet he was not without confession in Christ. There he lies, still not knowing that he is dead. Dear Lord Jesus Christ, take me also, even thus, from this valley of sorrow to Yourself.”¹¹⁸

Luther’s confidence even in death was sure that those who confess Christ Jesus will not know the state of death, but will rest peacefully in the grave as the body, and in the hands of Christ as soul, until the Last Day. This contentment with death, I content, must be a confidence in preaching, an anchor of faith for those who grieve, and careful catechesis for those who do not *yet* have the hope of which St. Paul speaks.

¹¹⁸ Bugenhagen, 119-20.

Chapter 5: Real Presence of the Body for STS Lutherans¹¹⁹

I recognize that even among Lutherans there is a sizable range of theological understandings and explanations for many loci. The resurrection of the body is no exception. The defined context of my research has been among the clergy who have signed the rule and subscribe to the theological commonality of the Society of the Holy Trinity. Among several other points of distinction, the founding statement of the society describes its membership as:

Ordained to the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments in Christ's Church, called to such an office in Lutheran churches, we form together an ordered society of pastors. We commit ourselves to gather regularly for hearing the Word, celebrating the Lord's Supper, prayer and theological reflection. We will gather to help one another to be faithful to the promises spoken when we were ordained. Specifically, we will work together to shape a parish pastoral practice consistent with the catholic Faith as formulated in the canonical Scriptures and confessed in the ecumenical Creeds and Lutheran Confessions, ...engage one another in disciplined reflection on the mysteries of the Faith, sharing our learning in the Scriptures, the Creeds and the Confessions, as well as Christian theology and literature -- desiring to glorify God with our minds and to be more faithful and learned teachers of the Faith.

Central to our faith we find the words of the Apostles' Creed which unite us in solidarity of the faith as it speaks of death:

*I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.*¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ The Rev. Nathan Corl Minnich, "Death" (presentation of research by survey, study, and observation at the General Retreat of the Society of the Holy Trinity, Mundelein, IL, September, 2014).

¹²⁰ "Catechism of the Catholic Church", *Vatican.va*, last modified 2018, accessed March 11, 2018, http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P14.HTM.

My evaluation of funeral proclamation, as examined by works of clergy in the Society, and by observation of funerals within the context of my funeral homes, will be thus situated. By limiting the participation in my evaluation and statistical analysis to this group, I have avoided attempting to distinguish between theological concepts which would be difficult to align to one another. The rule of the STS clearly defines what the group professes to believe about Holy Scripture and the Holy Sacraments, thereby, alleviating the need to define such concepts at length before looking more deeply into the concepts being addressed in this work.

The STS membership serves as my primary context of research and my primary audience for the reporting of such findings and theological evaluation. I propose that the unification of the rule, the creeds, and mutual accountability within the Society provide clergy with a framework which provides consistency in theological thought, presentation, and authenticity. Through the simple observation of funerals from the intersecting road of funeral director and clergy in my life I have noticed just how widespread the diversity on the subject has been.

Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again. That statement contains the words describing a principal article of faith in my own context as an ordained Lutheran pastor, and a member of the Society of the Holy Trinity, which contained within its rule is the desire for the completion of the work of the sixteenth century reformation and the reconciliation and reunification with the bishop and church of Rome. These small facts place my theological interpretation somewhere on the spectrum of theological thought,

giving introduction to the context from which I write, as explained at the beginning of the work. The unique combination of call and career found within my own short history has continually placed me at a crossroads of life and death. Proclamation of Word and Celebration of Sacrament are, for me, life-sustaining. The laying to rest of the dead, and walking with the grieving, is so full of life as well, even in the face of death. Opportunity provided therein, primarily focused on the comparison of practices among peoples and faiths when stricken with loss and grief, abound. Juxtaposition, life and death, and the desire to grow, in faith and understanding, have created a context of great opportunity. I believe that this opportunity has become a strengthening process of faith formation, which is always fluid and growing, as the examination of practices yields self-understanding of mind, faith, and theological support.

Connections between spiritual practice and theological understanding are paramount to the Christian community, the very nature of thought and action. I propose that when spiritual practice does not clearly and adequately reflect the theological understanding of a particular community the world sees confusion, misguided faith, and misunderstanding of practice. As a way of examining my reading of Luther and his contemporaries within my context today, I have been observing the reactions of those engaged in the funeral process from a theological perspective, as part of the ongoing study, presentation, and survey done by the STS for its own continuing education, which was first presented at the General Retreat of 2014.

I often observe the death of a loved one causing change in the normal flow of life for many individuals. How one responds to death is closely linked to the spiritual understanding of both the deceased and those responding thereto. I sought to observe, and from observation draw conclusions based on theological thought, which may, or may not, have influenced practices. I have observed human responses to death, specifically the interaction with the dead body in the brief time immediately following the death, which encompasses approximately three to five days. The practices observed at this point in time is sequential, in that I did not choose situations to observe, but rather observed practices within situations as they presented themselves chronologically in my own work as a funeral director. More specifically, I observed the situations chronologically to avoid observing a *particular* practice which may fit with my theological understanding, but rather observe a complex of practices to compare, contrast, and correlate the details contained therein.

The context in which I can observe these practices is as the funeral director working with the various families as they plan a response to death. This context allows me to keep my own theological understanding, beliefs, influences, and concerns apart from those making decisions. I will note, however, that funerals which required my presiding, thus influencing decisions and practices, and for observation, I have omitted them from the observations. In all instances the deceased was identified as being Christian in his or her faith history, and the various denominations are noted in the research analysis to follow.

The key pieces of literature discussed above, namely Cullman, Luther, and Karlstadt have formed the basis for my observation of the funeral rites, decisions, and care of the body. Keeping a keen eye for resurrection proclamation, among the other noted details. In my own context, I have observed, and will attempt to explain how the radical spirituality of the inconsequential flesh, for the admiration of a yielded spirit, may have similarities when held against the spiritual practices of death today marking much similarity to the problems facing Luther and his contemporary Karlstadt. Understanding how the development of practices of the past can influence the practice of today is an important part of observing. I take note of practices themselves, hoping to glean insights into the theological understanding behind the practice, and how these understandings may have influenced decisions.

The practice that I observed closely was how the public interacted with the human remains. The first and notable difference seen was revealed in the way funeral attendees reacted to being in the presence of the event. Of the funerals with a body present, nearly everyone in a line passed by the deceased, and nearly all of those paused in quietness gazing upon the body, a few making the sign of the cross, a few avoiding totally, and others with more grandiose gestures of emotion. The mood was generally subdued and a noticeable low volume of conversation. Of the funerals with only an urn present, filled with the cremated human remains, a line still formed to greet family. However, the more than noticeable volume of conversation was present along with a mood that was not always somber. On a great majority of occasions, I observed very few people, if any,

pausing at the urn in quietness. Even at the occasion of one of the Roman Catholic services, I observed no one making the sign of the cross or kneeling at the urn (even though the prie dieu, or kneeler, was present and I was intently watching).

By this observation, I attempt to explain the reverence for the human body as a simple indicator. The type of theological understanding or spirituality of death and that which comes after physical death, therefore, is indicated by some of the actions observed when someone stands before human remains. This observation might indicate that the theological understanding of the resurrection of the body and a spirituality that is focused upon eternal life might reflect a profound reverence for the dead (in the hope of it rising again). Other observable details seem to indicate that when the body is not present, as in the case of an urn containing the cremated remains, the level of reverence decreases dramatically. The focus of these gatherings seemed to be on the past years of the deceased and the remembrance of those years. Observed across denominational lines one may see that there is not a specificity of liturgical style dictating the presence of the body *per se*, *yet its presence alone seemed to dictate a differing observation*.

By simply removing the very tangible body of the deceased, it seems as if the spiritual practices observable in the gatherings after a death, are being transformed by the norms of non-religious life, and the focus upon individuality begins to trump theological ideals. Observed in this context, Christian spiritual practices in the face of death, informed and transformed by secular ethnocentric ideologies has produced a status quo which is more

concerned with celebrating achievements, than proclaiming life eternal; with human preference, rather than faith and hope.

By the appropriation of certain spiritual practices, and the discussion and presentation of observable trends, I hope to further the transformative theologies in my context.

Regarding the previous discussion of Karlstadt and Luther, it may be argued that the continuity of the real presence in the Sacrament of the Altar provides a needed opportunity through which the spiritual practice of honoring the value of the body can be learned and appreciated by the faithful. The proper handling, reserving, and use of the sacrament is vital to the ways in which the faithful will interact with the sacrament. The tangible presence of the true body and blood of Jesus Christ being central to the assembly of the people may enhance its formal importance in the community, and in turn will cause us to physically act out our faith in spiritual practices which include genuflecting, bowing, pausing with reverence or prayer, protecting, honoring, etc. In these we can see the use of the flesh of Christ to give honor to human flesh in general, since we will take it into ourselves thus sanctifying us by Christ Jesus' abiding therein. When the time comes in the life for those who live out this spirituality, to make decisions for their own bodies (in life or in death) the value, might be vitally noticed. It is my deep and reverent hope that the day will come when no one will disgrace, destroy or cast aside as trash that which resembles Jesus Christ, has been bound to the flesh of Jesus Christ in the Holy Sacrament, (and perhaps a first step even for Karlstadt and his theology) the very vessel of the divine.

