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Mourning the Dead in Christian Late Antiquity

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Mourning the Dead in Christian Late Antiquity

by

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A THESIS

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ABSTRACT

The transition of the Roman funeral (with its focus on family) to a Christian liturgy for death (focusing on clergy and text) has never been explored. Nor has mourning the dead, as part of the funeral-in-transition. This study is, therefore, a new inquiry. Its aim is to ascertain how change and continuity constructed a Christian response to death that began to manifest in the Latin West around the time of Charlemagne ca. 800 CE. The study asks: To what extent did late antique Christian families influence the christianization of the Roman funeral? What role did women play in that transformation?

Literary and non-literary sources (church councils, letters, homilies, hagiographies, graffiti, inscriptions, etc.) from late antiquity were scrutinized using insights and methods from ritual studies with theories from place and performance studies. Material evidence (archaeology, art, artifacts, monuments, grave goods, etc.) were analyzed with the help of mortuary studies together with memory and social identity studies. Heuristic devices such as the “rhetoric of condemnation” and the “hermeneutics of suspicion” mitigated androcentric bias in the data. In order to assess the transition from the Roman funeral to the Christian liturgy for death, “an ideal type”—the funeral process outlined by Valerie M. Hope in *Roman Death*—was used for comparison. Finally, the data was read from the perspective of “ordinary” Christians; women were considered in terms of their kinship relationships, domestic practices, roles as memory-keepers, as household managers and healers, as patrons, and especially as caretakers and ritual specialists in terms of death.

Key results of this study showed that the transition of the Roman funeral to a Christian liturgy was largely due to a gradual shift in control of the funeral process away from the family and into the hands of the church clergy. By the eighth century negotiation between the

two groups had resulted in the codification—directed by the Carolingian reformers—of liturgical books known as *ordines* and sacramentaries that formalized rituals for dying, death, and burial. Most remarkable was that women’s performance of mourning and ritual lament, however, retained a certain degree of independence that persisted throughout late antiquity and beyond.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study is an outgrowth of my Master of Arts degree in 2011. My interest in women's contributions to the development of Christianity in the early centuries was first inspired by Dan Brown's novel, *The Da Vinci Code* (2003). Subsequent research leading to the MA confirmed that women's main area of influence was with the family, especially at times of dying and death. Thus, was born a desire to explore in a doctoral program how the Christian funeral, the accompanying mourning rituals, and the liturgy came to be in the Latin West.

The research for this project turned out to be quite an exercise. The evidence appeared, not in the regular places where one usually finds data, in the texts of Church Fathers, but rather—because I was dealing with “ordinary” Christians—in “crumbs” lurking in art, architecture, artifacts, sculpture, inscriptions, graffiti, and obscure drawings in very old books and manuscripts. The work has spanned eight years interspersed between my roles as wife, mother, grandmother, full-time student, teaching assistant for a number of my professors, a member of the organizing committee for the Pacific North West (PNW) regional meeting of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) and Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) held at the University of Calgary in 2014, the webmaster for my parish website, member of a book club of ladies from my church, and member of WINCalagry (Women's Interfaith Network). It has truly been a feat of fancy footwork. At the same time, however, I was blessed with some amazing help.

I owe thanks to so many on this lengthy journey. First, to my husband of 53 years, dearest Patrick, for support and incredible patience taking on housework, grocery shopping, and driving, all on my behalf. To our beloved fur-children—Murphy, Dutchess, Bailee, Misty, and HoneyBee—who took turns sleeping next to my computer while I worked those late

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Ardua molimur;

sed nulla nisi ardua virtus.

I attempt an arduous task;

but there is no worth in that

which is not a difficult achievement.

– Ovid

For my husband, my rock and soulmate,

Ronald Patrick

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS
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ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
ANF	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum: Series latina
CIL	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
CLE	Carmina latina epigraphica
CSEL	Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum
ICUR	<i>Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae</i>
ILCV	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres</i> , ed. E. Diehl
ILS	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i> , ed. H. Dessau
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
PL	Patrologia Latina, ed. J. -P. Migne
SRM	Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum

INTRODUCTION

This study is part of a trend advocated by Peter Brown and followed by Ramsay MacMullen, Robin M. Jensen, Carolyn Osiek, and others.¹ The trend views Christianity as part of the multi-transformations (economic, political, social, geographic, social, cultural, and religious) characteristic of late antiquity—the period of change from roughly the second through eighth centuries in the western Roman Empire. Brown and like-minded scholars understand Christianity as emerging out of the Greco-Roman worldview and ethos. Some in the group have addressed issues associated with the development of Christian funeral rituals. For example, Brown explored the cult of the martyrs and the connection of wealth with afterlife beliefs²; MacMullen investigated the burial practices and veneration of the special dead (the martyrs) by ordinary Christians; Jensen explored the funerary art in the catacombs and the role of women in funerary banquets; and Osiek studied the patronage of women involving Christian burials in the catacombs and other cemeteries.³ However, the actual development of the Christian funeral process as a whole and from its roots within the Roman cult of the dead

¹ See historian Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981); classicist and historian Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997); art historian Robin Margaret Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art* (New York: Routledge, 2000); New Testament scholar Carolyn Osiek, “Roman and Christian Burial Practices and the Patronage of Women,” in *Commemorating the Dead: Texts and Artifacts in Context*, edited by L. Brink and D. Green (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 243-70; classicist Kim Bowes, *Private Worship, Public Values, and Religious Change in Late Antiquity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); historian John Bodel, “Dealing with the Dead: Undertakers, Executioners and Potter’s Fields in Ancient Rome,” in *Death and Disease in the Ancient City*, edited by Valerie M. Hope and Eireann Marshall (New York: Routledge, 2000), 128-51; religious studies scholar Janet H. Tulloch, “Women Leaders in Family Funerary Banquets,” in *A Woman’s Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity*, edited by Carolyn Osiek and Margaret Y. MacDonald with J. H. Tulloch (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2006), 164-93; and others.

² Peter Brown’s work on wealth and the afterlife includes: *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012) and *The Ransom of the Soul: Afterlife and Wealth in Early Western Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

³ Ramsay MacMullen, *The Second Church: Popular Christianity AD 200-400* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009); Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*; and Osiek, “Patronage of Women.”

has not been addressed. Further neglected has been the involvement of the family, especially the women, in the transformation of the Roman funeral as it transitioned to a Christian liturgy for the dead. This would become the thrust of my own study.

A spark flickered in 1941 when Alfred C. Rush set out to investigate the Christian adaptation of certain Roman funeral rites, but Rush's thesis was flawed in its lack of attention to socio-historical context and its use of the History of Religions comparison strategy.⁴ Rush, however, foreshadowed some of the assumptions that would be advanced by late antiquity scholars, led by Peter Brown, some forty years later—assumptions suggesting that the role of the masses, and not just the minority *elite* clergy, were responsible in the fashioning of Christian identity and introducing methodology that applied archaeology and material evidence to balance the textual record.⁵ Following Rush, however, scholarship bifurcated into studies on Roman death rites and the history of Christian liturgy. The liturgical studies focussed on elite clerical and monastic developments in the Christian funeral. And while validating the interaction of the Roman worldview with the cultures of Gaul and Hispania in the development of funeral rituals, the scholarship of Michel Andrieu, Damien Sicard, Frederick Paxton, and others emphasized an assumption that optimistic beliefs in the Christian

⁴ See historian of religion Alfred C. Rush, *Death and Burial in Christian Antiquity* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1941).

⁵ For instance, Brown, *Eye of the Needle*, xxviii-xxix. Regarding the term “elite,” see Janet Huskinson, “Elite Culture and the Identity of Empire,” in *Experiencing Rome: Culture, Identity and Power in the Roman Empire*, edited by J. Huskinson (London: Routledge, 2000), 95-124; Huskinson explains that the term *elite* refers, in the early centuries, mainly to those Romans who particularly valued and emulated “the Graeco-Roman culture” (as in artistic and intellectual tastes), which was portrayed in floor mosaics and portrait fashions, but was also fostered by education, “the built environment,” wealth, social influence, and power dynamics (political, economic, social, religious), 95. Scholars, therefore, need to be alerted to the term “elitism” as having to do with certain historical time periods, the influence of the imperial court, one's ancestral lineage (i.e., identity and status), personal values/character traits, love of the liberal arts, achievements (*res gestae*), 96-97. For purposes of this thesis then, “the elite” in late antiquity in the Latin West were largely responsible for the literary sources of data relevant to my research. Caution is to be exercised with those sources, since, as Huskinson affirms, “the sources are also biased in that most represent the position of the educated Roman male, so that it is harder to reach the experiences of those outside this privileged group ... more [about these] ‘silent lives’ can be retrieved from material evidence” in terms of, for instance, gender, 97-98.

afterlife replaced the fearful ideas regarding Roman death, while at the same time insisting there was a liturgical form for Christian death by the 400s.⁶ However, as revealed by my study, the christianization of death was far more protracted and complex. Éric Rebillard's challenge to the status quo, arguing instead that the simple replacement of Christian for Roman funeral rites (specifically burial) was more of a transitional process, was on the right track.⁷

At the same time the Christian response to death was being investigated by Rebillard and others, Valerie M. Hope was conducting her own scrutiny of the Roman funeral. She approached the treatment of the Roman dead as a "process," rather than separate rituals (e.g., the wake, burial, commemoration, etc.).⁸ Since Hope's study in 2009, others following her lead have illustrated, among other things, that Romans did not possess an overwhelming fear of death.⁹ Rather, the Romans maintained strong reciprocal relationships between the living and the dead, a bond that continued through commemorative festivals, well-defined rituals of grief, practices to reconstitute the social unit following the death, and rites to memorialize the dead in perpetuity. Further, in terms of christianizing the Roman funeral in late antiquity, the

⁶ See cleric and theologian Michel Andrieu, *Les "Ordines Romani" du haut moyen âge*, 5 vols., repr. 1960-1965 (Louvain, 1931-1961); theologian Jean Deshusses, "Le sacramentaire de Gellone dans son contexte historique," *Ephémérides liturgicae* 75 (1961): 193-210; cleric and theologian Damien Sicard, *La liturgie de la mort dans l'Église latine des origines à la réforme carolingienne* (Liturgie wissenschaftliche Quellen und Forschungen [LQF], Bd 63, Munster, Aschendorff, 1978); historian Frederick S. Paxton, *Christianizing Death: The Creation of a Ritual Process in Early Medieval Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990); and others.

⁷ See classicist and historian Éric Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity*, translated by E. Trapnell Rawlings and J. Routier-Pucci (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009).

⁸ See classicist and historian Valerie M. Hope, *Roman Death: The Dying and the Dead in Ancient Rome* (London, UK: Continuum, 2009).

⁹ For example, Roman historian Janet Huskinson, "Gender and Identity in Scenes of Intellectual Life on Late Roman Sarcophagi," in *Constructing Identities in Late Antiquity*, edited by Richard Miles (London: Routledge, 1999), 190-213; archaeologist Maureen Carroll, "No Part in Earthly Things': Death, Burial and Commemoration of Newborn Children and Infants in Roman Italy," in *Families in the Imperial and late Antique Roman World*, edited by Mary Harlow and Lena Larsson Loven (London, UK: Continuum, 2012), 42-63; and historical archaeologist Emma-Jayne Graham, *The Burial of the Urban Poor in Italy in the Late Roman Republic and Early Empire* (Oxford, UK: Archeopress, 2006).

complexity of that transformation and the notion of the funeral as “process in transition” have remained largely unexamined.

That is, examination was lacking until my project. It began with a focus on the funeral rituals enacted by Christian families in late antiquity. Consistent with Rebillard’s examination of the Christian care of the dead (specifically, burial) and Hope’s analysis of all the Roman death rituals, I focused on ritual, rather than on liturgy and theology. In addition, this study examined the funeral process holistically in terms of all stages of the funeral and all parties affected. In emphasizing the ritual process, I invoked the assumptions, methods, and insights of ritual studies. By focussing on the interactions between funerary rituals, beliefs, and materiality, I applied the understandings and assumptions of mortuary studies. And for further analysis, social identity studies, memory and place studies, along with performance studies were summoned for assistance. In terms of data for this study, not only were the relevant literary sources utilized, but so too was material culture—the visual and archaeological evidence of “ordinary” Christians—thus, providing a more accurate reading of the life and religiosity (the social context) of families in late antiquity. In particular, examination was directed at the role of the family in managing and formulating funeral rituals, and, specifically, the roles of women in caring for the dying and the dead, and for mourning and commemorating the dead. A breakdown of my study by chapter follows next.

Chapter One establishes a disciplinary context for this project. The chapter establishes my study as a new exploration in the area of ritual, not liturgy for Christian death. Also, the study is a new contribution in its focus on funeral rituals in the Latin West. It treats Christianity as part of the religious transformation that drew from the Roman culture and tradition of late antiquity. The chapter reviews key scholars in terms of their investigations of

the Roman funeral as a process and the development of a funeral for Christians as a transition from that of the Romans. The aim of the chapter is to establish background, to identify past scholarship related to my topic, and to set the stage for presenting my research findings.

Chapter Two addresses the methodology selected for analyzing my data. It explains the research methods, data types, limitations, and the “exemplar” or prototype elected for investigating the transformation of the Roman funeral process as it transitioned to a Christian liturgy for death by the early middle ages. In terms of theories, insights, and strategies used in this project, the chapter identifies ritual studies, performance and place studies together with mortuary studies, memory and identity studies. In addition, Hope’s Roman funeral sequence/process serves as a heuristic device for my examination of the transition to the Christian funeral liturgy. Because she was so very thorough in laying out funeral rituals as a “process,” her schema becomes useful for my won study. Accordingly, this chapter also presents an overview of the Roman funerary process as viewed by Hope in *Roman Death*.

Chapter Three lays out my findings for the transitioning that occurred 180-300 CE, roughly during the period prior to the Peace of the Church proclaimed in the Edict of Milan in 313 CE. Data on the emerging Christian funeral is presented and analyzed in three ritual stages following Arnold van Gennep’s outline for assessing rites of passage: separation (pre-liminal), transition (liminal), and incorporation (post-liminal) rites. My analysis shows that in light of the prevailing Roman ethos involving *sacra privata* and *sacra familiae* in matters of death, Christian Roman families retained control of all aspects of the funeral in the second-to-fourth centuries.

Chapter Four examines the data for the period 301-500 CE (after the Edict of Milan that legalized Christians living in Roman jurisdictions). Again, the transitions of the Roman

funeral as it moved toward the making of a Christian liturgy for death is investigated in terms of the separation, transition, and incorporation (or re-integration) stages for those involved (the deceased, the bereaved, the ritual agents, the community, etc.). My findings indicate the rise of monasticism as a surrogate “family” began to influence which rituals would be controlled by the Christian “family” and which ones by the church. Also important, the cult of martyrs further expanded the definition of “family” as lay Christians welcomed these “holy dead” into their burial spaces.

Chapter Five focuses on the period 501-800 CE, up to and beyond the time of Charlemagne and his attempts to unify Christians in the West and to codify funeral rituals. The church had begun building burial churches in Rome and welcomed the laity to celebrate their departed relatives at these sites. The laity was slowly beginning to utilize some of the rituals devised by the episcopate for the deathbed (e.g. anointing, eucharist, penance); for burial (e.g. asking for burial near the graves of the martyrs/saints, *ad sanctos*); and for commemoration (e.g., utilizing prayers for the dead, votive masses, confraternities of prayer, etc.). Additionally, my research surveys some remarkable illustrations in the Sacramentary of the Bishop Warmundus in the tenth century, which reveal the continuing role of women in the funerary process.

Chapter Six is the examination of funerary mourning, which accompanied all stages of the funeral during all chronological periods specified in my study. In distinction from the assumptions of previous scholarship, Christianity accommodated expressions of grief and mourning. In addition, these expressions continued to be associated with women. Consequently, in tracking the Roman funeral through its transitions up to the start of a public Christian liturgy for death, the evidence confirms that not only the family, but women in

particular, were integral players. This chapter presents evidence showing women's role as family specialists in funeral rituals; the function of women's ritual lament as beneficial for both the departed and the bereaved; and the gradual replacement of women ritual specialists by male clergy over the course of the funeral's transition in late antiquity.

Parenthetically, because care of the sick and dying was mainly "women's work," because death was so ubiquitous in late antiquity and was generally a "private" matter for families, and because surviving textual evidence was written by elite males (understandably possessing the elite male bias), the topics of this dissertation were not often written about and therefore were rarely part of the literary record. Consequently, most of my evidence comprises scattered "crumbs" that happened to survive in the environment as visual/material and non-literary evidence—wall paintings, relief sculpture, tomb inscriptions, symbols, graffiti, and so on. Despite the challenges, however, this study provides some new understandings about the ritual life of ordinary Christian families and the mourning practices of women in terms of death in late antiquity.

Chapter Seven concludes the dissertation with a summation and a discussion of the implications of this study including suggested topics for future research.

CHAPTER ONE

Review of Past Scholarship

This study examines the transition of funeral rites from the Roman tradition and its centrality of the family to the development of a Christian liturgy and its clerical nature under Charlemagne around 800 CE in the Latin West. This is a new exploration.

Past scholarship on the emergence of the Christian funeral (e.g., the studies by D. Sicard, A. Chavasse, and others) viewed “liturgy” and “ritual” without much attention to how the eventual development of a Christian liturgy for death required centuries of transformation in its various constituent rituals.¹ This study, however, distinguishes judiciously between “ritual” and “liturgy” in order to trace the transition of the one to the other. “Ritual” or “ritualization” is considered as any of the following: (1) a repeated set of embodied/physical actions or routines; (2) a “performative phenomenon,” which may or may not involve “a speech-act”;² and/or (3) action that is separate from “the conceptual aspects of religion, such as beliefs, symbols, and myths.”³ The term “liturgy,” on the other hand, is viewed as a subset of ritual and as the “public ceremonial form of worship” of the Christian church; “liturgy” requires belief in its efficacy so it can be repeated successfully and credibly for large numbers of participants.⁴ Previous scholarship has focused on Christian funeral liturgy and its

¹ For the group of scholars examining early and late antique Christian rituals for death, see Frederick S. Paxton, *Christianizing Death: The Creation of a Ritual Process in Early Medieval Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 12, 33, 21, 37-38, 42, 44. Other scholarship includes that of Michel Andrieu, *Les “Ordines Romani” du haut moyen âge*, 5 vols. 1931-61 (repr. Louvain, 1960-65); cleric and theologian Geoffrey Rowell, *Liturgy of Christian Burial* (London: Alcuin Club, 1977); Roman historian Paul-Albert Février, *Le culte des morts dans les communautés chrétiennes durant le IIIe siècle* (Rome, 1978); and historian of late antiquity Sabine MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1981).

² See ritual studies scholar Ronald L. Grimes, ed., “Ritual Criticism and Infelicitous Performances,” in *Readings in Ritual Studies* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996), 283.

³ See ritual studies scholar Catherine Bell, “Constructing Ritual,” in *Readings in Ritual Studies*, edited by R. Grimes (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996), 22.

⁴ See sociologist Kieran Flanagan, “Liturgy, Ambiguity, and Silence: The Ritual Management of Real Absence,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 36, no. 2 (June, 1985): 193.0

associative beliefs. This study concentrates on the funeral rituals and their process, that is, the actions performed by Christians.

Notably, the limited examination of funeral rituals to date has been on the Byzantine Church.⁵ Since there has not been significant analysis of the funeral ritual in the Roman West—that is, in the western Latin world or the Latin West—my study is a new contribution.⁶ Previous studies have focused on beliefs in the Roman West associated with death, afterlife, and resurrection with an underlying dominant assumption that the Christian beliefs were positive in contrast to the negative, fearful view of the Romans.⁷ This is part of the old “triumph of Christianity over paganism” paradigm, which has been challenged over the past four decades. That challenge may be viewed on three fronts, described in what follows.

⁵ For example, see theologian Nicholas Conzas “Death and Dying in Byzantium,” in *Byzantine Christianity*, edited by Derek Kruger, A People’s History of Christianity, vol. 3 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 124-145; see also New Testament scholar Dorothy Abrahamse, “Rituals of Death in the Middle Byzantine Period,” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 29, no. 2 (1984): 125-34; and historian George T. Dennis, “Death in Byzantine,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 55 (2001): 1-7.

⁶ Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), xxi. My study follows Brown’s definition of the Latin West geographically as the territory “from the western Balkans to Britain and from Trier to the edge of the Sahara,” xxi; chronologically, the “late Roman period” is defined by Brown as 350 – 550 CE in *Eye of the Needle*, xxi. Further, this study follows the definition posited by Brown for the periodization termed “Late Antiquity” in his publication of *The World of Late Antiquity* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971) and the chronology of late antiquity as “the period from about AD 200 to about 700,” 7.

⁷ For examples of this positive attitude, see historian of religion Alfred C. Rush, *Death and Burial in Christian Antiquity* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1941). Also, Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, esp. 41-43. Notably, these scholars and others view the positive, optimistic, and triumphant mood of the psalms sung at Christian funerals, and conducted by clergy, as the only outlook of Christians; they fail to note the continuing concern of “ordinary” Christian Romans about the perils facing the soul at death and during its journey into the afterlife—a continuation of the Roman perspective. The term “Christian Roman” is used in Thomas Jürgasch, “Christians and the Invention of Paganism in the Late Roman Empire,” in *Pagans and Christians in late Antique Rome: Conflict, Competition, and Co-Existence in the Fourth Century*, edited by Michele R. Salzman, Marianne Sághy, and Rita L. Testa (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 125-30; also, in Bengt Holmberg, ed. “Understanding the First Hundred Years of Christian Identity,” in *Exploring Early Christian Identity* (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 6-10. Éric Rebillard in *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity: North Africa, 200-450 CE* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 2-3 argues that “we should no longer assume that the behaviour of Christians was predominantly determined by their religious allegiance (despite the demands of their bishops) . . . we should instead ask how and in which contexts Christianness became salient in Christians’ everyday life.”

First, the work of Peter Brown, Ramsay MacMullen, and other scholars of late antiquity have proven that Christianity was part of the religious transformation of the period and drew from Roman culture and traditions. For example, Brown demonstrated how the shift in terms of patronage and wealth influenced ideas about the afterlife⁸ and MacMullen established how the cult of the martyrs drew upon the Roman cult of the ancestors.⁹ My investigation tracks the footsteps of these scholars because it follows their similar assumption that Christian ideas, beliefs, rituals and practices were not created *ex nihilo*. Christians drew from Roman culture; in the case of funeral rituals these “Christian Romans” adopted and then adapted the familiar Roman rites. My study differs in terms of its focus on the evolution of the funeral process (*per se*) rather than on specific beliefs associated with specific funeral rituals or views of death and the afterlife.

Second, the previous assumption based on the old paradigm has also been challenged by the work of Valerie Hope who focused on the Roman funeral ritual process rather than elite writings about death and cosmology.¹⁰ Her work indicated the complexity and diversity of expression in terms of Roman death. She also pointed out the significance of the family control over funeral rituals and that Roman social structures reflected and were supported by the rituals. Her work provides the baseline or foundation for this study by outlining some of the basic practices performed by the family and the significance of those practices in terms of the familial interaction between/with the dead. In other words, for my study, rather than focusing on the concepts found in the Christian writings of the elite, this study concentrates on

⁸ Brown, *Eye of the Needle*. Also, Peter Brown, *The Ransom of the Soul: Afterlife and Wealth in Early Western Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

⁹ Ramsay MacMullen, *The Second Church: Popular Christianity AD 200-400* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009). Also, MacMullen, “Christian Ancestor Worship in Rome.” *Journal of Biblical Studies* 129, no. 3 (2010): 597-613.

¹⁰ Valerie M. Hope, *Roman Death: The Dying and the Dead in Ancient Rome* (London, UK: Continuum, 2009).

the actions; that is, what Christians *did* rather than what some Christians *believed*. Hope's work also directed my own study towards the significance of familial control over funeral rituals. In addition, my study demonstrates the significance of the domestic *place* for Christian funeral practices; a significance evident in the interplay between the clergy and family and the role of house monasticism, as an alternative *family*, in the adaptation of the rituals.

And third, this study confirms and expands upon the observations made by Éric Rebillard suggesting that Christianity, counter to previous scholarship, did not exercise control over cemeteries until the early middle ages, and the key ideas indicating that “the communion of saints” was a concept late in development.¹¹ Rebillard's observations implied that Christianity developed its own funeral rituals much later than previously assumed—an implication validated by my own study. In addition, this study outlines the significance of the cemeteries as places controlled by family rather than church, and that the Roman concept of “family and ancestors” impacted and affected some of the key ideas for the “communion of saints.”

Past Scholarship

A review of past scholarship dealing with the origins and formation of Christian funeral rites in the Latin West ca. 180 – 800 CE is the task of this chapter. The scholarship selected for examination has been partitioned as follows: (1) the foundational work of the earliest pioneer on the subject, (2) the work of the first Roman scholar following the thirty-year hiatus in research—which had, by then, divided into two disciplinary streams, Roman and Christian,

¹¹ Éric Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity*, translated by E. Trapnell Rawlings and J. Routier-Pucci (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009).

(3) the next Roman scholar to study the funeral and who did so by treating the funeral in its entirety, and 4) analysis of the scholars who returned to the original thesis of Christian practices arising out of Roman rites. This investigation of past scholarship examines (1) major assumptions and limitations, (2) data types and methods of collection, and (3) contributions to the field of late antiquity studies. The intention of the literature review is to identify gaps relevant to my own topic so that in subsequent chapters, this study can apply some new assumptions, a unique combination of methodologies, and a fresh view of the primary data to explore the transformation of funerary rituals as Christianity itself transitioned through late antiquity.

Alfred C. Rush: The Pioneer Who Anticipated Later Scholarship

I begin by surveying the work of Alfred C. Rush, a pioneer in the study of pagan funerary rituals and the development of Christian burial rituals.¹² How did he view the adaptation and assimilation of death/burial rituals in light of new Christian ideals emerging in the first five

¹² The highly ambiguous term “pagan” begs some clarification. According to Prudence Jones and Nigel Pennick, *A History of Pagan Europe* (London: Routledge, 1995), 1, *pagan* (with small ‘p’) was “often used pejoratively to mean simply ‘uncivilised’, or even ‘un-Christian’ (the two generally being assumed to be identical), in the same way that ‘heathen’ is used. Its literal meaning is ‘rural’, ‘from the countryside (*pagus*)’. As a religious designation it was used first by early Christians in the Roman Empire to describe followers of the other (non-Jewish) religions.” Taking the definition of *pagan* a bit farther, Christopher P. Jones, *Between Pagan and Christian* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 3, states that non-Christians were sometimes referred to by Christian Greek authors as “Hellenes” or “gentiles” (*gentilis*) in reference to “high culture”; “pagan” also meant “idolater,” “polytheist” or “godless” (*atheoi*) since the many gods that pagans believed in were considered by Christians as “no gods at all,” 3-4. In the fourth century, another term of “popular origin, *paganus*” emerged when Roman soldiers in the West used the word *paganus*, contemptuously, for civilians or non-enlisted soldiers, 5. Since early Christians thought of themselves as “soldiers of Christ,” the *pagani* were non-Christians or those living in the countryside “in barbaric villages,” 5. See W. R. Jones, “The Image of the Barbarian in Medieval Europe,” in *Medieval Ethnographies: European Perceptions of the World Beyond*, edited by Joan-Pau Rubies (New York: Routledge, 2017), 358; Jones explains that by the seventh century, the cultural distinction between “Roman” and “barbarian” had become a religious otherness marking the differences between the Catholic Christian and the barbarian “who was the heathen or the Arian heretic” residing typically among the unconverted tribes.

centuries of the current era? As early as 1941 Rush anticipated what would become the thrust of later scholarship on the topic including my own study.

Alfred C. Rush published his PhD dissertation, *Death and Burial in Christian Antiquity*, in 1941. His work as an historian of early Christianity is especially significant because prior scholarship on the topic had followed a very different set of assumptions about the emergence of Christianity. The standard consensus among historians of religion in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth century—and indeed, rarely challenged before the 1970s—was that ancient paganism and the Roman Empire mattered naught after Constantine.¹³ Following the Peace of the Church, so the theory went, Christianity, the “newly triumphant faith,” saw the demise of the ancient world and the rise of the Christian Empire. Most scholars prior to the 1970s assumed that Christianity rejected its Jewish roots and quickly triumphed over Greco-Roman paganism. Prevailing thought accepted the idea of one unified and orthodox Christianity in the West. Moreover, the standard analysis of Christianity centered on clergy and theology—in short, the institutional church. There was little to no consideration given to the domestic/private worship of lay people, or even to the relevance of lay Christianity.¹⁴ However, Rush’s dissertation was very different. It hinted at innovation.

Innovation is evident in Rush’s hypotheses. First, he anticipated the paradigm shift that would materialize under Peter Brown in the 1970s. Rush moved away from the scholarly understanding that ancient society was comprised of two very distinct and separate factions: a

¹³ See historian Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 6 vols. (London: Strahan & Cadell, 1776-1789); see also historian of classical antiquity A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284–602: A Social, Economic and Administrative Survey* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964).

¹⁴ Challenges to Gibbons and Jones appear in MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism*, 2. See also historian Averil Cameron, *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity, AD 395–600* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 4-6. And, scholar of history and religion David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 7, 11. Also, Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981).

superior educated or “enlightened” minority and a uneducated “vulgar” majority.¹⁵ Rush incorporated the “folk traditions” of death rituals into his study alongside the writings of the literate elite. Second, he suggested that Christianity was not as monolithic as previously thought. His premise maintained that Christianity arose amid Jewish and Greco-Roman traditions and was therefore influenced by those cultures “to no little degree,” as he puts it.¹⁶ Third, Rush’s argument developed through a comparative analysis of paganism with Christianity. This comparative analysis focused on broad categories based on different stages of the death rituals (i.e. care of the dying, preparation of the dead for burial, celebration of a wake, etc.). In this way, Rush anticipated the later incorporation of insights from anthropology and ritual studies (nearly thirty years into the future) that guided the work of Valerie M. Hope on Roman death rituals and Frederick S. Paxton on Christian funerary rites.

Within the broad ritual categories for death, Rush engaged in comparative analysis of the perceived commonalities of actions and ideas. His analysis was reflective of the work of Mircea Eliade and the History of Religions School (*Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*), a prominent association of German Protestant biblical scholars (1880-1920) who made “extensive use of data from the comparative study of religion in the interpretation of Christianity” at the turn of the twentieth century.¹⁷ The History of Religions School (HRS) held that religious texts must be considered in light of their own particular evolution; it traced the historical development of Judaism and Christianity but also sought comparison with other

¹⁵ Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, 18-22, 30-33.

¹⁶ Rush, *Death and Burial*, vii.

¹⁷ See professor of biblical studies Wayne A. Meeks, “The History of Religions School (*Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*),” Part II, ch. 4 in *The New Cambridge History of the Bible: From 1750 to the Present*, vol. 4, edited by John Riches, New Cambridge History of the Bible (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2015), accessed January 13, 2020, doi:10.1017/CHO9780511842870.008. See also mid-twentieth century historian of religion Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, translated by Rosemary Sheed (London: Sheed and Ward, 1958), xi-xv.

ancient religions—Babylonian, Egyptian, and Greco-Roman. Indeed, the comparative analysis of HRS revealed some of the Roman and Jewish roots of Christianity. At the same time, by incorporating the HRS style of comparison, Rush received some of the same criticism that was directed at Eliade’s analysis: over-generalization to the point of moving from shared patterns to universalities and neglect of socio-historical context. In addition, training in Patristics in the 1940s combined with the evolutionary theories of the HRS, left little wonder why Rush ultimately arrived at the simple conclusion that western civilization evolved from primitive polytheism and paganism toward more sophisticated monotheism and Christianity.¹⁸

As noted, Rush’s major contribution was implying Christianity’s evolution from previous religious philosophies. One example of Rush’s argument for the pagan roots of Christian death rituals involved the crowning of the dead. In the cultures of the Mediterranean region—Mycenaean, Greek, Etruscan, and Roman—the custom was to crown the deceased in preparation for the wake, the funeral procession, and burial.¹⁹ The crowns were usually garlands or floral wreaths or sometimes diadems made of gold; they generally symbolized victory in reaching the end of life, being consecrated to a god, and/or assuming sanctity or divinity in death.²⁰ Rush noted that Christian leaders originally denounced and rejected “pagan crowns.” He cited the objections of Tertullian, Minucius Felix, and Clement of Alexandria concerning pagan connotations of “crowning the dead.”²¹ Tertullian, for instance, charged that the ritual was “idolatrour” and “too pagan” because it was inappropriate for Christians to

¹⁸ Patristics scholar Charles Kannengiesser noted this evolutionary trend in “The Future of Patristics,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 52 (1991): 128-39.

¹⁹ Rush, *Death and Burial*, 133-36; Rush reflects the history of religions where general patterns override considerations of socio-historical context.

²⁰ Rush, *Death and Burial*, 135.

²¹ Rush, *Death and Burial*, 137-40.

crown their dead as if they were pagan “idols.”²² Rush explained that the church’s response shifted when the episcopate offered an alternative meaning for what had become a persistent ritual enacted by the people. The bishops promoted particular passages from the New Testament to impress upon the faithful there was a “crown of life” waiting at the end of a Christian life well-lived (1 Cor 9:24-25; 2 Tim 4:6-8; 1 Pet 5:4, and Jas 1:12); similarly, stories from the *Acts of the Martyrs* about heroes of the faith were retold to remind the people that a “crown of martyrdom” awaited those who died defending the name of Christ during the Roman persecutions.²³ For Christians who did not die martyrs but lived their lives as faithful witnesses to Christ, leaders such as Jerome maintained that those souls would be awarded a “crown of lilies” as a “second kind of martyrdom,” for theirs was a heroic death without blood.²⁴ According to Rush, the early laity’s persistence with the Roman tradition of crowning the dead forced church leaders to substitute a Christian meaning, which led various Christian apologists to “christianize” parts of the prevailing culture without completely rejecting or replacing common practices.²⁵

Rush’s work also revealed that a similar process existed in the adoption and adaptation of “folk practices” around the idea and use of *viaticum*.²⁶ In the Greco-Roman tradition, the

²² Rush, *Death and Burial*, 138, citing Tertullian, *De corona militis (On the Military Garland)*, in *Opera*, vol. 1, edited by F. Oehler (Leipzig: 1853), 10.

²³ Rush, *Death and Burial*, 145-47.

²⁴ Rush, *Death and Burial*, 147-49, especially 148 citing Jerome, *Epistulae*, edited by I. Hilberg, *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum* 55 (Vienna, 1910-1918), 108.31 (hereafter cited as CSEL).

²⁵ Rush, *Death and Burial*, 137-41; on the topic of funeral crowns, Rush cites Tertullian, *Apologeticus*, 42.6 and *Ad nationes*, 1.10.26-27, 29; Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, 12.6, 38.3-4; Justin Martyr, *Apologia*, 1.9.1; and Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus*, 2.8.72.4.

²⁶ Rush, *Death and Burial*, vii-viii. While Rush did not pursue the blending or assimilation of the two parties “at odds” with each other (the institutional church and folk religions), his discussion was curiously similar to some new anthropological theories just in the incubation stage in the 1940s. By the 1950s a new notion had risen to the fore; developed by the American anthropologist, Robert Redfield, the new theory suggested that a “perpetual dialectic” created through a continuous dialogue and influence between two types of religious traditions, was characteristic of all societies; the result was the “great” tradition (the formal public priestly institution) and the “little” or private traditions (domestic folk practices); see anthropologist Robert Redfield, *The*

viaticum was a coin placed in the mouth or on the breast of the deceased prior to burial; the coin was intended to pay Charon, the ferryman of Hades, for safe passage of the spirit of the deceased across the River Styx to the world of the dead.²⁷ In the christianization of this process, a different *viaticum*, the eucharist, administered prior to death supplanted the coin.²⁸ The church ratified this practice at the Council of Orange in 441 CE, which stated in canon 3 that the eucharist given at the time of death was for “the consolation of the dying person and that it is aptly called by the Fathers a *Viaticum*.”²⁹ Further, the Christian *viaticum* (the eucharist) was considered more potent than the *viaticum* of the Romans (the coin for Charon) because the eucharist was Christ himself as protector on the perilous journey to God (*migratio ad Dominum*).³⁰ However, as Rush explained, there was a distinction between *viaticum* for the dying (permitted by church authorities) and *viaticum* for the deceased—an adaptation of the Roman practice, not permitted by church authorities but favoured by much of the laity.³¹

Primitive World and its Transformations (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1953) and *Peasant Society and Culture: An Anthropological Approach to Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956).

²⁷ See Lucian, *Charon*, edited and translated by A. M. Harmon, vol. 2, LCL 54 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1915), 168-84. Also, Plautus, *Bacchides*, edited and translated by John Barsby (Warminster, UK: Aris and Phillips, 1986), 1.94. And Paulinus, *Vita S. Ambrosii*, translated by J. A. Lacy, in *Early Christian Biographies*, Fathers of the Church 15, edited by R. Deferrai, 27-66 (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1952, 2001).

²⁸ Rush, *Death and Burial*, vii-viii. Rush suggests that the transformation of death rituals was simply a matter of accepting “folk customs” minus those linked with “pagan ideas” or “idolatry”; however, in his examples of funerary rituals he implies that ancient “folk customs” were essentially “pagan” and “idolatrous” in character, thereby conflating the two words *pagan* and *folk*. And for more on the early use of the Christian eucharist, see theologian Gregory Grabka, “Christian Viaticum: A Study of Its Cultural Background,” *Traditio* 9 (1953): 1-43.

²⁹ Rush, *Death and Burial*, 93, 98. For the Council of Orange (441 CE), see theologian and historian J. Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio* (Paris: H. Welter, 1901-1927), 6.436-37 (canon 3).

³⁰ Rush, *Death and Burial*, 95. Paxton adds that the early Christian belief/concern in the *migratio* (voyage) of the soul to heaven “through the realms of the demons of the air,” was ameliorated with the aid of baptism, anointing with oil, and the ninth century prayers for the dead; see Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 111, 174 and 206. For discussion of Christ as protector (*psychopompos*) during *migratio* to heaven, see Grabka, “Christian Viaticum,” 7-14.

³¹ Rush, *Death and Burial*, 95. Rush is correct that the *viaticum* was the major ritual requirement before death; however, according to Christian tomb inscriptions, early prayers, and the reconstructed sacramentaries and *ordos*, Christ was not the only guide and protector for the deceased; additional assistance came from the martyrs, saints, and angels.

Many Christian families felt the need to administer eucharistic *viaticum* to their loved ones after death just as they would have provided the coin to pay Charon.³² Condemnation by the bishops for the practice of giving *viaticum* to dead bodies appeared at the Synod of Hippo (393 CE), the Third Council of Carthage (397 CE), the Synod of Carthage (525 CE), and at the Council of Auxerre (579 CE), all of which repeated the prohibitions that the eucharist was not to be administered to corpses.³³ As Rush pointed out, despite condemnation by the bishops, folk practices governed the administration of the *viaticum* throughout most of Christian late antiquity.³⁴

One of Rush's basic assumptions, one shared by a number of scholars is that for Romans, death had a negative connotation.³⁵ Rush concluded that this "fear of death" was a

³² Rush, *Death and Burial*, 99.

³³ Rush, *Death and Burial*, 99-100. Proceedings of the Synod of Hippo (393 CE) are lost but are given in abridged form in the documentation of the Third Council of Carthage (397 CE) in Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum*, 3.850. Therefore, canon 5 of the Synod of Hippo is interpolated in Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum*, 3.895 as: "*corporibus defunctis eucharistia non detur.*" For repetition of the Hippo decree, see canon 6 at the Third Council of Carthage (397 CE) in Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum*, 3.881, which adds that because Christ said, "Take and eat" the eucharist, and it is not possible for a corpse to "Take and eat," that the eucharist shall not be given to dead bodies: "*Item placuit, ut corporibus defunctorum eucharistia non detur. Dictum est enim a Domino accipite et edite. Cadavera autem nec accipere possunt nec edere.*" The decree was renewed at the Synod of Carthage (525 CE); see Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum*, 8.643. And again, at the Council of Auxerre (578 CE), see canon 12 in Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum*, 9.913, which states in part, "*non licet mortuis nec eucharistiam nec osculum tradi . . .*" Further, the Council of Trullo, held in Constantinople in 691 CE, submitted legislation that was intended for "the then entire church both East and West"; the bishops ruled once again to censure the practice of giving *viaticum* to the dead; see theologian C. J. Hefele, *A History of the Councils of the Church*, AD 626 to 787, vol. V, translated and edited by William R. Clark (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1896), bk. 17, 234, canon 83. For further discussion on the eucharist given to corpses, see A. C. Rush, "The Eucharist: The Sacrament of the Dying in Christian Antiquity," *The Jurist* 34 (1974): 32.

³⁴ Rush, *Death and Burial*, 99-100.

³⁵ Epigraphs indicate that for Romans, especially for those who died young or very suddenly, death was a dark and "evil" event brought about by "angry gods" who created a "cruel" end or a "bitter fate," points out Rush in *Death and Burial*, 23-24. Examples of inscriptions suggesting these sentiments appear in the collection, *Carmina latina epigraphica*, edited by Franz Bücheler, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1895); (hereafter cited as CLE); see, for instance, CLE at 1.59.30-31 and 1.75.39 ("cruel death"); 2.1100.504 ("hostile death"); 1.69.36 ("bitter lot"); 1.219.104 ("bitter death") and 1.143.77 ("fatal power"). For the digital edition, see *Carmina latina epigraphica*, post editam collectionem Buechelerianam in lucem prolata, edited by Einar Engström and Franz Bücheler (1912), accessed February 21, 2020, <https://archive.org/details/carminalatinaepi00engsuoft/page/n4/mode/2up>. And for further discussion of *psychopompos*, see Grabka, "Christian Viaticum," 7-14.

universal attitude among pagans.³⁶ A select few souls could count on the guidance and protection of a kindly spirit or god, a *psychopompos*, on the journey through unspeakable perils to reach the afterlife.³⁷ Citing funerary inscriptions and excerpts from classical writers, Rush argued that the notion of *psychopompos* was common in Greek and Roman beliefs.³⁸ And, to show there was continuity over time, he cited passages from the New Testament, the Christian *Apocrypha*, Gnostic texts, and hagiographies of the saints thus confirming that similar dangers awaited the Christian soul on the way to paradise but that “an angel of the Lord” would deliver the soul in safety.³⁹ Rush cited confirmation of this idea in *Confessions*

³⁶ For an account of the terrifying and negative outlook on death, see Euripides, *Alcestis*, edited and translated by David Kovacs, vol. 1, LCL 12 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994). However, among pagans a negative attitude toward death was not always the case. Éric Rebillard asserts, for example, the Roman feast of the *Parentalia* was a family celebration of joy in memory of those deceased; the attitude of the festival was positive and hopeful, see Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 142-45. Further, see Hope, *Roman Death*, especially chap. 4, “Heaven and Hell,” 97-120 regarding the range of perspectives on death and the dead; there was little uniformity about what happened after death.

³⁷ For the Greeks and Romans, many believed the dead crossed over into the afterlife on a boat rowed by Charon the ferryman; see Rush, *Death and Burial*, 27; 44-54. See also, historian of religions Franz Cumont, *After Life in Roman Paganism* (New Haven, CT: 1922), 94. Notably, Rush uses Cumont’s work extensively throughout his own when referencing Roman eschatology; Cumont, however, very much relies on the idea of Christianity as separate from and unique to the paganism of the Romans; as well Cumont leans heavily on comparison without concern for socio-historical context; see George D. Hadzsits, review of *After Life in Roman Paganism* by Franz Cumont (1922), *The Classical Weekly* 20, no 21 (April, 1927): 168-69; also W. R. Halliday, review of *After Life in Roman Paganism* by Franz Cumont (1922), *The Classical Review* 37, no.3/4 (May – June, 1923): 87-88.

³⁸ Rush, *Death and Burial*, 27-29. See also, Plato, *Phaedo*, edited and translated by Chris Emlyn-Jones, vol. 1, LCL 36 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 170 D – 108 C. For instance, the god Hermes as *psychopompos* is referenced in two inscriptions from the collection, *Epigrammata Graeca*, edited by Denys L. Page, *Oxford Classical Texts* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1976), 414.8-10 and 312.8-16. Horace mentions the god Mercury as *psychopompos* in “*Carmina*” in *Odes and Epodes*, edited and translated by Niall Rudd, LCL 33 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 1.10.17-18. Tibullus mentions the goddess Venus leading the dead to Elysium in *Carmina*, translated by F. W. Cornish, J. P. Postgate, and J. W. Mackail, revised by G. P. Goold, LCL 6 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913), 1.3.57-58.

³⁹ Angels, by the power of Christ, carry the soul to heaven; see Rush, *Death and Burial*, 33-34, citing the *Acts of John*, the *Acts of Thomas*, and the *Apocalypse of Paul*. In the apocryphal *Acts of John*, for example, the author prayed for the protection of a *psychopompos* on the way to heaven, saying: “Let angels follow, let devils fear ... let Satan be derided ... his wrath be burned out ... his madness be stilled ... his vengeance be ashamed ... his assault be in pain ... and all his roots plucked up”; see *Acts of John* in *The Apocryphal New Testament*, edited by M. James (Oxford, 1926), 114. In the literature of Judaism, the lion typically symbolized terror and destruction; for instance, Psalm 21:22 and Psalm 7:2-3; see Rush, *Death and Burial*, 30. Further, in the New Testament (1 Peter 5:8) the devil is envisioned as a lion “who goes about seeking whom he may devour.” Also, in Luke 16:22, relating the parable of the rich man and the beggar, Christ states: “And it came to pass that the beggar died and was carried by angels into Abraham’s bosom.” Similarly, the struggles of the martyrs and many of the saints on their journeys to heaven “amid incessant dangers prepared for them by the devil” are described in

when Augustine related that his mother, Monica, was borne upon the wings of angels to escape the snares of the lion and the dragon on her way to paradise.⁴⁰ By using over-generalization and universals, Rush assumed it was “fear of death” that prompted all cultures, from the ancient Egyptians through to Christianity, to create a *psychopompos* to guide one to an afterlife. However, as subsequent scholars such as Hope would argue, this “fear of death” was not necessarily a major belief among the Romans; Paxton and Éric Rebillard agreed that the Christian position (of the church) viewed human mortality as more pragmatic in terms of accepting death.

Nonetheless, aside from the aforementioned critique, Rush’s work deserves credit on several fronts. First, as J. C. Plumpe comments in a scholarly review in 1943, Rush must be commended for the care and attention given to detail, for “the great mass” of data, the “scope and wealth of the materials discussed,” and his “record of great industry ... extensive reading

detail in their hagiographies in the *Acts of the Martyrs*; each death is seen as “a fight with Satan,” see Rush, *Death and Burial*, 31. An example from the *Acts of the Martyrs* is the story of Perpetua and Felicitas (third century in Carthage); it describes Perpetua’s battle in the amphitheater with the formidable “Egyptian” (who was really the devil) and her transformation into a man in order to fight the fearsome Egyptian; only the *psychopompoi*, God’s angels, could protect Perpetua’s soul and the souls of other martyrs and carry them safely and in glory to Paradise; see chap. 11 of the *Acts of Perpetua and Felicitas* at *Early Christian Writings Online*, accessed January 18, 2020, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/perpetua.html>. Another instance is taken from the fifth century in the biography of St. Melania the Younger, written by Gerontius, which describes Melania as watching with joy as the angels came to carry her to a heavenly reward; see Gerontius, “Life of Melania the Younger,” in *Lives of Roman Christian Women*, translated by Carolinne White (New York: Penguin, 2010), 68. Arguably, some of Rush’s sources, particularly from the New Testament *Apocrypha* and Gnostic texts, were considerably limited in the 1940s; the *Apocryphal* texts had not yet been fully studied (or even discovered) and the Nag Hammadi cluster of Gnostic codices would not be accessible for another twenty-five years; see *The Gnostic Society Library Online*, s.v. “The Nag Hammadi Library,” accessed January 18, 2020, <http://gnosis.org/naghamm/nhl.html>. Moreover, as outlined by T. Burke, a great deal of scholarship and debate on the Christian *Apocrypha* would not take place until the mid-twentieth century; see religious studies scholar Tony Burke, “Early Christian *Apocrypha* in Contemporary Theological Discourse,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Apocrypha*, edited by A. Gregory and C. Tuckett, 441-458 (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2015). Today the aim of scholars is to better understand what the *Apocrypha* “says of Christianity in its many forms throughout the centuries of the texts’ composition,” with less emphasis on their theology “in the sense of determining religious truth”; see Burke, “Early Christian,” 253.

⁴⁰ Augustine quoting from Psalm 90.13 states, “Let not the lion and dragon intrude ...” in *Confessions*, vol. 2, bks. 9-13, translated by Carolyn J. -B. Hammond, LCL 27 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 9.13.

and generally sound judgment.”⁴¹ Second, Rush also deserves praise for his contributions toward understanding the transformation of funeral rituals in late antiquity. He employed broad literary data regarding Roman/pagan perspectives and practices in terms of death and burial, and his textual evidence included classical, canonical, and non-canonical documents comprising the works of Greek and Roman writers, historians, and poets.⁴² Third, praiseworthy, too, is the fact that Rush’s database included archaeological evidence and material culture in the form of epitaphs, iconographic plates from tombstones (many discovered near Rome), Greek funerary plaques, relief carvings and sculptures, *cippi* (stone grave markers), and funerary reliefs from sarcophagi to illustrate various aspects of ancient Greek and Roman death rituals (though few of Christian provenance).⁴³ Notably, much of this evidence was the result of *recovery* and *display*, the common approach of scholars in the early twentieth century when detailed attention to socio-historical context and interpretation were generally lacking.⁴⁴ These factors would have restricted Rush’s access to relevant material evidence for early Christian funerary rituals and impeded analysis in terms of socio-cultural context. Fourth, despite the obstacles, Rush’s compilation of Roman material demonstrated a coherent description of the multi-stage Roman funerary process that has been duplicated by the work of later scholars (e.g., J. M. C. Toynbee and V. Hope to be discussed later).⁴⁵ Finally,

⁴¹ J. C. Plumpe, Review of *Death and Burial in Christian Antiquity* (1941) by Alfred C. Rush, *Classical Weekly* 36, no. 15 (March, 1943): 178-79.

⁴² Plumpe, Review of *Death and Burial* by A. C. Rush, 177-78.

⁴³ For examples of material/archaeological evidence, see Rush, *Death and Burial*, 35, 49, 136, 185-86, 200, 223, 239, 240, 250, and 255-56.

⁴⁴ Sister Charles Murray notes that for most of the twentieth century there were difficulties surrounding accurate recovery of evidence; items were often not examined *in situ* and it was a challenge to confirm origins, sites had been destroyed or robbed, and related literature was lost; see, Murray, *Rebirth and Afterlife: A Study of the Transmutation of Some Pagan Imagery in Early Christian Funerary Art*, BAR International Series 100 (Oxford, UK, 1981), 1-2. Additionally, historian and archaeologist William H. C. Frend notes the paucity of early Christian archaeology; see *The Archaeology of Early Christianity: A History* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1996), 222-25.

⁴⁵ Rush’s sequencing of the Roman death process is as follows: (a) the acts performed before and at the time of death—straightening the limbs, catching the last breath, the final kiss, and administering the *viaticum*; (b) the

Rush acknowledged the church's engagement with, and adoption and adaption of the Roman funeral process. Problematic in this analysis, however, was the categories-of-religion approach (inherited from Eliade and the History of Religions School), which created the tendency to combine all pagan religions together for the purpose of comparison. Today scholars recognize the limitations and constraints inherent in the Eliade and HRS methodology. In order to compare data and reach well-informed conclusions, modern scholars address "the complex interplays and mutual influences" among and between the entities under consideration.⁴⁶ Or, as Jonathan Z. Smith would have it, when making comparisons in the study of religions "it is not the elements but the relations between the elements that are significant."⁴⁷ Further, the socio-historical context or "historical narrative" tends to be omitted in a descriptive-comparative approach, and, in the case of Rush, most often little attention was given to patterns or processes that may have existed when the traditions originally interacted.⁴⁸ For instance, since it is the prerogative of all traditions to interpret themselves relative "to their historical past and social present," the socio-historical interpretation becomes "an important element of method and theory with regard to comparison."⁴⁹ In Smith's view, the technique of

acts performed immediately following death—closing the eyes and mouth, the *conclamatio* or calling out the name of the deceased; (c) washing the body after the *depositio* or lifting the body from the bed to the floor; (d) anointing the body with oil/salt/resin/ perfumes/ointments and/or spices; (e) clothing the body; (f) crowning the dead; (g) the wake in the home and/or the vigil at the grave; (h) mourning the dead—consisting of *planctus*/gestures and *nenia*/song/dirge and/or music, especially by women, from the time of death till the disposal of the body; (i) the funeral procession and transport of the body to the gravesite amid torches/lamps/candles; (j) the burial following the *vale* or farewell, the *laudatio funebris* or eulogy, and the final *nenia*; see Rush, *Death and Burial*, 91-273. For comparison of Rush's funeral sequence with those of J. M. C. Toynbee and V. Hope, see Appendix A of this study. See professor of classical archaeology J. M. C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1971).

⁴⁶ See sociologist Reza Azarian, "Potentials and Limitations of Comparative Method in Social Science," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 1, no. 4 (April, 2011): 120.

⁴⁷ See historian of religions Jonathan Z. Smith, *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 2004), 21.

⁴⁸ Azarian, "Potentials and Limitations," 121.

⁴⁹ Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 107.

looking equally at the traditions under consideration brings a kind of “parity” to the exercise in terms of the “historical processes of reinterpretation.”⁵⁰

There was also bias in Rush’s work, both in terms of viewing Christianity as a “logical” evolution that “corrected” pagan primitive views, and in terms of gender. These biases are revealed, for instance, in the way Rush portrayed the expressions of grief from Greco-Roman to Christianity. He summarized behaviors at pagan funerals—the wailing, gestures and words of grief and sorrow, especially by women—as “violent manifestations of mourning.”⁵¹ Explaining the mourning by those bereaved as a combination of words/song (*nenia*) and gestures (*planctus*), Rush emphasized the extremes of the Greek funeral dirge sung or chanted antiphonally by women.⁵² He described Roman ritual laments in a similar way.⁵³ The purpose of the “pagan dirge,” asserted Rush, was to lead the spirit of the deceased to the grave, suggesting therefore, that music “exercised a necromantic influence on the spirits of the dead.”⁵⁴ Rush cited the episcopate (e.g., Tertullian and Cyprian) struggling against the continuity of pagan mourning practices, particularly as used by women, for women were “especially attached” to extreme displays of emotion.⁵⁵ Rush’s comments adduced the

⁵⁰ Smith, *Drudgery Divine*, 106-107.

⁵¹ Rush, *Death and Burial*, 163.

⁵² The *nenia* and *planctus* are discussed at length as female demonstrations of “excessive sorrow,” “wild lament,” and “violent grief” in the performance of the funeral dirge accompanied by music; see, Rush, *Death and Burial*, 163-176.

⁵³ Rush used funerary reliefs as examples including one held by the Thermen Museum in Rome; it depicts the wake of a Roman woman attended by musicians; another example is the Haterii relief (held in the Lateran Museum at the Vatican) portraying the wake of another Roman woman, this time attended by musicians, wailing women, visitors, and family; both examples clearly illustrate the *planctus* (gestures of mourning) and the *nenia* (singing the song of lament); see Rush, *Death and Burial*, 166-69 and Plates IV and V. Consistent with this period of scholarship, Rush regards visual depictions as “records” of actual events rather than rhetorical (idealistic) depictions designed to persuade or reinforce specific social or cultural values. For a brief history on the shift in analyzing art, see Janet H. Tulloch, “Women Leaders in Family Funerary Banquets,” in *A Woman’s Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity*, edited by Carolyn Osiek and Margaret Y. MacDonald with J. H. Tulloch, 164-93 (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2006).

⁵⁴ Rush, *Death and Burial*, 169. For the Roman belief in the power of music over the spirits of the dead, see Apuleius, *Metamorphoses (The Golden Ass)*, vol. 2, edited and translated by J. Arthur Hansen, LCL 453 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

⁵⁵ Rush, *Death and Burial*, 174-81.

“hysterical woman” trope⁵⁶ so very prevalent in examinations of women in antiquity. He did not, however, understand the significance of the trope at the time of his study. Later scholars (V. Hope, M. Alexiou, and others) were able to show that a critical function of funerary rituals was to accommodate grief and mourning, and that ritual lament was fundamental to Jewish and Greco-Roman funerals.⁵⁷ On this subject, the final chapter of my study will argue that early-to-late antique Christians took very seriously (1) the need for grief and mourning; (2) the Roman obligation of *pietas* (familial love) including the duty to mourn and remember the dead; (3) the idea that mourning was a particular responsibility of the family and the special role of women; and (4) that these matters required attention before negotiation of a Christian response to death could be achieved.

In summing up Rush’s scholarship, there are two major points that he brought to light: (1) the Roman rituals for death were gradually incorporated and transformed by Christianity, and (2) this process involved a dialectical “give and take” between the elite male clergy and the Christian laity. Curiously, despite his innovative awareness and the significance of his contributions, Rush’s work was not followed to any extent after its publication in 1941. Over the next several decades, scholarship on death and funerals divided along disciplinary lines with Roman studies on the one side, and Christian history on the other. The overlooking of Rush’s work was made evident in 1971 when J. M. C. Toynbee—regarded as one of the

⁵⁶ Religious studies scholar Margaret Y. MacDonald explains the power of “hysterical women” and the use of this trope in the Roman world; women were charged with excesses in matters of religion, including demon possession, sorcery, and superstition in general; women’s authority as religious practitioners was perceived as threatening to those (men) in legitimate positions of power; ultimately, women (especially the grieving mother, wife, or daughter at funerals) became the object of careful scrutiny and public opinion by leaders of the early church, which, in turn, affected early Christian teaching regarding women; see MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion: The Power of the Hysterical Woman* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 2, 5, 109, 115-17.

⁵⁷ See scholar of modern Greek studies Margaret Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition*, 2nd ed., revised by D. Yatromanolakis and P. Roilos (Lanham, MA: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002).

founding mothers of the analysis of Roman death and burial rites—never mentioned Rush whatsoever in her work, and Frederick S. Paxton (1990)—extolled for his study of Christian death liturgy reaching into the early middle ages—relegated Rush to one brief footnote in which he questioned Rush’s findings.⁵⁸

Jocelyn M. C. Toynbee

Thirty years after Rush’s study of death and burial in Christian antiquity, J. M. C. Toynbee—archaeologist and Roman art historian—wrote *Death and Burial in the Roman World*. Her work reportedly described Roman funerary customs and Roman beliefs about the afterlife stressing what were characterized as “habits of thought”; most important for Toynbee were the forms of artistic expression and architectural design associated with the cult of the dead.⁵⁹ In addition, *Death and Burial in the Roman World* was more descriptive than argumentative. The study begins with the Etruscan antecedents to Roman death and burial practices and progresses through to Christian antiquity (fourth century and beyond). The result is a work heavily skewed toward an archaeological study in tomb types, unsurprising, given Toynbee’s expertise in archaeology and Roman art. Her textual evidence is comprised mainly of classical Roman literature, so her literary analysis is not as broad as that of Rush. Unfortunately, a bibliography is absent from the book, making it difficult to survey the full array of textual sources.⁶⁰ Much of the material evidence is presented visually in ninety-two photographic

⁵⁸ Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 1971. While Toynbee may not have mentioned Rush, Paxton challenged Rush’s use of data from the *Vita S. Melaniae*, which discussed placing the eucharist as *viaticum* in the mouth, at the time of death; see Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 122n88. Of course, the topic of Christian use of *viaticum* was not related to the topic of Toynbee’s book, which dealt mainly with burial archaeology.

⁵⁹ Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 11.

⁶⁰ Eleanor M. Hawtrey, Review of *Death and Burial in the Roman World* (1971), by J. M. C. Toynbee, *Prudentia* 3, no. 2 (1971): 122. See also, classicist William Thurman, Review of *Death and Burial in the Roman World* (1971) by J. M. C. Toynbee, *The Modern Language Journal* 55, no. 7 (November, 1971): 483.

images and thirty diagrams/figures, along with a plethora of written descriptions of funerary paintings, reliefs, and tomb decorations.⁶¹ Focus is given to “the concrete manifestations of death” (archaeology and architecture), sprinkled with textual sources to support the material culture.⁶² The result is more about highlighting what the Romans *built* in response to death and less of what they *thought* about or *did* (in terms of rituals) with reference to death.⁶³ Notably, there is little discussion on Roman beliefs about the afterlife.⁶⁴ In other words, Toynbee’s work represents the period of scholarship when material culture was generally examined within the parameters of archaeology and the history of art/architecture, and when written material was analyzed by historians. Toynbee incorporates both material/visual culture and written sources into an analysis that appropriately represents and respects the uniqueness of each data source. It is significant that the technique of integrating textual and material/visual evidence using a socio-historical approach did not develop until later with the scholars of late antiquity (e.g., Peter Brown, David Frankfurter, and Robin Jenson) and Roman studies (e.g., Valerie Hope, Maureen Carroll, and Emma-Jayne Graham, among others).⁶⁵

⁶¹ Hawtrey, Review of *Death and Burial*, 122.

⁶² See classicist R. P. H. Green, Review of *Death and Burial in the Roman World* (1971) by J. M. C. Toynbee, *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (January 1971): 283.

⁶³ See philologist John E. Rexine, Review of *Death and Burial in the Roman World* (1971) by J. M. C. Toynbee, *The American Historical Review* 79, no. 5 (December, 1974): 1525.

⁶⁴ See Hawtrey, Review of *Death and Burial*, 121. Significantly Toynbee devotes only a small section to Roman beliefs concerning the afterlife in her book’s ch. 2 where she states, “[h]ere our primary concern is with the evidence, written and archaeological, for funerary practice”; still, Toynbee accedes that for many Romans epigraphy, literature, and the arrangement of tombs indicated a general conviction that “some kind of conscious existence is in store for the soul after death and that the dead and living can affect one another mutually,” see Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 33-34. Most notably, Toynbee anticipates one of the major points developed by V. M. Hope in 2009, that is, the importance in late antiquity of the relationship between the living and the dead.

⁶⁵ For instance: Hope, *Roman Death*; also, Maureen Carroll, “‘No Part in Earthly Things’: Death, Burial and Commemoration of Newborn Children and Infants in Roman Italy,” in *Families in the Imperial and late Antique Roman World*, edited by Mary Harlow and Lena Larsson Loven (London, UK: Continuum, 2012); and Emma-Jayne Graham, *The Burial of the Urban Poor in Italy in the Late Roman Republic and Early Empire* (Oxford, UK: Archeopress, 2006).

Toynbee's data is presented in a series of cultural/historical categories with greater emphasis on Etruscan and Roman burial, less attention to burial for Jews and early Christians.⁶⁶ The sections on "Roman Beliefs" and "Funerary Rites" briefly review Roman ideas/ideals about death and funerary practices, including burial customs and the cult of the dead.⁶⁷ Toynbee suggests that funeral practices carried general expectations, routine, or typical rituals commonly performed for Romans.⁶⁸ Yet, beyond a doubt only the wealthy elite and perhaps "middle-class" Romans could afford the expense of the elaborate death/burial rituals as portrayed. While Toynbee alludes to possible variations in funeral rituals because of the social status of the deceased, this point is often lost in her more general remarks about extensive commemorative celebrations, festivals, and construction of monuments for the dead. It is an example of what all scholars face: generalization is often due to limitations in the sources. On the one hand, Toynbee postulates that pomp and ceremony were important in the Roman funeral to reinforce family status and ensure the memory of the deceased.⁶⁹ On the other hand, she admits (specifically in her chapters five and six) not all Romans could afford flamboyant funerals and some of the poorest Romans were buried between the rows of house

⁶⁶ Toynbee stresses that her book is not intended to specifically examine either Jewish or Christian iconography or art style in any detail; however, she does spend time discussing art in general in the Jewish and Christian catacombs of Rome; see Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 234-44. Note, also: the identification of "Christian" iconography does not become culturally visible until late in the second century; see New Testament scholar Graydon F. Snyder, *Ante Pacem: Archaeological Evidence of Church Life before Constantine*, 2nd ed. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2003), 20-21.

⁶⁷ Toynbee cites classical references pertaining to preparation of the body for burial and the lying-in-state to receive visitors: Ovid, *Epistulae ex Ponto*, 2.2.45; Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.38.218-19; Martial, *Epigrams*, 9.57.8; Cicero, *De legibus*, 2.24.60; Juvenal, *Juvenal and Persius*, 3.267; Persius, *Juvenal and Persius*, 3.103-5; Varro, *De lingua latina*, 7.70; and Suetonius, *Domitian in Lives of the Caesars*, 17. Toynbee supports the remaining categories of the funerary process (categories which compare significantly with those identified by Rush) with a similar list of classical references. For a comparison in the depiction of the stages of the funerary sequence among Toynbee, Rush, and Hope, see Appendix A of this study.

⁶⁸ Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 43-64.

⁶⁹ Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 33-72.

tombs in the Isola Sacra necropolis south of Rome or simply in *amphorae* placed partially in the ground.⁷⁰

In reviewing Toynbee's research design, one critic describes Toynbee's treatment of the data as "conventional formal analysis," occasional application of social history, and lacking any clear statement of methodology.⁷¹ Without a doubt, *Death and Burial* is a work of description and not the argumentation of a thesis. It is also a book with a narrow focus, as mentioned above. Arguably, Toynbee emphasizes the wealthy sector of urban society and neglects rural examples and diverse regions.⁷² Absent also are substantive discussions about familial or communal relationships and the intersection of tradition and private self-expression.⁷³ I agree with critics that Toynbee offers little analysis in terms of the transitions or continuity from one historical period to another or from one culture to another; e.g., from the Etruscan to Greek to Roman traditions for death, or how these customs were modified or eventually adapted to Christianity.⁷⁴ Admittedly, this was not the thrust of scholarship in the 1970s.

Still, Toynbee's book has received praise for its ambitious "broad overview" of ancient Roman funerary monuments, and especially for its potential usefulness to art historians,

⁷⁰ Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 101, 253.

⁷¹ See classicist Joseph L. Rife, Review of *Death and Burial in the Roman World* (1971) by J. M. C. Toynbee, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, 97.6.10, accessed January 24, 2020, <http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/1997/97.06.10.html>.

⁷² Rife, Review of *Death and Burial*. See also, Thurman, Review of *Death and Burial*, 483.

⁷³ Rife, Review of *Death and Burial*.

⁷⁴ See classicist R. M. Ogilvie, Review of *Death and Burial in the Roman World* (1971) by J. M. C. Toynbee, *The Classical Review* 23, no. 2 (December, 1973): 260. See also, Rife, Review of *Death and Burial*. Notably, there are few Christian examples in Toynbee's work despite discussions that occur as late as the fifth century; this may have been due in part to Toynbee's main consideration for "Roman" evidence in the western empire, and Byzantine and Middle Eastern evidence in the eastern empire. The lack of "Christian" investigation raises the criticism of Toynbee's failure to acknowledge the transformation of Roman funerary/religious customs for death and burial. These transformations would have involved continuous assimilation, accommodation, and innovation—the result of the Romans interacting with Christian ideas, assimilated practices, and innovations—all of which developed over time and in diverse regions of the Roman world.

classical archaeologists, and others who might apply its research as a starting place for integrating diverse kinds of evidence in new research.⁷⁵ The book has been acknowledged for assembling a wide body of archaeological and architectural evidence for the Roman cult of the dead in one place; it is further praised as “one of the only comprehensive surveys on its vast topic in print [in the 1970s] as well as the standard reference for many classicists, despite the growing number of related publications” available at the time.⁷⁶ Indeed, Toynbee’s study became foundational for anyone examining late antique death and burial or changes in religiosity in the Roman world.⁷⁷ Yet, as discussed above, it focuses more on what was built to accommodate death and, therefore, lacks (for my purposes) analysis and interpretation in terms of understanding the formation of Christian rituals for death.

Valerie M. Hope

The first in-depth study on Roman death after Toynbee’s classic publication of 1971 came almost four decades later in the form of *Roman Death: Dying and the Dead in Ancient Rome* by Valerie M. Hope (2009). This book is now the “new standard” because it examines Roman death as “an integrated topic” rather than analyzing individual aspects of the funeral process.⁷⁸ Hope focuses on the ritual response to death as a systematic sequence of actions. For instance, in her introduction she states, “[t]his book seeks to integrate not just different types of evidence but also the varied facets of the process of death and dying—to trace all aspects of

⁷⁵ Rife, Review of *Death and Burial*.

⁷⁶ Rife, Review of *Death and Burial*.