“Luther believed in the importance of an honorable burial which in itself mocked death and was an affirmation of the doctrine of Resurrection. The result was the development of a funeral ritual which aped its medieval predecessors focusing on a procession, the singing of hymns and burial.”¹²¹ The appropriation of thought similar to that of Karlstadt, and many since his time who have taken farther steps down that particular theological road of devaluing the body, has contributed to a vast majority of spiritual practices surrounding death relying far too heavily upon remembrance rather than resurrection. I propose that the detachment of the bodily significance, across many facets of our spirituality, has created a chasm that is possible to cross again easily if theological thought and faith are acted out in appropriate spiritual practices prior to death. If the value of the physical body of Christ, the incarnate God Himself wrapped in flesh, is held in deep reverence and continuity of nature on both sides of the tomb Christianity may see faith in the resurrection take its primary seat of honor.

If a mere remembrance is enough for the Holy Sacrament in Karlstadt’s understanding, and that understanding stems from the lack of value in the flesh itself, then neither are our own bodies worthy of value. However, as explored above, remembrance is not enough, and the physical presence of Christ is what allows for the flesh of humankind to know true yieldedness through Christ, and union therefore with His flesh, we can be assured that our bodies also are of great worth to God. Christ Jesus took on flesh to redeem it, not to destroy it so that only a spirit can live. I think we can equate His words in the case of

¹²¹ Andrew Spicer and Craig M. Koslofsky, "The Reformation Of The Dead: Death And Ritual In Early Modern Germany, 1450-1700," *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 32, no. 1 (2001): 296.

human flesh to that of the law. I believe He came to fulfill the plan for human flesh in the resurrection, not abolish it.¹²²

When the flesh is denied, changed, or ignored, on the resurrection side of the tomb, the Church, and all of those who look to the Church for direction at death, will begin to remember only what was. What IS (*the dead body*) seems to be of no value for so many, both physically and theologically.

¹²² Matthew 5:17

Chapter 6: Analysis and Observation of the STS Study

For this analysis, I have examined the STS data collected, funeral proclamation delivered by Lutheran clergy of the Society of the Holy Trinity. In this way, I was able to examine content, seeking only one theological concept, the resurrection of the body. Then, by comparing the use of such a theological locus to that presented in Luther's own work and the works of his contemporaries, I have made analysis of congruencies and differences. This material has also aided in discovering the level of commingling (if any) of eulogy and sermon among the members of the Society.

I have also evaluated the responses of a survey used within the Society for presentation at gatherings of the ministerial order. The responses provide insight into the practices at death, and in this sampling, I propose continuity among the Society, but a need for growth. The survey shows a need for growth among members of the congregations themselves and among congregations and the funeral directors who serve them.

Finally, to compare the observations and evaluation of those within the ministerial order with a wider selection of Christian ministers I have observed funerals, gathered statistical data concerning the various points examined thus far in this work, namely resurrection language, care of the body, and liturgical language. In examining these various avenues of data, I hope that a greater discussion can be sparked whereby congregations, clergy, and funeral directors better understand the need for authenticity to their respective traditions, and have an eye for what is observed by those outside the church in what is said and done when caring for the dead.

In these examples, I see theology at work, but recognize the significance of the funeral event, and the preaching and theological presentation made is best received because of the nature of the event itself, the emotional connectedness to the event, and the attention given to what is said because of the heightened senses as a symptom of grief.

“Theologizing, like all Christian communication, must be directed to someone if it is to serve its purpose.”¹²³ In other words, people do hear what the funeral preacher has to say, and if the proclamation is authentic to the task at hand, the theological understanding of the gathered community and the deceased, it can be most effective. It is worth noting that the funeral event (context) may have myriad differences from funeral to funeral. The sensitivity of the pastor is significant in understanding the context, but as shown in the examples above the role of context is “subordinate...in the contextualization process [and that] experience, culture, social location, and social change...are acknowledged as important, but they are never as important as the supra-cultural, never changing gospel message.”¹²⁴

The resurrection of the body is the never changing message of Christ Jesus and His resurrection which began the process of our resurrection, but it is this fact which gives access to the gospel message. The interaction with the incarnate Jesus Christ is our connection between the cultural and the supra-cultural. In the nature of death the doctrine

¹²³ Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology: Faith and Cultures Revised and Expanded Edition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013), loc. 974, Kindle.

¹²⁴ Bevans, 1001.

of resurrection is intimately intertwined with our human flesh, through the flesh of Christ. The experience of the two is needed in the proclamation of this article of faith. Keeping in mind the message of what I am holding up as an example of funeral proclamation, is not simply Luther's way of preaching, but that the gospel was paramount, and in that gospel message was found the promise of a bodily resurrection. In the examination of the tradition experienced by Lutherans for centuries we should regard this history and example are not good "in themselves, but [rather] convenient vehicles for this essential, unchanging deposit of truth."¹²⁵

Evaluation of Funeral Proclamation & Liturgical Language among the Society

Participants

In examining the addresses of Lutheran clergy within the Society of the Holy Trinity, I examined how clergy approach the theology of the resurrection in their message at death, and how that proclamation aligns with that which was put forth by Luther, his contemporaries, and theologians claiming foundation within that tradition.

Following the September 2014 STS presentation, which was part of the three-part series on Sin, Death, and the Devil, I have been collecting funeral sermons as part of my ongoing instruction, discussion, and study within the ministerial order. These were originally used within our chapter retreats in ongoing discussion within the smaller groups. Originally evaluated based on the type of service (i.e. traditional funeral,

¹²⁵ Bevans, 929.

cremation, graveside, etc.) and language used to introduce the service (i.e. Burial of the Dead, Funeral, Memorial, etc.) these examples within the order have provided the basis for analysis on the use of the term resurrection, and emphasis placed upon the body and its value. I have also been able to reevaluate them based on characteristics of proclamation versus oration/eulogy to better define the difference by example.

Resurrection proclamation is a concern of practical theology. The hermeneutical lens of Christians encountering the human reality of death is certainly unique. The situation imposed upon the community is death, and *in* this situation, the preacher is tasked with holding in tension the myriad of psychological and sociological effects of the situation upon those involved, and the primary proclamation of the resurrection of the body, in the case of the STS as defined by the theological understandings which unite the group. The tension of these seemingly opposite constructs is a reality in the face of death, where an eschatology is held up theologically as the answer to the present struggle.

Although I see within this work a constructive theological task, I recognize the doctrine of the church, as it was presented by the reformer Martin Luther and upon which Lutherans tend to rely, is not always clearly presented in what is said and done in practical situations like the care of the dead today.

After setting a worthy example by which this evaluation has been examined, namely Luther's own work and other examples which follow that design as presented above, I set forth a statistical analysis of the amount of resurrection proclamation present among those in the Society who have participated. In simple numbers noting the number of

sermons, and the number of times within a sermon, a preacher used the words and phrases: resurrection, resurrection of the body, and immortality. Beyond the numbers, I have examined the fullness of the theological presentation to determine its clarity and authenticity based solely upon the use of Holy Scripture, Creeds, and Luther's work, so not to introduce levels of evaluation beyond what the STS would claim as central to the order's theological claims.

Fifteen members of the Society of the Holy Trinity provided funeral sermons, and the corresponding order of service used at the funeral. From these I was able to conclude that the very nature of the Society and its rule, actually does provide its clergy with a commonality. When held in contrast to funerals observed and led by Lutheran clergy outside the Society members the sermons provided by STS clergy were strikingly similar in format and content, and the outside observed Lutheran funerals were not. All the materials provided by STS clergy used the phrase 'resurrection of the body' and the funeral sermons presented clearly this theological concept. The clergy spoke of a bodily resurrection in all cases.

The differences which can be seen in the materials can be found in the choices of Holy Scripture which had similarities (i.e., Psalm 23) but a great variation in other scriptures used. However, the clergy presented theologically *a hope in the bodily resurrection* and did so from varying points of scriptural reference, church doctrine, and comforting reassurance of promise.

I think a contributing factor to the unity of these examples was that in each case, the funeral included the use of the creeds, both the Apostles' Creed and Nicene Creed. This provides a theological framework for the gathering, and for those witnessing the rite, a confirmation of the faith of those gathered and (hopefully) that of the dead. In comparing the observed Lutheran funerals, led by clergy outside the STS, only a few used the creeds, and none that were held in the funeral home setting used a creed.

All but one participant from the STS used the phrase 'Burial of the Dead' to title the gathering, as indicated in the *Lutheran Book of Worship* used by all participants. The outlying title was not far off, but reflected more the Roman Catholic naming by using the phrase "Mass of Christian Burial."

A Word about Liturgical Language at Death

The general recommendation for all liturgies of the Society in its gathering is the *Lutheran Book of Worship*. To start here one will find the following text in relationship to the care of the dead, dying, and bereaved. The opening dialog between the minister and gathered congregation speaks of what the church believes about the body, which lies before them. In the present moment, in the face of death, the church recognizes that this person was baptized, and now the church speaks of what it believes for the present and for the future concerning the dead and those who believe:

“When we were baptized in Christ Jesus, we were baptized into his death. We were buried therefore with him by Baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live a

new life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.¹²⁶

A smaller number of the members of the Society use the Lutheran Service Book of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. This text asks the congregation to respond with the words of Romans chapter 6 after hearing the question. The connection to death in baptism is strong in both texts, and the connection to the body is paramount. The church does not baptize a ‘faith’ but rather the flesh!