⁷⁷ Examples of work citing Toynbee include: Hope, *Roman Death*; classicist Catharine Edwards, *Death in Ancient Rome* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007); Graham, *Burial of the Urban Poor*; also Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*; Paxton, *Christianizing Death*; Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*; Ramsay MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981); and anthropologists Peter Metcalf and Richard Huntington, *Celebrations of Death: The Anthropology of Mortuary Ritual*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

⁷⁸ Hope, *Roman Death*, 2-3.

the journey(s) followed by the dying, the dead, and the bereaved.”⁷⁹ Hope follows this schema—that of tracing the entire set of rituals involved from dying and death through to memorialization—throughout her book. She concludes that Roman death was “a process from pre-death planning to the grave” and sees “parallel shifts in areas that are often studied separately” (e.g., funerals, mourning, rituals, epitaphs, monuments).⁸⁰ Her holistic focus on death and their rituals means that she (1) discusses all the agents and participants of the death—the deceased, the bereaved, and the mourners; (2) examines the whole set or sequence of funerary rituals and festival/commemorative rites together; and (3) analyzes the rituals in conjunction with beliefs (e.g., souls, the afterlife), materiality (e.g., tombs, monuments), and social functions of death rituals (e.g., transfer of the deceased, grief, reconstitution of social units, and commemoration), which are also a feature of recent work in mortuary studies (to be discussed later). Hope maintains that dying was a central part of ancient Roman life; death was ever-present, mortality rates were high, and death presented the ultimate challenge to the stability of families and Roman society.⁸¹ As a result, death, with its accompanying rituals, reflected upon Roman “social identity” and “self-definition.”⁸² Death also fell within the domain of “private worship” (*sacra privata*) and, except for the deaths of the imperial family and/or the most elite of society (the senatorial class), care of the dead was a private family matter.⁸³ In particular, the commemoration of the deceased was significant in terms of

⁷⁹ Hope, *Roman Death*, 13.

⁸⁰ Hope, *Roman Death*, 185-86. Notably, Arnold van Gennep promoted what he called his “sequential method” in the study of rituals when he argued that a given ritual can only be studied (and understood) in relation to what comes before and after it, see ethnographer Arnold van Gennep, “On the Method to Be Followed in the Study of Rites and Myths” in *Classical Approaches to the Study of Religion*, vol. 1 of 2, edited by J. J. Waardenburg (The Hague: Mouton, 1973), 298-99.

⁸¹ Hope, *Roman Death*, 2.

⁸² Hope, *Roman Death*, 2.

⁸³ *Sacra* refers to Roman worship; in antiquity it was divided into two categories—*privata*, worship by individual families and funded privately; and *publica*, worship by the whole of the Roman people (the state), funded by the public treasury, and overseen by the Roman pontiffs. Death, burial, and commemoration was part

reflecting and validating social values. Employing insights from memory studies, Hope identifies and elucidates the elaborate means and practices involved in memorializing the Roman dead. These rituals transformed the corpse into an esteemed ancestor and was a method for survivors to navigate the journey through death, which, in turn helped to reintegrate not only the memory but also the identity of the dead among the living.⁸⁴

Roman Death lays out several basic assumptions. First, as Hope explains, “[t]o understand death, or more accurately a society’s death beliefs, customs and rituals, is to illuminate the living society.”⁸⁵ Within a specific historical period, one must comprehend the full ritual process by integrating all components of the death journey from the perspectives of all the players—the dying, the dead, and the survivors.⁸⁶ Second, Hope reminds her readers that the designation, “Roman,” is an “homogenization” or “process of cultural fusion and dialogue” that existed from North Africa to Northern Britain; therefore, funeral/burial customs, as part of that amalgamated culture, played a role “in illuminating the interaction between Roman and indigenous cultures and identities.”⁸⁷ The “cultural fusion” begins with the Roman adoption of the Greek culture; in other words, “Roman” is a composite identity. Third, Roman society was hierarchical—the system of ranking included the emperor, the senators, the equestrian order, and the urban plebeians (the masses of ordinary people

of Roman *sacra*; and for most Romans it was deemed a private matter or *sacra privata*; see William Smith, ed., *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, s.v. “sacra” (New York: Harper, 1842, 1848, 1854; Boston: Longwood Press, repr. 1977), 998. For a modern interpretation of *sacra privata* and late antique worship both public and private, see classicist Kim Bowes, *Private Worship, Public Values, and Religious Change in Late Antiquity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 4-6.

⁸⁴ Hope, *Roman Death*, 2-3.

⁸⁵ Hope, *Roman Death*, 12.

⁸⁶ Hope, *Roman Death*, 12-14. For other works that incorporate the inclusive model established by Hope, see classicist Hugh Lindsay, “Death-Pollution and Funerals in the City of Rome,” in *Death and Disease in the Ancient City*, edited by Valerie M. Hope and Eireann Marshall, 152-73 (London: Routledge, 2000); and classicist Darja Šterbenc Erker, “Gender and Roman Funeral Ritual,” in *Memory and Mourning: Studies on Roman Death*, edited by V. Hope and J. Huskinson, 40-60 (Oxford, UK: Oxbow Books, 2011); also, Carroll, “No Part in Earthly Things,” 42-63.

⁸⁷ Hope, *Roman Death*, 8.

comprised of citizens, non-citizen *provinciales*, freedmen, and slaves). Hope acknowledges that our primary access to Roman society is through the surviving literature of the male elite and therefore represents a biased aristocratic and gendered perspective. As a result, one must search beyond the written record looking for material/visual evidence (funerary monuments, epitaphs, skeletal remains, graves) for clues about the funeral practices of ordinary people.⁸⁸ Fourth, Roman society was patriarchal and dominated by specific gender expectations.⁸⁹ Women's roles and actions are not prominent in the record and when they are expressed, it is often through a patriarchal lens. For example, in terms of grief and mourning, women's mourning—wailing, weeping, and lamentation—reflected women's supposed weaker nature and their behaviors were often confined to familial or private spaces.⁹⁰ The result was male condemnations of women's behavior whenever the spatial boundaries were crossed.⁹¹ Fifth, Hope recognizes that tombs must be viewed as an integration of epitaphs, images, and design that promoted interaction between the living and the dead, especially since the Roman ideal

⁸⁸ Hope, *Roman Death*, 10-12.

⁸⁹ Hope, *Roman Death*, 125, 209, citing the writings of Seneca, Plutarch and Cicero regarding the view that woman's grief and mourning was "deeper" than for men; such mourning, if enacted by men, was considered weak and "feminine"; further, certain elite male ideals for conduct were expected to be followed by everyone engaged in public mourning; see Seneca the Younger, *Consolation to Marcia*, 7.3; Plutarch, *Consolation to Apollonius*, 22; and Cicero, *Letters to his Friends*, 9.20.3.

⁹⁰ Hope, *Roman Death*, 126. See also a well-defined account of the Roman funeral and the role of women (especially in terms of middle to upper class society) in historian of religion Katariina Mustakallio, "Roman Funerals: Identity, Gender and Participation," in *Hoping for Continuity: Childhood Education and Death in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, edited by K. Mustakallio, J. Hansks, H-L. Sanio and V. Vuolanto, 179-90 (Rome: *Institutum Romanum Finlandiae*, 2005). Mustakallio notes an important change in the late Republic "in the nature of the *luctus matronarum* [the lament behavior among the women of upper-class families], from the traditional lamentations of Roman matrons to an organised and highly professional lamentation of hired women"; according to Mustakallio, by the first century of the common era, "we hardly find any traces of groups of matrons lamenting in public," 185-86. Notably, restrictions on the mourning practices of women in public had existed long before Cicero repeated them in *De legibus*: e.g., Solon's Law 16.4-5 from Greece, and Table 10.3 of the Twelve Tables forbade women from tearing their faces or wailing at a funeral; this same law appears in Cicero's *De legibus* 2.25.63.

⁹¹ Hope, *Roman Death*, 126. For information about the laws of the Twelve Tables (450BCE) and their renewal, see Cicero, *On the Laws (De legibus)*, edited and translated by Clinton Walker Keyes, LCL 213 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928), 2.23.59. For further on Cicero, see n87 above.

was for the dead to be “a continuing presence among the living.”⁹² And since pre-death construction of tombs was common among the upper classes, it may be assumed the family who built these tombs did not want the dead to be segregated physically in a solitary space; moreover, there was the crucial duty of the living “to remember the dead as they had lived.”⁹³ In vivid contrast to Rush and various other scholars who theorized that the Romans maintained negative and fearful views of the dead in contrast with Christian optimism, Hope establishes the interconnectedness and the reciprocal nature of the relationship between the living and the dead.⁹⁴ Finally, along with the elite ideal stressing the importance of memory—that is, leaving a lasting family reputation and “an enduring legacy for posterity”—Hope points out the variety and number of funerary monuments built in Rome for the purpose of ensuring individuals and their families were known in life and after death; and this, in turn, served “to underpin Rome’s stability and continuity.”⁹⁵ As Hope vividly demonstrates, Roman society was intensely concerned with commemoration of its deceased.

In terms of understanding that death was a central part of life for the Roman people, Hope acknowledges that death reflected both social status and self-identity; to that end she embeds funerary rituals in specific socio-historical context. For example, social structure dictated how private or public Roman funerals would be. Since a public funeral was mainly the privilege of the elite few, only Romans of high social standing (including the emperor and his family) generally celebrated in this fashion. However, the “educated, propertied, and largely male minority” exercised both practicality and ideals in reference to death when they wrote wills in preparation for death; their wills provided for survivors (especially children of

⁹² Hope, *Roman Death*, 38-39.

⁹³ Hope, *Roman Death*, 38.

⁹⁴ See ch. 4 in Hope, *Roman Death*, 97-20.

⁹⁵ Hope, *Roman Death*, 11, 34

the family), preserved one's elite identity, and protected the family's reputation.⁹⁶ Public displays of virtue and success meant erecting civic buildings, funerary monuments, and victory statues, holding public games and processions, and making donations or setting up community foundations; again, these traditions strengthened "Rome's stability and continuity."⁹⁷ Hope argues that social structures determined one's identity not only in life, but equally in death, ultimately deciding where and how one would be buried, or buried at all.⁹⁸ Regardless of the temporal, economic, and regional differences in funerary rituals across the empire and how these may or may not connect with rituals depicted in the literature, according to Hope,

the funeral was an important and essential ritual ... Death dislocates both the deceased and the bereaved from their usual roles in the social structure ... The funeral finally separates the dead from, and restores the bereaved to, the world of the living. Funerals in Rome and its empire, as in other periods and cultures, served to unite society demonstrating its common beliefs and core values, while underlining differences and roles based on age, gender, wealth and status.⁹⁹

Scholars viewing the data must therefore take social identity into consideration. Furthermore, caution must be exercised. Caring for the sick and dying, preparations for death, and so on, as depicted in literary accounts and in sculptural reliefs, which Hope suggests were "constructed to suit the needs of the author, the political climate or both," are "ideals and counter-ideals

⁹⁶ Hope, *Roman Death*, 18, 27. The writing of a will may have been influenced by the elite person's philosophy about death; e.g., some Romans followed the ideals of the Stoics (life is short, death is inevitable, so prepare for it), while others accepted the Epicurean approach (life is meant to be enjoyed; death is nothing and must not be feared), explained in Hope, *Roman Death*, 18-22.

⁹⁷ Hope, *Roman Death*, 32-34.

⁹⁸ Hope, *Roman Death*, 158. Just beyond the Esquiline Gate (located outside the city walls of Rome) was a public place for burial of the poor and abandoned corpses. It was comprised of *puticuli*, "mass burial pits, rectangular in shape, arranged in rows, lined with blocks of *sperone* or *cappellaccio tufo*" where the corpses were piled up and left in the open air to rot: see John Bodel, "Dealing with the Dead: Undertakers, Executioners and Potter's Fields in Ancient Rome," in *Death and Disease in the Ancient City*, edited by Valerie M. Hope and Eireann Marshall, 128-51 (New York: Routledge, 2000), especially 131. Further information about the *puticuli* at the Esquiline Gate is available in Varro, *De lingua latina*, vol. 1, translated by Roland G. Kent, LCL 333 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938), 5.25.

⁹⁹ Hope, *Roman Death*, 66-67.

that are suggestive of the importance of death and dying in the Roman world.”¹⁰⁰ What scholars are left with, therefore, is essentially “the perception that dying was bound to the identity of the individual”; that is, depending on who the Roman was, basically determined how his/her death would be depicted in literature and/or material culture.¹⁰¹ These individual depictions, however, still represented key Roman values and concepts. How one died and was commemorated through ritual and material culture, reflected core social ideas.

Despite the social structures and hierarchies in play, it was generally the Roman household, the *familia*, that decided the what, when, how, and where of the rituals for dying, death, burial, and commemoration. If it was not possible for the *familia* to provide funerary support for the dead, then other assistance was sought. In some cases a funeral and proper burial could be guaranteed by membership in voluntary associations (*collegia*) or “burial clubs.”¹⁰² In other instances, when corpses were not claimed, were unwanted or belonged to the very poor, the state assumed responsibility for disposal.¹⁰³ Just as funerals, literature, and material culture could promote the memory of the deceased, the denial of these symbols of care and respect served to obliterate the memory of the deceased altogether, in effect severing

¹⁰⁰ Hope, *Roman Death*, 64; as Hope explains, the ideals about how one should die “were readily domesticated, with the deathbed centered on home and family, and with women and children complementing their men folk by dying well”; surviving scenes of death in the literature, therefore, are “either sanitized or shocking.”

¹⁰¹ Hope, *Roman Death*, 64; Hope argues that literary sources often distort reality and/or are biased toward the elite or left up to the perspective (and bias) of the account’s author.

¹⁰² Hope, *Roman Death*, 68. Over time, Rome’s elite society increasingly came to utilize undertakers and professionals at their funerals. Hope argues that by the end of the Republic, the role of the family in the care and disposal of the dead “was idealized” and since, for the elite especially, the desire was for “display and convenience,” specialists were able to tap into this potential market” and offer specialized undertaking services; e.g., male *pollinctores* might be hired to prepare the body of the deceased for the wake and subsequent burial, *Roman Death*, 69-70.

¹⁰³ Toynbee’s study, cited above, states that some of the poorest Romans were buried between the rows of house tombs in the Isola Sacra necropolis or covered over in tiles, “gable-style,” or simply in *amphorae* placed partially in the ground in locations throughout the empire (Britain, Germany, and Italy); this would imply that even families of the poor were involved in choosing private burial places for their dead: Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 101-103.

the interaction between the living and the dead.¹⁰⁴ Hope notes, “[r]emembering the dead was a public duty but also a private one”; here she is referring to the construction of “public” memory such as monuments, dedications and literature, in contrast to “private,” memory in the form of personal items treasured by members of the *familia*; e.g., portraits, epitaphs, jewelry, keepsakes/heirlooms, and even locks of hair.¹⁰⁵ Applying the insights of memory studies demonstrates that commemoration was a complex familial and social enterprise.

As part of this memory enterprise, it was also customary for Roman families to make regular visits and to participate in picnics or funeral banquets at the graves of their loved ones. Feasting in the cemetery was commonplace. Hope notes the importance of meals and offerings at the graves of the ancestors; these celebrations “promoted contact between the living and the dead.”¹⁰⁶ Again, for elite families in Rome, death memorials often became spectacles of grandeur signifying political messages about the bereaved family.¹⁰⁷ It was another chance to show the family’s wealth and to compete for “family prestige.”¹⁰⁸ Hope explains that the cemeteries, while filled with the remains of the dead, were more correctly “products of the living”; it was in the cemeteries that people demonstrated and constructed their familial role, their social identity, and their status in the community; as Hope puts it, “collectively the graves, epitaphs and monuments begged that the dead be remembered and promoted their continuing presence.”¹⁰⁹ Again, maintaining a relationship between the living and the dead was not only a duty, but was also an important strategy for ensuring continuity and stability for Roman society.

¹⁰⁴ Hope, *Roman Death*, 179-81.

¹⁰⁵ Hope, *Roman Death*, 180-81.

¹⁰⁶ Hope, *Roman Death*, 88.

¹⁰⁷ Hope, *Roman Death*, 89.

¹⁰⁸ Hope, *Roman Death*, 90-91.

¹⁰⁹ Hope, *Roman Death*, 154.

In addition, Hope's discussion of commemoration hints at the grave as the "place" where the living could interact with the dead. Feasting with the dead at the gravesite occurred at regular intervals—for instance, on the third, ninth and thirtieth day after death, on festival days (e.g., the *Parentalia*) or on personal anniversaries—and to facilitate these meals, shared with the dead, many of the tomb-places were equipped with water wells, dining areas, and cooking ovens.¹¹⁰ It was traditional for families to visit the places that held the remains of their ancestors and to make small offerings of food (e.g., salt, eggs, lentils and beans) to honour the dead but also to entertain the living; sometimes the feasts were extravagant events that displayed the status of the family and were intended to "impress both peers and social inferiors."¹¹¹ The grave was a "place" that solidified family identity—an aspect that suggests to scholars the significance of "place" in terms of ritual.¹¹²

Further, as implied above, for most of the Roman population, tombs and grave markers continued to be the dominant signifiers of memory; cemeteries were "an integrated and integral part of the suburbs. The *stelae* (or *cippus/cippi*)—the slabs of stone used to mark the graves—positioned "above or in front of the place of burial with any inscribed text or images facing the road" were for the purpose of engaging the passersby, all in an attempt to be remembered.¹¹³ The cemetery was a marginal but active zone, serving as a meeting place for the living and the dead"; sometimes the tomb stones solicited a casual encounter with a stranger passing by, sometimes it called for "a more structured visit of a relative or friend," but in any case, the encounter was crucial for it meant the deceased would not be forgotten.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Hope, *Roman Death*, 86.

¹¹¹ Hope, *Roman Death*, 87.

¹¹² See Ronald L. Grimes, *Rite Out of Place: Ritual, Media, and the Arts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987).

¹¹³ Hope, *Roman Death*, 159.

¹¹⁴ Hope, *Roman Death*, 181.

With regard to ritual, Hope outlines the funerary process in some detail. Her sequence of ritual stages is essentially the same as those presented by Toynbee and Rush.¹¹⁵ According to Hope, ancient Roman funeral rites followed a certain sequence: (1) when death occurred the body was prepared for burial, (2) a wake, held in the home, was accompanied by mourning/lament, (3) the procession to the cemetery took place amid mourning led by professional women, (4) the eulogy for the deceased may have been delivered (for elite citizens, especially) prior to burial, (5) the corpse was buried/cremated, and (6) subsequent commemorative feasts were held at the cemetery. Noted earlier in this study was that Hope, in contrast to Rush and Toynbee, provides more detail about functions accorded the various funerary rituals, and about gender roles. Therefore, it is my intention to apply Hope's depiction of the funeral rites and their component rituals as a baseline for my study.

To summarize then, Hope's research is accepted as foundational for any examination of Roman death. There is also consensus that her work details the function and major themes of Roman funeral rites. Further, her work demonstrates the shift in methodology in terms of incorporation of ritual studies and memory studies, and in connecting materiality, rituals, and emotions. In short, Hope's scholarship provides the necessary background for any analysis (including my own) of the transition from Roman to Christian death rituals. Hope's adherence to the methodological parameters of ritual and memory studies offers an example for similar investigations to follow. Therefore, in terms of this current project, Hope's work serves as a heuristic device upon which to venture into my own analysis.

¹¹⁵ Again, for a detailed comparison between the ritual sequences presented by each of the scholars under discussion here (Rush, Toynbee, and Hope) and the consistency between them in terms of practices and ritual stages, see Appendix A of this thesis.

Studies of Christian Funeral Rites After Rush

As noted, there was a lengthy gap in the scholarship after Rush. The examination of death rituals split along disciplinary lines: Roman studies and Christian history. The Christian studies reflected the standard foci on theology, church institution, and liturgy. This brand of scholarship is illustrated by Damien Sicard (1978) and Frederick Paxton (1990).¹¹⁶ Sicard and Paxton focus on the development of funerary liturgy; that is, their work investigates elite clergy, theologians, and monastics. Both scholars assume the existence of a hypothetical “original” liturgy for death that was developed from Rome in the 400s or a bit later to become the core religious worship in the Western Church; this liturgy, they argue, was, to a greater or lesser degree, pivotal to all subsequent Christian liturgy for dying, death, and burial. Notably, the assumption of an early Christian liturgy for death was something that Rebillard questioned. My own study further challenges that idea and demonstrates that the date of a church liturgy for death falling into place was late, rather than early.

Damien Sicard

In 1978 Damien Sicard published *La liturgie de la mort dans l'Église latine des origines à la réforme carolingienne* (*The Liturgy of Death in the Latin Church: From the Origins to the*

¹¹⁶ See Damien Sicard, *La liturgie de la mort dans l'Église latine des origines à la réforme carolingienne* (Liturgie wissenschaftliche Quellen und Forschungen [LQF], Bd 63, Munster, Aschendorff, 1978). Sicard was influenced by several French/German scholars including: (1) Michel Andrieu, *Les “Ordines Romani” du haut moyen âge*, 5 vols. (Louvain, 1931-61; repr. 1960-65) and *Le pontifical romain au moyen-âge*, 4 vols. (Vatican City, 1938-41); (2) Jean Deshusses, “Le sacramentaire de Gellone dans son contexte historique,” *Ephémérides liturgicae* 75 (1961): 193-210, and “Le ‘Supplément’ au sacramentaire grégorien: Alcuin ou Saint Benoît d’Aniane ?” *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 9 (1965): 48-71; (3) theologian Antoine Chavasse, *Étude sur l’onction des infirmes* (1942) and *Le sacramentaire gélasien Vatican Reginensis 316: Sacramentaire presbytéral en usage dans les titres romains au VII^e siècle*, Bibliothèque de théologie, Ser. 4.1 (Paris, 1958); and (4) theologian Cyrille Vogel, *Introduction aux sources de l’histoire du culte chrétien au moyen-âge*, Biblioteca degli Studia Medievali I, Spoleto, 1966).

Carolingian Reform).¹¹⁷ The work is a textual critical and codicological analysis of the funeral liturgy in the Christian West. Its data includes some 150 manuscripts from late antiquity and the early medieval period.¹¹⁸ *La liturgie de la mort* was/is considered as impressive “and exhaustive” in its one-of-a-kind analysis of the liturgy of death practiced in Christian late antiquity.¹¹⁹ For Sicard, the manuscripts are “ecclesiastical” representations of the Roman and Gallic (Frankish) churches. His methodology involves dividing the collection of liturgical manuscripts into two groups—*ordines* and sacramentaries—and then assessing their transmission and development. The first group consists of eight *ordines* or *ordos*, the books that describe liturgical actions, the directions or guides “for the celebrant and his ministers setting forth in detail the arrangement of the entire ritual procedure and how to carry it out.”¹²⁰ The *ordo* is “the indispensable complement to the sacramentary” because the sacramentary contains only the required text for the liturgy.¹²¹ Therefore, in most cases the celebrant would not be able to perform the specific liturgical function (rite) without the assistance of an *ordo* to explain what gestures or postures to incorporate, which substances (such as oils, incense, water, etc.) or objects (such as a crucifix, a pall, candles, etc.) to use.¹²² Sicard conducts a thorough analysis of the *ordo* manuscripts and then documents their textual development,

¹¹⁷ See Sicard, *La liturgie* (1978); this book, originally in French, was translated into German (also in 1978) but there has never been a version published in English. Some of Sicard’s other publications include: “Should There Be a Funeral Mass?” *Concilium* 2, no. 4 (1968): 23-26, and “Christian Death,” in *The Church at Prayer: An Introduction to the Liturgy*, edited by Aimé Georges Martimort, translated by Matthew O’Connell, 3.221-40 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1988).

¹¹⁸ See historian of religion Pierre Nautin’s Review of *La liturgie de la mort dans l’Église latine des origines à la réforme carolingienne*, by Damien Sicard, *Revue de l’histoire des religions*, 197, no. 2 (1980): 227-28. Also praising Sicard is historian and scholar of women’s studies Megan McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints: Prayer for the Dead in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994) 4-5. In addition, Sicard is applauded by Paxton for his monumental contributions; see Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 12.

¹¹⁹ See theologian Bernard Moreton, Review of *La liturgie de la mort dans l’Église latine des origines à la réforme carolingienne*, by Damien Sicard, *The Journal of Theological Studies* 3 (1980): 231, 237.

¹²⁰ This definition is from Cyrille Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy: An Introduction to the Sources*, translated and revised by W. Storey and N. Rasmussen (Portland, OR: Pastoral Press, 1986), 135.

¹²¹ Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy*, 135.

¹²² For further explanation of “*ordine*” or “*ordo*,” see Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy*, 135-37.

relationship with each other, changes in their structure and use, and why the changes occurred; finally, he determines the “theological implications” for his data.¹²³

As a next step, Sicard embarks on an extensive investigation tracing the textual development of the second group of manuscripts, the sacramentaries (books providing the texts the presider/priest requires for the celebration of each mass and sacrament). In terms of death and funerals, Sicard identifies what is deemed to be the oldest extant manuscript, the Frankish Vatican Gelasian (MS *Reg. Lat.* 316), a sacramentary dated from the eighth century, which contains a mass for the dead.¹²⁴ This particular manuscript is significant, according to Sicard, because it is the “core” for subsequent manuscripts.¹²⁵ Sicard, along with Cyrille Vogel, Jean Deshusses and others, propose that some form of the Vatican Gelasian (*Reg.* 316) travelled from Rome across the Alps and was copied around 750 CE in the nunnery of Chelles, near Paris, becoming the “Frankish recension of a Roman book” and our only extant copy.¹²⁶ This textual transmission reinforces the interaction between Rome and Gaul in the development of the funeral liturgy.

¹²³ Moreton, Review of *La liturgie*, 231-32.

¹²⁴ Notably, the oldest tradition did not include a mass for the dead, rather perhaps, the mass of the day; see Sicard, *La liturgie*, 174-202. According to Vogel, “The Sacramentary that we term ‘Old Gelasian’ is preserved in a MS of the Vatican Library, *Codex Vaticanus Reginensis latinus* 316, folios 3-245; its missing conclusion is found at Paris, *Bibliothèque Nationale, codex latinus* 7193, folios 441-56. It is clear that the indicated leaves of the latter MS used to belong to the *Reginensis* but had already been separated from it by 1651”; see Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy*, 64. The *Vat. Reg.* 316, written in three separate books (*libelli*), outlines the texts needed by the priest to carry out a specific liturgical event (e.g., consecration of virgins, funerals, weddings, dedication of churches, and so on); *Liber tertius* (book three) discusses the masses for the sick and dying and especially the *de cura mortuorum*, the funeral, and commemorative/memorial masses; see Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy*, 66.

¹²⁵ Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy*, 65; the “Old Gelasian Sacramentary” (*Vat. Reg.* 316) was likely composed between 628 and 715 (and not earlier as previously thought) at Rome: see Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy*, 68-69. There was some misunderstanding that the Old Gelasian may have originated in the sixth century (or even earlier); however, this early date was claimed only because a Lateran cleric asserted that Pope Gelasius I (492-496) composed a sacramentary in his lifetime (later disproved); see Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy*, 37 and 54 n87.

¹²⁶ Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy*, 65 and further details about the “Old Gelasian Sacramentary” (*Reg.* 316) can be found at 64-70. The contents of the Old Gelasian comprises three books, which also address the origin, date, and areas of influence of the sacramentary. See also Jean Deshusses, “Les sacramentaires: État actuel de la recherché,” *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 24 (1982): 19-46, esp. at 28, and Deshusses, “Le sacramentaire de Gellone,” 193-210, as well as, “Le ‘Supplément’,” 48-71. For further information, see A. Chavasse, *Étude sur l’onction des infirmes* (1942) and *Le sacramentaire gélasien* (1958); also, Cyrille Vogel, *La discipline*

Besides the sacramentary MS *Reg. Lat. 316*, Sicard's analysis of the *Ordo XLIX*, dealing with funeral rites, is also of consequence.¹²⁷ According to Vogel, *Ordo XLIX* is part of the same collection as the Vatican Gelasian sacramentary (MS *Reg. Lat. 316*)—discussed above—that comprised the documents brought to Gaul ca. 750 after having been “redacted at Rome” between 700 and 750.¹²⁸ *Ordo XLIX* is a “directory” explaining “the rites of death (*ut videris cum ad exitum propinquare*) and burial”; further, as an *ordine*, it was designed to facilitate public worship for Christian funerals.¹²⁹ Sicard deduces, probably due to his assumption of a unified fourth century Christianity controlled by the bishops in Rome, that all the *ordines* collected in Gaul were Roman in origin (that is, from Rome). However, later scholarship shows Sicard's deduction to be unfounded and lacking evidence, that the *ordines* were influenced to no small degree upon arrival in the West.¹³⁰ Bernard Moreton argues that allowances must be made for the “conflation and mutation in transmission” of the *ordine* because there was more exchange than previously assumed between Gaul and Rome.¹³¹ In addition, the process of christianization was much more gradual and complex in the European setting than many realized. For instance, one factor of critical importance was the influence

pénitentielle en Gaule des origines à la fin du vii^e siècle (Paris, 1952) and *Medieval Liturgy* (1986). In addition, see Michel Andrieu, *Les “Ordines Romani” du haut moyen âge*, 5 vols. (Louvain, 1931-61; repr. 1960-65).

¹²⁷ Two publications edited by Andrieu are basic background to Sicard's work: Andrieu, *Les Ordines Roman* (mentioned above), and *Le pontifical romain au moyen-âge*, 4 vols. (Vatican City, 1938-41).

¹²⁸ Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy*, 147. Vogel identifies this group of documents as “Collection A”; the *ordines* and the sacramentaries were separate and independent of each other in their Roman origins. They crossed the Alps into Gaul independently and circulated separately ca. 700; they were altered in Francia ca. 750 and compiled into one collection after the “Romanization of worship had officially begun” under Pepin; see Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy*, 146.

¹²⁹ Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy*, 187. Speculation is that the Roman *ordos* and sacramentaries brought to Gaul were carried by pious pilgrims or perhaps monks who had been inspired by the liturgy performed in Rome and decided to share it in Gaul prior to the Carolingian reforms; see Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy*, 70. Only “derivatives” of the *ordo* exist from the tenth and eleventh centuries and there is no original *Ordo XLIX* in manuscript form; see Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy*, 139. Andrieu's scholarship organized the *ordines* according to their critical editions and chronology; he lists *Ordo XLIX* in *Les Ordines Romani*, vol. IV, *Ordines XXXV-XLIX* (repr. 1965).

¹³⁰ Moreton, Review of *La liturgie*, 233; the origin may have been Frankish; that is, when an *ordo* arrived in the West, Frankish Christians substantially adapted it to suit their needs.

¹³¹ Moreton, Review of *La liturgie*, 235.

exerted by the Carolingian rulers in the reform of funerary rites.¹³² The most reasonable hypothesis then, is that *Ordo XLIX* was Roman in its beginnings but was influenced, adapted, and accommodated for funeral liturgy once it reached Gaul in the early eighth century.

Sicard was convinced that, despite disagreement over how much Roman influence resided in the manuscripts (*ordines*) arriving in the West in the eighth century and subsequent textual witnesses appearing through to the eleventh century, the general nature and organization of the Roman *ordo* was clearly (in his estimation) of a very early origin (perhaps fourth to fifth century) mainly because it possessed the characteristic Roman brevity.¹³³

Paxton, in a later survey of Sicard, concurred with the estimated early date because the *ordo* described by Sicard was analogous to the hypothetical Roman *ordo defunctorum*, which Paxton argued displayed a “Christian” (optimistic) rather than “pagan” (pessimistic) attitude toward death.¹³⁴ However, we have already noted that Hope proved Romans actually expressed more hopefulness than fear for the soul’s fate after death; positive sentiments about the dead were communicated in festivals (e.g., the Parentalia, Carista), in epitaphs, in the literature (e.g., Virgil’s *Aeneid*), and by the popularity of the “mystery cults.”¹³⁵ To further support Sicard’s claim of an early date for the Roman *ordo*, Paxton insisted that *Ordo XLIX* as it presented in Gaul was accompanied by psalms of “faith triumphant and confidence in salvation” as well as rubrics, verses, and psalmody that harkened back to the funerary

¹³² Moreton, Review of *La liturgie*, 232.

¹³³ Sicard, *La liturgie*, 43.

¹³⁴ Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 37-38.

¹³⁵ Hope, *Roman Death* argues that “[s]ome sort of belief in the continuity of the dead may have motivated the living, but this was probably entwined with other factors such as superstition, duty, tradition, and the desire to remember and respect the dead.”¹¹⁵ In reality, suggests Hope, “Romans of all walks of life could be ... sceptical and cynical ... [but] belief (or indeed non-belief) was often personal and private, and even optional,”¹²⁰ As noted earlier, some Romans, specifically, followers of the Epicurean philosophy (e.g. Lucretius), denied the survival of the soul, claiming instead there was “nothing” after death; other Romans, the Stoics (e.g. Seneca the Younger), maintained that the soul could be “nothing” after death since it had no body with which to “experience.”

traditions of the fourth/fifth century when there was an emphasis on the cult of the martyrs and assurance that anointing with holy oil and the *viaticum* guaranteed resurrection and redemption.¹³⁶ Underlying Sicard's thesis, asserted Paxton, was an assumption that the views of the church (demonstrated by the rites in Rome) were quite distinct from ideas about the welfare of the sinner after death as understood in Gaul, and this distinction necessitated different funeral rites in the two regions.¹³⁷ However, as will become evident in the later chapters of my study, emphasizing the positivity of resurrection and redemption as claimed by Christian writers was disputed by actual grave inscriptions dated between the third and sixth centuries; late antique Christians were more concerned about protection and assistance for the dead, about the duty to mourn, and about preserving familial identity.

Frederick S. Paxton

Paxton published *Christianizing Death: The Creation of a Ritual Process in Early Medieval Europe* in 1990. His work follows the studies of Christian death liturgy by other scholars such as F. W. Puller (1904), Edmund Bishop (1918), Michel Andrieu (1931), Antoine Chavasse (1942), Jean Deshusses (1977), and, of course, Damien Sicard (1978).¹³⁸ Paxton approaches

¹³⁶ Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 42-45; Paxton makes a strong case for the similarities between the Roman *ordo* and the ritual response to death for Christians of Rome in the fourth to fifth centuries; he argues that the rites of the church were organized as “a passage,” which conducted the deceased “symbolically from earth to heaven ... the funeral cortege was an *adventus*, a triumphal procession into perpetual light,” 42. At 42-43 he cites Ernest Kantorowicz, “The ‘King’s Advent’ and the Enigmatic Panels in the Doors of Santa Sabina,” *Art Bulletin* 26 (1944): 207-31, which discusses the image of the triumphal procession depicted on Christian sarcophagi and on the door panels of Santa Sabina in Rome, dating to early fifth century. The images refer to the resurrection and to the Second Coming (final judgment) that clerics and Christian writers promoted around the fifth century; the trope of “triumphal entry” or *adventus* was used on clerical sarcophagi but also extensively on imperial coins where the emperor is depicted as “messianic” and wearing a halo. The conclusion to be drawn, therefore, is that “resurrection” was particularly favored among the high elite (bishops, kings, and emperors—the “anointed ones”).