In Holy Baptism name was clothed with the robe of Christ’s righteousness that covered all his/her sins. St. Paul says: “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?”¹²⁷

Careful direction is given to the Lutheran pastor using the primary source of liturgy found in the *Lutheran Book of Worship*. “The pastor’s ministry to [the bereaved] is to lead [them] into and through the rites of the church where the voice of the Gospel can be heard with healing, power, and clarity. In an effort to be positive and emphasize the victory of the resurrection, the pain and loss of death must not be minimized or ignored. Both must be held in balance.”¹²⁸ A balance observed between death and life observed by the church, I think can be appropriately applied to many life situations, as well as

¹²⁶ *Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978), 207.

¹²⁷ *Lutheran Service Book* (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Pub. House, 2006), 110.

¹²⁸ Philip H Pfatteicher and Carlos R Messerli, *Lutheran Book of Worship: Manual on The Liturgy* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1978), 356.

many liturgical functions of the church. The examples of baptism and the Eucharist continue to act out the Word through the Sacraments, upon the flesh of God's people.

The liturgical language that opens the rites of the burial of the dead speak about the value of the body and of its resurrection. This value, discussed throughout this study, is central to the claims Christianity makes about the resurrection of the body. As mentioned before, the church's attitude toward the body and its value is not necessarily changing. If the "Christian attitude toward the body [was] as countercultural in antiquity as [it] is today"¹²⁹ it is not the culture which is changing, but instead a growing number of Christians are no longer standing in stark contrast to the culture. Thomas Long quotes Margaret Miles in her work *Bodies in Society: Essays on Christianity in Contemporary Culture* remarking on strangeness of human attitudes toward bodies in a way that almost sounds perplexed as to why Christians would still be missing the mark when considering the value of the flesh:

...they cared for living bodies and dead bodies because they understood that the Incarnation of Christ had once and for all settled the issue of the value of human bodies.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ Thomas G Long, *Accompany Them With Singing: The Christian Funeral* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, U.S., 2009), 30.

¹³⁰ Long, 30.

Survey of STS Members

From the STS study and its data, I draw attention to the need of *authenticity* in speech *and* action when presented with death and their inseparable connection. Because I deeply perceive a loss of the teaching, concept understanding, and value regarding the resurrection of the body, I think that the ministerium cares deeply about this issue but has no plan to reclaim or renew its vitality. I have therefore created discussion based program, a way of navigating with clergy, to begin engaging the decision-making processes of parishioners responding to the physical death of a loved one with a new leadership model. It is rooted in a way of doing ethical leadership, which has at its heart the community *and* its story, along with an eye toward preplanning. Because a healthy discussion of a difficult topic such as death can be better suited to a time before one is stricken with grief.

The Society of the Holy Trinity, in preparation for a ministerium wide discussion of the renewal of the proclamation of the resurrection of the body, began this study. Including all members in the study in future study may reveal greater diversity in various areas and add dimensions of discussion not yet seen in this smaller subset of members.

Second, the very thing which is lacking ought to be on the forefront of our teaching, guiding and directing so that the grieving make decisions which are made with authenticity of speech and action working together. Clergy must regain confidence to act *in persona Christi* as they shepherd the bereaved, model a faith and hope unlike that

which this world knows. With the confidence of the bodily resurrection as the banner which goes on before we might be much better at speaking life in the face of death.

Third, the best preachers among us in the ministerium must guide and direct our sisters and brothers in the best practices of proclamation. With confident authority we must renew the sermon as the central act of proclamation at the funeral. Eulogies can speak of remembrance, but sermons speak of resurrection hope, and those sermons must be authentic to our tradition.

Finally, we must engage in the practice of working hand-in-hand with the funeral professionals nearest our churches. Educating and empowering funeral directors to know and understand our theological place in the world of Christianity will enable them to speak with us as well about the resurrection of the body, and how best to conform their choices, and actions to the speech and proclamation of the church, when needed most.

To determine the *habitus* of caring for the death within a Lutheran tradition I have analyzed the commonalities existing within the ministerium, and examined the variables existing within group (i.e. differing parts of the country, various Lutheran groups within the ministerium and their historical makeup, generation of the pastoral leaders, etc.).

What seems to have become the procedural knowledge of these processes can then be explained by examination. I expected to observe differences in cultural knowledge (and trust of the clergy) in the various situations, which may inform the thinking employed when planning the rites associated with the care of the dead, by simply asking the question “how involved is the pastor in the decision-making processes at death?” In less

formal conversation after the first presentation in 2014, the STS data shows the procedural knowledge has been shaped more so by other factors. The norms, values, and cultural knowledge once clearly understood by families is surpassed by what individuals want. I came to understand an underlying unrest among the clergy regarding decisions made without the opportunity to discuss the church's perspective, and fewer willing to even characterize a church perspective for fear of alienating families.

Feelings of caution and special care are high among clergy. Outside the bounds of the prepared questions there was much discussion of the fear of driving family members away from the church by not acquiescing to their requests (and in a few cases perceived demands). From the surveys which followed to evaluate the 2014 discussion, many reported as if the opportunity to share the faith of the church in these circumstances is lost, or even unwanted. The thinking quickly returns to a state of filling in the gaps with the liturgy of the church as best they can, and a recognition of the lack of teaching, which must be done before the time of death, as teaching while planning a funeral is not productive.

I have, through these observations, seen confirmation of understanding how the current state has come about. In comparison to decisions at death, the same can be asked of birth, marriage, illness, and celebratory rites performed by the pastor and his or her involvement therein. All clergy of the STS agreed that we must do a better job in education, as we do in these other life passage moments, when faced with the care of the dead.

An interpretation of STS data collected in response to the first General Retreat discussion on death and mapping proved helpful in understanding the current state of the ministerium and the desire to further the discussion. By mapping, I made some general observations about cultural norms and track them to determine if there are similarities despite geographic differences, since STS membership spans the U.S. and Canada. The results were as expected. The differences did not seem to be culturally driven, but rather based on the personality and style of the clergy. In a wider study, perhaps, geographic trends may be visible. I suspect that the change in procedural knowledge, as response to a more global secular trend for individualism and personal choice, is widespread and only small pockets of cultural differences exist.

Through the evaluation questions gathered by the STS, I sought to specifically determine if clergy engage families in the discussion of the concept of the resurrection of the body at any depth after a death has occurred and prior to the completion of the funeral. I sought to discover scriptures recommendations in the planning of the funeral, and the insistence or recommendation of the presence of the body. What I found was not far from what I expected. When asked “do you specifically address the theological concept of the resurrection of the body when planning a funeral?” most replied with a resounding “no.” The reasons were diverse, and some attempt to do so indirectly. This majority teaches something profound, and often missed. Clergy, when confronted with death and grieving families avoid the chief tenet of faith in the Christian tradition, the resurrection of the body! Most clergy uses only prescribed scripture from books of

worship rather than spend time discussing how best to portray the article of faith, the resurrection of the body, through this act. I hear in these responses some avoidance of depth, and the simplicity of *standard* choices. When asked if clergy insist on the presence of the body for the liturgy, an overwhelming majority say no. Common reasons (family has already chosen not to have the body present, cremation happened before the planning of the funeral liturgy, it is difficult for families to see the casket, it is not necessary) all surprised me as a member of the ordained clergy, and at the same time did not as a funeral director. The same clergy who insist on the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharistic Meal are dismissive of the insistence of the real presence of the baptized (and now deceased body) of a loved one at the liturgy. A nearly unanimous answer of “no” responded to the clergy involvement in the funeral decisions between funeral director and family, and many seemed perplexed as to why they might be involved.

Bazerman notes about negotiating (which I think is akin to arranging funerals with various groups) that “when the other side...makes a demand that doesn’t make sense to you, don’t assume they are acting irrationally. Instead stop and ask yourself what you might not know that could explain their actions.”¹³¹ Deeply knowing the other is essential in leading well, I believe. For this instance, the funeral director and the clergy are vital components of knowing the other, and thus better understanding the family together as key people in the funeral planning.

¹³¹ Max H. Bazerman, *The Power of Noticing: What the Best Leaders See* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014), 79.

A most notable observation about the recommendation of the body being present at the funeral is that each group contended that it might be the other's job. Funeral directors overwhelmingly seem to think that the clergy would need to comment on the presence of the body. Clergy replied that the funeral directors decide this with the family and that it may not be their place, or it happens before they can comment. This vacuum of leadership has created an environment where personal choice, without any professional guidance, rules all decisions. The names used by the funeral directors to describe services speak more of the individual than the clergy report, and *celebration of life* is most used.

In reevaluating the STS survey after the September 2014 presentation, where STS clergy who engaged their local funeral directors, I was most struck by the way in which the funeral directors describe what they hear the most from clergy at funerals. No one used the word sermon, and some even questioned why that was asked. They seemed to think that sermons were for Sunday, and eulogies were for funerals. If no other analysis is presented, I think this alone speaks volumes about the nature of proclamation of the resurrection of the body. The funeral directors who guide decisions of grieving families do not recognize proclamation, clergy do not insist upon it, and the public has nearly dismissed it completely.

Chapter 7: Perspectives and Practice

(Remember - Recognize - reCOGNIZE - Resurrect)

Often the emphasis in the days after a death is on remembrance. It is clear that the church teaches that there should also be an emphasis on resurrection. But that can be a big leap for people and two other moments seem to help bridge the gap: recognition, and reCOGNITION. Surely we can recognize our deceased loved ones from photos and mementos even. But the bias I held deep within my formation, and faith foundation was a physical recognition. This is the pathway I have chosen to walk as I meander through this maze of changing funeral trends and grieving families.