¹³⁷ Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 44.

¹³⁸ Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 10-12 indicates the contribution of six influential scholars toward the study of the Christian funeral liturgy. First, historian F. W. Puller showed that ritual anointing of the sick was an ancient practice and did not become integrated into the Christian funeral's ritual sequence until the middle ages;

his investigation of the Christian response to death by examining which rituals were transmitted from Rome to the West, how and why they were transmitted, and when they were finally documented in manuscript form (that is, incorporated into the various sacramentaries). The funeral rituals Paxton investigates are those created by clergy and monastics, with some influence from the Carolingian rulers. Paxton proposes three goals for his extensive study: (1) to investigate the process of ritualizing Christian death, dying, and the commemoration of the dead in Western Europe; (2) to establish “a bridge” between specialized liturgical studies and the broader areas of research—including anthropology in terms of insights provided by Arnold van Gennep regarding rituals, and recent advances in codicology—in particular, by examining how the texts were developed and transmitted within the political, social, and religious contexts of change; and (3) to enlighten the study of the specific contributions of the Carolingian era to the development of medieval European Christendom.¹³⁹ Paxton focuses on the books of liturgy (the sacramentaries) and the books of ritual performance (the *ordines*). However, to this data he adds supplementary textual material such as episcopal letters, legal texts, hagiographies, and monastic rules.¹⁴⁰ He confirms Sicard’s observation of the interaction of Rome and Gaul in the development of the funeral liturgy, but maintains that the Frankish

notably, Caesarius of Arles played an important role in advocating anointing of the sick, which the Spanish church developed into a ritual of spiritual healing and the Irish church implemented as purification of the soul and preparation for death; see Puller, *The Anointing of the Sick in Scripture and Tradition, with Some Considerations on the Numbering of the Sacraments* (London: SPCK, 1904). Paxton would incorporate some of these ideas into his analysis in *Christianizing Death*, e.g., 50-51, 55-56, 70-73, 128-30, and 165-68. Second, historian Edmund Bishop was one of the early scholars who began the “scientific reconstruction” of the history of church liturgy; see Bishop, *Liturgica Historica: Papers on the Liturgy and Religious Life of the Western Church* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1918). Third, Michel Andrieu is credited for his publication of the Roman *ordines*; see Andrieu, *Les Ordines romani* (1931). Fourth, Antoine Chavasse is cited for his contribution to the study of anointing of the sick and the history of the Gelasian sacramentary in *Étude sur l'onction des infirmes* (1942). Fifth, Jean Deshusses is acknowledged for his comparative examination of more than fifty ninth century sacramentaries; see Deshusses, “Chronologie des grands sacramentaires de Saint-Amand” in *Revue bénédictine* 87 (1977): 230-37. And finally, Damien Sicard and especially his 1978 study of the prayers and rubrics found in the various *ordines* up until 800 CE.

¹³⁹ Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 13-15.

¹⁴⁰ Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 2.

kings did not simply adopt the ways of Rome to ritually care for the dying and the dead; much more was involved.¹⁴¹ According to Paxton, the Christians of Western Europe demanded their own ritual response to death and they expected rituals that affirmed their own peculiar social structures and understanding of Christianity.¹⁴² These views, he argues, included an emphasis on spiritual healing of the soul—indeed, ahead of the health of the body, as was the focus of Roman rituals in the south—in preparation for the first resurrection (*prima resurrectio*); hence, the use of ritual anointing to restore the health of the soul and Penance for the forgiveness of sins.¹⁴³

In terms of data, Paxton's study is predominantly liturgical with a focus on text criticism. His study examines a collection of sacramentaries—Frankish, Roman, Gelasian, Gregorian—as well as *ordines*, one *ordo* in particular (as did Sicard) the Roman *ordo defunctorum*, which Paxton designates as a hypothetical book of “original” funerary rituals and the directions for their performance.¹⁴⁴ This *ordo defunctorum* prescribed the how and when of gestures and actions, the clothing worn by the presider, and the materials to be incorporated (e.g., oils, spices, lights/candles, and so forth). Paxton presents the Roman *ordo defunctorum* as a theoretical entity that potentially existed in the city of Rome and would have pre-dated the earliest evidence of the manuscripts.¹⁴⁵ He suggests that the *ordo* (something

¹⁴¹ Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 3, 13-14.

¹⁴² Paxton concludes that, in terms of the ritual care of the dying and the dead into medieval times, “the contributions of Spain, Ireland, and Francia weigh more heavily than those of Rome”; and any unity that was achieved “was due less to adherence to the tradition of Rome or the stated goals of the Carolingian reform than to the persistent attempts of numerous Christian communities to construct a ritual response to death which made sense in terms of both their antique inheritance and their own experience”; see Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 14.

¹⁴³ Significant was the influence of Caesarius of Arles and his use of holy oil on the sick and dying, and his prayers immediately after death and before burial (the commendation), which were initially adopted in the service for the nuns of Caesarius' sister's convent and later found in the Vatican Gelasian sacramentary; see Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 58-59 and 62-65.

¹⁴⁴ Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 15.

¹⁴⁵ Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 12-13, 15, 37-44.

similar to *Ordo XLIX*) appeared early, perhaps in the fourth and fifth centuries; it was built around “a coherent set of actions—*viaticum* [italics mine] as the rite for the dying, the chanting of psalms, triumphal processions.”¹⁴⁶ Applying Van Gennep’s insights to the *ordo*, Paxton concludes that these rituals addressed the fear and experience of death (rite of separation) by focusing on the transference of the soul into the community of saints. The stages of the *ordo* were therefore “infused with a spirit of optimism concerning the salvation of Christians and the resurrection of the dead.”¹⁴⁷ Similar to Sicard, Paxton observes that by the late eighth century multiple compilers (male and female) had transformed the sacramentaries; material was sometimes included, sometimes excluded, other times altered or adapted, and then reworked by clerics, monks, and nuns who actually used the liturgical material until it was finally written down.¹⁴⁸

An example of this reworking and transformation of the sacramentaries is found in Paxton’s discussion of Caesarius of Arles and his sister’s convent in the sixth century.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 38-39 especially 39 with the chart entitled, “Ritual 1: Rubrics and psalmody of the old Roman *ordo defunctorum*,” that outlines the ritual process; Paxton’s chart is assembled from Sicard, *La liturgie*, 2-33 and from another chart at the end of Sicard’s book. It must be reasonably assumed that the old Roman *ordo* for the dead originated within the domain of monastics (similar to how Caesarius’ prayers for the nuns emerged in the sixth century) and was, therefore, was not intended initially for the laity.

¹⁴⁷ Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 39-40.

¹⁴⁸ Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 4. Notably, because these documents were ritual texts, their content could be freely adapted, excised, and altered to suit the users of the manuscripts; Paxton includes women (nuns) among the groups that had input into the liturgy and ritual of the sacramentaries and other liturgical books. This information suggests an opportunity for further investigation.

¹⁴⁹ Caesarius wrote a *Rule for Nuns* (composed in Latin as *Regula ad virgins*) for the women of his sister’s convent; the prayer service appears in an appendix to a copy of the rules; see Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 52. In the *Regula* were additional ordinances for implementation at the time of death of the nun; for example, ch. 70 of the Rule was entitled, “Vigil for the Dead” and outlined what was to be performed “before midnight” and “after midnight” as well as what passages from scripture should be read aloud for an “elder sister” and what passages for a “younger sister.” The next section, entitled, “Services for the Dead in the Basilica” described how the bishop would accompany the body of the deceased in a procession into the church amid chanting; the final section of the funeral liturgy was called, “Prayers for the Burial of the Sister” and included four prayers of commendation; see medieval historian Maria Caritas McCarthy, “The Rule for Nuns of St. Caesarius of Arles: A Translation with Critical Introduction,” PhD dissertation, ProQuest 0226509 (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press, 1960). Notably, Caesarius’ funerary process was very similar to that outlined in the *Ordo XLIX* for funerals.

Caesarius' sister, the abbess of the nunnery in Arles, asked her brother to compose prayers for a death ritual to be performed when one of the sisters died: first, it was a service of 'separation' over the body of the deceased sister, and second, it was a service of 'transition' of the nun's soul performed at the grave before the body was buried.¹⁵⁰ Caesarius wrote six prayers (two for the first service and four in the second) to comprise the ritual. Paxton explains how ubiquitous these prayers were to become in the West for they were eventually "basic to all later Gallican and Frankish burial services" developed around the "basic structural elements" of the funeral liturgy.¹⁵¹ Paxton notes further that Caesarius' prayer service(s) for the nuns "breathe the spirit of late antique beliefs and attitudes toward death and the afterlife ... [Even though] they do not reproduce the psalmodic structure of the Roman *ordo defunctorum*, they nonetheless maintain much of that Roman trust in the ultimate salvation of Christian souls summoned from this world to God."¹⁵² Again, the prayers alluded to the "optimistic hope" and presumably, the Gallican and Frankish burial services that adopted and/or assimilated Caesarius' prayers for the dead refer to those recorded in the sacramentaries that evolved over the seventh and eighth centuries.

Paxton also addresses several aspects of socio-historical context for the ritual process, something omitted by Sicard. Changes occurred in the Latin West due to what Paxton refers to as the "flow of culture." For example, he stresses the shifts taking place in Gaul—cultural, geographical, and historical—from the sixth through eighth centuries. He writes,

¹⁵⁰ See Caesarius of Arles, *Sancti Caesarii Arelantensis opera omnia*, edited by G. Morin (Maretioli: 1942), 2.127-28. The prayer service for the nuns "comprises six prayers arranged in two moments: an initial response after death"—these two prayers ask God to forgive the sister's sins and to grant her rest and peace—and finally there was the graveside service marking the separation of body and soul (body to the earth, soul to heaven) accompanied by three prayers; the burial service ended with a prayer of commendation; see Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 4-5, 52-53, and 66.

¹⁵¹ The prayers included: *Pio recordationis affectu*, *Te domine*, *Debitum humani corporis*, *Omnipotens aeterne deus*, *Praesta domine*, and *Commendamus tibi domine*; see Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 52-53.

¹⁵² Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 55.

“Merovingian Gaul stood with one foot in the Mediterranean south and the other in the barbarian north”; in the early period, “Christian cultural forms flowed from south to north” (when Rome’s influence was greater) and in the later period, cultural forms flowed “from north to south,” suggesting that the impact of contributions from Gaul, France, and Spain were to have equal or even greater agency than did Rome in the development of Christian death rituals.¹⁵³ Accompanying these different “Christian cultural forms” were particular understandings of soteriology. For example, the Irish monks around the 700s introduced ritual that emphasized the need for the dying person to purify his/her soul. These rites shifted the rituals surrounding the anointing of the sick to focus on the anointing of the soul as part of the preparation required before death.¹⁵⁴ Visigoth Spain would contribute deathbed penance, which also focused on the purification of the soul.¹⁵⁵ In sum, the Spanish church and the Irish monks introduced versions of soteriology that emphasized the purification of the soul in preparation for death; collectively this would shift the orientation of the death rites in Gaul from concerns about the transfer of the soul to God, to the unease about the state of the soul prior to and following death.

¹⁵³ Regarding the geographic and historic flow of influence on death ritual, see Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 47. For an explanation of “the complex interaction of various ritual traditions that fed into the cultural stream of Europe, especially in the critical period during and after the Carolingian reform of the eighth and ninth centuries,” see Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 13.

¹⁵⁴ Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 78-83.

¹⁵⁵ Visigothic Spain’s use of ritual anointing departed from that of Caesarius of Arles in Merovingian Gaul; the Spanish ritual was comparable to the old Roman stress on physical healing. Notably, the prayers used in the blessing of the sick are “striking” for their “juxtaposition of illness and vice”; at the same time, they were similar in function to Caesarius of Arles’ entreaty that the sick person be healed and returned to continued participation in the Christian community; see Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 69-73. The Spanish church (ref. Council of Barcelona in 540 CE) was unique in its development of a ritual of public penance (e.g., the penitent had to be tonsured, wear a monk’s habit, and spend the remainder of his life in prayer and fasting); significantly, the “act of tonsure permanently separated the recipient from ordinary laymen, placing him among the ranks of the clergy”; if the penitent was about to die, the Spanish church enforced “tonsure, communion, the laying on of sackcloth, and signing with ashes”; the prayers, singing of psalms and antiphons were meant to indicate the person was “in-between” the states of life and death; and when death was imminent, incorporation was symbolized by removing the sackcloth, clothing the person in a clean garment, and administering communion; see Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 73-78.

As already mentioned, Paxton's argument and organization of data employs Van Gennep's tripartite schema explaining life passages.¹⁵⁶ Paxton traces the development of the Christian funeral using Van Gennep's framework: (1) the "separation" (pre-liminal stage of the process), which involves healing rites and preparation-for-death rituals for both the bereaved and the deceased; (2) the "transition" or "liminal" (threshold) stage dealing with rituals for the deceased and the bereaved, both groups having been "suspended between" the realms of the living and the dead; and finally (3) the "incorporation" (post-liminal) rites intended as closure, for reinstating "normalcy," restoring social order for the earthly community and for survivors, while safely establishing the deceased in the community of the dead.¹⁵⁷ However, while Paxton refers occasionally to rites of passage, his focus remains on the text (the words) of the developing liturgy rather than on the ritual actions themselves; his work, therefore, is to be distinguished from ritual studies. The application of Van Gennep's framework supports Paxton's thesis of the shift in the soteriological orientation from transfer of the death to the otherworldly community of the saints, to purification of the soul. For example, Paxton generally categorizes votive masses, confraternities of prayer, the "special office for the dead as part of the daily round of monastic prayer," and a "whole new genre of written record"—the confraternity books, *libri memoriales*, and annals of the dead¹⁵⁸—as continuing concerns over the state of the departed soul. Paxton does not investigate, nor does he discuss to any degree, the performance of grief or the restoration of the social order for those survivors left among the living.

¹⁵⁶ Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (London, 1909), repr. translated by M. B. Vizedom and G. L. Caffee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 10-25, and especially the chapter, "Funerals," 146-65.

¹⁵⁷ Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 6-7.

¹⁵⁸ Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 134.

In further critique of Paxton's work, reviewer Janet Nelson argues that *Christianizing Death* lacks "non-liturgical evidence for funerary rites" and that Paxton's "primitive 'materialized' religiosity" in ninth-century Gaul is not well supported.¹⁵⁹ Nelson agrees with my own suggestion that more evidence of "pre-Christian practices" (domestic religiosity of families) is required if Paxton expects to accurately trace the evolution of a Christian liturgy for death.¹⁶⁰ By overly focussing on textual and liturgical sources, Paxton fails to thoroughly investigate the socio-historical context (such as the domestic piety of the people) leading up to the Carolingian reforms. The needs of ordinary Christians in early medieval Europe required attention not only to the soul and its spiritual healing (which was stressed in the Carolingian reforms) but equally to the physical body preparing to leave his/her community through death, and to the survivors left behind.¹⁶¹ As noted, Paxton's discussion in terms of ritual stresses the care of the dead and neglects the function of ritual for survivors. Additionally, his study of the funerary process is not holistic; it misses what Hope identifies as essential, that of considering the full funerary sequence and its relationship to materiality.

Consequently, in considering what Paxton presented in *Christianizing Death*, and noting his shortfalls, my study focuses on (1) rituals—the actions in consort with beliefs, much in the way of Hope—while relying on ritual studies for structure in the investigation; (2) the entire funerary sequence, again in the manner of Hope; (3) materiality—tomb inscriptions, buildings, symbols, artifacts, sculpture, pictorial representations and/or graffiti and papyrus

¹⁵⁹ See scholar of medieval history Janet L. Nelson, Review of *Christianizing Death: The Creation of a Ritual Process in Early Medieval Europe* (1990) by Frederick S. Paxton, *The English Historical Review* 109, no. 432 (June, 1994): 682.

¹⁶⁰ Nelson, Review of *Christianizing Death*, 682.

¹⁶¹ Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 202-203: Paxton maintains that the focus of the old Roman *ordo defunctorum* as practiced by most churches in the West (ca. fifth to eighth centuries) was on the spiritual aspect of death (i.e., on the soul's triumphal passing through death to join the community of saints awaiting resurrection), which resulted in "little concern" by the church with the dying person or with the people in attendance; in other words, in the eyes of the clergy, baptism and communion "ensured salvation," 202.

documentation where available—to complement textual evidence; (4) pre-Christian practices (neglected by Paxton) that influenced the development of Christian funerary rituals; and (5) a challenge to Paxton’s thesis of an early liturgy to show, instead, that a Christian liturgy for death came much later, during the middle ages.

Éric Rebillard

The monograph, *Religion et sépulture: L’Église, les vivants et les morts dans l’Antiquité* written by Éric Rebillard in 2003 was not published in English until 2009 when it was released as *The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity*.¹⁶² It represents a major shift from liturgical analysis to a historical examination of Christian death rites, and it is recognized for its challenge to long-standing assumptions regarding early Christian death and burial. Rebillard’s work follows the paradigm shift initiated by Peter Brown in the 1970s and 1980s when scholars became more focused “on lay people and their expectations” rather than “on the bishops and their regulating role” in the late antique church.¹⁶³ Christianity was finally understood as part of the broad transformation of religion that occurred in late antiquity in the Roman Empire. Having arisen from Jewish roots and having adapted and integrated various elements of the Greco-Roman context, Christianity was no longer viewed as an isolated sect, but instead an integral part of the socio-historical fabric of late antiquity in the Latin West. At the same time, the paradigm shift accepted Robert Redfield’s “perpetual dialectic” shown to

¹⁶² Rebillard’s French title may be translated as: *Religion and Burial: The Church, the Living and the Dead in Late Antiquity*.

¹⁶³ Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, x.

occur universally between the little or popular (i.e., folk) religiosities and the theologians and clergy of the great religious institutions (e.g., Judaism and Christianity).¹⁶⁴

Drawing partially from the previous scholarship of Rush, Toynbee, and Paxton, and perhaps, from a curious clue left by Louis Duchesne in 1910, Rebillard makes a bold claim.¹⁶⁵ He postulates and decisively demonstrates that the late antique church did not control Christian burials in the third century as previously assumed nor was Christian burial uniquely distinctive due to its hopeful and optimistic afterlife belief in the resurrection.¹⁶⁶

The conclusions of Rebillard's study are noteworthy, so much so, that it is useful to survey each point in detail. First, Rebillard disputes the exclusivity of early Christianity as unique (*sui generis*), an idea of some controversy even late into the twentieth century. John Bodel welcomes Rebillard's new approach in the following statement:

The premise that ancient Christians lived and died more or less like pagans and Jews in the same Mediterranean contexts may seem uncontroversial, but it flies in the face of an established view of the organization of the early Christian church that has persisted essentially unchanged since the end of the nineteenth century ... The founding father of Christian archaeology, Giovanni Battista de Rossi[']s ... belief in the exclusivity of the early Christian community ... was quickly enveloped in scholarly consensus and effectively became shielded from criticism ... [So] when

¹⁶⁴ Redfield, *The Primitive World* (1953) and *Peasant Society* (1956): Redfield (see 16n25 of this chapter) argued that a "perpetual dialogue" created continual influence between two types of religious traditions characteristic of all societies—the "great tradition" (the formal public priestly institution) and the "little traditions" (the private domestic folk practices of families, tribes, villages, etc.). Notably, Christianity, as a major institution, was still a work-in-progress in late antiquity.

¹⁶⁵ See religious historian Louis Duchesne, *Christian Worship: Its Origin and Evolution*, 3rd English ed., translated by M. L. McClure (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge [SPCK], 1910), iii; Duchesne stated that funeral ritual was "of an absolutely private nature" and "has no very ancient features." In Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, see references to Rush at 4, 82, 126, 208; references to Toynbee at 17, 211; and references to Paxton at 24, 140. One of the sad reflections on the division of scholarship into two disciplinary streams around the end of the twentieth century (as mentioned above) is the fact that Rebillard does not incorporate any of the information of death rituals in the Roman world, and therefore the material published by Roman Studies scholar Valerie Hope. Rebillard would have had access to Hope's work—she first published an article in 1997, and her *Roman Death* book was issued in 2009—but Rebillard did not cite her. Neither has Hope incorporated Rebillard's research in any of her scholarship to present. Nor has she ever included Rush's contributions.

¹⁶⁶ Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, xi.

[Rebillard's] arguments were brought together in [his] book ... it was as if a window had been thrown open in a musty room.¹⁶⁷

Second, Rebillard argues rather persuasively that there is no evidence that can establish the existence of collective burial grounds provided or controlled by the church in the third century; his finding challenges previous misunderstanding on that topic.¹⁶⁸ For example, because there is a burial space (*Area I*) in the catacomb of Callistus that hold the remains of at least eight popes from the second to fourth centuries, it was assumed by scholars in the past that this constituted a communal Christian burial ground; however, the *Area I* burial collection was clerical only and did not include laity.¹⁶⁹ As Rebillard asserts, “In the Roman Empire, the cult of the dead was basically a family cult,” implying that ordinary Christians—who continued to follow Roman tradition—were responsible for the burial of their dead in places of the family’s choosing; they were not required to bury relatives in church-authorized cemeteries.¹⁷⁰ Still, Rebillard’s hypothesis has been criticized by some. Despite a detailed examination of the words *areae* and *cemetery* (along with their Greek and Latin forms) and analysis of the words’ relationship to *coemeterium*—the Latin, meaning “place to sleep/lie down,” in reference to a church or *martyrium* for the burial of saints/martyrs—Rebillard’s arguments have not persuaded everyone that bishops did not own cemeteries for Christians in general.¹⁷¹ Other scholars such as Marios Costambeys agree with Rebillard that the

¹⁶⁷ John Bodel, Review of *The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity* by Éric Rebillard (2009), *American Historical Review* 116, no. 1 (February, 2011): 210.

¹⁶⁸ Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 176-77.

¹⁶⁹ For details about the papal crypt in the catacombs of Callixtus, see Snyder, *Ante Pacem*, 159-61. Another argument supporting Rebillard’s claim of no apparent church-owned burial space is the graffiti under Rome’s S. Sebastiano, especially the graffiti addressed to saints/apostles Peter and Paul; first, the original burials on this site were non-Christian until ca. 200 and only after that do clearly Christian symbols appear; second, after ca. 250 a large *triclia* (dining area) was built along with a lengthy “graffiti wall” where messages were addressed to Peter and Paul (it was believed this was their *martyrium*, perhaps set up years before) during funerary meals held in the space; see Snyder, *Ante Pacem*, 181-89.

¹⁷⁰ Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 142.

¹⁷¹ Rebillard explains the origin of the word *cemetery* as derived from *coemeterium* (Lat) and *koimeterion* (Gk) in *Care of the Dead*, 3-5; the words *area/areae* (and their appearance in Tertullian’s writings in the second

development and control of separate Christian cemeteries occurred over long periods of time.¹⁷² Costambeys maintains that multiple factors played into the transformation of private familial to public church control of burial spaces in Rome; those factors included: (1) a growing desire for burial *ad sanctos* within the city walls near churches dedicated to martyrs; (2) common contravention of Roman burial law; (3) burial within urban areas in spaces previously deemed “public” (e.g., bath complexes; churches; *horti* or parklands that held at least one *domus* of a wealthy Roman family who eventually transferred the property to the church for buildings and cemeteries); and finally (4) development of a burial liturgy.¹⁷³

Third, *The Care of the Dead* also discusses the limits of the power and authority of the late antique church over the Christian cult of the dead. For one thing, the Roman state set out legislation and controlled the collection of fines for violation of tombs and the profanation of corpses; for Rebillard this implied that private burial places were protected by civic laws.¹⁷⁴ It was also a Roman duty (*pietas*), as indicated in numerous epitaphs, to bury abandoned bodies and the state even hired funerary workers to dispose of corpses of the abandoned and the poor; however, it was not, as Rebillard demonstrates, an expectation of the church upon all

century regarding Christian burials in Carthage) are explained in *Care of the Dead*, 7-12. As for the counter arguments, John Kloppenborg insisted in 2005 that Rebillard’s arguments “do not successfully exclude the more usual interpretations that the Roman Church possessed cemeteries controlled by the bishop”; see scholar of religion John S. Kloppenborg, Review of *The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity* by Éric Rebillard (2009), *The Catholic Historical Review* 91, no. 3 (July, 2005): 512. And Leonard Rutgers, also in 2005, charged that Rebillard’s explanations are confusing and asks why it would not have been proper for the church to be involved in burials even while families or *collegia* fulfilled their own responsibilities for the dead; see classical archaeologist Leonard V. Rutgers, Review of *The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity* by Éric Rebillard (2009), *Vigiliae Christianae* 59, no. 2 (May, 2005): 214-15. Notably, the appraisals just mentioned were directed at Rebillard’s original book in French (2003). A few years later (2009) when his book was released in English translation, Rebillard refuted the critiques in a footnote stating that these were “the kind of assumption[s] I am challenging in this book”; see Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 26 n66, which identifies Rutgers as basing his conclusions on “self-evident” assumptions about ancient burial practices.

¹⁷² See medievalist Marios Costambeys, “Burial Topography and the Power of the Church in Fifth- and Sixth-Century Rome,” *Papers of the British School at Rome* 69 (2001): 169-89.

¹⁷³ Costambeys, “Burial Topography,” 169-89.

¹⁷⁴ Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 61: “we know that tomb violation was a public offense from the reign of Septimius Severus, and a law of Gordian, from 240 and retained in the Justinian Code (9.19.1), qualified it as ‘a crime against religion’ ... [therefore] tomb violation qualified as a public offense.”

Christians to bury anyone other than their own family members.¹⁷⁵ And while there was a general understanding among Christians to perform good works, such as burying the poor, there was no obligation to do so; the bishops only took on the responsibility for the poor when there was no other recourse.¹⁷⁶ Cyprian of Carthage states in his *Letters* that clergy were expected to bury martyrs and confessors, but martyrs and confessors were “the special dead” and granted particular privilege by the church in terms of burial places (*coemeterii* or *martyria*).¹⁷⁷ Further, in terms of church control over the cult of the dead, Rebillard explains that the episcopate actually “tolerated” certain practices in “the secular sphere” when Christians complained they had always “done it this way”; for instance, feasting at burial sites was one of the concessions made by Augustine in Hippo thus allowing the laity to continue with their local traditions.¹⁷⁸ Worth noting is that the current study lends further credence to Rebillard’s arguments in terms of who had jurisdiction over burying the dead by reaching beyond that debate to include the significance of the family’s control over burial, their jurisdiction over the places of burial, and their authority over burial rituals.

Fourth, Rebillard argues that Christian inhumation was not due to belief in the resurrection. He spends the entirety of his chapter 4 demonstrating through the use of epigraphy, texts, civil/secular laws, and episcopal treatises that when “Christians had to defend their preference for inhumation, in a society where cremation remained, or had been, the norm for a long time, they did not stress their belief in the resurrection, but the respect for

¹⁷⁵ Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 90.

¹⁷⁶ See Rebillard’s discussion regarding burial of the poor in *Care of the Dead*, 111-15; passages from the *Apostolic Tradition*, attributed to Hippolytus, relating to burial of abandoned bodies and the poor, are explained in detail in *Care of the Dead*, 112-14.

¹⁷⁷ Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 98. See also, Cyprian, *Letters of Cyprian* (1-81), vol. 51 of *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*, translated by Sister Rose B. Donna (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1964), 12. 2.1.

¹⁷⁸ Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, x, 177-78. Regarding Augustine and feasting of the laity in the cemeteries, see *Care of the Dead*, 148.

the body.”¹⁷⁹ Of note in this regard is that Hope shows that the Romans were already in the process of shifting from cremation to inhumation. Therefore, beliefs were not the driving force in the change from cremation to inhumation from the first century to fourth century of the common era; Hope suggests only that “a change in fashion rather than a change in beliefs” was the most likely explanation.¹⁸⁰ However, my own findings provide additional evidence in terms of the laity’s lack of focus on the resurrection and their continued use of specific Roman practices associated with burial.

Finally, Rebillard determines that, besides matters of burial, the church remained largely uninvolved in decisions regarding commemoration of the dead. He notes that families were responsible for maintaining the memory of their deceased, leaving the bishops to manage celebrations for saints/martyrs.¹⁸¹ He also notes that it was common for early Christians to celebrate their dead ancestors at Rome’s annual *Parentalia*, the festival that included feasting in the cemetery at the graves of the ancestors. From the third to fifth centuries, argues Rebillard, ecclesiastical texts revealed the episcopate’s disapproval of the feasting behaviors of Christians at these “pagan” celebrations; for instance, Tertullian, Zeno of Verona, Gaudentius of Brescia, Ambrose of Milan, and Augustine in Hippo all issued concerns for Christians participating in the “drunken parties” (especially those conducted at the tombs of the martyrs) during *Parentalia* festivities.¹⁸² In addition, Rebillard asserts, “Christians saw banquets at martyrs’ tombs as a way of honoring them”; and, while the bishops viewed the feasting as a “form of sacrifice,” and “pagan” in nature, they did not wish “to appear to urge Christians to

¹⁷⁹ Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 88.

¹⁸⁰ Hope, *Roman Death*, 82; notably inhumation had been the oldest of the Roman rites of disposal.

¹⁸¹ Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 144, citing the Council of Elvira in Spain (295-315 CE) which issued directives for how worship at martyrs’ tombs was to be conducted: see canon 34 (restrictions on the lighting of candles) and canon 35 (women forbidden at the shrines at night) in *Concilia Hispaniae*, edited by Juan Vives, *España cristiana, textos 1* (Barcelona: Instituto Enrique Flórez, 1963).

¹⁸² Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 144-51.

neglect the memory of their ancestors ... [Yet, there] was no specific Christian substitute” at this point in late antiquity.¹⁸³ In Rebillard’s estimation, late antique bishops were especially undecided about what the nature of a relationship between the living and the dead should look like; he gives the example from the fifth century that the church had not yet set limits on what the living could do for the dead.¹⁸⁴ In terms of commemoration/*memoria*, my own study extends Rebillard’s findings on late antique Christian memory of the dead to include: (1) how the relationship of the Romans between the living and the dead influenced those same relationships for Christians, (2) how familial reciprocity between the living and the dead dominated concerns of the Christian laity in late antiquity, (3) how the close relationship between the living and the dead was maintained to a large extent through rituals, and (4) how that special relationship was influenced by the cult of the martyrs.

Clearly then, Rebillard’s approach to death, burial, and commemoration is a “return” to A. C. Rush’s perspective, that of viewing Christian practices as growing out of the Roman. Furthermore, like Toynbee and Hope, Rebillard employs material culture (tomb inscriptions and archaeology) in his investigation. Any gaps in Rebillard’s work appear to be three-fold. First, there is still more to analyze, especially in terms of gender and bereavement considerations in Christian funerary practices. Second, while he has disproved Paxton and Sicard’s premise that there was a definitive liturgy for the dead in Rome in the fourth and fifth centuries, Rebillard has not been concerned with tracking the “stages of development of the Christian cult of the dead.”¹⁸⁵ And third, in terms of funeral “sequence” as a whole integrated “process,” as promoted by Hope, Rebillard falls short. The only mention of the funeral in its

¹⁸³ Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 152-53.

¹⁸⁴ Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 174-75.

¹⁸⁵ Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 140.

entirety is a brief section (mid-book) pointing out the differences between the “ideal” Christian funeral (clearly the rites for clergy and monastics, and for some elite Christians) and those celebrated by pagan Romans. According to Rebillard, the “Christian” funeral exhibited the following elements: (1) there was no anointing of the dead, only of the sick, (2) the use of *viaticum* (eucharist) was far from reported routinely, even in the *Lives of the Saints*, (3) the vigil at the church was only for bishops and virgins, (4) the chanting of psalms was the “Christian version of mourning dirges,” (5) the “new meaning of death in Christianity completely transformed manifestations of mourning: joy and hope prevailed over sorrow and tears,” (6) at the same time, “mourners did not entirely disappear from the funerals of Christians,” (7) “simplicity and joy prevailed over opulence and tears,” and finally (8) the attendance of clergy and “brothers in faith” at funerals was more important “than the family or social connections.”¹⁸⁶

In addition, one may argue the existence of a few other weaknesses in Rebillard’s approach: (1) his subject deserves a more detailed analysis of the extant evidence, (2) he could have more fully applied the insights from ritual studies to the topic, (3) he neglected a more thorough examination of the transformation from the Roman death rituals to the Christian rituals, and (4) the organization of his book is hard to follow; nowhere does he indicate the geographical parameters of his study; it seems to cover both the eastern and western Roman Empire, which, arguably were distinctly different because of language, culture, socio-historic context, etc.¹⁸⁷ Further, Rebillard’s work does not reach much beyond the fifth century in the

¹⁸⁶ Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 130-31.

¹⁸⁷ Notably, Rebillard suggests, “[i]n retrospect, I wish I had done it [his study of textual sources for pagan, Jewish, and Christian evidence together] more systematically, especially in the last two chapters on the commemoration of the dead,” which does not address geographic (or chronological) parameters per se, but does indicate some self-analysis by the author himself; see *Care of the Dead*, xi n6.

West; he mentions only once that “the earliest documents describing a Christian ritual for funerals date from the eighth and ninth centuries” but does not explain the development of these rituals.¹⁸⁸ And while he alludes to the “social function” of the relation between the living and the dead, he does not elaborate on its evolution during the period between the fifth and ninth centuries. Had he gone that far, he would have noted that among the elements necessary for a formal liturgy for death to begin to coalesce, there needed to be clarification about why the remembrance of the dead was socially and emotionally necessary.¹⁸⁹ Significantly, the current study addresses a number of Rebillard’s shortfalls in the following ways: (1) it includes additional evidence—both textual and material/visual, (2) it applies ritual studies and extending the analysis until at least the 800s, (3) it clarifies the performance of grief within the development of the Christian funeral rituals, (4) it clearly spells out the chronological and geographical scope of the research, and (5) it challenges the idea that there was a prevalence of Christian joy and hope over pagan sorrow and fear.

My study found that late antique Christians continued to be concerned about a safe passage for their loved ones into the afterlife; but this concern arose from their Roman belief in the fundamental importance of honoring and remembering the dead and that the bond between the living and the dead was preeminent. It was not so much about “the safe passage from the one group to the other” (referring to the passage from life through death into the afterlife) as Paxton explained it. He argued that it was not until the liturgy could rely on “a structure of exchange” in a complex network between the deceased, the heirs, the church

¹⁸⁸ Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, xii.

¹⁸⁹ See medievalist Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages: The Living and the Dead in Medieval Society*, translated by Teresa Lavender Fagan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 6. Paxton realized the importance of the relationship between Christian Romans and the ancestors and drew from Peter Brown’s *Cult of the Saints* to describe the living-and-the-dead relationship as a process of “socializing death and the dead”; he concluded that the living and the dead “could not become one Christian society without a means of safe passage from the one group to the other,” see *Christianizing Death*, 18.

(mainly monasteries) and the poor that unity might be a real possibility.¹⁹⁰ But with that, I disagree. It was far more complicated. My research showed that what the laity wanted was that their loved ones be cared for by the church (both body and soul) in terms of respect, love, and recognition that the endurance of memory and identity for the deceased (as well as the bereaved) was all-important to the living (those that remained behind). Granted, Rebillard's book was certainly a beginning to scholarship's understanding of this lengthy and complex transformation. In fact, in John Bodel's estimation, *Care of the Dead* provides an invaluable (though, I would argue, incomplete) precursor to French historian Philippe Ariès' *L'homme devant la mort* (1977) viewed as the "classic study of Western man's evolving response to death" in the middle ages.¹⁹¹ Notably, when Rebillard's observation—that funerary rituals were left to the discretion of the family—is paired with Hope's work on memorial/memory and identity, we begin to grasp why commemoration of the dead and maintaining relations between the living and the dead were foremost considerations for the people of late antiquity. The current study addresses the need of ordinary Christians to maintain strong bonds with deceased family members (including saints and martyrs as part of the Christian community or "family"). As Hope points out, memory/identity/social relationship was one of the most important functions of the Roman ritual process for death. In the estimation of my own study,

¹⁹⁰ Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, 33-3; the typical scenario for the elite Christian followed a pattern something like the following: (1) before death, the deceased divided up his goods between the church and his heirs, (2) the heirs in turn were obligated to remember the deceased through prayers and alms, (3) the monasteries received the goods and redistributed them to the poor as alms while also promising to pray for the deceased, and finally (4) the poor were benefited (nourished) by the alms, which then symbolized the deceased had fulfilled his part of the multi-leveled exchange, thereby making his soul free to move from purgatory to heaven.

¹⁹¹ Bodel, Review of *Care of the Dead*, 211. Bodel argued that the original introduction to the French version (2003) of Rebillard's book promised to provide "the first missing chapters of [medievalist] Philippe Ariès' classic study of Western man's evolving response to death (*L'homme devant la mort* [1977] ... [and] it is against the broader canvas of that important contribution to the cultural history of the West that Rebillard's book deserves to be viewed." Ariès' book was translated into English by Helen Weaver under the title, *The Hour of Our Death: The Classic History of Western Attitudes Toward Death over the Last One Thousand Years* (New York: Barnes and Noble Book, 2000).

while Rush suggested individual pagan practices (e.g., crowning the dead) or symbols (e.g., boats/ships) were adapted to accommodate Christianity, the contributions by Hope (in terms of Roman traditions) and Rebillard (who showed the church did not claim control over burial until the fourth and fifth centuries, that there were limits to the authority of the episcopate until that time) have proved (in one way or another) that specific *Roman* frames of reference and the *functions* of ritual were the greater factors influencing Christian funerals.

A Segue into My Own Study

Significantly, this study focuses on the funeral rituals of late antique Christians as critical factors in the family's due diligence completing the task of *pietas* toward the dead.

Accordingly, my thesis examines the family's control over the rituals; their participation as ritual agents in matters of death, burial, and *memoria*; and the significance of family-controlled places as sites for the ritual performance of the funeral process. One supplemental examination is the role of women as ritual specialists/agents for the family. Hope identifies the roles of women in the Roman funeral process and my MA thesis/monograph (2012) highlights some of those roles and their effect on the development of Christian death rituals.¹⁹²

Therefore, the topic of women's part in the funerary process is a complementary part of the current study. Other scholars have examined women's involvement in the patronage of catacombs (e.g., Nicola Denzey); the role of women at funerary banquets as depicted in the frescoes in Rome (e.g., Janet Tulloch); women and their leadership in *refrigeria* (meals) for the saints (e.g., Robin M. Jensen); and finally (though tangentially treated by Cyrille Vogel and Frederick Paxton) the role of the nuns working in the scriptorium of Chelles to produce

¹⁹² See Sharon Murphy Mogen, *Women and Death Rituals in Late Antiquity: Forming the Christian Identity* (Saarbrücken, Germany: LAP Lambert Academic Publishing, 2012).

the first of the Christian sacramentaries.¹⁹³ These diverse roles of late antique women were extensions of female responsibility in the family's oversight of the funeral.

Further, consistent with Rebillard's suggestions and in imitation of Hope's analysis of Roman death, my study spotlights *ritual* rather than liturgy or theology. Evidence of the ritual process is treated holistically, that is, with consideration for all stages of the funeral (dying, death, vigils, oration, burial, and commemoration) and all the parties involved (agents, participants, the deceased, survivors, and the community). Therefore, by stressing the ritual process, this investigation invokes the assumptions and methodology of ritual studies.¹⁹⁴ In addition, by exploring interactions between funeral ritual, beliefs, and materiality, this inquiry benefits from the insights of mortuary studies and its focus on archaeology and material/visual evidence.¹⁹⁵ Data in this area involves funerary monuments, burial remains, grave goods, tomb inscriptions, and burial spaces/places. This evidence, in turn, is read and analyzed using memory studies and place studies.

Memory as identity—which Hope demonstrated was a key element of the Roman funeral—also contributes to the analysis of my research results. Social identity, as another factor, enters my project in terms of the social categories created among Christians (following the prevailing system of Roman hierarchy); these categories involve bishops and other

¹⁹³ See religious studies scholar Nicola Denzey, *The Bone Gatherers: The Lost worlds of Early Christian Women* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007); Janet Tulloch, "Women Leaders" (2006); Robin Margaret Jensen, "Dining with the Dead: From the Mensa to the Altar in Christian Late Antiquity" in *Commemorating the Dead: Texts and Artifacts in Context*, edited by L. Brink and D. Green, 107-43 (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008); Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy* (1986), and F. Paxton, *Christianizing Death* (1990).

¹⁹⁴ For important work in ritual studies, see for example, Van Gennep, *Rites of Passage* (1960); Ronald L. Grimes, *The Beginnings in Ritual Studies*, 3rd ed. (Waterloo, ON: 2013); Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Bare Facts of Ritual," in *Readings in Ritual Studies*, edited by R. L. Grimes, 473-82 (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996), and Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹⁹⁵ For mortuary studies see for example, medievalist Patrick J. Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994); see also historian Bonnie Effros, *Merovingian Mortuary Archaeology and the Making of the Early Middle Ages* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2003).

ecclesiastics, monastics, virgins, elite laity, and the ordinary laity. My study investigates the perspectives of these groups and shows how their differing worldviews impacted funerary rites. In addition, the application of social identity considers the upheavals (social/political/economic) during late antiquity that produced shifts in identities as individual families suffered break-down. Social identity also addresses how the ensuing vacuum, eventually filled by the church community, provided new Christian Romans a much-needed “surrogate family.”¹⁹⁶ Since memories had always been constructed and maintained as the private responsibility of the family (most often the role of women), memory as communal identity required adaptation and christianization. This, too, becomes part of my study.

The significance of mourning practices in addressing grief and the question of the efficacy of women’s ritual lament in terms of assisting the grieving family and/or the bereaved (individuals and/or the broader community) are other topics of my study. The previous assumption that fearful and distressful “pagan” views of death were replaced with joyful Christian ideas of resurrection and redemption has been found contrary to the primary sources. Rather, grief was still experienced, expressed and accompanied with rituals. Moreover, women were frequently associated with the expression of grief. On those matters, my study concludes the following: (1) the “positive” view of death was largely confined to the clergy, (2) expressions of grief continued among the laity, and the mourning and ritual lament performed by women persisted, and (3) women’s performances of grief remained alongside rituals for death even as funerary rituals coalesced to become a formal Christian liturgy.

¹⁹⁶ A promising analysis of the transformation of families in the Roman empire is found in Bowes, *Private Worship*, 2008. Kim Bowes, *Private Worship, Public Values, and Religious Change in Late Antiquity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

CHAPTER TWO

Methodology

This chapter lays out the research methods, data types, limitations, and the “exemplar” or prototype chosen for this project to investigate the transformation of the Christian funeral process in late antiquity. The applicable methodology was rooted in ritual studies and mortuary studies, with assistance from memory/identity studies, place studies, and performance studies. The data for this project consisted of literary and non-literary texts in combination with material and visual evidence. Tools for analysis included socio-historical assessment, visual rhetorics, contextuality, and literary criticism with insights gleaned from the hermeneutics of suspicion and rhetorical condemnation.¹ In terms of a prototype for the funerary process, the Roman funeral as delineated by Valerie Hope, was selected to fill that role.² Using these many tools, my study found that the family, particularly with contributions from their womenfolk, was instrumental, if not leaders, in the development of the Christian funeral and the adoption by the institutional church of a Christian liturgy for death in and around the eighth century in the Latin West. In what follows, I explain how the research strategies for this thesis unfolded.

¹ For discussion of visual rhetorics as a tool for analyzing art and artifactual data in dialogue with literary text, see Janet Tulloch, “Women Leaders in Family Funerary Banquets,” in *A Woman’s Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity*, by Carolyn Osiek and Margaret Y. MacDonald with J. Tulloch (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 167. For a good example of the rhetoric of condemnation in action, see classicist Gail Holst-Warhaft, *Dangerous Voices: Women’s Laments and Greek Literature* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 171-72.

² See Valerie M. Hope, *Roman Death: The Dying and the Dead in Ancient Rome* (New York: Continuum, 2009).

Fields of Study Utilized for This Project

Ritual Studies

Nearing the end of the second century CE, the starting point of my study, it was the case that the Roman funerary process involved the independent practices of families in matters of death, burial, and commemoration of the dead. To analyze the transition of this process till it became a Christian liturgy for death,³ this study adopted and applied insights from ritual and practice theory, especially as elucidated by Catherine Bell.⁴

In *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*, Bell explains the extensive bifurcation of thought and action evident in previous approaches to the study of ritual. Reviewing the historical debate on whether culture and religion started out immersed in myth or in ritual, Bell notes that the three major schools of thought—phenomenology of religion, the “school of ritual and myth,” and the psychological view—all separated ritual from belief.⁵ This separation resulted in a hierarchical perspective in which belief and doctrine were given preference and rituals were subordinated. According to Bell, this subordination of ritual and the “underlying model of primitive society,” have together shaped a good deal of modern scholarship on religion.⁶ It is one of the reasons why rituals have only recently received more scholarly attention, and it is probably why, in reference to late antique Christianity, doctrine and belief were highlighted and why Frederick Paxton, for instance, focused on liturgy and its connection to theological developments in his scholarship.⁷

³ Frederick S. Paxton, *Christianizing Death: The Creation of a Ritual Process in Early Medieval Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 134-37.

⁴ See Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁵ Bell, *Ritual*, 3-8, 12-13, 21.

⁶ Bell, *Ritual*, 21.

⁷ Paxton, *Christianizing Death*

The study of rituals gained more attention when the rituals were analyzed within the context of sociology and when the analysis largely revolved around the social function and purpose of ritual within a community (basically the thrust of functionalism).⁸ French sociologist, Émile Durkheim, early in the twentieth century, argued that religion was most significantly a way of gathering together a “collective group” and ensuring their social identity.⁹ Social anthropologist, Alfred Radcliffe-Brown argued that religion as a social structure contributed to “the formation and maintenance of social order.”¹⁰ Radcliffe-Brown insisted that ritual expresses and builds a feeling of dependence on some form of “moral or spiritual power” and that the social function of ritual stabilizes the social system, adjusts the system’s internal operations, maintains group tenets, and restores equilibrium after major disruptions in society.¹¹ Anthropologist, Roy Rappaport’s field studies in New Guinea in the 1960s demonstrated that ritual regulates interactions between communities and/or between communities and the environment; he argued that ritual plays a critical role in sustaining a given social system because the authority of ritual is “rooted in the divine, as well as in tradition.”¹² Meanwhile, in consort with functionalism, Gregory Bateson, E. E. Evans-Pritchard and others sought to modify the approach to include structural and symbolic explanations for the relationship between ritual and religion. They found that rituals are “imaginative constructions” that can actually reveal in an observable way the religious

⁸ Bell, *Ritual*, 23.

⁹ Bell, *Ritual*, 24-25, citing Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Form of the Religious Life*, [1915], translated by J. W. Swain (New York: Free Press, 1965).

¹⁰ Bell, *Ritual*, 27, citing Alfred Radcliffe-Brown, “Religion and Society,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 75 (1945): 33-43.

¹¹ Bell, *Ritual*, 28-29.

¹² Bell, *Ritual*, 30, citing Roy Rappaport, “Ritual Regulation of Environmental Relations among a New Guinea People,” [1967], in *Ecology, Meaning and Religion* (Richmond, CA: North Atlantic Books, 1979), 41.

concepts of people.¹³ Evans-Pritchard discovered that it is not the feelings or behaviors of people in a ritual that matter; what is important is that the rite be carried out in order to affect and reflect “the structural order of social relations” within the group.¹⁴ Essentially, the result is still a focus on the social structures of society.

Arnold van Gennep went on to examine ritual in terms of how it is used in an actual social setting and how a given rite fits within a particular sequence of rites; moreover, he explained that the meaning of any given rite depends on the function of the *whole sequence* of rites of which it is a part.¹⁵ All life-crises rites, argued Van Gennep, follow a three-stage process—separation, transition, and incorporation—and there is a wide similarity among ceremonies for birth, puberty, marriage, death, and the other life passages.¹⁶ This, in fact, has become one of the major operating assumptions within ritual studies, but, unfortunately, not always followed. For instance, despite stating in *Christianizing Death* that he would apply Van Gennep’s three-stage process for the examination of funeral rituals, Paxton failed to follow through on that claim. His study limited analysis to the parameters of the liturgy.

Further, Van Gennep’s analysis of ritual stressed the importance of rites of passage in transitioning and re-constituting groups “in an orderly and sanctioned manner” to achieve the

¹³ Bell, *Ritual*, 35, citing Gregory Bateson, *Naven*, [1936], 2nd ed. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1986), and E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Nuer Religion* [1956] (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 313-20, 207-208.

¹⁴ Bell, *Ritual*, 35, citing Evans-Pritchard, *Nuer Religion*, 207-208; these observations would lead to “structural studies of kinship and mythological systems” by Claude Levi-Strauss during 1967-8, and Clifford Geertz’s “symbolic studies of cultural meaning” during 1973-80; see Bell, *Ritual*, 35.

¹⁵ Bell, *Ritual*, 35-36, citing Arnold van Gennep, “On the Method to Be Followed in the Study of Rites and Myths,” 1910, in *Classical Approaches to the Study of Religion*, edited by Jean Jacques Waardenburg, vol. 1 (The Hague: Mouton, 1973), 298-99; notably, Van Gennep refers to this way of studying a ritual as his “sequential method.” Curiously, Valerie Hope, in *Roman Death*, recognizes the importance of considering individual aspects of Roman dying, death, and bereavement in context, that is, as part of the entire funerary process; yet she does not mention Van Gennep’s earlier observation of this reality; see Hope, *Roman Death*, 12-13, 195-96 n5.

¹⁶ Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, translated by M. B. Vizedom and G. L. Caffee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 3, 194.

integrity of the whole.¹⁷ In terms of my study, one of its focuses has been the reconstitution of the group following death; that group for most of late antiquity was the family. It was the family for whom death disrupted social and often economic well-being, a situation that did not change until the concept of “family” changed. Roman funerary rites responded to these issues by creating a relationship between the living and the dead, which in turn was perpetuated through various commemorative rituals. For Christianity, the response became part of what Éric Rebillard noted was the community of the living and the dead or the “Christian cult of the dead.”¹⁸ In addition, Van Gennep suggested that rituals for life passages were critical to “the psychological well-being of individuals,” and not only to the structural-functional welfare of the family or community.¹⁹ This notion has received limited attention until recently when a shift occurred within sociology, history, and other disciplines that recognized the significance of emotions and scholarship’s ability to study them.²⁰ Traditional rites, in terms of death—grief, mourning, and bereavement—are now acknowledged by most scholars engaged in the subject of death, albeit with limited discussion.²¹ This is the case within the study of Christianity, given the assumption that Christianity replaced a fear of death with an optimistic view of eternal life; however, on that subject this study was able to prove that particular scholarly perception to be inaccurate.

¹⁷ Bell, *Ritual*, 37.

¹⁸ See Éric Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead in late Antiquity*, translated by Elizabeth Trapnell Rawlings and Jeanine Routier-Pucci (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), especially ch. 7, “The Church, Christians, and the Dead: Commemoration of the Dead in Late Antiquity.”

¹⁹ Bell, *Ritual*, 37.

²⁰ See, for example, the collection of contributions edited by psychologists, L. Z. Tiedens and C. W. Leach entitled, *The Social Life of Emotions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004). Provocative topics include (1) emotion as socially responsive, (2) emotion as socially shared and regulated, and (3) emotion as socially constituted. The potential for applying these perspectives to the Roman funeral and its transition to a Christian liturgy for death, especially in terms of grief and mourning would seem to offer material for another dissertation!

²¹ See, for example, classicist David Konstan, “Emotions and Morality: The View from Classical Antiquity,” *Topoi* 34 (2015):401-407.

In the 1960s, Victor Turner, building on Van Gennep's ideas of liminality and rites of passage, argued that ritual provided a "social drama" that allowed tensions within a social entity to be expressed and resolved.²² The idea of ritual dramatization led Turner to explore ritual as performance and also to imagine social structure as a dynamic, fluid process by which communities could redefine and renew themselves continuously.²³ As Bell explains, there was a realization of "aesthetic connections among ritual, drama, music, folklore, and dance" causing culturalists to see "provocative suggestions in the metaphors" of drama and performance" thus making it likely that cultural ideals might be "embodied in social attitudes and personal experiences."²⁴ In addition, performance theorists like Ronald Grimes have argued that ritual is an event that "effects changes in people's perceptions and interpretations," and especially that the physical and sensual aspects of ritual (its kinesthesia and synesthesia) are crucial to its experience.²⁵ In this study, while it has focused on Bell's practice theory of ritual (or ritualization), it also drew on Grimes' idea of ritual as performance in terms of providing heuristic devices that help to focus attention on the ritual elements of place/setting, the agents, participants and spectators, kinesthesia (movement) and synesthesia (the senses). These elements are useful in terms of "reconstructing" the shared sensory experience of ritual lament, in particular.

As briefly noted above, Turner thought ritual could also change society. By elaborating on Van Gennep's tripartite sequence involved in rites of passage, Turner explained that rituals not only affirm social order, but also allow for "disordered inversions" to

²² Bell, *Ritual*, 39, citing Victor Turner, *Schism and Continuity in an African Society* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1957) and Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974).

²³ Bell, *Ritual*, 23-35.

²⁴ Bell, *Ritual*, 73.

²⁵ Bell, *Ritual*, 74, citing Ronald L. Grimes, *Symbol and Conquest: Public Ritual and Drama in Santa Fe, New Mexico* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1976), esp. 45-46.

legitimate and/or change the original order/status.²⁶ In other words, rituals could be vehicles for change or transformation, a concept that has been a major element in the present study. Bell expands upon Turner's ideas. Bell views *practice* as action performed in association with structure(s).²⁷ These structures include the structure of social relations, embodied memories, previous traditions of practice, and the like. Practice both reflects and reshapes these structures. It means that rituals are situated within structures while having the capacity to transform them. It explains in part Valerie Hope's discussion of practices associated with Roman funeral rituals as comprising Roman familial, social, and gender relations at the same time they were conditioned by Roman cultural, intellectual and religious worldviews.²⁸ The christianization of these rituals was not merely the emergence of a new liturgy based on Christian doctrine (as Paxton suggested). Rather, funeral rituals continued to reflect the previous Roman structures until the rituals were reshaped and the structures (with associated worldviews) changed along with them or vice versa (or a combination of the two). Bell's idea of ritualization helps to explain the process of transformation as a dialectic relationship between practice and structure in the following way: (1) the actions/practices generate memories, emotional sensations, multisensorial experiences, and symbolic representations that display formal relationships; (2) these structural links between elements of ritualized practice reflect and reconstruct a worldview so that the result is a feeling of a logical system with a hierarchically organized order that clearly connects to the general worldview; and (3) finally, there is a sense of totality because the emotional or sensory associations may be augmented or reinterpreted through individual thought, discussion, and reflection before, after, or even

²⁶ Bell, *Ritual*, 40, citing Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*, 38-41.

²⁷ Bell, *Ritual*, 76-83.

²⁸ Hope, *Roman Death*, 2-3.

during certain phases of the ritual event.²⁹ Thus, ritual is one component in a process of constant reconstruction and change. It means, for instance, that Rebillard's idea of the Roman importance of a community of the living and the dead, then adapted by Christianity, was not solely the elaboration of ideas associated with saints and martyrs. Rather, the adaptation emerged when the Roman death rites (designed to reconstruct the social relations between the living and the dead) were reinterpreted; that is, the ways in which the living honored the memory of the dead, and the dead themselves, were re-conceived through a Christian perspective which, in turn, reciprocated a perceived response from the dead in the form of assistance to the family. More accurately, reinterpretation and subsequent changes in ritual practices would, over time, contribute to the Christian notion of a wider community: "the communion of saints."

One of the major considerations in terms of *practice* is the agent who executes the practice in relation to the structure. The agent is restricted by internalized structures as well as existing material/social limits. In the case of Roman death rites, the agent(s) involved the family and various paid people. The agents executed several different practices (e.g., the women prepared the body and lamented while the men eulogized). Again, following Bell and the practice theories of those such as Pierre Bourdieu,³⁰ the agent is one ingredient in a continuous shifting cluster of "structure, practice and agent" that, in turn, is involved in a process of mutual re-creation.³¹ Further, as the parts of the cluster shifted, they influenced each other toward either continuity or change. With regard to my own study, changes in late antique death rituals were largely due to shifts by way of structures and practices executed

²⁹ Bell, *Ritual*, 136-37.

³⁰ See sociologist/anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of the Theory of Practice*, translated by R. Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 79 and 96.

³¹ Bell, *Ritual*, 82.

through agents. For example, by the 800s, the performance of Christian death rituals was more often performed by the clergy in place of the agents of the family (commonly, the women). For this shift to occur, familial agents needed to relinquish some of their control to the church; certainly, family members still participated in the funeral and continued the management of some of the rituals or practices—but, for the relinquishing of agency to have occurred, both structures and practices needed to shift and change.

The shift and change are due to ritual's embeddedness in the historical process. Bell clarifies further that studying ritual with practice theory views ritual as part of an "historical process," one which reproduces past patterns that are also "reinterpreted or transformed."³² She also argues that the study of ritual practice explicitly concerns "what rituals do, not just what they mean, particularly the way they construct and inscribe power relationships."³³ People, in their everyday lives, may exercise agency when they consent yet protest, or replicate yet try to transform their situation.³⁴ Paramount in all these considerations, maintains Bell, is the focus in practice theory that "physical mind-body holism" is critical when implementing and embodying "everyday schemes of physical action and cultural values."³⁵ Again, these are factors in terms of the shift from the familial control of funerals to clerical control augmented by family practices.

As well as the assertions just offered about the fluid dynamics of ritual, a group of German scholars advocated, in 2006, for a concept they referred to as "transfer of ritual." Robert Langer, et al. (the Heidelberg project on "Ritual Dynamics") discussed the transfer of ritual from one context to another (e.g., geographical, cultural, religious, economic); the project

³² Bell, *Ritual*, 83.

³³ Bell, *Ritual*, 83.

³⁴ Bell, *Ritual*, 83.

³⁵ Bell, *Ritual*, 83.

argued that change or combinations of change in one or more contexts (through time and space) are likely to bring about transformation, re-invention, adoption, compensation, and even loss of rituals.³⁶ Further, according to the research group, it is the combination of interacting aspects of the context, the internal elements of the ritual itself, and finally the participants, who determine the changes or adaptations to ritual.³⁷ The group of researchers admitted, however, that their theory of “transfer of ritual,” while useful for learning what external contexts have effected ritual change or innovation, may not always resolve “who” was responsible for the modification, “what” the intention was for bringing about the modification, or “how” the modifications were actually orchestrated.³⁸ My analysis focused on the combination of context, ritual and participants in tracing the evolution of the funeral ritual, and as predicted by Langer et al., there were certain expected gaps. In several cases, however, other studies in other areas of study helped to resolve many of these shortfalls.

As implied previously in the discussion of heuristic devices with Grimes, language (e.g., Paxton’s “liturgy”) is only one element among a number of others; practical and bodily actions within rituals were also significant. This is because knowledge can be embodied rather than verbalized. The meaning attached to funerary rituals, therefore, was generated through the practical experience of the ritual. Knowledge was repeatedly created and recreated every time the ritual practice was carried out by the agents and experienced by the bereaved. James Laidlaw and Caroline Humphrey propose that one of ritual’s characteristics is that the performed act is not “just in store for us, it is also in store in us” as embodied memories.³⁹

³⁶ See cultural anthropologist Robert Langer, and religious studies scholars D. Lüddeckens, K. Radde, and J. Snoek, “Transfer of Ritual,” *Journal of Ritual Studies* 20, no. 1 (2006): 1-10.

³⁷ Langer, et al., “Transfer of Ritual,” 7.

³⁸ Langer, et al., “Transfer of Ritual,” 8.

³⁹ See social anthropologists Caroline Humphrey and James Alexander Laidlaw, *The Archetypal Actions of Ritual: An Essay on Ritual as Action Illustrated by Jain Rite of Worship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 260.

Therefore, meaning does not underlie or precede the ritual practice, but is created and recreated through a mindful body and embodied mind.⁴⁰ Using the term “embodied” purposely highlights two points: (1) cognition depends upon the kinds of experience that come from having a body with various sensorimotor capacities, and (2) these individual sensorimotor capacities are themselves embedded in a more encompassing biological, psychological and cultural context.⁴¹ The embodied knowledge and experience of the practical execution of an act (or ritual) is as significant as, if not more than, the meaning attributed to it. Or, put another way, the “meaning” of a ritual, for both agents and participants, may not be verbalized; it may be, instead, a multi-sensory experience. Therefore, not only must one consider a ritual’s shared meaning (the verbalized or written part), but all of its shared mutually-structured embodied experience, as well. This has been an important awareness adopted by this project.

While the focus of my analysis was on the funeral ritual, considerations of context, embodied memories and expressions of social relations required the extension into calendrical commemorative rites. For instance, late antique Roman and Christian funerals can be classified as calendrical commemorative rites and/or the rites of feasting and festivals. The regular visitation of families to the graves of their loved ones and the meals shared on site with the dead gave “socially meaningful definitions to the passage of time.”⁴² The activities created “ritual time” that was predictable and repeated every year; the effect was to solidify Roman (and subsequently, Christian) identity and a strong sense of community.⁴³ Special

⁴⁰ See anthropologists Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret M. Lock, “The Mindful Body: A Prolegomenon to Future Work in Medical Anthropology,” *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 1.1 (1987): 6-41.

⁴¹ See philosophers Francisco J. Varela and Evan Thompson, along with cognitive psychologist Eleanor Rosch, *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 172-73.

⁴² Bell, *Ritual*, 102.

⁴³ Bell, *Ritual*, 105.

festivals such as the *Parentalia*, *Rosalia*, *Feralia*, and *Lemuria* (some private, others more public) were celebrated on specific dates each year to honour the ancestors and the spirits of the dead.⁴⁴ Again, the festivals reinforced social identity and Roman unity. In short, the rites of exchange and/or communion were present. The category presents the notion of “gift exchange,” or the idea of reciprocity as it relates to the bond between the living and the dead. We know, for instance, that family members often brought food offerings to the cemetery as gifts and/or sustenance for the dead (as *refrigerium*). The offerings were intended to maintain social bonds (beyond death) and to “repay” the benefits the dead had provided to the surviving family: property, social identity, status, and life itself.⁴⁵ For Christians, the gifts eventually became spiritual (e.g., the offering of prayers and masses) and the bishops served as the “third party” in the exchange—especially as gifting began to occur between the living and the saints/martyrs, who were recognized as the “patrons” and extended “family” in the community of God (the *ecclesia Dei*).⁴⁶

Also important to the study of ritual is “place” or “space.” R. Grimes and Jonathan Z. Smith have dealt with the subject as it pertains to religious rituals in some detail. However, the two men have not necessarily agreed on the role of place/space in ritual performance. Smith has advocated for the “emplacement of ritual” in which ritual activity occurs in its proper ritualized place, while nonritual activity happens quite naturally in mundane non-ritualized

⁴⁴ Hope, *Roman Death*, 99-102. Notably, the *Lemuria*, held in Roman times on May 9, 11, and 13, was renamed and adapted by Pope Boniface IV in 609 CE to become the feast of the Virgin Mary and the Saints; the day, *dedicatio Sanctae Mariae ad martyres* (eventually shortened to “All Saints”) was celebrated on May 13 (Lemuria) until the eighth century when Pope Gregory III moved the feast to November 1st to counter the Celtic festival of Sanhain, also a celebration of the dead; see *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed., edited by E. A. Livingstone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), s.v. “All Saints’ Day,” 41-42.

⁴⁵ See medieval historian Patrick J. Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 77-78.

⁴⁶ Geary, *Living with the Dead*, 78-83.

spaces.⁴⁷ Smith also argued that the ritual actor remembers the difference between ritual in a ritualized place (where things are the way they ought to be—orderly and idealized) and ritual in a non-ritualized place (where things are the way they actually are—disorderly and messy).⁴⁸ The recollection of the difference between idealized behavior in the ritual place and the chaotic behavior in the non-ritualized place, maintained Smith, created tension for the ritual actor.⁴⁹ In other words, for Smith, ritual activity does not render the space sacred; instead, the *place* makes the activity sacred; place, he insisted, is not an empty container “but rather, a force that forms actions and actors.”⁵⁰ In contrast, Grimes (from the vantage of place studies) has maintained that “we know which places are sacred and which are not by observing what is enacted (or not enacted) in them. Sacrality becomes evident in *how* people act.”⁵¹ For Grimes, the ritual *activities* performed in a given place make that place “sacred.” Therefore, given the context of my thesis, Grimes’ work is more reflective of place studies, and it accommodates better the ideas of my hypothesis, namely, that home can become temporarily sacred during the early stages of the funeral; and the cemetery, as a place, becomes sacred for a much longer period after the major funeral rites (including burial) have been completed. Or, put another way, in terms of death for Romans and/or Christians, there were places critical to the family, to state officials, and to church leaders; for instance: (1) the home of the deceased was the *place* of rituals of separation (both for the deceased and for the surviving family); (2) the route travelled from home to the cemetery—that is, transporting the body of the deceased to the site

⁴⁷ See Ronald L. Grimes, *Rite Out of Place: Ritual, Media, and the Arts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006) 102-103.

⁴⁸ Grimes, *Rite Out of Place*, 102, citing, J. Z. Smith’s definition of ritual cited from “The Bare Facts of Ritual,” *History of Religion* 49.2 (1969): 125.

⁴⁹ Grimes, *Rite Out of Place*, 103.

⁵⁰ Grimes, *Rite Out of Place*, 105 and 107, citing J. Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 110.

⁵¹ Grimes, *Rite Out of Place*, 108.

of burial—was the *place* of rites of transition; (3) in terms of elite Roman statesmen, for example, the forum was a ritual place of transition and for bishops, abbots, and abbesses stopping at the church on the way to burial represented a place for the enactment of a rite of transition; and (4) the gravesite was the *place* of closure, the rites of incorporation (for both the deceased and for the surviving family). For the deceased the tomb-place meant “incorporation” into the realm of the dead, and for the bereaved it meant an opportunity to “reintegrate” with society every time the family returned to feast and remember.

Finally, there is the question of a “working definition” of “ritual” for the current study examining the transition of the Roman funeral. I tend to favor the perspectives of Bell and Grimes on ritual, so the definition I have elected for this study is this: Ritual is a “strategic way of acting” (Bell) performed as embodied experience (Grimes) in a place made sacred by the action/rites performed there (Grimes). Significantly, my research of the “places” involved with funeral rituals and their transformation has invariably implicated material/visual evidence, which is more consistent with mortuary studies, the next topic of discussion.

Funerary/Mortuary Studies

Mortuary studies typically addresses archaeological evidence. Obviously, in terms of the reconstruction of rituals, it means the examination of material traces and written descriptions or references. Data includes grave goods, cemeterial configuration, and burial remains—though historical and documentary sources may also be considered in tandem. The findings spawned by mortuary studies provide critical insight into religious beliefs, social structure, gender ideology, and other matters in terms of the culture or society under

scrutiny.⁵² As far as who among scholars engages in mortuary studies, it is largely the realm of historians, archaeologists, sociologists, and cultural anthropologists, or in my own case, scholars of religious studies. Interpretation of mortuary data allows academics to explore a lengthy list of themes: (1) reconstruction of social structures, (2) the ritualized or symbolic meaning of mortuary practices, (3) social identity and personhood, (4) architecture and spaces/places, (5) social memory, (6) death as a process of journey/rite of passage, (7) commemoration practices, (8) performances or ritualized acts, (9) remembering and forgetting as processes or “technologies” of change, (10) transformation—social, economic, political, and religious, (11) the impact of Christianity as a religious tradition, (12) diversity in burial types and places, (13) emergence of churchyard burial, and (14) death as performance and transition.⁵³ In other words, these themes comprise some of the same structures and aspects of worldview, along with traces of their practices, that scholars of funerary rites in late antiquity look for. Hence, the relevance of mortuary studies for this thesis.

Related to the argument that the study of death/burial should involve both material culture and text is the notion that investigating mortuary data is largely a study of societies of the past and the way they conveyed memories.⁵⁴ According to Patrick J. Geary, “Expressed beliefs and articulations of elite culture [the church/clergy] present one sort of meaning [e.g., in text]. A second, deeper sort must be found in the matrix of relationships combining objects, gestures, rituals, and articulations [everyday practices of religion]—in short, in the totality of

⁵² See Bonnie Effros, *Merovingian Mortuary Archaeology and the Making of the Early Middle Ages* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2003), 2. Also, G. F.M. Rakita, Jane E. Buikstra, et al., eds., *Interacting with the Dead: Perspectives on Mortuary Archaeology for the New Millennium* (Miami: University Press of Florida, 2005).

⁵³ See archaeologist Howard Williams, *Death and Memory in Early Medieval Britain* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 6-34.