When someone dies, we fly through memory so often it seems like we live there completely. This is most true in the immediacy of death. I place *remember* at the head of the pathway toward a right understanding of the resurrection, which is difficult to see when what we long for is a simple waking up of the dead. This remembering is far deeper than simple recall and involves all our senses to truly remember, and even in those memories *we* imprint them within our own lives.

Beyond remembering there is the concept of recognition, which I think is vital when death enters our lives. This two-fold discernment pit, needs physical recognition to be the foundation upon which our minds can truly re-*cognize* the dead. Artificial means (i.e. photographs and movies) are not enough, just like the artificial things we dismiss from authentic worship (silk flowers, recorded music, digital preaching, etc.) as not holding the trueness of our worship. More deeply, a Eucharist of memory and empty actions cannot

compare to the ability to truly hold the body of Jesus Christ, in the flesh, to help our brains understand what they cannot fully grasp, a mystery of faith, as presented above. In discernment, we weigh out all options, and talk through the ways in which each option will affect faith, life, and the church. In the case of caring for the dead, there are benefits of being *in the actual presence of the dead body* as a way of cognitive understanding that which cannot be fully understood. In the real presence of death, we can reorder our cognitive understanding to include this new reality, and discern what death truly means for what remains of our life.

Finally, the goal of all Christian thought, faith, and life: RESURRECTION. Pastors who shy from this article of faith are losing the integrity with which they should lead. “Leaders must make decisions that proceed from a center of wholeness out of which they are able to speak with authenticity and integrity. This cannot be done without plumbing the depths of who we really are-and this is only discovered in the present.”¹³² Without this, we stand on sinking ground, a ground that will swallow us up never to let go. Yet, this is what we proclaim: this ground cannot hold us! If the church has a value that cannot be compromised, this ought to be the one. Without the bodily resurrection of Christ, and by baptism us as well, the great towers of faith begin to fall. For those who tread these waters our spirituality must be centered upon the real presence of Christ Jesus our Lord. Run to His Holy Supper at every opportunity. Remember Him in the command and promise to eat and drink, that body and blood which is given for you, and shed for the

¹³² Walter E Fluker, *Ethical Leadership* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009), loc. 2457, Kindle.

sins of many. Recognize his presence in Word and Sacrament, but truly re-COGNIZE that presence into the present reality of life. Then, we can come to know the truth of the bodily resurrection and lay hold of the greatest promise: life everlasting.

Observation of Funerals

For comparison, and in preparation for the presentation given at the 2014 General Retreat, I observed funeral ceremonies in my capacity as funeral director, which provided a unique opportunity to observe many funerals without being noticed specifically as an observer, since it is my regular responsibility to be at these funerals. The observations of funerals in this capacity constitute the basis for the following analysis (funerals over which I presided as a member of the clergy are not included). Keeping an eye on funeral language I have noticed following terms and observations (the categories are listed from most frequently to least frequently observed):

1. Titles used to describe the service
 - Celebration of Life
 - Funeral
 - Memorial Service
 - Burial of the Dead
2. Type of service
 - Cremation Memorial
 - Viewing
 - No Viewing/Body Present
 - Cremation No Service
3. Denomination
 - United Methodist
 - Independent
 - UCC

No Clergy Present/None

Lutheran

Catholic

Jehovah's Witnesses

Wesleyan

Amish

Mormon

4. Public Address Evaluation

More Eulogy/Mixed with Sermon

Eulogy only

Proclamation/Eulogy Separate

Proclamation only

5. Resurrection Theology

Resurrection non-specific

Spiritual Resurrection

Resurrection of the Body

None

Angel

Most funerals seem to be labeled as *celebrations of life*. This title, in and of itself, speaks more of the dead than of faith. It speaks of likes, dislikes, and achievements past than it does of future hope. Cremation with a memorial service was the type of service which did not surprise me at all as the average, and is closely becoming equal with traditional services across the nation, and in some places, more.

Pursuant to the discussion at hand it is striking to note that a great majority of funerals are conducted with eulogy as the prevailing public address. When considering that the overwhelming majority seems to be centered upon the life and personal details of a deceased rather than faith and hope.

Yet even in those where eulogy prevailed there was often mention of resurrection. This mention, however brief, in many cases is either a simple resurrection thought, non-specific in nature and non-descriptive in theology or doctrine, or it was a mention of a purely spiritual resurrection akin to the immortality of the soul and the unworthiness of the body. Some funerals have no mention of resurrection at all, and in one instance I heard clearly stated an image of transformation into an angelic figure, and what seems to be a shrinking number mentioned the resurrection of the body.

When considering the observation and evaluation of funeral proclamation across varying lines I have kept the observational criteria simple, so that I do not end up reading too much into any one situation, rather noting by number those which fit certain categories. I used broad categories which were easily relatable to members of the STS during the presentation.

On one hand, it is easy to fall into the trap thinking that our own preaching is good, and make it the standard by which all preaching is evaluated. Upon hearing other sermons, we often dissect the style, tone, delivery, speed, etc., and miss the content entirely. I find it difficult, when traveling, to truly hear a preacher's message without the critique happening in the back of my mind.

On the other hand, in my regular interaction with preachers at funerals, I can evaluate differently. I'm not looking for a *Sunday sermon* for my own worship, but rather standing as an outsider to a relationship of pastor/family and attempting to figure out what is being preached. What I hear, far too often, is just what is failing, in my opinion, in funeral

proclamation. A preacher who is attempting to pick ‘passages’ and link them in some way using far too many likes and dislikes of the deceased, and information about their achievements, crafting it into what some may call a sermon. The end result becomes a disastrous mix of loosely connected bible verses and trite remembrances of someone’s life, not really a sermon and not even a true eulogy.

As I’ve watched poorly constructed failures I’ve remained attentive to the need of better construction (and not just a need to see the other side of the gap but a need to see the destination of the entire journey) so that the listener becomes a sojourner. By this I mean, a few passages, which call to mind a life lived (remembrance) is only sufficient for the grief of today; the short journey of response to death. I think that funeral proclamation becomes effective when it looks more like a map of a journey, rather than a bridge over trouble. Rather than connecting a few passages to the situation of the moment, preaching the gospel means preaching the good news of resurrection of the dead. That is much more grand than crossing a bridge from scripture to a moment in life, it’s more like traversing life with a roadmap of good news.

Chapter 8: Introduction to the Parish Resource

Based on the observations and collections of STS data I have developed the following parish resource to accompany this work. Correlation is foundational to the resource and having the leader of the resource familiar to these findings he or she will be better suited to guide the discussion to discover the correlation put forth (i.e. Real Presence in Eucharist and in the deceased body at the funeral). This type of correlation is rooted in Paul Tillich's (1951) methodology seeking to correlate existential questions of human experience (death) with theological answers found in Christianity and namely in Holy Scripture, and for this work, the writings of Luther and other reformers.¹³³ To deepen the conversations, I agree that there are other areas which need to be considered, and for this concern, Swinton & Mowat offer a broader correlation method which calls into dialectical conversation the situation, together with Christian insights and those of other social sciences, giving mutual critical analysis of the situation and other factors while discussing theology.¹³⁴ While Tillich hoped to achieve relevance for the Christian tradition within a rapidly secularizing social context,¹³⁵ I hope that discussions contained within the parish resource might do the same, and not just achieve relevance, but shape, inform, and quite possibly transform end of life decisions.

¹³³ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (Beccles, Suffolk: SCM-Canterbury Press Ltd, 2006), 1470, Kindle.

¹³⁴ Swinton, 1470.

¹³⁵ Swinton, 1499.

In following this model the resource should provide similar insights, “depth and clarity,”¹³⁶ by identifying the situation as I have done with this preceding work. Identified herein at the funeral, and by addressing the *resurrection of the body, the real presence of the body (Eucharist and Resurrection), and the proclamation of the Gospel at death rather than eulogy of past life* identify the situation in question, I have attempted to provide a framework of correlation in which the leader and participants may examine practice and gain new insights into those practices. Thirdly, a theological reflection taking place in a safe place, and at a time prior to death to discuss without the added stress and confusion of grief. Finally, I would hope that this resource would provide for suggestions in revising the forms of practice to more closely reflect the theological, historical, and scriptural basis upon which the community stands, finding a way to authentically provide catechesis of faith and hope through the burial of the dead, the proclamation of the resurrection of the body, and a reverence for the holy as understood in the flesh.

Implications for a Wider Audience

After developing and circulating the practical tools of guiding workbooks and resource material grounded in theology, proclamation, and authentic traditions, among the members of the Society, they could be modified as needed and shared beyond our ministerium for use, especially by other Lutherans, but also by other Christians sharing the confession of the resurrection of the body. In addition, a second order audience

¹³⁶ Swinton, 1832.

would be the funeral directors of the localities served by these clergy. I hope that the workbook material may provide foundations for congregations and individuals to explore their own wishes through the lens of the church. By doing so, they may see that the decisions made about the care of the dead speak profoundly about their faith, and come to realize the gravity of actions beyond personal choice. The inclusion of the local funeral director in the congregational study will certainly widen the audience, and provide for mutual discussion, growth, and ultimately better understanding of one another's position, needs, and expectations.