⁵⁴ Williams, *Death and Memory*, 2.

reflected and non-reflected behavior and creation.”⁵⁵ Geary suggests that the study of mortuary practices in the Gallo-Roman West, for instance, is essentially the study of religion in society in late antiquity and the early middle ages. He writes that proper examination of the subject

must be grounded in the actions of ... [western societies] rather than in the inherited and poorly assimilated belief tradition of doctors of the Church or in the equally complex and elite Germanic oral literary tradition ... the archaeologist must distinguish the essential structures unifying his material and establish, as it were, a model of a system of functional and representation interdependences among his sources. The textual historian must do the same. Then the two models must be juxtaposed and combined and only then compared with the articulated reflections of the elite cultural traditions.⁵⁶

In short, Geary stresses the need to extend beyond the doctors of the Church (which we know limited Paxton) and to incorporate both material and textual evidence. Mortuary studies has the potential to do that. My own study, therefore, has embraced the insights and application of mortuary studies to assess the transition of the funerary process from the Roman to the Christian. One of the strengths of mortuary/funerary studies is its link to the study of social memory. Howard Williams maintains that material culture related to death/burial is a manifestation of the desire of people from the past to remember and to be remembered; the ancients were motivated to “commemorate the dead, venerate ancestors, and articulate genealogies and mythologies.”⁵⁷ Memory, argues Williams, is a process rather than “a fixed

⁵⁵ Geary, *Living with the Dead*, 34. Notably, Geary’s work appeared at the height of the argument concerning “the traditional view of the religion lived by the majority of laity as a vulgarization of the model imposed by the clergy” in the middle ages, which had been proposed earlier (1970s) by Peter Brown regarding late antiquity; see Geary, *Living with the Dead*, 32-33.

⁵⁶ Geary, *Living with the Dead*, 44.

⁵⁷ Williams, *Death and Memory*, 2. See also, Geary, *Living with the Dead*, 2; Geary maintains that late antique and early medieval Christians were obligated not only to liturgical remembrance of the dead (prayers and masses offered for the dead) but also to preserve “the name, the family, and the deeds of the departed” into perpetuity. In the sixth century and beyond, “[t]he dead were present among the living through liturgical commemoration, in dreams and visions, and in their physical remains, especially the tombs and relics of the saints ... They played vital roles in social, economic, political, and cultural spheres.”

entity” and is therefore hard to recognize; at the same time, memories are comprised of both material evidence and literature—images, stories, songs, texts, rituals, and so on.⁵⁸ The work of Paul Connerton in memory studies is another valuable resource. Connerton maintains that remembering in oral cultures (which is what the Roman world of late antiquity was) “takes the form of performance repeatedly recited by the custodians of memory to those who hear of it.”⁵⁹ Connerton explains further, “performative utterances have to be cast in a standardised form if there is to be any chance of their being repeated by successive generations, and the rhythms of oral verse are the privileged mechanisms of recall because rhythm enlists the co-operation of a whole series of bodily motor reflexes in the work of remembrance.”⁶⁰ Memory studies thus provides background for my investigation of women’s ritual lament at late antique funerals. Connerton’s insights mesh with Williams’ position on social memory—basically viewed as “selective remembering and the active forgetting of the past”; as such, it is inherently “selective, active and performative in nature,” and can be facilitated by material culture and ritual performances along with literacy and orality.⁶¹ I discuss more about the material culture aspect of social memory a bit later.

In sum, my study’s incorporation of the methodological strategies just reviewed—ritual studies in tandem with performance and memory studies; and mortuary/funerary studies complemented by place studies and memory/identity studies—work together to solidify the four main themes of this thesis: family, place, memory, and ritual.

⁵⁸ Williams, *Death and Memory*, 2. See also, Effros, *Merovingian Mortuary Archaeology*, 9-10; Effros argues that the material culture of death (grave goods, epigraphy, tomb location, cemeterial topography, etc.) enhance “the memory of the deceased instead of accurately rendering an image of his or her social standing, ethnic affiliation, or personal adornment.”

⁵⁹ See social anthropologist Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 76.

⁶⁰ Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 76.

⁶¹ Williams, *Death and Memory*, 2.

Data for This Study

Analysis of my subject has required a variety of data—literary, non-literary, and material/visual evidence. Assessing these primary source-types necessitated the use of a variety of methods for analysis. Foremost among the approaches was a reading of the sources that realize the existence of both formal (institutional) and informal (domestic) Christianity in late antiquity. Because this study has traced the transformation of funerary rituals in the West, it was crucial that the social matrix—representing the laity and their practice of private funerals—be as fairly represented as feasible, given the nature of the evidence. By re-reading the literary sources with assorted hermeneutics and including non-literary together with material evidence, it has been possible to make the laity more visible in their ritual activities for the dead.

With these points in mind, this section describes the various sources that were applicable to my topic, it discusses the parameters and limitations of these sources, and finally, reviews the methodology that helped integrate the data.

Literary Sources

Primary sources for my study, in terms of funerary rituals, involved all types of literature including (1) canonical texts comprising the New Testament, Church Orders such as the *Didascalia* and the *Apostolic Constitutions*, and the records of the proceedings of church councils and synods; (2) patristic literature comprising treatises, sermons, and letters of the Church Fathers in the Latin West; (3) hagiography (written accounts of the lives of martyrs, saints, and confessors); and (4) liturgical documents including the sacramentaries (books of prayers for masses and sacraments) and the *ordines* (books of liturgical actions and ritual

procedures). In reviewing this material, the focus was not on theology and doctrine associated with death and afterlife; rather, the focus was on the actions and practices. Given that the writers were not ethnographers or anthropologists, the actions and practices must be gleaned from the various literary genres (other than the brief references in the Church Orders or the later liturgical texts.). In fact, given the ubiquitous nature of death and familial control of the ritual process, it was usually in the context of “extraordinary,” “offensive,” “bothersome” or “contentious” that attracted notice and written reports by the clergy. Therefore, in some (if not many) cases, it was a matter of following the breadcrumbs.

In addition, these literary sources had to be approached cautiously since surviving textual sources have been found to represent the patriarchal and hierarchal facet of Christianity, often to the exclusion of the social matrix.⁶² The extant texts are typically illustrative of the church institution largely represented by elite males and are, therefore, biased in the sense they are stereotypical and idealized, for example, on matters of death and mourning; such texts tend to be “dismissive of the beliefs and practices of others” (the social matrix) and usually critical (often in quite negative terms) of alternative practices that contravene “traditional elite ideals.”⁶³ Significantly, the androcentrism of the elite Roman

⁶² Past scholarship, in failing to recognize especially textual biases, produced several methodological errors when contemplating ecclesiastical texts; some of the errors involved falsely assuming the literature was an accurate historical record or that literature was the only “voice” of society “when actually other voices have been ignored, repressed, or assimilated” or supposing that literature accurately reflected popular religion when “actually literature and practice stand in tension with each other; see Snyder, *Ante Pacem*, 15.

⁶³ See New Testament scholars David L. Balch and Carolyn Osiek, introduction to *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, edited by David L. Balch and Carolyn Osiek (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), xiv. Also, historian Gillian Clark explains “androcentrism,” as encompassing elitism and idealism, in the following definition: “The lawyers, doctors, theologians, creative writers, and artists who produced such discourses [writings about “the ways in which women’s lives were perceived interpreted, and (if possible) regulated in terms of leading ideas, priorities, assumptions, and interests”] were (almost without exception) men, and were members of an educated elite with a common cultural inheritance”; in G. Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity: Pagan and Christian Lifestyles* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1994), 2. See also S. Murphy Mogen, *Women and Death Rituals in Late Antiquity: Forming the Christian Identity* (Saarbrücken, Deutschland: LAP Lambert Academic Publishing, 2012), 15-17 and 22-23. In addition, Hope *Roman Death*, 11 discusses male bias in literary sources.

Christian (and Christian Roman) male influenced the historiography of women and their activities when depicted in past scholarship, especially when the focus was on literary evidence alone. Therefore, to counter the prevalent biases, scholars of late antiquity have adopted the strategy of “reading against the text” for which there are two useful hermeneutics. In the 1980s Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza devised the “hermeneutics of suspicion”; her strategy recognized that virtually all ancient/historical texts are androcentric and that women portrayed in the texts are “social constructions.”⁶⁴ In this study, for instance, that is often the case; e.g., Jerome’s depiction of the women he mentored in Rome and Jerusalem were invariably as “perfect” ascetics. A second tool enlisted in decoding the androcentrism in texts is the “rhetoric of condemnation.”⁶⁵ Frequent condemnations in the written record by political and religious (male) leaders in late antiquity made it clear that specific behaviors of women at funerals and certain practices of laypeople were judged as “unseemly,” and “out-of-control,” and even “hysterical.”⁶⁶ The Church Fathers regularly complained about lamenting women, for instance; the criticism was documented in episcopal sermons, letters, and especially in the proceedings of church councils. John Dickinson Haines makes the following observation:

a condemnation implies a practice that is abundant and vibrant enough to be condemned. The more plentiful the condemnations, the more widespread the practice ... most writers in the Middle Ages side unambiguously with the Church, whether they are monks at one end of the spectrum or trained clerics with a secular vocation at the other end. By instinct, they enforce use of Latin and adherence to Roman ecclesiastic authority. As a result, these writers, usually highly educated

⁶⁴ See feminist biblical scholar Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 108-109. Fiorenza’s “hermeneutics of suspicion” was established as a fundamental principle for the study of women’s history. For further information about the development of strategies by Fiorenza and other “foremothers” of women’s history and their efforts to more accurately reflect the ancient world, see Mogen, *Women and Death Rituals*, 2-4.

⁶⁵ The “rhetoric of condemnation” was a term first used by Gail Holst-Warhaft in describing the attempt by Christian leaders to control women’s funerary lament; the condemnation was similar to “the classical suppression of women’s mourning” in Greece and Rome; see G. Holst-Warhaft, *Dangerous Voices: Women’s Laments and Greek Literature* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 171.

⁶⁶ See Mogen, *Women and Death Rituals*, 32-33.

Latin-fluent men, often have a special beef with one or more of the following: (1) popular practices, (2) undue usage of the vernacular in public, and (3) women.”⁶⁷

In addition, ecclesiastical texts have frequently been shown to present an androcentric gendered-ness, which regarded women as inferior while reducing their status to biological functions and roles associated with mothers, daughters, wives, sisters, or *hetaerae* in late antique literature.⁶⁸ Seldom are women portrayed as “active subjects in history” or, in the case of funerals, acknowledged as specialists or agents of ritual.⁶⁹ In terms of idealism, Christian writers have tended to write “about what the world ought to be like” and about “religious practice as it should be.”⁷⁰ Idealism and elitism also precluded writing about the social matrix, the majority of Christians, with the result that information concerning “the Christianity of the people” was sadly lacking. As a result, the viewpoint of those who practiced domestic religiosity (ordinary Christians) in caring for the dead has remained largely invisible in the literary record, except through the occasional “rhetoric of condemnation” in the complaints of the episcopate (e.g., the church councils of bishops). To counter these inherent difficulties, responsible scholarship now applies several types of data—literary sources in combination with non-literary data and/or material culture—in a socio-historical context to ensure a more gender-nuanced interpretation of the literary sources.⁷¹ The socio-historical approach used in this thesis has endeavored to present a more inclusive history and allowed the use of a variety of theories and insights from a range of cultural studies (e.g., anthropology, sociology, ethnography) to interpret the diversity of information.

⁶⁷ See classicist John Dickinson Haines, *Medieval Song in Romance Languages* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 38.

⁶⁸ See New Testament scholar and theologian Ute E. Eisen, *Women Officeholders in Early Christianity: Epigraphical and Literary Studies* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 1.

⁶⁹ Eisen, *Women Officeholders*, 2.

⁷⁰ See Ramsay MacMullen, *The Second Church: Popular Christianity AD 200–400* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), xii.

⁷¹ Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 91.

Non-literary Sources

This data set comprises writings that were less “formal” or “official” than literary sources and involved funerary inscriptions (epigraphy), graffiti, documentary papyri, and votive texts; significantly, the latter three sources are less available for study mainly because of their function—to convey meaning or information, to remember/commemorate, to announce (in a votive) that “particular acts had been duly performed,” to “encourage the result it described,” or to request a favor.⁷² According to John Bodel, epitaphs, or the more formal messages immortalized in stone on graves, provide “our best ancient evidence” for non-elite persons.⁷³ Bodel argues that considering epigraphy as a source for historical research requires (1) understanding the “group” of inscriptions in which a given specimen is found, and (2) choosing the right analytical tools—archaeological tools to discern the physical context; philological tools to read the inscription; and historical tools to grasp the significance of the epigraphy in terms of social history.⁷⁴ One of the “informal” types of non-literary sources is graffiti, the common scribbling left on objects in the environment that comprise brief statements, names, initials, and sometimes simple drawings.⁷⁵ Useful examples of graffiti for this thesis included the graffiti on the walls of the dining room (*triclia*) under the church of San Sebastiano (in Venice, Italy) and on the walls of the necropolis beneath St. Peter’s in Rome.⁷⁶ Sadly, much of the graffiti discovered to this point is undiscernible or contains symbols only.⁷⁷ The dating of much of what is considered “Christian graffiti” seems to fall

⁷² See John Bodel, ed. “Epigraphy and the Ancient Historian,” in *Epigraphic Evidence: Ancient History from Inscriptions* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 15-35.

⁷³ Bodel, “Epigraphy,” 30.

⁷⁴ Bodel, “Epigraphy,” 5.

⁷⁵ See Graydon F. Snyder, *Ante Pacem: Archaeological Evidence of Church Life Before Constantine* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2003),

⁷⁶ Snyder, *Ante Pacem*, 251-63.

⁷⁷ Snyder, *Ante Pacem*, 251.

within 250–345 CE, probably indicating that the sites were well-visited.⁷⁸ At S. Sebastiano, for instance, food offerings were made to the saints Peter and Paul on behalf of some early Christians who had celebrated meals on location; the graffiti demonstrated an association with the martyrs Peter and Paul as a way of honoring family members or the individuals named in the graffiti.⁷⁹ Snyder notes the assumption that “the presence or *daemon (psyche)* of the special dead remained near the place of burial ... [t]his presence served not only as a rallying point for community formation” through dining with the dead and fellow Christians,” but also as a means of petitioning God.⁸⁰ Documentary papyri are official/civic documents/contracts, personal letters, and written prayers, which may reveal the everyday actions of people. Votive texts are writings that refer to promises or vows, wishes and dreams that may have involved the individual and spirits of the dead or a martyr or saint; sometimes the votives were small objects of dedication.⁸¹ Again, bias and idealism must be considered possible (even probable) within any of these categories of non-literary sources; therefore, caution must be exercised. Late antique inscriptions, for example, were often formulaic, or they applied “social or religious norms” instead of imparting personal sentiments.⁸²

Historical context was another important consideration for this study. It was important to establish the date and location of the non-literary sources (epitaph, graffiti, papyri, or votive) in order to align the evidence as closely as possible to the place and time under study.⁸³ Further, as already mentioned, I have attempted to integrate data-types—the non-

⁷⁸ Snyder, *Ante Pacem*, 256-57; for example, the substantial numbers of graffiti at S. Sebastiano and at the *aedicula* (shrine) beneath St. Peter’s.

⁷⁹ Snyder, *Ante Pacem*, 257, 259.

⁸⁰ Snyder, *Ante Pacem*, 258.

⁸¹ See historian of classical antiquity Robin Osborne, “Hoards, Votives, Offerings: The Archaeology of the Dedicated Object,” *World Archaeology* 36, no. 1 (March, 2004): 1-10.

⁸² Eisen, *Women Officeholders*, 19-20.

⁸³ Eisen, *Women Officeholders*, 20.

literary with literary and/or with material evidence. After all, inscriptions and graffiti in isolation can be no more advantageous than literature in isolation.

Material/Visual Culture

This data collection involved funerary art and architecture, artifacts (e.g., votive objects of dedication), and archaeological evidence (e.g., graves and grave goods). Funerary art included wall paintings (e.g., in the catacombs of Rome) and relief sculpture characteristic of the decorated fronts of sarcophagi or *stelae* (stone grave markers). The subject of wall paintings (*frescoes*) at tombs or among the burials in the underground catacombs was often the family's private funerary banquet depicting participants celebrating a meal with the deceased.⁸⁴

Funerary architecture consisted of monuments, family tombs, and the architectural features added on site for dining events; such modifications to the monuments or tombs sometimes involved water wells or fountains, hearths or ovens for cooking, stone benches and/or tables (*mensae*), and pipes or tubes extending from the surface down into the grave for feeding the dead.⁸⁵ Examples of dining architecture were evident, for instance, in the Isola Sacra necropolis near Ostia in Italy.⁸⁶

Also included in the material data for funerary rites were artifacts and grave goods left at the tomb/grave. In terms of artifacts, these objects were sometimes votive gifts (to signify the keeping of a promise either to the deceased, or to a martyr/saint, or directly to Christ), in

⁸⁴ See religious studies scholar Janet Tulloch examines several of the examples of the material culture in "Women Leaders in Family Funerary Banquets," in *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity*, by C. Osiek and M. MacDonald with Janet H. Tulloch, 164-93 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006).

⁸⁵ See Robin M. Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art* (New York: Routledge, 2000) and "Dining with the Dead: From the *Mensa* to the Altar in Christian Late Antiquity," in *Commemorating the Dead: Texts and Artifacts in Context*, edited by L. Brink and D. Green, 107-43 (New York: de Gruyter, 2008).

⁸⁶ For discussion of the role of women in dining practices/rituals at the tombs of Romans and Christians, see Carolyn Osiek, "Roman and Christian Burial Practices and the Patronage of Women," in *Commemorating the Dead: Texts and Artifacts in Context*, edited by L. Brink and D. Green, 243-70 (New York: de Gruyter, 2008).

which case the items may have been decorated or inscribed to indicate their purpose; or they might have been cooking items such as pots, eating utensils, plates, drinking vessels, etc. The grave goods found in archaeological excavations at gravesites (furnished graves) typically consisted of personal items of the deceased—tools; games (e.g., dice sets); jewelry (necklaces and brooches); belt buckles and/or dress fasteners; combs; weapons, etc.⁸⁷ These items were sometimes left as memories of the deceased or perhaps as gifts/offerings to him/her for use again in their “new identity” as ancestors. Sometimes the grave goods were intended as status signifiers showing the deceased’s social class; his/her political, religious, societal role, etc.

As for the methods used with material culture, best practice suggests, once again, the integration of textual and material evidence. This makes it possible to reveal the “discourse” that existed between the different types of data. Integration as a strategy assumes that in antiquity there was an interaction or “dialogue” among “symbols of meaning”; in other words, one must assume an inter-relationship between the texts, between the artifacts, and/or between texts and artifacts, or between any of this data and its audience (real or perceived).⁸⁸

Limitations

In terms of limitations, this study was no different than others—there are issues limiting the research and these need to be acknowledged. My investigation examined the “Latin West,” in the geographical terms outlined by the well-known historian of late antiquity, Peter Brown.⁸⁹ Admittedly, the land area was large: “from the western Balkans to Britain and from Trier to the edge of the Sahara.”⁹⁰ However, due to the shift in terms of power structures from Rome

⁸⁷ See Williams, *Death and Memory*, 36-78.

⁸⁸ Tulloch, “Women Leaders,” 176-77.

⁸⁹ Brown, *Eye of a Needle*, xxi.

⁹⁰ Brown, *Eye of the Needle*, xxi.

to Gaul, the ecclesiastical interactions between the Roman church and Gallo-Roman churches, and assumed interactions in terms of liturgical development, my study required a larger geographical area. Regarding chronology, the main focus was “late antiquity,” defined by Brown as “the period from about AD 200 to about 700.”⁹¹ I stretched the limits of this period to 180 CE at the early end because, according to Graydon S. Snyder, that was the approximate time when “Christian” artifacts first began to appear in the record; in other words, it took nearly two centuries for disparate christianities to develop a “distinctly Christian culture.”⁹² On the other end of my chronology, the date was extended by a century or so to accommodate the writing of church liturgical documents (sacramentaries and *ordines*). Hence, the broad sweep of time: ca. 180 CE – 800 CE.

Another limitation was “context.” In terms of material evidence, much of the evidence concerning Roman and early Christian funerals has been collected in museums or catalogued in digital databases and is, therefore, no longer *in situ*. This factor has somewhat hindered accessing an accurate socio-historical context in every case, but this study has made every effort to identify context when working with each type of data. Finally, research for this study has attempted to consistently view the entire funerary sequence as a whole, rather than as single rituals; Hope maintained in *Roman Death*, that a holistic approach to death/funerary ritual has a better chance of discovering “parallel shifts in areas” that are often missed when examined separately.⁹³

⁹¹ Brown, *World of Late Antiquity*, 7.

⁹² Snyder, *Ante Pacem*, 3; material remains that are definitively “Christian” do not appear until around 180 CE because, as Snyder explains, “It took about 130 years after Paul universalized Judaism for the a distinctly Christian culture to appear,” and it came in the form of “symbols, art, letters, funerary practices and some builtforms.”

⁹³ Hope, *Roman Death*, 12-13, 185-86.

Still, in light of the above considerations and limitations, this study did not achieve an unequivocal conclusion or full description of the funeral rituals as they evolved within the Christian context. This would have required the analysis of hundreds of thousands of epitaphs, thousands of excavated graves and hundreds of documents. Rather, my study attempted to provide parameters around the evolution of funeral rites and some of the major factors similar in fashion to the explorations of Rebillard or Brown. Most importantly, this research project was designed to place the development of the funerary ritual process during Christian late antiquity in its appropriate socio-historical context.

The Roman Funeral: Heuristic for Tracking the Transition to a Christian Funeral

Numerous scholars of early and late Roman antiquity—including Emma-Jayne Graham, Valerie Hope, and Darja Šterbenc Erkes, among others—recognize how difficult it is to reconstruct “the typical” Roman funeral.⁹⁴ Since so many factors impacted the actual funerary practices of the family—factors such as: social status, wealth, gender, resources, locale, time in history—it is virtually impossible to formulate a one-size-fits-all Roman funeral.⁹⁵ However, as Graham points out, “sources refer to a number of activities that appear to have been considered important” and these quite fairly can be incorporated into a “reasonable facsimile” of a funeral sequence notwithstanding the “chronological, geographic, and status

⁹⁴ Emma-Jayne Graham, “Memory and Materiality: Re-embodying the Roman Funeral,” in *Memory and Mourning: Studies on Roman Death*, edited by V. M. Hope and J. Huskinson (Oxford, UK: Oxbow Books, 2011), 21-23. Also, Hope, *Roman Death*, 8-15. See as well, Darja Šterbenc Erker, “Gender and Roman Funeral Ritual,” in *Memory and Mourning: Studies on Roman Death*, edited by Valerie M. Hope and Janet Huskinson (Oxford, UK: Oxbow Books, 2011), 41.

⁹⁵ Graham, “Memory and Materiality,” 21-39. Also, Šterbenc Erkes, “Gender,” 40-60. And Hope, *Roman Death*, 65-67.

perspectives” the evidence represents.⁹⁶ It is this “ideal type” of Roman funeral that is presented here as a “starting point” for examining the transition to Christian rituals for death and burial.⁹⁷

Some Background

To understand the Roman funeral, two important considerations should be noted: the tension between private and public religious rites, and the concept of personal identity as “collectivist.” First, Roman religious rites were generally divided into two categories: familial worship (*sacra privata*) and public worship (*sacra publica*).⁹⁸ *Sacra privata* involved individuals, their families, and/or households. Included in the domestic cult were prayers, sacrifices, and rites (e.g., those for death/burial) performed by individuals or the entire family for family members and paid for by the family. *Sacra publica*, on the other hand, was designed to advance the welfare of the state or the larger collective. For Romans, the division between *sacra privata* and *sacra publica* was not a simplistic matter of dividing up civic, social, and religious space. As Amy Russell argues, sacred space (that is, spaces used for ritual) “cannot be separated from the private. The private was implicated not just in domestic shrines but even in Rome’s public sacred spaces”; and she asserts further, “[t]he question is not whether particular spaces were public, private, or sacred, but how discourses of public, private, and sacred were used to debate and manipulate control over them and the spatial

⁹⁶ Hope, *Roman Death*, 15.

⁹⁷ See Appendix A, which illustrates the consistency between the scholars mentioned (Rush, Toynbee, and Hope) in terms of the general elements of Roman funeral rituals.

⁹⁸ “*Sacra*,” *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, William Smith, William Wayte, and G. E. Marindin, eds. (London: John Murray, 1890), 997. Mentioned earlier in this study at 30n83 is reference to more recent scholarship on the concept of *sacer* for late antique Romans; see Bowes, *Private Worship*, 4-6.

experiences they offered.”⁹⁹ Therefore, in terms of funeral ritual as *sacra privata*, there is an implicit negotiation between public, private, and the sacred.

Roman funeral ritual was private in the sense that it was controlled and managed by each family. However, death was not entirely private as the process was open to friends/neighbors when the body was displayed for public viewing at a wake. Further, the body was processed through public spaces when it was transported from the home to the cemetery. The cemetery could be both private and public space. It was private in terms of containing the familial tombs and mausoleums. But it was public in the sense it was a site for various public festivals, and the cemetery was often constructed along roads where passersby were encouraged to stop and interact with epitaphs and the architectural features of the tombs.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, in the public sense—as indicated by Cicero’s exposition in *De legibus*—Roman law specified that the pontiffs of Rome decided on religious regulations for burial; for instance, a grave/tomb was *res religiosa* (therefore, sacred) once a body was buried at the site.¹⁰¹ In contrast, for the family, the grave was a private place attributed with special

⁹⁹ See Roman historian Amy Russell, *The Politics of Public Space in Republican Rome* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 104. In addition, Russell argues that, “we do not have particularly good evidence for which cults or rituals and their associated places were public and which were private ... [and] it is not obvious that the technical distinction between state and non-state religion had any effect on the actual experience of worshippers or visitors to sacred spaces. The difference between the two types of cult is legalistic ... State cults were in theory set up for the benefit of the community as a whole, but an individual could participate in the most official of cults in what might appear to us to be a purely private way,” 103-104.

¹⁰⁰ See Russell, *Politics of Public Space*, 28; Russell quotes the agrarian law of 111 BCE (RS no. 2) and “its definition of *ager poplicus populi Romanei* – ‘public land belonging to the Roman People’”; she also explores the opposition between *publicus* and *privatus* and the use of these terms in legal texts such as *Justinian’s Digest*, which uses “*ius publicum* to govern anything related to the state, while *ius privatum* is concerned with individuals”; see *The Digest of Justinian*, edited by Alan Watson, 4 vols., rev. ed. (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009). Further, Russell observes that *publicus* and *privatus* do not always represent exact opposites, and third categories appear which do not fit into either,” and for this she uses the example of *sacer*, 27. She also notes “how fundamental the basic distinction between public and private space was to Roman legal thought,” 28.

¹⁰¹ The pontiffs of Rome made declarations on the conditions required for *res religiosa* and what met the standards set for proper burial (*religio sepulchrorum*); see Cicero, *De legibus*, edited and translated by Clinton Walker Keyes, LCL 213 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928), 2.22; for the penalties determined by Roman civil law on tomb location (outside the *pomerium* of the city), see, *De legibus*, 2.23.58; for violation of the tomb, see *De legibus*, 2.26.64, which states, “But Solon has no other rules about graves except one to the

meaning for the clan/familial group; the grave/tomb was *sacra privata*, “the place of the ancestors.”¹⁰² In the context of this study then, *public* and *private* are significant because the *private* means the family could and would maintain jurisdiction over the rituals in their *private* spaces (in the domus, in the cemetery or at the family tomb). At the same time, the christianization of Roman funeral rituals (i.e., the transformation of the Roman funeral) progressed as Christianity gradually gained control over *public* spaces or created their own.

A second factor in understanding the Roman funeral is that the basic concept of personal identity for the Romans was collectivistic. This meant one’s identity was determined by social relationships, social status, gender, and the roles played in society. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, regular (or annual) family gatherings created “ritual time” for the familial unit; further, the gatherings were predictable and repeated at regular intervals. Consequently, ritual activities—like those of the funeral—solidified Christian identity, just like it had for Romans in the past. This study acknowledged from the outset that the most fundamental aspect of one’s Roman identity was the family or household (the *domus*).¹⁰³ Particular duties (*officium pietatis*) were expected of the *familia* (or alternatively, the *collegium*) in matters of dying, death, burial, and commemoration of the dead.¹⁰⁴ The familial

effect that no one is to destroy them or place the body of a stranger in them. And a penalty is fixed in case anyone violates, throws down, or breaks a burial mound ... or monument, or column.”

¹⁰² See Ramsay MacMullen’s discussion of the ancestor cult prevalent in Greco-Roman culture and adapted by early Christians to include the cult of the martyrs in MacMullen, “Christian Ancestor Worship in Rome,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 129, no. 3 (2010): 601.

¹⁰³ The Roman *familia*, in its narrowest sense, referred to agnatic kin; it became more broadly defined as “agnate and uterine kin, dependents, and even friends, all grouped under the heading ‘domus’,” understood as “household” during the third to seventh century, see Kim Bowes, *Private Worship, Public Values and Religious Change in Late Antiquity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 5. For discussion of family membership as an integral part of social identity, status, and prestige, see Hope, *Roman Death*, 87-90.

¹⁰⁴ Notably, Roman *collegia* were not solely burial clubs (as Hope, *Roman Death*, 68-69 mistakenly indicated) but were voluntary associations set up for social or labor collegiality (and funerals and burial spaces were often included), were similar to guilds, and were often supported by private patrons; see, John Bodel, “From *Columbaria* to Catacombs: Collective Burial in Pagan and Christian Rome,” in *Commemorating the Dead: Texts and Artifacts in Context: Studies of Roman, Jewish, and Christian Burials*, edited by Laurie Brink and Deborah Green (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 227-32. Further, Bodel argues that *collegia* did not

care of the dead involved a sequence of domestic rites—somewhat varied but remarkably analogous from region to region.

Next, is an overview of the Roman funeral, which was used as the “ideal type” or base of comparison for my own investigation of how and why the transition toward a formal Christian funeral liturgy unfolded as it did.¹⁰⁵

The Roman Ritual Sequence for Death

In 2009 Valerie Hope presented in *Roman Death*, an outline of the funerary process that was in play some two thousand years ago. The Roman funeral began with events at the deathbed and ended with memorials for the dead. Hope cautioned that the ancient events of the funeral “could be readily idealized” in the literature.¹⁰⁶ It was a view shared by Ann Suter in her study of women’s funerary lament and her finding that the rituals portrayed in literature were not “real” but rather “re-enacted”; likewise in iconography, rituals were “re-presented” and therefore, had to be understood only as descriptions of actual funeral events and expressed through the perspective of some author or artisan from the past.¹⁰⁷ Consequently, having duly noted the inevitability of idealism in the data, and aware of the likelihood of its bias, I set out to assemble Hope’s “Roman Funeral” in outline form. The objective was to establish in broad

replace families “in caring for the burial of the dead ... [rather that] families operate[d] in their customary roles within the framework (both administrative and architectural) of the *collegia* ... [Collegia] were not alternatives to the traditional mechanisms of support but overarching structures that enabled the family and individual patrons to perform their conventional roles within newly defined social and physical contexts,” 180-81.

¹⁰⁵ Arguably, the “stages,” as outlined below, did not always occur in the “neat and tidy” sequence as they are presented; obviously, the incorporation of specific rituals would have depended on the preferences of the family in question; but any number of factors may have influenced those preferences—tradition, ideals, status, wealth, social identity, practicality, and so on.

¹⁰⁶ Hope, *Roman Death*, 50.

¹⁰⁷ For discussion of “re-presented” and “re-enacted” ritual lament, see professor of ancient gender studies Ann Suter, introduction to *Lament: Studies in the Ancient Mediterranean and Beyond*, edited by A. Suter (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008), 11, 14-15n1.

brushstrokes the basic contours of Roman funerary rituals as ritualized behaviors practiced by Romans, revised and adapted by new Christian Romans finally becoming a formal Christian liturgy for death beginning in the eighth century under Charlemagne.

Significantly, Hope's seven stages of the Roman funeral are closely aligned with what A. C. Rush and J. M. C. Toynbee in separate studies presented decades earlier. Appendix A of this study compares Hope's funerary sequence with the sequences of Rush (1941) and Toynbee (1971). Each stage of the seven-stage Roman funeral, according to Hope, is described briefly in what is outlined next.

Stage One: Dying and Death

For elite Romans the "good death" had everything to do with "family"; it was characterized as dying at home in the presence of a loved one ("preferably a mother or spouse") who could perform certain acts of devotion and comfort such as catching the last breath in a kiss, closing the eyes, and calling out the name of the deceased three times.¹⁰⁸ The "good death" emphasized social identity. It also underscored the importance of the family home/*domus*, that "place" where one belonged and where one's social identity and security were assured. The idealized "good death" occurred when one behaved in the ideal way; for instance, the expectation that the one about to die "should be brave and resolute and utter some wise or witty parting words."¹⁰⁹ It was a sign of strong character to face one's suffering and pain with dignity and bravery; men, especially, "were supposed to be calm and resigned," according to the ideal performance of dying and consistent with elite norms.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Hope, *Roman Death*, 50.

¹⁰⁹ Hope, *Roman Death*, 50.

¹¹⁰ Hope, *Roman Death*, 50. Regarding last words, see Statius, *Silvae*, edited and translated by D. R. Shackleton Bailey, LCL 206 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 2.1.150-55 and 5.1, 170; and

The deathbed scene, depicted in rare extant relief sculptures from sarcophagi and from textual accounts, was often situated in the home. In reviewing her evidence, Hope notes that in the art/sculpture and the literature the deceased was surrounded by family members and/or friends who were portrayed in varying postures and gestures of mourning. For women the actions were often depicted as follows: (1) the woman holds her head in her hands, (2) she may have unbound her hair or removed her head covering, (3) she reaches out with her hand or both hands toward the deceased, (4) she beats her breasts with her fists, (5) she scratches her cheeks and/or pulls her hair, and (6) she calls to the deceased as indicated by her hands cupped around her mouth.¹¹¹ Hope points out that public mourning gestures for men were contrary to the ideal of male composure and restraint and therefore considered “weak” or “womanish” so were censured; but male mourning still occurred in private.¹¹² Some of Hope’s observations of men in attendance at the deathbed are gleaned from art and sculpted reliefs; for example: (1) the man may be touching his head or his chin with one hand, (2) he might be adorning the deceased with garlands, (3) he may beat his chest with his fists, (4) he may sit clutching his knees or one knee, eyes downcast, shoulders hunched, and/or (5) he may stand apart from the women gathered round the deathbed.¹¹³ Other mourning behaviors (mainly for women) involved: weeping, groaning, shrieking, throwing ashes or dirt over her head, rolling

Suetonius, *Dives Augustus*, vol. 1, translated by J. C. Rolfe, LCL 31 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914), 99.