Giving insight to the clergy of the Lutheran tradition about the clarity and authenticity of our proclamation is notable, and hopefully fruitful as we better our proclamation. But, presenting tools by which that clarity and authenticity is communicated to those who partner in the process of burying the dead, may be quite valuable. The inclusion of individual funeral directors, or even group presentations at association meetings, will provide clergy with a usable tool for conveying the significance of our faith and actions. From the perspective of the funeral director, by clearly understanding the clergy we can more confidently guide families in their choices. Far too often, while grieving, families make choices without the direction and guidance they most need concerning the religious component of the events they are planning. This tool (and the relationship built by this tool between clergy and funeral director) will allow the funeral director to clearly guide the family, and will provide simple, clear, and authentic direction to their most immediate need: planning a funeral in authenticity, hope, and faith.

As congregants better understand the preacher, and the funeral director better understands the congregants, a more unified, clear, and authentic *whole* can be achieved when we gather to lay to rest, those who have fallen asleep.¹³⁷

¹³⁷ 1 Thessalonians 4

“Where is the Body?”
A Resource and Discussion Guide for Considering the Funeral Liturgy as
Catechesis
for use within the Parish as adult learning and discussion

Introduction

For Lutheran congregations, catechesis has been significant for generations. The basis of our Christian education, even in the home, has been Martin Luther’s *Small Catechism*.

Teaching the young and old alike to fear and love God in all things, while understanding these things in our everyday actions, was introduced among us by way of Luther’s *Small Catechism*. Considering that so much of what we do instructs, we must continually be vigilant in living out this faith and instruction so that the authenticity of our faith is seen in all our actions. To fear and love God, as the *Small Catechism* states over and over, is to truly use our lives, words, and actions in an ongoing process of learning and growth. When we consider ourselves and those to whom we witness faith, as important components of this formation, perhaps we can consider the value learned and taught by catechesis among the faithful.

When we consider that the liturgy, paramount even to our good works, is vital to the living out of faith we stretch beyond our individual mindsets and begin to think corporately. The communal action of the liturgy is the most visible form of our living out of our faith as community, and can often serve as witness to a larger audience than one expects. For this discussion guide I would ask for you to consider the audience as your family and friends first, a first level community learning from your own faith in action.

If the liturgy is so vital to the living out of faith, then we must consider *all* liturgy, especially the funeral. I hope that we could consider the funeral liturgy as always pointing toward the crucified and resurrected Christ Jesus first, long before any mention of ourselves. Therefore, it is necessary to focus more emphasis on the *faith* of the deceased rather than her/his life, likes/dislikes, achievements/failures. Can you consider a good funeral one that witnesses to faith in Christ Jesus and his resurrection promise, more so than an individual life?

When thinking of those closest to you answer the question: “will my funeral teach them about me, or about my faith?” Now, consider the wider community and your own congregation and answer this question: “what will my funeral say about my faith in the resurrection, and my trust in Jesus Christ?” Can you imagine what it may feel like to divest yourself of your individual past, and identify more closely with the Lord and *His life, death, and resurrection*? Assuming that we can even step closer to this type of understanding, I am specifically asking for you to consider laying down that to which you might cling (life, achievements, works, etc.). As the most popular hymn resounds: “So I’ll cherish the old rugged Cross, Till my trophies at last I lay down”¹³⁸ this exercise begs for us to lay down much, and truly cling to the cross alone.

Finally, consider the role your body has occupied in the instruction of others throughout your life. Your real presence has been the tangible way in which you have interacted with

¹³⁸George Bennard, *The Old Rugged Cross*, 1913.

the world around you, and Jesus Christ's real presence has been the tangible way in which you have interacted with Him, especially in the Eucharist.

By the end of our topics for discussion, and our common reading and study, I hope that you can answer these questions with more substance and confidence. Most importantly, you will be lead in a discussion which will highlight the kingdom of God and your physical and significant part therein. The topics will begin by discussing why we gather together. Of all the theological loci possible to hold in tension with the human body, this discussion will focus primarily on the connections we have with the real presence of the incarnate Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, and our response thereto. When considering this, we can discern our own response to the questions as we see the body of Jesus and our own body, intimately joined in His eternal plan for salvation, resurrection, and a new creation.

Topics for Discussion

Defining why we come together as a community at death

Where is the Body?

Real Presence: Eucharist and Resurrection

Resurrection: Body Matters!

Foundational Texts for Study:

Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead? The Witness of the New Testament
by Oscar Cullmann

At the end of this discussion guide you will find a worksheet of vital importance for your funeral liturgy, as a member of this parish and as one who has taken the time to consider how the funeral liturgy at your death may point to Christ Jesus first and above

all personal components. Consider carefully your thoughts and directions to share with the Pastor and your family concerning the choices you would make having studied and discussed the history, theology, and evangelism contained within this liturgical act. Then, having participated in this discussion, you have been given tools and language to speak with some authority and confidence so that you can participate in the authenticity of our faithful witness to the world through the liturgy of the church and your very presence in the flesh even in death.

At the time of death, families are burdened with making significant choices while grieving. Sometimes this can be quite difficult, even when death is expected or anticipated, not just in cases of tragedy and sudden death. This learning opportunity is intended to empower you to make sound theological choices which reflect your faith, and share those choices with those who will be tasked with making decisions at your death. Even in the simplicity of choosing passages of Holy Scripture, hymns, and brief discussions of faith a meaningful and authentic liturgical presentation can be made. Authenticity in our living out of faith, especially at death, is crucial.

This guided theological discussion is more than simply preplanning a funeral. It is a guide to understanding the choices that can be made, and the wider implications of those choices for those who survive, and who look to those who have died in the faith as witnesses worthy of our admiration. The impact of the funeral liturgy is far wider than we often assume.

Each module should be completed in a timeline suitable for complete, thorough, and deep conversation. A suggested timeline would be two sessions per module at a minimum. This will give participants an introduction to the readings by the leader, a brief overview of the lesson itself, the learning objectives, and general discussion to address items like dispelling myths or assumptions held. It is highly recommended that the community gather with food and fellowship at each session, to encourage a setting less like a lecture or sermon, and more like a family discussion. Finally, by inviting the local funeral director to each session the clergy and funeral director should be prepared to lead together. The wider community needs to see the two roles in their professional capacity, exercising their expertise in providing for the people in the very ways they have been well-trained to do.

MODULE ONE:
Defining why we come together as a community at death
Theological Reading: “A Theological Understanding of Christian Practices”
Dykstra & Bass. *Lifelong Faith*, Summer 2008.
Holy Scripture: 1 Thessalonians Chapter 4

Learning Outcomes: The participant

1. will be better able to discuss the historical significance of communities gathering at the death of a loved one.
2. have a deeper understanding of Christian Practices in light of life-passage events, more especially the burial of the dead, and be better equipped to draw correlation between this and other life-passage rites of the church which focus on the body
3. will be able to discuss the details of St. Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians, used by Lutheran and others in funeral proclamation

In a broad sense, we can see that there are gatherings which define us as a community, most notably, the Mass. Since these gatherings are liturgically centered upon Jesus Christ, and we receive Him in the Blessed Sacrament, the distinguishing term *Christian Practice* might be used. In our reading about Christian practices, one would notice them being defined as “things Christian people do together over time to address fundamental human needs in response to and in the light of God’s active presence for the life of the world.”¹³⁹ The funeral is just such an occasion. We gather as people do, many times over years of living, to respond to the needs of those who grieve, bury the dead body, and by so doing give witness to what we believe about God’s active presence for the life of the world. Moreover, God’s active presence among those who survive and those who have fallen asleep.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Craig Dykstra and Dorothy C. Bass, "A Theological Understanding of Christian Practices." *Lifelong Faith*, Summer (2008): 6.

¹⁴⁰ 1 Thessalonians chapter 4

We can understand the nature of the funeral service to be catechesis when we begin to understand it as an Easter liturgy which remembers when the deceased was made a child of God in Baptism. It is a liturgy based upon the resurrection of the body of Jesus, the moment when death was overcome in victory.¹⁴¹ By the acting out of our faith at death, and linking that faith to the Easter Liturgy, our actions say more than words possibly could. “The fuller understanding of death recognizes these feelings of grief and desolation and gives them expression, but it also moves beyond them to a confident hope. Both the sadness and the joy must be seen together, one tempered by the other.”¹⁴² In the liturgy of the Burial of the Dead we participate in a practice which holds so much in tension (life/death, joy/sadness, burial/resurrection).

Noting that the *Manual on the Liturgy* speaks of the funeral as an expression moving toward hope, discuss the value of this expression within the context of practice within your own congregation. Do you agree with the authors of the essay about the nature of Christian Practices?

Define the coming together at the funeral in terms presented in the *essay*:

1. Addresses fundamental human needs and conditions
2. Involves us in God’s activity
3. Is social in character
4. Endures over time
5. Involves deep awareness
6. Is done within the church, public, work, and home
7. Shapes the people who participate
8. Possesses standards of excellence
9. Comes to a focus in worship
10. Adds up to a way of life when interwoven with other practices

¹⁴¹ Considering 1 Corinthians 15:55 as a basis for such language

¹⁴² Philip H Pfatteicher and Carlos R Messerli, *Lutheran Book of Worship: Manual on The Liturgy* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1978), 364.

Finally, reflect on the *Twelve Christian Practices* by asking if ***your funeral*** would reflect: honoring the body, hospitality, household economics, discernment, shaping communities, forgiveness, saying yes and saying no, keeping Sabbath, testimony, healing, dying well, singing out lives.

Leadership Notes:

Defining the funeral as a Christian practice within your congregation is vital to the success of this first discussion. For the sake of this discussion I define a “good” funeral to be one which is a more authentic representation of the faith in the resurrection, and a witness of such to those who see the rites of the church. It will be helpful to guide the group to name and take ownership of the practices already in place, even if (by the help of this discussion) they begin to transform into a more authentic representation of the faith in the resurrection, and a witness of such to those who see the rites of the church.

First, break apart the various components of the funeral mass and examine why some may be constant among many people, while other components may have been removed at times. For this to begin, examine first if there have been funeral liturgies without the celebration of the Eucharist and attempt to discover why.

Specifically, treat the discussion of Christian practices as a way of transforming thought about everyday life and Christian practice as inseparable. The solid link with the *Small Catechism* and the readings shared should direct the participant in examining many practices. By doing this with small tasks it may be easier to find deep connections with the funeral, the Mass, and the witness portrayed therein.

Especially where the rites of the local congregation have seemed to go off course from the historical liturgy, leaders (and church members) may ask “how did we get here?” Of course, there is most likely no simple answer except, over time, we have learned a new *habitus* which have become the norm of those shaped by the community, the *natives*, as described here:.

Habitus,... is [a]... shorthand concept for that nexus of dispositions that makes it possible for us to perceive the world, to experience our environment, to constitute a context, and act therein. It is the visceral plausibility structure by which we make sense of our world and move within it. But the question is, how is such a visceral plausibility structure learned and absorbed? ...this is the same as asking, how does one become a “native”? We can now say that being a “native” is a matter of having acquired a *habitus* that has become second nature— which is also a matter of one’s having absorbed, and been absorbed into, the plausibility structures of a people.¹⁴³

Holy Scripture:

Start with the reading of Holy Scripture. Have small groups (if needed) discuss the scripture to identify parts which:

1. are easily understood
2. can be explained easily to others
3. resonate deeply with daily life and witness of faith
4. need clarification
5. are difficult to understand or explain.

¹⁴³ James K. A Smith, *Cultural Liturgies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 92.

MODULE TWO:
Where is the body?

Theological Reading: “Theology from the Knees and Forehead: An Ethnographic Exploration of Ash Wednesday, by Jodi L. A. Belcher. Boston University Graduate Conference, March 2014

Holy Scripture: John Chapters 11 & 20

Learning Outcomes: The participant

1. will be able to incorporate theological concepts of how the human body is relevant in the liturgies of the church, and upon that foundation begin to extrapolate the value of the human body throughout the whole of the liturgy, more especially the burial of the dead.
2. will be able to discuss the details of the Gospel of John as it gives account of the burial of the dead in Jesus’ lifetime and ministry.
3. will have a broadened sense of the ways in which the church has understood the body in worship, and will begin to make the necessary connections between the gestures, blessings, and liturgical acts which include parts of the body, and the totality of the body in worship.

In a real sense, can you feel the emotion in both chapters of St. John’s gospel? Pay close attention to the words which ask about where the body has been placed, both of Lazarus and Jesus. There is deep concern, wrapped in emotions, to identify where the body is and the desire to be in its real presence. In both chapters the very physical body of one who had died is brought forth from the tomb. Can we confidently answer the “why” behind the surface questions being asked here? For example, the angels ask “whom are you seeking?” as if those present on that first Easter morning could fully understand their questioning and respond appropriately “Jesus resurrected.” No, they are confused, expecting a dead body. Or, as St. Luke records “why do you seek the living among the dead?” as a more pointed question. Can it be that the root of our faith in the resurrection is that the body is significant? Do you consider the body significant enough to place it central in our acting out of this belief in the funeral liturgy? Read again these

passages and place your body in the tomb, and imagine or even play with dialog, your loved ones seeking to properly care for your flesh, mourning and preparing with myrrh and oils, or gathering with your siblings around your tomb as Jesus approaches.

Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. And he said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” Jesus wept. (John 11:32-35 ESV)

They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” (John 20:13-15 ESV)

In the reading “Theology from the Knees and Forehead...” the author speaks of active participation. Take, for example the following commentary. “In Christian communities, bodies are not only epistemological instruments through which we learn formative practices of faith; our bodies are also theological agents, actively participating in relationships with God and with one another.”¹⁴⁴ This statement becomes central to the argument, when describing the way in which the bodily presence at a significant place draws us, through prayer and presence, into a present reality of a past event, a true relationship with the divine, as in the Eucharist for example. The connection that can be made between the past and the present in relationship with the tangible presence of the

¹⁴⁴ Jodi L. A. Belcher, “Theology from the Knees and Forehead: An Ethnographic Exploration of Ash Wednesday (paper presented at Boston University Graduate Conference, March 2014): 1.

Body and Blood of Christ Jesus is worth of correlation with the tangible presence of the body of the deceased (since it was the very flesh claimed by God in baptism, and redeemed by God in the sacrifice of the Christ). The flesh of our body has repeatedly been drawn into a relationship with the past through our interaction with Christ Jesus, and honoring the remembrance of those divine moments of relationship between our real flesh, and the real flesh of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist at the funeral speaks well of faith and hope in that relationship, and all that is therein contained.

Can you give examples when, through the liturgies of the church, you have caught a glimpse of this convergence of past, present, and future? Does a particular hymn spark your mind to envision your great aunt standing next to you singing boldly the faith? Does a certain smell bring back a childhood memory of Christmas Eve? Does the sun shining through the stained-glass windows of the church seem to transport you to the day when your daughter was joined in matrimony?

Can you imagine then how your own funeral, within the Mass, will construct for those present a real presence moment wherein they can experience and instruct the fullness of our faith in the resurrection of the body? Yes, this approach is counter to a culture where funerals do little more than honor the deceased (or the life lived along with likes and dislikes). This may be uncomfortable to think about, but the very presence of the body allows for the witness to its resurrection in a poignant way. The opening dialog between the minister and gathered congregation speaks of what the church believes about the

body, which lies before them. In the moment, the church recognizes that this person was baptized, and now the church speaks of what it believes now:

“When we were baptized in Christ Jesus, we were baptized into his death. We were buried therefore with him by Baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live a new life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.”¹⁴⁵

As Belcher continues to discuss kneeling, and further the forehead, as bodily presence within the construct of worship, the temporary nature of the present seems as if it needs more attention, discussion and explanation. Understanding the body as a ‘theological agent’ allows for an understanding of the relationship between the body (the physical world perceivable by our physical senses) and the divine (the kingdom that is beyond the senses). Mentioned in the essay is the body’s inability to continue kneeling for long periods of time, or perhaps the implied fact that ashes cannot remain upon the forehead forever, yet these temporary moments draw us to a larger reality of past, present, and future.

Now, consider your body in worship, and more specifically your dead body in worship. Take a moment to stand in the church where the casket would be at the funeral. Take notice of the significant liturgical items and discuss what they mean for *e* of the significant liturgical items and discuss what they mean for *your* faith with the group. What can you say about the Paschal Candle, the funeral pall, the color of the pastor’s vestments?

¹⁴⁵ *Lutheran Book of Worship*, 1st ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978), 207.

If we can, in many different ways, understand the significance of our own bodily participation in worship while living, why does it become difficult to imagine in death? Is it too big of a leap to connect the entirety of bodily participation in worship from baptism, to kneeling, to the sign of the cross, to eating and drinking, to standing, and laying on of hands, to motionless and without breath (asleep as St. Paul might say)? Can you relate these concepts and imagine the place where all these intersect, and the words of resurrection are spoken over your flesh? We gather specifically at the funeral Mass to participate in this mystery, would you agree that by the living and the dead participating in the funeral *both* are theological agents?

Reflect on the following in light of this discussion:

1. Can you see the significance of Catechesis in the funeral?
2. If the community arrives at a funeral and asks “where is the body?” because it is not present, does the church confuse its instruction?
 - a. damage authority?
 - b. miss opportunity to act out faith?
3. Does the body present give greater psychological foundations for the grieving process?
 - a. Dr. Sandra Bertman addresses “Facing Death” as a significant part of the human experience of death and from a medical perspective clearly states

that viewing the dead body helps one accept the fact of death...[and] encourage[s] involvement with the mourning rituals of funeral.¹⁴⁶

- b. Does the presence of a pall-covered casket evoke the same beneficial acknowledgement of death?
- c. Does the presence of the body (even covered by the pall – image of our connection to Christ Jesus in Baptism) establish the fact of death, and creates a corrected image of the dead?¹⁴⁷
- d. This corrected image is like the one who conquered death, Jesus Christ, in catechesis of the mystery of the resurrection do you agree with the powerful imagery of this physical presence of the dead?

Leadership Notes:

Returning to the Smith text, and using the concept of incarnation as the revelatory method of our connection consider the following to guide or respond to discussion:

Merleau-Ponty and Bourdieu both prompt us to appreciate what Mark Johnson calls “the bodily basis of meaning”— or more specifically, the aesthetics of human understanding. Johnson, translating Merleau-Ponty’s claim about “incarnate significance,” says that “what and how anything is meaningful to us is shaped by our specific form of incarnation.” This requires that we attend to “the bodily depths of human meaning-making through our visceral connection to the world” - “the vast, submerged continents of nonconscious thought and feeling that lie at the heart of our

¹⁴⁶ Sandra L. Bertman, *Facing Death: Images, Insights, And Interventions* (Boston: Taylor & Francis, 1991).