¹¹¹ Hope, *Roman Death*, 125-32; see also the image of marble sarcophagus of child’s deathbed (second century CE), held at the British Museum, London, 84-85, Plate 4; and the image of relief from the tomb of the Haterii depicting a matron lying in repose surrounded by mourners (first century CE), held in the Vatican Museum, Rome, in *Roman Death*, 84-85, Plate 5.

¹¹² As Hope explains, “both men and women were expected to conform to certain conventions and expectations, and to deviate from these could cause criticism,” but, of course those standards would have changed over time—the scope of Hope’s investigation was first century BCE to second century CE; upper class men were praised for their public service (continued, even in the face of devastating loss) and self-control. “The ideal was that a brave man was not susceptible to distress,” *Roman Death*, 126-27. Hope cites examples from Seneca the Younger, *Consolation to Marcia*, 13-14; Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, 3.7.15, and others at 209n8.

¹¹³ Hope *Roman Death*, 125-32; see also Plates 4 and 5 depicting deathbed scenes at 84-85, described above in n110.

on the ground, scratching her arms, striking her thighs, ripping or removing her clothing (especially removing shoes to be barefoot, or baring her breast).¹¹⁴ Besides the ritual act of catching the final breath of the deceased in a kiss and closing the eyes—usually completed by the closest of kin, such as the mother or wife—Plautus mentions that a coin was usually placed in the mouth of the departed to serve as *viaticum*, the fare for the voyage to the realm of the ancestors.¹¹⁵ Customarily, the body of the deceased was lifted to the floor (*depositio*). Varro spoke about the significance of the earth (the ground/floor) as the place where life begins at birth and ends at death.¹¹⁶

Stage Two: Preparation of the Corpse for Exposition

Next, the body was washed in warm water, anointed (with incense, perfumes and/or honey), and dressed “in a shroud or other suitable clothing,” tasks performed by women of the household unless the family could afford the cost of hiring *pollinctores* to act on their behalf.¹¹⁷ Preparation for burial and for “display” of the deceased at the wake (*compositio*)

¹¹⁴ J. M. C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971), 45. See as well, classicist Anthony Corbeill, *Nature Embodied: Gesture in Ancient Rome* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 77-84; Corbeill provides analysis of the ancient sources describing mourning behaviors: e.g., Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, 3.1; Plautus, *Miles gloriosus* 211-12; Pliny, *Natural History*, 11.250; Servius, *Aeneid*, 3.607; Cicero, *De legibus*, 2.59 and *Tusculan Disputations*, 3.62, 1.27; and Terence, *Phormio*, 106-107.

¹¹⁵ Plautus, *Bacchides*, edited and translated by John Barsby (Warminster, UK: Aris and Phillips, 1986), 1.53.21. Also, Lucian, *Charon*, translated by A. M. Harmon, vol. 2, LCL 54 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1915), 2.1-43. In Greco-Roman religions, the coin was the symbolic payment to Charon, the mythical ferryman, who would transport the soul of the dead on his boat across the River Styx into Hades, the underworld.

¹¹⁶ Varro, *De lingua Latina*, Books 5-7, translated by G. Kent, LCL 333 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938), 5.64.

¹¹⁷ Hope, *Roman Death*, 69-71. Undertakers residing at “a grove outside the Esquiline Gate of Rome” employed a variety of “funeral specialists” such as *pollinctores* (who prepared the body for burial), *fossores* (who dug graves), *vespillones* (who carried coffins and funeral biers), *tubicines* (horn-players), *tibicines* (flute-players), dancers, mimes, and *praeficae* (dirge-singers), among others; see Hope, *Roman Death*, 69. See also, John Bodel, “Dealing with the Dead: Undertakers, Executioners and Potter’s Fields in Ancient Rome,” in *Death and Disease in the Ancient City*, edited by V. M. Hope and Eireann Marshall (New York: Routledge, 2000), 135-39. Bodel explains that the workers in the funeral trade were grouped together in the area of the grove of Libitina (the goddess of funerals who was not a deity and never “entered the Roman pantheon ... she had no temple, no cult

was an opportunity to equip the corpse for the journey to the grave and into the world of the ancestors. When possible (usually in the households of middle and upper-class Romans) the body of the deceased was placed on a funeral couch in the *atrium* (the central hall of the house) and surrounded by flowers, burning incense, and spices to await family members, relatives, neighbors, and friends soon arriving to pay their respects and to mourn with the bereaved family. For the elite, it was during this time that an *imago* (death mask of the deceased) was made to ensure the lasting memory of the deceased as part of the family unit.¹¹⁸ *Imagines* were kept on display in the home and/or paraded in public funeral processions. Rituals involving ancestral masks reaffirmed the continual interaction between the living and the dead.

During the rites of preparation for burial, the women of the family began to mourn spontaneously (crying, shouting, moaning, wailing). The men of the family might also mourn, but usually more privately. However, Lucian described general mourning performance for both men and women in this way: the “women wail, men and women alike weep and beat their breasts and rend their hair and lacerate their cheeks; clothes are also torn on the occasion, and dust sprinkled on the head.”¹¹⁹ Still, as mentioned, elite norms demanded that men show

and no worshippers”) and *libitinarii* were the funeral contractors who resided in the grove and sold particular materials (biers, incense, perfumes, torches, etc.) and funerary services to the inhabitants of Rome. Significantly, the *libitinarii* or mortuary specialists were later “during the middle and late Empire ... known collectively as *funerarii*”; see Bodel, “Dealing with the Dead,” 138. For the anointing ritual, see Virgil, *Aeneid*: Books 1-6, translated by H. Rushton Fairclough, revised by G. P. Goold, LCL 63 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 6.218-19, which also mentions the warm water used for bathing the corpse. For further reference, see Martial, *Epigrammata*, vol. 1, edited and translated by D. R. Shackleton Bailey, LCL 94 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 3.12.

¹¹⁸ Hope, *Roman Death*, 71.

¹¹⁹ Lucian, *De lucta (On Mourning/Funerals)*, translated by A. M. Harmon, LCL 162 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925), 3.12. To distinguish between the emotions of male and female, Seneca the Younger attempted to explain the situation as follows: “Despite suffering the same bereavement, women are wounded more deeply than men, barbarians more than the civilized and the uneducated more than the learned,” from “On Consolation to Marcia,” in *Moral Essays*, vol. 2, translated by J. W. Basore, LCL 254 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932), 2.3.4.

no emotion in public. Plutarch stated the reason: “Mourning is feminine, weak, and dishonorable, since it characterizes women more than men.”¹²⁰

Ritual lament (comprised of *planctus* and *nenia*) began at the moment of death, continued during the preparation of the corpse for burial, and lasted throughout the sequence of funeral rites. As well, Roman tradition required that mourning be extended to anniversary and festival dates following the funeral.¹²¹ According to classical writers, the status and class distinction of the deceased determined different expectations for mourning; for instance, in the case of the death of upper-class fathers and husbands, Roman matrons were to mourn for a period of ten months, a duty they performed “on behalf of the whole family.”¹²²

Stage Three: The Wake or Lying-in-State (Latin: compositio)¹²³

As the wake or exposition began—at this point, still in a private setting in the home/*domus*—mourners (relatives, friends, neighbors) arrived to pay respects to the deceased and to comfort

¹²⁰ Plutarch, “Consolations to His Wife,” in *Moralia*, vol. 7, translated by P. H. De Lacy, LCL 405 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), 4.

¹²¹ Karen Stears, “Death Becomes Her: Gender and Athenian Death Ritual,” in *Lament: Studies in the Ancient Mediterranean and Beyond*, edited by A. Suter (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 149-50; lament poetry was designed to tell family histories, a skill that was important for visitations to the family tombs. Note: Stears is writing about Greek customs, but we know that late antique Roman tradition had already been Hellenized.

¹²² Šterbenc Erker, “Gender,” 54-55. Ovid explains that the ten months of mourning (under the law of Numa) corresponds to one year under the Laws of the Kings; see Ovid, *Fasti*, translated by James G. Frazer, revised by G. P. Goold, LCL 253 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), 1.33-6, 3.133-34. See also Seneca the Younger, *Epistles*, vol. 1, translated by Richard M. Gummere, LCL 75 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1917), 63.13; and regarding prolonged female mourning, see Tacitus, *Germania*, translated by M. Hutton and W. Peterson, revised by R. M. Ogilvie, W. H. Warmington and M. Winterbottom, LCL 35 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914), 27.2.

¹²³ See professor of art William M. Jensen, “The Sculptures from the Tomb of the Haterii,” PhD diss. (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 1978), 38; W. M. Jensen writes, “Since the verb *componere/componere* (‘to lay out’) used by Persius is most often found elsewhere in Latin when speaking of the corpse’s exhibition, it seems best to adopt the word *compositio* to designate the Roman lying-in-state rather than *collocatio*, as has been customary since at least the middle of the nineteenth century.” Notably, Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 44 prefers to use the term *collocatio*, citing Heinrich Brunn, *Monumenti degli Aterii* (Roma, 1850), 363-410 and its reprint, *Heinrich Brunn’s kleine Schriften gesammelt*, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1898), 72-102, both of which are extremely dated. Šterbenc Erker also uses the term, *collocatio* for the exhibition of the deceased at the wake, though without explanation as to the source of the term; see Šterbenc Erker, “Gender,” 47.

the surviving family. A material depiction of the wake, dated first century CE, is provided in a sculpted relief panel from the tomb of the Haterii family (of middle to upper class status) in Rome.¹²⁴ The deceased is the matron of the family. The presence of the will and testament laying on the funeral bed indicates the fulfillment of the matron's last social duties in terms of family (e.g., distribution of property, protection of memory/reputation/status) while, perhaps, indicating specific strategies to perpetuate her own memory in the community (e.g., setting up funds to care for her grave; donations toward foundations—such as *collegia*—and funds to pay for regular celebrations, including food and drink at the matron's tomb).¹²⁵ There are torches displayed (to light the way for the spirit of the deceased in transition on its journey to join the spirits of the ancestors) and garlands of flowers/vegetation (to mitigate the smell of the decomposing corpse for the mourners). In addition to the mourners, there might also be other women present such as those shown in the Haterii relief, namely, a female pipe-player and a *praefica* (the professional female performer of lament). In case of the Haterii relief, the position of the *praefica* close to a lectern seems to indicate that she was reading (or singing/chanting) from a book placed on the stand, and she is veiled to signify her role in performing a religious ritual during the *compositio*.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ The relief from the tomb of the Haterii is held in the Vatican Museums in Rome. See Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 29, fig. 9.

¹²⁵ Hope, *Roman Death*, 27-33.

¹²⁶ See W. M. Jensen, "Tomb of the Haterii," 58; Jensen's hypothesis of identification challenges Toynbee's description, which does not recognize the *praefica* in poetical lament accompanied by the pipe-player. Toynbee's account reads as follows: "Below, at the foot of the couch, is a seated woman wearing the typical coiffure of the period and playing on a double pipe; a veiled woman stands beside her with hands raised and folded together"; see Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 45 and for the image of the relief, see 29, fig. 9.

Stage Four: The Funeral Procession (pompa funebris)

As the wake ended, it was time for the family to transport the deceased in procession (*pompa*) to the place of burial. The *pompa* was comprised of family members along with relatives, friends, and neighbors—and, of course, the *praeficae* leading the lament or *nenia*. For elite families, the cortège likely included actors wearing the *imagines* of the family’s distinguished ancestors; the mimes would be impersonating the ancestors of the family and implying their presence, walking in procession through the streets to the outskirts of the town and the place of burial. Ovid reported that one of the main functions of the *nenia* (the women’s lament poetry) was to entice the spirits of “the recently dead on their ultimate journey” and that the singing of the *nenia* was done to the accompaniment of pipe music, resulting in considerable noise as the procession passed by.¹²⁷ Dorota Dutsch explains that the Romans “conceptualized physical death as only the initial phase of a larger transformation as the deceased person remained a member of the clan—either one of the friendly *di manes* or one of the hostile *lemures*, demanding annual propitiation.”¹²⁸ Similar to the function of noise, torches were used to distract and ward off any evil spirits that may try to hinder the journey of the deceased toward the place of burial; torch bearers cleared the way for the cortège winding its way through the streets and lit the way for the spirit of the deceased to reach the grave.¹²⁹ Torches,

¹²⁷ Ovid, *Fasti*, 6.668. For additional evidence that pipe music accompanied the *nenia* to the burial site and following the delivery of the eulogy or *laudatio funebris*, as already mentioned, see Cicero, *De legibus*, 2.61-62. Also, regarding the *nenia*, see Seneca, *Apocolocyntosis*, translated by Michael Heseltine and W. H. D. Rouse, revised by E. H. Warmington, LCL 15 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913), 12.3.

¹²⁸ See classicist Dorota Dutsch, “*Nenia*: Gender, Genre, and Lament in Ancient Rome,” in *Lament: Studies in the Ancient Mediterranean and Beyond*, edited by Ann Suter (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 259. For more about the spirits or “shades” of the dead, and spirits of the ancestors as *Manes* or *di Manes*, see Livy, *History of Rome*, vol. 2, edited by Benjamin O. Foster, LCL 133 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1922), 3.58.11. See also, Cicero, *In Pisonem* (Against Piso) in *The Orations of Cicero*, vol. 14, translated by N. H. Watts, LCL 252 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), 7.16. See also, Virgil, *Aeneid*, 6.743.

¹²⁹ Persius, *Satires*, translated by G. G. Ramsay (London: William Heinemann, 1928), 3.103-106. Also, Tacitus, *Annals*, 3.4. All funerals were held at night in Roman antiquity according to Servius, *Commentary ad Virgil’s Aeneid*, translated by K. W. Gransden, Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991), XI .143. For middle class and elite families, the *pompa* was made even more

the noise of musicians and mourners, and the general chaos created by the procession may have been factors that led to disapproval and laws prohibiting “extravagant” funeral processions.¹³⁰

The deceased was transported on a bier carried by pallbearers (see the Amiternum relief of the *pompa*); the body was covered with a *pallium* and sometimes accompanied by certain identifying items (e.g., the helmet for the centurion in the Amiternum relief).¹³¹ The funeral procession was privately organized and privately enacted by those involved in the procession itself; it was “public” in the sense that it moved through public space (the city streets on the way to the cemetery) and was witnessed by public spectators. In other words, the procession was a private familial ritual presented for public viewing.

Stage Five: The Eulogy (laudatio funebris)

For illustrious statesmen and the imperial family, the Roman funeral was a “public funeral,” sponsored by and paid for by the Roman state; in other words, it was *sacra publica*.¹³² The elaborate funeral procession—presumably accompanied by mimes/actors wearing the *imagines* of the ancestors, large numbers of musicians, and a grand entourage of manumitted

elaborate by employing musicians (horn players, flautists). Besides announcing to citizens of Rome that a person of import had died, the music added more noise to the funeral procession; see, Hope, *Roman Death*, 69; the personnel used in the procession may have been hired from the undertakers residing in the grove of Libitina outside the Esquiline Gate of Rome.

¹³⁰ For laws restricting the extravagance of funerals and the noise of lamentation and music, see, Cicero, *De legibus*, 2.59; and Seneca, *Epistles*, 63.13.

¹³¹ The Amiternum relief (mid first century BCE) depicts a funeral procession; the relief is held at the Museo dell’Aquila in Italy. For a photograph of the relief, see Hope *Roman Death*, 84-85, Plate 6; and also, Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 30, Plate 11. We know that the Amiternum relief depicted a certain Publius Apisius, a centurion, thanks to the research of classicist Lisa A. Hughes; see her article at L. A. Hughes, “Centurions at Amiternum: Notes on the Apisius Family,” *Phoenix*, 59 (2005): 77-91; the article is cited in Hope, *Roman Death*, 74-75, 203n15.

¹³² Referring again to the definition provided by Festus, public rites (*sacra publica*) were delineated by certain criteria; that is, they were the rites exercised on behalf of the whole *populus*, publicly funded, celebrated in public, and intended to benefit the state; everything else in terms of *sacra* (religious matters) was private. Festus, *De verborum*, translated by Wallace Lindsay (Teubner, 1913), 380.

slaves and clients who had been granted extensive patron-client arrangements—passed through the *forum Romanum* on its way to the burial site or place of cremation.¹³³ Aristocrats had the right to a funeral speech (*laudatio funebris*) in the Roman Forum and perhaps again at the grave or cremation pyre.¹³⁴ The desire to enhance the family status and honor, to be remembered, and to solidify one's identity and that of the *familia* in the public sphere were paramount; it was equally important for the upper echelon of Roman society to use their status to honor the state and to help “underpin Rome's stability and continuity.”¹³⁵

In nearly every case it was a male orator who performed this honor for the deceased (also usually a male of nobility).¹³⁶ Characteristics of the *laudatio funebris* are outlined as follows:

In the funeral eulogy, the orator mentioned the exploits relevant to the political community: first he described the person who was about to be buried and spoke of his ancestors, those who had received a wax ancestor mask (*imago funebris*). The orator, a son or a relative of the dead person, commemorated the honors of the family's ancestors, their civic virtues and merits (Polybius 6.54.3). The orator depicted the loss of the dead person as a loss which affected the whole city.¹³⁷

¹³³ Šterbenc Erker, “Gender,” 50. An example of a privileged elite Roman is Drusus the Elder, Roman politician and military commander, legal stepson of the Emperor Augustus (d. 9 BCE). For an account of the funeral speeches given for Drusus the Elder, see Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, vol. 6 (Books 51-55), translated by Earnest Cary, LCL 83 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1917), 55.52.

¹³⁴ Šterbenc Erker, “Gender,” 50; for non-elites, whose funerals were “private,” a funeral speech may be delivered at the graveside outside of the city walls (*pomerium*).

¹³⁵ Hope, *Roman Death*, 34. See Sallust, *The War with Jugurtha*, vol. 1, translated by J. C. Rolfe, revised by John T. Ramsey, LCL 116 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 4.6; Sallust explains the notion of virtuous *exempla* when he writes: “The memory of the deeds of others produces in the hearts of noble men a desire to fan a flame that is not extinguished until their own virtue has equaled that fame and glory.”

¹³⁶ Hope, *Roman Death*, 197-98 n29: “women could also be celebrated and remembered.” See classicist Harriet I. Flower, “Were Women Ever ‘Ancestors’ in Republican Rome?” in *Images of Ancestors*, edited by J. Munk Højte, 159-84 (Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 2002). In addition, Julius Caesar delivered a *laudatio* for his aunt, as related by Plutarch, *Parallel Lives, Vol. 7: Caesar*, translated by Bernadotte Perrin, LCL 99 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919), 5. Also, Augustus gave the eulogy for his grandmother, Julia “when he was only twelve years old ... Caligula at the age of sixteen spoke at the funeral of his great-grandmother Livia Augusta;” see classicist O. C. Crawford, “*Laudatio Funebris*,” *The Classical Journal* 37, no. 1 (October, 1941): 19.

¹³⁷ Šterbenc Erker, “Gender,” 50.

Cicero admitted that the elaborate praise, glory, and lengthy *exempla* of virtue and heroic deeds became more exaggerated over the generations.¹³⁸ The power of memory and identity was clearly hard at work. The mimes wearing the funeral masks of the ancestors were positioned prominently at the front of the *rostra* to remind the many spectators just how influential the members of the deceased's family had been in the history of the Roman Republic. Moreover, it was characteristic for elite families to record in writing some of the more famous orations delivered to the crowds gathered in the Forum.¹³⁹ As Horace and Propertius made clear, words in the form of literature and/or poetry were more lasting as memories than were monuments, buildings, and statuary.¹⁴⁰

Another purpose of the eulogy was consolation of the bereaved. However, this ritual event was only available to the elites (usually male) of Rome.¹⁴¹ As Donovan Ochs explains, the aristocratic deceased “belongs, not to the small grieving immediate family, but to the public, to the State, and to Rome. By diffusing and diluting individual grief, the rhetorical symbols of publicness are set in opposition to the singleness of the deceased.”¹⁴² From the first announcement of death and the invitation to the community to attend the funeral (usually made by a “crier” or *dissignator*¹⁴³); through the wake, sometimes made available to the public (it might last for as long as seven days); through the funeral procession, possibly

¹³⁸ Cicero, *Brutus. Orator*, translated by G. L. Hendrickson and H. M. Hubbell, LCL 342 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1939), 62. Also see, Dutsch, “*Nenia*,” 258; Dutsch explains that evidence for the male speech/eulogy, the *laudatio*, is well-documented, but that is not the case for the female performance of the *nenia* (lament-song of women), for which there is minimal scholarship.

¹³⁹ Besides Cicero, additional writers—Pliny, Plutarch, Suetonius, Livy, and Tacitus, among others—have left records of orations, see Crawford, “*Laudatio Funeris*,” 26.

¹⁴⁰ Horace, *Odes and Epodes*, 3.30. Also, Propertius, *Elegies*, edited and translated by G. P. Goold, LCL 18 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 3.2, 18-27.

¹⁴¹ As Hope explains, “[f]or the elite this speech (*laudatio funeris*) was a mark of distinction, which could be sanctioned by the state. The speech was delivered in the Forum prior to arrival at the cemetery,” *Roman Death*, 78.

¹⁴² See scholar of rhetoric and communications Donovan J. Ochs, *Consolatory Rhetoric: Grief, Symbol, and Ritual in the Greco-Roman Era* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 94.

¹⁴³ See Bodel, “Dealing with the Dead,” 139.

including its detour through the Roman Forum (the busiest place in the city) to hear/witness the speech (*laudatio funebris*); Ochs asserts that the “psychological consequences of death [were] shared by a public collectivity.”¹⁴⁴ In addition, “[h]alting the procession at the Forum reinforce[d] the public, not private character of the patrician’s funeral ... the deceased becomes, rhetorically, not a visual reminder causing sorrow and pain but an object causing a large, living collective to gather, participate, and share in the work of the cultural ritual.”¹⁴⁵ Ochs suggests further that the effect of the *laudatio* was to assert “a rhetorical conclusion” to the funeral, implying that “the deceased has now joined company” with his “honored and honorable ancestors.”¹⁴⁶ By surrounding the “lifeless and immobile corpse” of the Roman aristocrat with many “symbols of power and superiority” (e.g., “large numbers of attendants,” dignitaries arriving in chariots, state officials “seated on ivory chairs,” and the sight of an “expensively decorated bier”), the spectators and the grieving family could be reassured (at least rhetorically) that awe had replaced anguish, strength had replaced powerlessness, and the fear of mortality had been replaced by assurances of immortality—that the memory of the deceased would live on.¹⁴⁷

Stage Six: The Burial

For the vast majority of Romans, the funeral procession by-passed the Forum and terminated at the burial place. During most of antiquity, cemeteries in Rome were located

¹⁴⁴ Ochs, *Consolatory Rhetoric*, 94.

¹⁴⁵ Ochs, *Consolatory Rhetoric*, 94.

¹⁴⁶ Ochs, *Consolatory Rhetoric*, 95.

¹⁴⁷ Ochs, *Consolatory Rhetoric*, 95; significantly, the finality of the aristocratic funeral process would not occur until the deceased was buried in “costly and near-permanent tombs,” which would then “guarantee” enduring memory and immortality for the dead.

beyond the city walls and along the roadways leading into and out of settlements.¹⁴⁸ Some wealthy landowners had their own family house-tombs like those in the cemetery at Ostia and *Portus Augusti* at Isola Sacra, north of Ostia; for the poorest sector of the population, graves were often placed “between the rows of the house-tombs,” sometimes in *amphorae* (clay pots) implanted in the ground or under “large flat bricks” or “stone slabs” laid on the surface, or simply in holes dug in the earth.¹⁴⁹ The poorest of the poor and criminals, however, were often abandoned and left unburied, or their corpses were collected and thrown into pits (*puticuli*) to rot, or interred in mass communal graves.¹⁵⁰ This situation is an indication of the bare minimum of funeral rites—burial in its most basic form—covering the corpse with “a few handfuls of dust in a symbolic gesture could suffice.”¹⁵¹ The first three centuries of the current era also saw the invention of two burial innovations in the city of Rome: *columbaria* (niches for ash urns), either in underground chambers or in buildings above ground, and the underground *hypogea* (chambers of “earth-cut shelves” for inhumations) linked together to create catacombs.¹⁵²

For inhumation, the body, wrapped in a simple shroud, was laid in the ground “or encased in a coffin made of wood, lead or stone ... Large stone and marble sarcophagi could be located above ground or within tombs, and this might especially be the case with ornately

¹⁴⁸ For Roman burial, see Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 48-50. Also, Cicero, *De legibus*, 2.23.58.443-44 regarding where burial was permitted by the laws applied in Rome (i.e., the Twelve Tables derived from the Laws of Solon)

¹⁴⁹ Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 101-103. According to Toynbee, these more modest types of burials were very common elsewhere in western parts of the Roman Empire. Hope adds that from the third century onward, inhumation was the usual type of burial across the empire; see *Roman Death*, 82.

¹⁵⁰ Valerie M. Hope, “Contempt and Respect: The Treatment of the Corpse in Ancient Rome,” in *Death and Disease in the Ancient City*, edited by V. M. Hope and Eireann Marshall, 104-27 (New York: Routledge, 2000), 111.

¹⁵¹ Hope, *Roman Death*, 81, which states, the “most basic requirement for disposal was that the body should be covered with earth.”

¹⁵² Hope, *Roman Death*, 84. Also see, Bodel, “From *Columbaria* to Catacombs,” 195-200.

decorated examples ... since the fine sculpture could then be viewed.”¹⁵³ It was also common for grave goods to accompany the burial. These might include coins, jewelry, lamps, pots, or other items considered important for the deceased in the afterlife.¹⁵⁴ Grave gifts were clear indicators of the family’s social role in terms of solidarity, memory, and identity. Before the act of burial was completed the name of the deceased was called three times along with the word, “*Vale*” (Latin: farewell) as described by Virgil in the *Aeneid*.¹⁵⁵

Again, throughout the burial ritual, mourning activities/gestures (*planctus*) continued: the kinswomen beat their breasts and thighs, scratched their faces, tore at their hair, clapped their hands and stamped their feet.¹⁵⁶ Middle-class and non-elite families may have opted for a funeral speech for the deceased; it was typically delivered at the gravesite prior to burial, perhaps in imitation of the patrician practice of this ritual (that is, the *laudatio funebris* performed for elite citizens in the *forum Romanum*, discussed in the previous section). Some evidence for written praise of the deceased occurs in funeral inscriptions which indicates that both men and women could be eulogized (e.g., epitaphs for Roman wives or *amica*).¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ Hope, *Roman Death*, 84. Also, Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 50.

¹⁵⁴ Hope, *Roman Death*, 85. For a more detailed account of the implementation of grave goods and the belief that the deceased resided under the earth and therefore “lived” in the tomb or grave, see Alfred C. Rush, *Death and Burial in Christian Antiquity* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1941), 239-42, 245-46.

¹⁵⁵ Rush, *Death and Burial*, 254. See also Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.231, 2. 97-98, 6.505-506 and Servius, *Commentary on Virgil’s Aeneid*, 2.97.

¹⁵⁶ For further discussion of the *planctus* (gestures of mourning), see Rush, *Death and Burial*, 164-69, 176, 229-31. See also Lucian, *De luctu*, 12 where he ridicules women’s practices of *planctus* including: scratching cheeks, ripping clothing, tearing out hair, wailing, beating the breasts, and pouring dust over one’s head.

¹⁵⁷ See Harriet I. Flower, *Ancestor Masks and Aristocratic Power in Roman Culture* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1996), 61-70; Flower argues that only those distinguished Roman aristocrats who had the legal right to own ancestor masks (*imagines*) were permitted to have a *laudatio funebris* performed in the *forum Romanum*; this would therefore deny the possibility of non-elites delivering funeral orations in the Forum. At the same time, it would not have prohibited Roman families of whatever status from having a relative give a speech for the deceased at the tomb prior to burial in a family tomb/grave. For inscriptional evidence praising wives and “women in alternative relationships,” see classicist Alison Jeppesen-Wigelsworth, “The Portrayal of Roman Wives in Literature and Inscriptions,” PhD diss. (Calgary, AB: University of Calgary, 2010), 209-310.

Finally, we are told by writers like Diomedes, that the *nenia* was sung at the burial as “the last and ultimate song that, together with lamentation,” was sung to the dead.¹⁵⁸

Stage Seven: Commemoration of the Dead

Commemoration had everything to do with memory. As stated so often in this chapter, memory (hence, identity) was paramount for Roman families, especially for the aristocracy. Hope states, “It was a duty to remember the dead,” and this was done in a multitude of ways—tombs, monuments, grave markers, inscriptions, gifts, memorial gardens, altars, feasts, and banquets.¹⁵⁹ In addition, *memoria* meant maintaining social relationships even after separation by death. Relationships may have been transformed by death, but it was critical that those relationships be maintained. One way this was done was by transforming the deceased of the family into *Manes* (i.e., powerful spirits/souls of the dead, “subjects of propitiation,” sometimes referred to as shades).¹⁶⁰ Roman texts show a prevalence in Roman society of the ancestor cult and ideas about the survival of the spirits (*Manes*) of the dead.¹⁶¹ The *Manes* were “powerful and divine ... as witnessed by the ... opening invocation ‘to the spirits of the dead’ (*Dis Manibus*)” or *D M* on funerary monuments and in inscriptions.¹⁶² Private rites of

¹⁵⁸ See similar references to the *nenia* sung at the end of the funeral in the work of classicist Thomas Habinek, *The World of Roman Song: From Ritualized Speech to Social Order* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 235-36; Habinek cites Servius, *Aen.* 6.216; Ovid, *Fasti*, 6.668; Varro, *Ling.* 7.70; Suetonius, *Aug.* 100.2; and several others.

¹⁵⁹ Hope, *Roman Death*, 171-77.

¹⁶⁰ Carroll, *Spirits of the Dead*, 4.

¹⁶¹ Carroll explains that the *Manes* were mentioned (she states the incidence as “frequent” at 4, but as “occasional” at 126) in the form of (*D M*) as an opening invocation inscribed on epitaphs, appearing during the reign of Augustus, becoming increasingly common in the first century CE, and common also during the mid-second century and into the third century in Gaul and Germania when *D M* was expanded to read, for instance, “*D M et Memoriae*” (to the spirits of the dead and the memory of ...) and “*D M et memoriae aeternae*” (to the spirits of the dead and the eternal memory of ...) or “*D M et quieti aeternae*” (to the spirits of the dead and the eternal rest of ...); see Carroll, *Spirits of the Dead*, 126.

¹⁶² Carroll, *Spirits of the Dead*, 3-4 notes that “ideas about the survival of the spirits (*Manes*) of the dead” were far more prevalent among the general populus of the societies of Rome, northern Gaul, and Germania. In addition, inscriptions often mentioned “the reunion of surviving children, husband, wives, and friends with their

commemoration—for instance, the regular funerary banquets and festivals at the *Parentalia* during the month of February in Rome—were intended to “placate the *di Manes*, the ‘good’ gods [spirits] of the ancestors” and to establish “a close relationship between the celebrants and the dead.”¹⁶³ While privately celebrated by each family during one week in February each year, the festival of *Parentalia* also became quite “public” when the entire city of Rome remembered all dead ancestors on the last day of celebrations known as *Feralia*.¹⁶⁴ The purpose was to cleanse the *res publica* by having every Roman “carry out [his/her] duties (*iusta*) for the *di Manes*” to benefit the state.¹⁶⁵ The benefit, as argued previously, was to reinforce the solidarity and collective identity of Rome; it involved the communal concept of *concordia* (harmony/unity), a concept that the Christian bishop, Augustine, would invoke later in the fifth century.

It is significant that belief in the spirits of the dead as existing in or around the grave/tomb—while perhaps a popular and more prevalent belief among Romans—was not the only belief about what became of an individual after death.¹⁶⁶ Generally speaking, the

loved ones”; see Carroll, *Spirits of the Dead*, 4 citing examples in *CIL* 6.7579; *CIL* 6.9693; *CIL* 6.18817 among others.

¹⁶³ Šterbenc Erkes, “Gender,” 55. See also Ovid, *Fasti*, 3.560-64.

¹⁶⁴ Hope, *Roman Death*, 100.

¹⁶⁵ Šterbenc Erkes, “Gender,” 55. See also Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, vol. 2, edited and translated by Robert A. Kaster, LCL 511 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 1.13.3. Notably, the week of *Parentalia* was both “public” and “private” because “Roman magistrates set aside the ‘official’ clothes with the marks of their social rank and wore plain, ‘civil’ clothes, the temples were closed, and no public business could be dealt with. Magistrates thus signaled the private character of their existence during these festive days. The suspension of public affairs had a structural similarity with a week of mourning (*feriae denicales*) in the private cult of the dead”; see Šterbenc Erkes, “Gender,” 55-56. For more information on the *Parentalia*, see classicist Fanny Dolansky, “Honouring the Family Dead on the Parentalia: Ceremony, Spectacle, and Memory,” *Phoenix* 65 no. 1/2 (2011): 125-57.

¹⁶⁶ Two strong Greco-Roman philosophies were those of the Epicureans and the Stoics. Lucretius was well-known for his writing on Epicureanism; he argued that fear of death was the base cause of the worst of human characteristics (jealousy, desire, greed) and that, according to Epicurus (the Greek philosopher) death was “nothing” and after death there was nothing; consequently, death was nothing to fear; notably, Epicurus, Aristotle, and their followers held that “death was annihilation”; see Hope, *Roman Death*, 19-20. Further information is located in Hope, *Roman Death*, 19 citing Lucretius discussing Epicureanism in *On the Nature of the Universe*, 3.865-69. Other death philosophies included that of the Orphic-Pythagoreans who alleged cyclical reincarnation; Plato and his adherents believed the soul was immortal and that “the just [souls] were sent upwards

dominant view held by the majority of Romans was voiced in the writings of Lucian, in the form of satire; Lucian maintained that the deceased were still accessible to or close to the living and interacted with living members of the family.¹⁶⁷ Commemoration for most Romans, therefore, reflected and continued the bond of love, loyalty, and dutifulness to family, known as *pietas*.