¹⁴⁷ Robert Wesley Habenstein, William M Lamers and Howard C. Raether, Editor, *The History of American Funeral Directing*, 4th ed. (Brookfield, WI: National Funeral Directors Association, 1996), 781.

ability to make sense of our lives.” “Meaning,” on this account, is not restricted to the propositional or the conceptual; rather, our bodies make meaning on an “aesthetic” register, without the discursive mediation of words, concepts, or propositions.¹⁴⁸

As Lutheran clergy we hold fast to the doctrine of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, and protected in youth by Joseph. This human nature of Jesus, connected so deeply with his human mother and father Joseph, is often times connected intimately with our own birth, family, and childhood. Many pro-life Lutheran groups identify themselves with the concept that Christ’s time spent in the womb of Mary, hallowed the wombs of all. Many Lutheran family advocacy groups (across the many Lutheran denominations) use the Holy Family as an example of the blessed nature of the family in their own mission and work. The use of Jesus’ life events and circumstances as examples for our living is vast in number, and I think we can take a few steps farther and examine the places and events through which the body of Jesus passed as just the same excellent examples. Why would we honor wombs and families, and stop short of preparations and graves?

I believe that Christ Jesus hallowed the place where he was prepared for the tomb to honor the body itself, and comfort the suffering of those who loved His real presence so deeply. Jesus never spoke against the preparation of his body prior to the crucifixion, in fact he allowed for the expensive anointing of his body just a short time before his horrific death.¹⁴⁹ The people closest to Jesus needed to interact with his real presence in

¹⁴⁸ James K. A. Smith, *Cultural Liturgies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 110.

¹⁴⁹ Luke 7:36-40

their hour of grief, it was their custom, and it was therapeutic for their grief to follow such customs in the mourning period, by so doing one may notice that Jesus hollowed the preparation of His body, and the preparation of all those who would believe. These physical and faithful connections make real the personal embodying of death, the value of the body itself, and the process by which we grieve.

Can we agree then that the *visceral* connection to the death and burial of the incarnate Jesus Christ embodies our connection to the divine while still in the flesh, awaiting our bodily resurrection?

For further discussion and authority on the presence of the body at the Mass of Christian Burial, the group can read and discuss together the directives set forth in the second appendix of the Order for Christian Burial. Here the connection is made with this flesh having been (washed in baptism, anointed with the oil of salvation, and fed with the Bread of Life).¹⁵⁰

Holy Scripture:

Start with the reading of Holy Scripture. Have small groups (if needed) discuss the scripture to identify parts which:

1. are easily understood
2. can be explained easily to others
3. resonate deeply with daily life and witness of faith
4. need clarification
5. are difficult to understand or explain.

¹⁵⁰ *Order of Christian Funerals* (Washington, D.C.: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1997), Appendix II.

MODULE THREE:

Real Presence: Eucharist and Resurrection

Theological Reading: “Chapter XI: The value of the doctrine of the substantial presence, distribution, and reception of the body and blood of the Lord in the Supper”

Martin Chemnitz. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, 1979. pgs 185-194.

Holy Scripture: Luke chapter 22

Learning Outcomes: The participant

1. will hear and study the writings of early theologians in Lutheranism, who comment specifically on the connection between the flesh of Jesus Christ and His presence in the Eucharist.
2. will have the opportunity to discuss how the real presence has been taught in their own past experience, and learn ways to discuss and relate these topics to others in light of the theological presentation of Lutheran scholars.
3. will be able to discuss the details of Luke’s gospel record of the institution of the Eucharist and understand not only the whole of the institution but the significance of the language and form in light of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
4. will be able to discuss the nuances of the real presence and the various doctrines of the Lord’s Supper and how those differ or align with the Lutheran practice and understanding of the same.

Of particular focus for our current contextual study of human theological understanding is the reaction, handling, and value of death in the midst of life and faith, in its many facets. When the human emotional response to death collides with having to make decisions, there is great opportunity for leaders (clergy and funeral directors for example) to guide and direct, assisting the grief stricken through a difficult time. Given this opportunity, I believe it is of serious concern that guidance and direction be authentic to the norm of faith and tradition already known by the grieving family. It is certainly not an opportune time to teach or instruct in new ways, but when the foundation has been properly laid, the directions and guidance are grounded in what is already established.

Start with an assembly where the Eucharist is central to worship, and the Eucharistic

elements held in particular regard for their nature as true Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, and that regard has been part of a long-standing foundation of theological teaching. It may be easier, in such a context, to draw the correlation between how the body of Jesus is honored, and how we ought to honor the body of the faithful deceased. For example, a family whose connection to such an assembly is strong, and who already understand some of the theological underpinnings of such behavior, can be guided in their decision making to authentically present the faith in the resurrection through the funeral process, honoring the body and making evident its connection to Christ's body. When the assembly is regularly taught the significance of bodily presence, decisions can be appropriately made without attempting to teach or correct theological concepts at a time when decision making is emotionally impaired. It is imperative therefore to discuss these topics often, and begin to understand (as an assembly and as an individual) how choices at death impact the catechesis of the assembly and witness of faith to the larger community.

Keeping in mind that the larger community, and members of the assembly alike, begin to understand theology by witnessing the church, its liturgy, and its speech it becomes paramount to present authentically across all situations a consistent message of faith and belief. A people then who handle with particularity the bodies of the deceased in the similar honor as they do the body of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, make present and visible a correlation that can be seen by many. Being authentic in situations like death, in the same way as the Sunday Eucharistic assembly, allows for faithful decision making,

even when emotional responses to death interfere.

Can you give examples that show that some of the truest revelations of human response to death are revealed when the safeguards of the mind, and the coping mechanisms of the psyche are preempted by the very real struggles of grief and mourning? To do this, examine the ways you have responded to simple tasks when in the midst of grieving. What made the decisions more/less difficult? What factors did you consider that you may not have considered before?

Are there examples of reacting more honestly when in the midst of struggle and suffering, when the complexity of thought is less calculated? Much can be said about the ways a people care for their dead. It speaks volumes of their various understandings of life in general, and in most cases life everlasting. The great British statesman Sir William Gladstone is supposed to have declared, “Show me the manner in which a nation cares for its dead and I will measure with mathematical exactness the tender mercies of its people, their respect for the laws of the land and their loyalty to high ideals.”¹⁵¹

Can we draw correlating conclusions in the church, in the face of death, by word and action, most especially in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar and the way in which we handle the dead? In the same way Gladstone spoke of community in general, if one were to show the manner in which a faithful people cared for the real presence of Jesus Christ’s body in the Eucharist, could we attempt to measure the belief in and of the

¹⁵¹ Attributed to William E. Gladstone, “Successful Cemetery Advertising,” *The American Cemetery*, March 1938, 13.

bodily resurrection? The authenticity of worship can be witnessed in both Sunday Eucharistic assembly and the burial of the dead, making sure the connection theologically between Christ's body, and our own flesh, and the inseparable connection thereto portrayed.¹⁵² Is the correlation evident between the care of the real presence of the body and blood of Christ Jesus in the Mass as well as the care of the real presence of the body at the funeral within the Mass in your own context?

Reflect on the following in light of this discussion:

1. At the funeral of a loved one, where most consider remembrance, can you make connections between the intent of Jesus' words "this do in remembrance of me" and the remembrance we hold for those who have died?
2. St. Cyril¹⁵³ notes that Christ "grafts our miserable and corrupt nature into the holy and life-giving mass of His human nature so that [we]...are renewed through the remedy of this most intimate union." Note the connections (word and action) that are present in the funeral with the body present and compare them to the connections (word and action) in the Lord's Supper.
3. Discuss the nature of Christ's flesh in light of the following:
 - a. "In the first place, our Faith ought to lay hold on Christ as God and man in the nature by which He has been made our neighbor, kinsman, and

¹⁵² See Romans 8:38-39 and consider this inseparability

¹⁵³ Martin Chemnitz and Jacob A. O Preus, "Chapter XI: The value of the doctrine of the substantial presence, distribution, and reception of the body and blood of the Lord in the Supper," *The Lord's Supper* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1979), 188.

brother. But the proper, simple, and natural meaning of the words of institution teaches that...He comes to us in order to lay hold on us (Phil. 3:12).

- b. Define the Mass in your own words as it declares the resurrection.
- c. Define the funeral within the Mass in your own words as it portrays the resurrection.

Leadership Notes:

To best understand how Luther's contemporaries distorted the value of the body, I turn to the writings of Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt. We can gain insight into the discussion by examining how, even in the time when Luther was active in writing and teaching, others responded to him. The distortion is not necessarily a modern phenomenon, but plagued the church for centuries. Karlstadt contributed to an idea which further separated the body, soul, and connectedness therein contained.

Death seemed as if it were a supreme release for Karlstadt; it was a release from the bonds of this world and all its sins, desires, flaws, and persecutions. To follow Christ into death, and to see such following as an attainment of something greater, continues to pervert the means of righteousness gifted by Christ to those who accept death. Accepting death is quite different than cheerfully following into death, as described in his *Tract on*

the Supreme Virtue of Gelassenheit by Karlstadt.¹⁵⁴ His development of spiritual understanding, which led to practice, added to the fallacy of achieving some supreme status in life everlasting through one's own actions or virtues. Strangely enough, when taking seriously the references of Holy Scripture which speak of hating this soul (Luke 14:33) to refocus one's own attention upon the merits of Christ's gift of eternal life, Karlstadt pressed on toward a definition of "how detachment ought to be."¹⁵⁵

I propose that what develops into Karlstadt's radical spirituality of hatred toward the self is exactly what alters the prevailing understanding of the spirituality of Jesus Christ's connectedness with humanity. It is the very essence of the fully human and fully divine connectedness unique to Jesus, which sets him apart, above, and yet truly a part of, each human being. Be that as it may, and even as similar ideologies surface nearly five hundred years later, Karlstadt did not see a massive movement from the norm, but rather saw only one small avenue for spiritual difference from Luther and the Roman Catholic Church. However, this concept is found at the very root of various other thinkers, reformers, and spiritual leaders since; a small seed planted which has spread into far reaching thinkers in several other traditions. The detachment he speaks of becomes a central problem in his theological split from the church at the time, and with Luther.

¹⁵⁴ Andreas Rudolf-Bodenstein Von Karlstadt, Wayne H. Pipkin and E. J. Furcha, *Essential Carlstadt: Fifteen Tracts By Andreas Bodenstein (Carlstadt) From Karlstadt* (Waterloo, Ont: Herald Press (VA), 1995), loc. 527, Kindle.

¹⁵⁵ Karlstadt, *Tract on the Supreme Virtue of Gelassenheit*, 526.

MODULE FOUR:

Resurrection: Body Matters!

Theological Reading: “Lutheranism: *Two Kinds of Authority* Chapter 1 pgs 7-11.”

Gritsch & Jenson. Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1976. pgs 185-194.

Holy Scripture: 1 Corinthians chapter 15

Learning Outcomes: The participant

1. will be better able to discuss the historical significance of authority and authenticity in the early church as well as the modern church, its rites, and its theology.
2. have a deeper understanding of how the world views the church through the liturgical acts which are viewed by the public, and define the presentation and viewing of these rites as they relate to how the church functions within the world.
3. will be able to discuss the details of St. Paul’s letter to the Corinthians and confirm that the early writers of Holy Scripture spoke about the value of the human body within worship and within the life of the church in general.

We begin this final discussion with the confirmation of the authenticity of the gospel message of the resurrection of the dead. In attempting to understand the application of this message in the funeral liturgy, and faith practices at the time of death we must move beyond a practical application and focus more deeply on the meanings contained therein. The use of the funeral liturgy as a means by which we can accomplish all of what has been discussed, requires careful and thoughtful planning. Having explored the worth of the flesh, its connection to the divine, its place in the theology of the tradition, and its value at the funeral liturgy, one must consider the practical application of these philosophical and theological discussions. A key place to begin the intermingling of faith and practice is the establishment of authority, and the continuity of that authority in the living out of faith. The authority explored here will enable us to discuss with depth and clarity our thoughts and choices, measuring only against the established authority of

Jesus Christ, and Him revealed to us by the whole of Holy Scripture. In this manner, we judge not upon personal desire or understanding but alone on Scripture and the gospel message central to this discussion: the resurrection of the body.

From the reading, we explore the remembrance of Jesus Christ, and the authentic gospel. “Our gospel-talk is authentic only if it is accurate recollection. The same tradition is not, however, merely documentation of a past event. For what is handed on includes that Jesus is risen, that he is free future and not a dead past. Thus, the tradition is a tradition of proclamation, of that telling about Jesus which is liberating promise.”¹⁵⁶ Now, consider the remembrance Jesus speaks of at the institution of the Eucharist and that remembrance as part of the whole of the gospel. Do you see a necessity for both? If this is explanation is worthy of our attention, then we can more accurately ask the same question about the burial of the dead. The funeral liturgy, like the Sunday Eucharistic assembly, is also an event of proclamation aimed at the same gospel promise of the resurrection. This also refocuses our attention, especially while grieving, from a “dead past” to a “free future” to use the same phrase.

The revelation, of Jesus Christ found in the Holy Gospels, is different than anything else this world has ever seen. In the incarnate Jesus Christ, we have been given a revelation in the body, wrapped in human flesh, the same flesh in which this world dwells, for the purpose of proclaiming that which is beyond that same flesh, namely the

¹⁵⁶ Eric W Gritsch and Robert W Jenson, “Two Kinds of Authority,” *Lutheranism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 7-11.

revelation of the divine. In his book *The Revelatory Body*, Luke Timothy Johnson states so eloquently:

The Christian Bible is distinctive among the world's religious literatures for two reasons. The first is that the compositions of the Old and New Testaments draw scarcely any attention to themselves as revelatory. When compared to the Upanishads, the Hermetic Literature, or the Qur'an, for example, Scripture does not point to its texts as the Word of God or as the source of divine self-disclosure. The second is that Scripture consistently points to humans as the medium of revelation. This is not a matter simply of Scripture explicitly acknowledging its human authorship, or of expressing human experience within the compositions themselves. It is a matter, from beginning to end, of locating the arena of divine activity squarely in the bodily experience of its characters.¹⁵⁷

You foolish person!¹⁵⁸ St. Paul exclaims to those who attempt to explain the resurrection. Johnson responds as St. Paul is “suggesting either that the answer should be obvious or that it is utterly unknowable.”¹⁵⁹ Only when we consider that the very flesh in which we dwell, is the same flesh in which Christ Jesus sought to dwell are we fully open to the fullness of the revelation. Johnson is accurate in drawing this significant conclusion, and for the purpose of this study, we too, must observe the uniqueness of the flesh. This revelation in Jesus Christ, by the flesh of the incarnation, and the same flesh in which he walked from the sepulchre, is unique for our salvation and revealed in the commonality which is shared: flesh. Therefore, the body matters. The molecular matter of

¹⁵⁷ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Revelatory Body: Theology as Inductive Art* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2015), 1196-1202, Kindle.

¹⁵⁸ 1 Cor. 15:36 ESV

¹⁵⁹ Johnson, 1436-1437.

the body, the flesh itself, matters. The way in which we honor the flesh matters, as by these concerns we proclaim the uniqueness of our faith whereby God dwelt in the flesh and brought it up from death in great victory. Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again, the great mystery of faith becomes reality in the flesh.

Reflect on the following in light of this discussion:

1. We are not simply embodied spirit, but the union of the two as inseparable even in the resurrection. Look at the icon of the Harrowing of Hell, when Christ accomplished the breaking of the bonds on Holy Saturday, but took up the flesh again in the resurrection. This *wrapper* mentality is not new, but has been plaguing the church for centuries.
 - a. The history of viewing the body as a disposable and not entirely worthy package for spirit — a history that extends at least from Plato, through forms of Gnosticism, to Descartes — is a long one. The efforts to overcome the heritage of dualism have also been many and often futile.¹⁶⁰
 - b. Does our own life, and even our death, aid in overcome the false gnostic desire to separate the body from the spirit? How can your funeral contribute to the right understanding of Christ's own resurrection, and that of your own?

¹⁶⁰ Johnson, 1547-1550.

2. Johnson also addresses the meaning of the body by referring to St. Paul's writings:

- a. When seeking to answer the question concerning the future resurrection ("with what sort of sōma do they come?"), he eventually answers in terms of a "spiritual body" (sōma pneumatikon), which he contrasts to the mortal body that is "sowed" (sōma psychikon). In other letters, Paul declares that believers have died to the law through the body of the Messiah (Rom. 7: 4), that their mortal bodies would be brought to life (8: 11), and that they could present their bodies to God as a living sacrifice (12: 1). He says that he and his fellow preachers bear the death of Jesus in the body (2 Cor. 4: 10) and declares of himself that he carries on his body the wounds of Jesus (Gal. 6: 17). There are a remarkable number of premises underlying these statements: that human bodies are intrinsically connected to others, to God, and to a crucified and raised Messiah; that the body can at once be singular and at the same time part of a collective or communion; that the body is not independent but dependent and interdependent; that the present empirical body can be offered in service to God and will be transformed in the future.¹⁶¹
- b. Can you better defend the meaning and value of the body, pre- and post-resurrection after this discussion?

¹⁶¹ Johnson, 1809-1819.

3. Finally, how can we refute the individualism of the world and proclaim a worth to the body for the resurrection? Consider the following:
- a. The body is thought of in terms of problems to be solved: the dramatic exchanges of blood and vital organs through medical technology is extended through the regimens of exercise and diet, and even more dramatically through the kinds of body-engineering found in fetal harvesting, gender-changing, plastic surgery, and cloning. ¹² In this construal, the body is considered a form of property. It is something I have; I own it and can dispose of it as I choose; I can sell my body for profit. I have rights over my body just as I have rights over my other property.¹⁶²
 - b. Is the body mere property? If not, explain how your funeral within the Mass can catechize the community about the value of the flesh, according to Christ Jesus' incarnation and resurrection, and His connection to your flesh and future resurrection.
 - c. Does the body matter?

¹⁶² Johnson, 1832-1842.

Appendix I

Complete the following with the discussions of this program in mind. When thinking of those closest to you answer the question: “will my funeral teach them about me, or about my faith?” Then, consider the wider community and your own congregation and answer this question: “what will my funeral say about my faith in the resurrection, and my trust in Jesus Christ?” Finally, consider the role your body has occupied in the instruction of others throughout your life. Your real presence has been the tangible way in which you have interacted with the world around you, and Jesus Christ’s real presence has been the tangible way in which you have interacted with Him.

Funeral Worksheet THE BODY MATTERS

Name: _____

Baptism: _____ Confirmation: _____ Marriage: _____

Funeral Home to be called: _____

I would like my body to be viewed: YES NO

I would like my body present at the Funeral Mass: YES NO

My remains are to be buried at: _____

Holy Scripture Choices:

Hymn Choices: _____

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