In terms of *memoria* or commemoration of the dead, there were several forms of activity. First, and arguably the most common, was dining with the dead. On the day of burial, and following the rituals at the grave, it was common for the Roman family to have a meal (Latin: *silicernium*) in their home to honor the deceased.¹⁶⁸ Then on the ninth day after burial the family remembered the deceased with another feast (Latin: *cena novendialis*) at the gravesite. This feast was the symbolic ending to the formal period of mourning for the family as well as a symbol to mark the unity of the living with the dead; food was offered to the deceased, libations of wine were poured over the grave, and a meal was shared with the deceased.¹⁶⁹ Robin M. Jensen's analysis of archaeological and textual evidence reveals that oil, wine, grain, flowers and incense could be brought as offerings to the dead and poured or

into the sky" (Elysium) and enjoyed a happy and "beautiful existence" while "the unjust [were sent] downwards into the earth" to suffer (in Hades) "in proportion to the sins of life"; see Hope, *Roman Death*, 19, 107. The Stoics, in contrast, believed that the soul likely lived on after death in a "better" state than it had previously within a body; but the idea of an underworld, according to the Stoics, "was nonsense" and it was advisable to "face and prepare for death" because death was inevitable; see Hope, *Roman Death*, 20-21 citing Seneca the Younger discussing the Stoic perspective in *Letters* 26.7, 93.12, 93.3-4, 61.2 and also in *Letters* 1. 49, 66, and 82. Notably, Epicureanism, Stoicism, and other Greco-Roman philosophies of death tended to be ideas held mainly by elite Romans.

¹⁶⁷ See Lucian, *De lueta (On Mourning/Funerals)* as an example of satire. Also, Lucian, *Verae historiae (The True History/Story)*, translated by A. M. Harmon, LCL 14 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913). And, as well, Lucian, *Cataplus (The Downward Journey)*, vol. 2, translated by A. M. Harmon, LCL 54 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1915).

¹⁶⁸ Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 50-51. This meal was celebrated often in the home of the deceased but could also be celebrated at the grave/tomb.

¹⁶⁹ Hope, *Roman Death*, 86-87. Also, Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 50-51.

scattered onto the grave/tomb.¹⁷⁰ Images (paintings and reliefs) also indicate some of the food types consumed at the feasts.¹⁷¹ Some tombs in the vicinity of Rome had built-in dining facilities including wells that supplied water, benches for seating guests, and ovens for cooking the food.¹⁷² Feasts were repeated on the third, thirtieth (or fortieth) day following interment, annually on the birthday of the deceased (Latin: *dies natalis*), and then during yearly festivals for the ancestors (for instance, the *Parentalia*).¹⁷³ Evidence showing how food and drink were shared as nourishment for the dead is apparent in the archaeology of graves that feature “holes or pipes through which food and drink could be poured down directly on to the burial (*profusio*), so as to reach the remains” of the deceased.¹⁷⁴

A second way of memorializing the ancestors was regularly reintegrating and including them in societal activities (both public and private). For the elite, this was accomplished through the *imagines* (wax masks) that were as part of the family’s domestic shrine (*lararium*) where the ancestral spirits were honored.¹⁷⁵ The two realms—the living and the dead—were unified by duty (*iusta*) and filial loyalty (*pietas*); yet, the *boundary* between the two realms—the living and the dead—was ethereal, blurred by the notion that “death did

¹⁷⁰ Robin M. Jensen, “Dining with the Dead: From the *Mensa* to the Altar in Christian Late Antiquity,” in *Commemorating the Dead: Texts and Artifacts in Context: Studies of Roman Jewish, and Christian Burials*, edited by Laurie Brink and Deborah Green (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 117.

¹⁷¹ Jensen, “Dining with the Dead,” 117 n14. Jensen refers to loaves, fish, cups, “joint of beef,” and “heads of a pig and fowl” depicted in the imagery.

¹⁷² Jensen, “Dining with the Dead,” 118-20. See also, Carroll, *Spirits of the Dead*, 42. Carroll provides a partial list of tomb inscriptions that mention feasting facilities at the tomb, see *Spirits of the Dead*, 42 n62.

¹⁷³ Jensen, “Dining with the Dead,” 117-18.

¹⁷⁴ Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 51. For example, according to Toynbee, “in the necropolis excavated under St. Peter’s in Rome ... Tomb F, inset into the border of a mosaic pavement, is a series of small, spare marble slabs each pierced with a hole for pouring sustenance down on to the dead beneath; and there are similar holes in the mosaic pavement of Tomb C. In the floor of Tomb O there is a marble roundel pierced by four holes; and Grave y, a child’s inhumation burial of Hadrianic date, near the reputed tomb of St. Peter, contained a terracotta coffin, partly encased in a rectangular block of masonry, which was penetrated by a vertical tube for pouring.”

¹⁷⁵ See classicist Mario Erasmo, “Among the Dead in Ancient Rome,” *Mortality* 6.1 (2001): 31. Also see, Hope *Roman Death*, 99. In addition, Mogen, *Women and Death Rituals*, 59-60.

not prevent one from continuing to participate in Roman life.”¹⁷⁶ Mario Erasmo asserts that although both Greeks and Romans shared the idea that death “represented a change and not an end to one’s life,” the idea of “the reintegration of the dead ... as participants in various rituals” of life, was uniquely Roman.¹⁷⁷ Accordingly, it was common for Roman households to display domestic shrines or altars (*lararia*) as places for invoking their chosen gods and/or the ancestors to ask for the family’s wellbeing and protection.¹⁷⁸ In terms of departed family, the *lararium* was, in effect, an extension of the cemetery as a place of memory, identity, and contact between the living with the dead.¹⁷⁹

Third, in terms of remembering the ancestors, it was the case that monuments, statues, grave markers, and shrines memorializing the dead had become “a prime form of status display, social competition, and perpetuation of memory’ by the end of the Republic.¹⁸⁰ The usual patronage for the architectural structures and art *memoria* involved the *familia* and generally included “members of the household for several generations” who found themselves assigned the task of maintenance in perpetuity.¹⁸¹ Sometimes patronage for burial/commemoration might even extend “beyond the household” to specify other individuals.¹⁸² When land for cemeteries became scarce in Rome, “digging went underground within the private property [of the family] and then extended beyond it” to form *hypogea*

¹⁷⁶ Erasmo, “Among the Dead,” 31.

¹⁷⁷ Erasmo, “Among the Dead,” 32. Also see 42 n7 stating that this idea would not have involved those who followed the Epicurean philosophy, which posited there was no afterlife because everything ended with death. According to Erasmo, the “deceased’s concern about his reputation in death and even among his dead ancestors is [also] uniquely Roman”; see Erasmo, “Among the Dead,” 40.

¹⁷⁸ See classicist Deborah Boedeker, “Family Matters: Domestic Religion in Classical Greece,” in *Household and Family Religion in Antiquity*, edited by John Bodel and Saul M. Olyan (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2012), 232.

¹⁷⁹ Bowes, *Private Worship*, 32. According to Bowes, “Images of deceased ancestors were, by the later first or second century, making increasing appearances in household shrines ... where they were worshipped alongside the household deities.”

¹⁸⁰ Carroll, *Spirits of the Dead*, 16.

¹⁸¹ Osiek, “Roman and Christian Burial,” 248.

¹⁸² Osiek, “Roman and Christian Burial,” 248.

eventually linked by tunnels that became expansive catacombs.¹⁸³ Carolyn Osiek points to textual and material evidence indicating that patrons of burial places or commemorative monuments often included women, sometimes in private patronage and other times in public patronage.¹⁸⁴ Clearly, women, as well as men, were responsible for keeping alive the memory of the dead and the identity of the *familia* or *collegia*. At the same time, men and women established “places”—monuments, tombs, and statues along with epigraphs—that ensured lasting memory of the ancestors and an enduring relationship between the living and the dead, thus guaranteeing solidarity and identity for the future.

A fourth tradition to honor the dead was in terms of funerary inscriptions; epitaphs provided an effective means of remembering the dead and keeping their names and “voices” alive. As Hope explains, “For most people there was no other public option to keep a name alive” than through epitaphs; furthermore, simple epitaphs were “the only affordable statement of memory which could be directed at a wide audience.”¹⁸⁵ Maureen Carroll describes how many of the funerary inscriptions “called out” from the roadside cemeteries to passers-by, to complete strangers, to stop and take notice of the dead by reading an epitaph

¹⁸³ Osiek, “Roman and Christian Burial,” 248. For more about underground cemeteries, see Bodel, “From *Columbaria* to Catacombs,” 197-200.

¹⁸⁴ Osiek, “Roman and Christian Burial,” 257-64. Women were known to take part in and lead *collegia*, the “professional and social organizations of the non-elite, often patronized by an elite figure”; women also held administrative offices such as *magistra* (instructress), *curator* (manager), and *sacerdos* (priestess); see Osiek, “Roman and Christian Burial,” 261. One well-known female benefactor was Eumachia, a patroness of the fullers’ guild [though that is debated] and public priestess of Venus in Pompeii; see Osiek, “Roman and Christian Burial,” 263. For further on Eumachia, especially in terms of her background, family heritage, her associations with the population of Pompeii, and her munificence, see classicist Virginia L. Campbell, *The Tombs of Pompeii: Organization, Space, and Society* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 114-19. Eumachia built a large funerary complex in the Forum of the city for her own tomb; the building contained a grand statue of Eumachia herself accompanied by several inscriptions, one of which links her to the fullers’ guild, however, her patronage of the guild has been disputed by scholars; see Campbell, *Tombs of Pompeii*, 119.

¹⁸⁵ Hope, *Roman Death*, 153.

aloud, as was the ancient custom, or by listening to someone else reading the epitaph aloud.¹⁸⁶ The texts of epitaphs provided information about the individual mentioned; the texts “were intentionally chosen by the deceased or those close to the deceased to negotiate and display status and to commemorate a network of personal relationships the dead enjoyed”; often, what was included in the inscription “reflected an intentional and manipulative selection of details” for the purpose of making “the life of the deceased visible and memorable.”¹⁸⁷

And finally, commemorating the dead was achieved in the form of festivals of remembrance; these celebrations involved the “contract” established between family members (or members of a *collegium*) and their dead kin (or comrades, in the case of *collegia*). The “contract” involved reciprocity of favors. As mentioned earlier, the Romans believed in the survival of spirits of the dead (*Manes*) and that these spirits were powerful “subjects of propitiation.”¹⁸⁸ The living were obliged (by *iusta* and *pietas*) to remember the dead, to keep them “alive” by regular nourishment (feasts referred to as *refrigeria*), and to ensure their lasting identity through epitaphs and monuments; in short, the dead ancestors were to be “revered, respected and remembered.”¹⁸⁹ It was held that if the dead—who were thought to reside in or around their burial place—were “duly propitiated,” they were “capable of aiding their descendants.”¹⁹⁰ At the same time, “there was always something faintly threatening” about the *Manes*, something “unknown and uncertain about the dead and their possible continuing presence,” especially if they were “kinless and neglected.”¹⁹¹ Evidence of this

¹⁸⁶ Maureen Carroll, “‘The Mourning Was Very Good’: Liberation and Liberality in Roman Funerary Commemoration,” in *Memory and Mourning: Studies on Roman Death*, edited by V. M. Hope and J. Huskinson (Oxford, UK: Oxbow Books, 2011), 134.

¹⁸⁷ Carroll, “The Mourning Was Very Good,” 134-35.

¹⁸⁸ Carroll, *Spirits of the Dead*, 4.

¹⁸⁹ Hope, *Roman Death*, 100.

¹⁹⁰ Hope, *Roman Death*, 100. See also, Carroll, *Spirits of the Dead*, 4.

¹⁹¹ Hope, *Roman Death*, 100. Also, Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 35.

persistent dis-ease in terms of the spirits of the dead was displayed in a festival known as *Lemuria* (May 9, 11, and 13). It was a time that the living could confront the spirits of the dead when they were said to “wander around the house.”¹⁹² Hope explains the private/domestic rituals associated with the celebration of *Lemuria* as follows:

at midnight the house owner was supposed to get up, barefooted, wash his hands, throw black beans over his shoulder and say nine times, ‘I send these and with them I redeem myself and my family.’ The shade was believed to collect the beans and follow behind unseen. The ritual ended with further purification by water and a clash of bronze accompanied by a demand for the shades to depart: ‘Ghosts of my father, leave.’¹⁹³

Robin M. Jensen discusses the festival of *Rosalia* (*dies rosationis*) when family members (presumably, women) brought roses to the graves of their kinsfolk.¹⁹⁴ Toynbee adds that *Rosalia* and an associated festival, *Violaria* (when violets had come into bloom) were times for families to visit the tombs of their departed, spread roses or violets (which were deemed “pledges of eternal spring in the life beyond the grave”) scattering them about the grave and decking the funerary portraits (*imagines*) or statues of the ancestors with floral garlands.¹⁹⁵ The anniversaries of birthdays of the dead became another reason for festive visits to the tombs when family members brought offerings of violets or rose petals, lighted lamps filled with incense, and sometimes food and drink, for “that is what they [the *di Manes*] lived off.”¹⁹⁶ Of course, the main festival each year was the *Parentalia*, discussed in some detail

¹⁹² Hope, *Roman Death*, 99. For a detailed discussion of the festival of *Lemuria*, see Ovid, *Fasti*, 2.617-38. Also, Plautus, *Amphitryon*, edited and translated by Wolfgang de Melo, LCL 60 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 777.

¹⁹³ See Hope, *Roman Death*, 99 citing Ovid, *Fasti*, 5.429-44. The souls/spirits of the dead were thought to “live” in beans, according to Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, vol. 7, edited by W. H. S. Jones, LCL 393 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), 18.118.

¹⁹⁴ Jensen, “Dining with the Dead,” 118. See inscriptions in *Inscriptiones Latinae selectae*, edited by H. Dessau (Berlin: Apud Weidmannos, 1892-1916), 7213, 7258, 8369-74, which all mention the bringing of roses to the tomb (hereafter cited as *ILS*).

¹⁹⁵ Toynbee, *Death and Burial*, 62-64. See also, classicist Keith Hopkins, *Death and Renewal: Sociological Studies in Roman History*, vol. 2 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 233.

¹⁹⁶ Hopkins, *Death and Renewal*, 234.

previously. Keith Hopkins points out an epitaph of a ragman who was buried in a small Italian town; the ragman had “provided enough money for twelve men from his guild to dine at his tomb once a year on a day of the *Parentalia*”; we recall that the festival was a week in duration, meaning that the fellow ragmen would have a choice of which day they would satisfy their comrade’s wish.¹⁹⁷ Along with the banquet at these memorial festivals, the other common activities involved dancing and music. Johannes Quasten explains that music and dancing were integral elements of Etruscan and Roman banquets for the dead.¹⁹⁸ He argues that funerary “music was originally supposed to have offered comfort to the dead.”¹⁹⁹ In reference to the dead residing in their idyllic state in the realm of the ancestors, Lucian writes that the eternal pastime of the “blessed” was singing, dancing, and playing musical instruments (the lyre, tambourine and sistrum) at their “continual banquet” held in paradise.²⁰⁰ At the same time (and discussed previously), the Romans thought that the purpose of funerary music was “a means of making the spirit of the deceased docile ... [that music] had the aspect of an adjuration of the deceased.”²⁰¹

¹⁹⁷ The epitaph in question is preserved in *CIL*11.5047 and cited in Hopkins, *Death and Renewal*, 233.

¹⁹⁸ See theologian and scholar of patristics Johannes Quasten, *Music and Worship in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (Washington, DC: National Association of Pastoral Musicians, 1983), 154.

¹⁹⁹ Quasten, *Music and Worship*, 154-55. For example, see Plate 32 which shows a gravestone in the museum of Fiesole; the scene depicts a funerary banquet in the upper register and a musician playing a flute along with two dancing figures in the lower register. Notably, music of all kinds was prevalent in ancient cultures and the music for different events had different functions (e.g., wedding songs, triumphal songs, songs at symposia were convivial songs, songs at religious ceremonies accompanied “initiatory, purificatory, apotropaic, medical, and other kinds of rituals,” and there were also songs/music at festivals and at theatrical/dramatic performances). For more about the funerary/lament songs and music depicted in this study, see scholar of Greek and Roman music Giovanni Comotti, *Music in Greek and Roman Culture*, translated by Rosaria V. Munson (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

²⁰⁰ Lucian, *Verae historiae (The True History/Story)*, 2.5.108.

²⁰¹ Quasten, *Music and Worship*, 158.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the what, how, and why of this project; that is, the scope, methods, and rationale for my thesis. First, about the scope. The chronological and geographic limits of this study involved the Latin West (from Britain to North Africa and Spain to the Balkans) during late antiquity (defined for purposes of this project as ca. 180 – 800 CE). Further, in terms of subject limits, this study focused on the funeral and its transition from the Roman to the Christian within the parameters of the Latin West in late antiquity.

Second, with regard to the methods and data. The methods chosen for this investigation include (1) scholarly approaches and insights from ritual studies supplemented by memory and performance studies then augmented further using practice and performance theory as well as theories of social identity; (2) methods and insights from mortuary/funerary studies complemented by place studies in turn supplemented by understandings from ritual and memory studies; and (3) additional tools/devices for analysis (e.g., literary criticism including the hermeneutics of suspicion and condemnation; visual-rhetorical analysis; contextuality) plus the strategic application of these tools. Then, in terms of data for this study, clues from literary and non-literary sources as well as material/visual evidence become relevant. In addition, strategies for dealing with respective categories of the data and cautions for implementing those strategies are critical.

Third, the rationale. Among the crucial considerations for this study are the following: (1) socio-historical context; (2) bias in the data—androcentricity, idealism, elitism, equality and gender-ness; (3) factors of Roman and church culture such as the virtual exclusion of voices from the social matrix of ordinary people; (4) the centrality of the family at this time in Roman and church history, (5) the vital bond between the living and the dead, and (6) the role

of women and the family in the funerary process during its transition from Roman to Christian. This chapter also presented an outline of the Roman funeral (as delineated by V. M. Hope) that would provide a “model” against which this project could evaluate the transformation and christianization of the funerary process during late antiquity in the Latin West.

CHAPTER THREE

Familial Control of Funerary Rituals 180-300 CE

Introduction

The preceding chapter surveyed the Roman funeral process and the scholarly methods and data used for analyzing the sequential stages of the funeral, the purpose of the funeral in terms of preserving family memories and identity, the ritualization of practice and performance, and the ritualization of place. This chapter and the following two chapters deal with the transformation of funerary rituals from the Roman to the Christian. The chapters are arranged chronologically, in three large time blocks: the current chapter deals with the period 180-300 CE, while the following two chapters deal with 301-500 CE, and 501-800 CE respectively. The time blocks/ or chapter designations are arbitrary, although, the partitions could be considered as (1) “before Constantine and the Edict of Milan,” (2) “after Constantine and the Peace of the Church,” and (3) “the unification of the western empire under the Merovingians and Carolingians.” The last of the three chapters allows this study to examine the changes to the Christian funeral as fostered by Charlemagne, and then to explore the funeral’s trajectory into the ninth century and beyond, leaving a small opening in which to consider the survival of women’s ritual lament in the modern era.

As concluded by past scholars—A. C. Rush, R. MacMullen, P. Brown, and E. Rebillard, for example—early Christians adhered to previous Roman funeral traditions. Given the work of Brown, MacMullen, K. Bowes, and other scholars of late antiquity, this observation is not surprising in that Christianity and Christians were part of the Greco-Roman culture. However, while Rush focused on the continuation of beliefs and ideas assuming an Eliadian set of universals, my dissertation establishes that the continuity of Roman funerary

practices for generations (indeed, for centuries) of Christians was due in large part to the familial control of rituals surrounding death. Drawing from Valerie Hope's analysis of Roman funeral rituals, this chapter examines the practices of Christians between 180-300 CE.¹ It demonstrates that funerary rites remained both under the control of the family, and in *places* temporarily defined as "familial" due to the rituals performed there by the family. The process of ritualizing a "place" (essentially, making it sacred) is noted by Catherine Bell. She states, "ritual-like action ... gives form to the specialness of a site, distinguishing it from other places in a way that evokes highly symbolic meanings."² This explains, therefore, three particularly symbolic and especially sacred places for early Christians—the family-home, the journey taken from home to cemetery, and finally, the tomb or gravesite itself.

According to Bell, the enactment of ritual (or ritualization) is about social *doing* or *action*, a strategic way of acting (praxis), which "differentiates itself from other practices" for specific purposes.³ Bell's model of ritualization posits that ritual as practice is always performed in dialectic with structures—cultural patterns such as social relationships (familial and societal), embodied memories, previous traditions—which can be reflected in and reshaped by ritual practice.⁴ As noted in chapter two of this thesis, it was from Bell's perspective and that of Ronald Grimes that "a working definition" was established for the current study. My research was able to demonstrate there was a continuation of Roman funerary practices within Christian families because the social relationships (familial and societal), the embodied memories, and the previous traditions as reflected in the funerals for

¹ Valerie M. Hope, *Roman Death: The Dying and the Dead in Ancient Rome*. London, UK: Continuum, 2009.

² Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 159. See also, Ronald L. Grimes, *Rite Out of Place: Ritual, Media, and the Arts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 108.

³ Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 7 and 80-82.

⁴ Bell, *Ritual*, 81-83.

most of late antiquity, were predominantly Roman. Further, it was the family's control over funerary rituals that served to retain the Roman-esque approach to funerary practices for as long as it did (into the eighth century, and beyond in some respects). In other words, by the end of the third century—the focus of this chapter—the church had managed, only to a minimum, to reshape the ritual practice, change relationships, or develop its own traditions.

Accordingly, having positioned some background, a survey of my investigation is ready to proceed. While considering the implications for both the deceased and the bereaved, my research began with an investigation of the funerary process in the first designated period (180-300 CE) using Van Gennep's tripartite categorization of rituals (separation, transition, and incorporation), which he understood defined how the living and the dead coped with their respective transformations at death.

The Separation (Pre-liminal) Stages of the Funeral, 180-300 CE

The phases of the funeral considered in this section include dying and death, followed by preparation of the body for burial. The rituals associated with these phases were intended to help both the deceased and the survivors “separate” from each other and from what had been their “former” existence. For the Romans, the time of death was critical. Protection of the dying person's spirit was of paramount concern. That same consideration would remain for Christians, as well. Christian families—still more comfortable with Greco-Roman beliefs and traditions in terms of death—continued to believe that the soul (shade/spirit) of the deceased required assistance on its perilous journey through death. The Roman belief that the journey to paradise was hazardous and filled with dangers and obstacles persisted. Christian texts reveal that horrors such as dragons, lions, and specifically, the devil and his demons, awaited each

soul on its way into the afterlife.⁵ A good example of this popular belief was found in the prison diary of the martyr Perpetua (d. 203 CE). Perpetua wrote that in her fourth dream, she envisioned herself fighting hand-to-hand against a disgusting and vile “Egyptian” whom she perceived to be the devil.⁶ Brent Shaw explains that representing the devil as the “foul Egyptian” was “a simple reflection of racism. The Egyptians were the most despised, hated and reviled ethnic group in the Roman world—therefore an appropriate choice for a dark and satanic thing.”⁷ In an earlier dream Perpetua mentioned a ladder leading to heaven guarded by a monstrous dragon (or snake); the ladder was bounded on either side by an arsenal of knives, hooks, swords, and lances ready to tear the flesh of whomever should climb it.⁸ Still, Perpetua bravely began the climb and as she did so, the dragon/snake put out its head and she stepped on it at the first rung of the ladder. The imagery was clear to all who were familiar with Genesis 3:15 when God spoke to the snake/devil in the garden after the fall of Adam and Eve saying, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.” Perpetua saw herself as victorious

⁵ Death was now a fight with Satan and his hordes along with other perils; for instance, New Testament passage (1 Peter 5:8), which states, “Discipline yourselves, keep alert / Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour.” Also, Origen of Alexandria spoke about “the powers of the air” and “demons” advancing toward the soul on its journey after death while angels sought to guard and guide the soul to heaven; see Origen, *Origenis in librum iudicium*, PL 12, edited by J. -P. Migne (Paris, 1862) at 3.3, 3.4-6, 6.2, 7.1-2.

⁶ See Perpetua, “*Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*,” in *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, edited by H. Musurillo (Oxford: 1972), 10, which states, “*Et exivit quidam contra me Aegyptius foedus specie cum adiutoribus suis pugnaturus mecum*”; my translation = “And there emerged someone to fight against me, a powerful Egyptian with his helpers.” Note the phrase: “*contra diabolum*” = “against the devil” in the following: “*Et experrecta sum; et intellexi me non ad bestias, sed contra diabolum esse pugnaturam: sed sciebam mihi esse victoriam*”; my translation = “And in the morning I awoke; and I knew that it was not against the beasts I was to fight, but against the devil: but I knew mine was the victory,” 10.

⁷ See Roman historian Brent Shaw, “The Passion of Perpetua,” *Past & Present: A Journal of Historical Studies* 139, no. 1 (May, 1993): 28n62.

⁸ Shaw explains that the *Passio of Perpetua* exists in both Latin and Greek; he maintains that the Latin was the original, the Greek was a “translation”; see “The Passion of Perpetua,” 3n2. Perpetua’s diary relates her first dream about the great bronze ladder stretching up into the sky (to heaven); at its base was “coiled an enormous snake” (*et erat sub ipsa scala draco cubans mirae magnitudinis*); see Perpetua, “*Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae*,” 4.26, 4.12.

over the devil through the power of Christ when she wrote in her diary about the snake/dragon, “It shall not hurt me, in the name of Jesus Christ. And from beneath the ladder, as though it [the dragon/serpent] feared me, it softly put forth its head; and as though I trod on the first step I trod on its head.”⁹

The soul’s struggle with demonic foes on its journey to heaven was also depicted in archaeological evidence. A graphic scene was found represented on a tombstone (ca. third century CE) in the Hypogeum Campana in Rome; see Appendix B, fig. 1. The funerary plaque was dedicated to Beratius Nikatoras Lazaria, his wife Julia, and a child Onesime and was enhanced with several symbols.¹⁰ Gregory Grabka interprets the illustration as follows: in the center is the figure of the Good Shepherd (Christ) carrying a lamb (the soul of the deceased); to the right of the viewer is a lion with its mouth open wide (representing evil powers)¹¹ and with its head turned toward the shepherd; to the left is a menacing monster (another evil power) with a man (the prey) hanging from its jaws; above each of the demons is a chi-rho symbol (naming Christ as protector); at the bottom is an anchor (a Christian symbol for hope in times of danger).¹² Clearly, the Roman beliefs about the dangerous journey after death had

⁹ The passage in Latin states, “*Et dixi ego: Non me nocebit in nomine Iesu Christi. Et desub ipsa scala, quasi timens me, lente eiecit caput; et quasi primum gradum calcarem, calcavi illi caput,*” in Perpetua, “*Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae,*” 9-10.6. Translation in Shewring, *Passion of SS. Perpetua,* 9-10.26.

¹⁰ This tombstone is housed today in the Vatican Museum (Lateran Collection/*ex Lateranense*) in Rome.

¹¹ See theologian Gregory Grabka, “Christian Viaticum: A Study of Its Cultural Background,” *Traditio* 9 (1953): 24-25. The lion in early Christian art was ambivalent in its meaning; on the one hand, it represented Christ as strength and power, and on the other hand, the lion (especially with its mouth open wide) symbolized evil, and sin. See also, “Lion” in *The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Art and Architecture*, edited by Tom Devonshire Jones, Linda Murray, and Peter Murray (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), 314.

¹² See New Testament scholar Graydon F. Snyder, *Ante Pacem: Archaeological Evidence of Church Life before Constantine*, 2nd ed. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2003), esp. ch. 2, 23-66, which outlines and explains the various symbols used by the early Christian community in expressing itself and communicating with others; e.g., the anchor was “a symbol of hope during danger ... security in a hostile, if not negative, culture,” 28. Other examples of symbols: the boat/ship = “security in the midst of chaotic waters,” 29; the dove = peace, 39-41; the Orant = community security or peace = family = filial piety, 38

been adapted, then assimilated into a Christian belief system.¹³ Furthermore, as art historian Robin M. Jensen asserts, there is a “mutual dependence of verbal and visual modes of religious expression” at this time in history; early Christian symbols present “visual metaphors,” which have “direct parallels in early Christian literature” and “viewers, like readers” were expected to understand the multiple layers of faith tradition “as passed down in different forms, whether through homilies, liturgies, dogmatic writings, or pictures.”¹⁴ It is one more reason this dissertation incorporates *both* textual and material/visual evidence in its investigation of the transition of the Roman to Christian funeral.

Over time, the idea of the Christian eucharist as *viaticum* (protection and sustenance) became part of the Christian family’s duty to provide its members with security at the hour of death.¹⁵ For Christians, miracles raised the possibility of healing because of faith in Christ and his teachings. Especially powerful as a healing or “magical” food for the early Christians—in terms of sickness and the danger of imminent death—was the eucharist (bread and wine made into the body and blood of Christ) that would be considered *viaticum* or provision for a safe journey into the afterlife, in much the same way as the coin for Charon was *viaticum* for Greco-Romans.¹⁶ Christians understood that consuming the eucharist prior to death meant the

¹³ Snyder, *Ante Pacem*, argues that many of the symbols were of Greco-Roman origin, but given a new Christian meaning; he names the lamb, anchor, vase, dove, boat, olive branch, the Orant, the palm, bread, wine (as a vase), the Good Shepherd, fish, and the vine of grapes, 27-53.

¹⁴ See Robin M. Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 3.

¹⁵ Grabka, “Christian Viaticum,” 21. Grabka argues that early Christians, because of their cultural and historical background, “felt the need of supplying the spirits of their departed kin with a provision for the journey of death ... [they] carried over with them their ideas of a voyage of the soul to its hereafter [as well as] ... the funeral rites derived from such a belief.”

¹⁶ Grabka, “Christian Viaticum,” 21; the journey after death was considered *migratio ad Dominum* for the early Christians, and the boat/ship was a common symbol in the art and literature of the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans. Further, it could be argued, the boat, for the Jews, was also a symbol of “deliverance” as in the story of Jonah, which was later interpreted by Jesus (Matt. 12:38-40) as a paradigm of death and resurrection; see Snyder, *Ante Pacem*, 92.

assurance of a safe journey to heaven and, ultimately, salvation of one's soul for eternity.¹⁷ However, this dissertation maintains that the “changes or transitions” in early Christianity meant the newly converted only gradually accepted Christian variations on the Roman rites while retaining their former pagan worldview; the transition was not as easy as the writings of church leaders would have us believe.

The view of the eucharist as special, sacred, and above all, capable of intervention in times of adversity, had to be acquired. The bishops had to teach converts to treat the consecrated bread and wine with reverence, to regard the eucharistic elements “as objects of power that could be used to confer blessing on a person's body merely by external contact”; and that “the elements possessed apotropaic powers for those who consumed them.”¹⁸ For instance, the *Apostolic Tradition*, attributed to Hippolytus of Rome, stated that if the eucharist was consumed in faith before any other foods in the day, that it provided protection against subsequent ingestion of poison.¹⁹ Ignatius of Antioch regarded the eucharist as *φάρμακον* (medicine/remedy/drug) that brought immortality and ensured communion with Christ.²⁰ The *Acts of Thomas* had a similar view.²¹ And Cyprian described how devotees wore lockets

¹⁷ See liturgists Paul Bradshaw and Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Eucharistic Liturgies: Their Evolution and Interpretation* (Collegeville, MI: Liturgical Press, 1989), 68.

¹⁸ Bradshaw and Johnson, *Eucharistic Liturgies*, 65.

¹⁹ Hippolytus of Rome, *Apostolic Tradition*, edited by Gregory Dix and Henry Chadwick, 4th ed. (London: Routledge, 2006); canon 36 states, “The faithful shall be careful to partake of the eucharist before eating anything else. For if they eat with faith, even though some deadly poison is given to them, after this it will not be able to harm them.”

²⁰ Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Ephesios (Epistle to the Ephesians)* in *Ante-Nicene Fathers 1*, edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson with A. Cleveland Coxe (Edinburgh, 1867), 20.2; Ignatius called the eucharist “the medicine of mortality” (hereafter cited as *ANF*).

²¹ *Acts of Thomas* in *The Apocryphal New Testament*, translated by M. R. James (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924); for example, *Act* 135 relates a story of Tertia's visit to a kinswoman of her husband; the woman was dying and Tertia tells her about the “medicine of life” (the eucharist).

carrying eucharistic bread as talismans and if unworthy individuals attempted to hold these lockets the bread would burst into flames or their contents would turn to ash.²²

Of course, accompanying the development of the eucharist as powerful protection in times of adversity was the need for families to gain access to the consecrated elements. As early as the third century in North Africa, Christian families were taking the eucharist home “for daily consumption,” according to Tertullian and Cyprian.²³ The same was reported by Justin Martyr (ca. 100-165 CE) who stated that after the eucharistic celebration, the deacons sent home particles of consecrated bread for reception by those absent from the mass.²⁴ Therefore, it was through the eucharist that Christian families could assist their members, especially in situations of serious illness and death. This, after all, was the central focus of the familial duty of Roman *pietas*—to protect and sustain family members. Early church leaders such as Tertullian, Cyprian, and Hippolytus confirmed the Christian belief that the soul would journey to God (*migratio ad Dominum*) after death; the metaphor for this journey was often a ship shown carrying the faithful soul to the light of heaven (*lux perpetua*).²⁵ The obligation to ensure the deceased some comfort/peace (*refrigerium*) and protection (*viaticum*) beyond death (and within Christian parameters) was now possible, but it was nuanced at different times and in different locales.

²² Cyprian of Carthage, *De lapsis* in *Opera Omnia, Patrologiae cursus completus*, edited by J. -P. Migne (Paris, 1844), 25-26.

²³ Tertullian, *De oratione*, CSEL 20, edited by A. Reifferscheid and G. Wissowa (Vienna, 1890), 19. Also, Cyprian, *De lapsis*, 25-26. Also, Cyprian, *De mortalitate*, CSEL 3.1, edited by G. Hartel (Vienna, 1868), 313; and see Grabka, “Christian Viaticum,” 40. For the development of the eucharist as a Christian sacrament between the third and fifth centuries, see Paul Bradshaw, *Eucharistic Origins*, Alcuin Club Collections 80 (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 145.

²⁴ Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, translated by Marcus Dods and George Reith, ANF 1, edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing, 1885), 67.

²⁵ Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, translated by T. R. Glover and G. H. Rendall, LCL 250 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), 16.9-11. Also, S. Cypriani, *Opera Omnia*, PL 4, edited by J. -P. Migne (Paris: 1844), *Ep.* 61.1. In addition, see Cyprian, *De mortalitate*, PL 4, edited by J. -P. Migne (Paris, 1887), 22.597-98; 26. See as well, Hippolytus of Rome, *De Antichristo*, *Patrologia Graeca* 10, edited by J. -P. Migne (Paris, 1857), 59.

The variation in nuance becomes evident in a debate that ensued between Cyprian and Novatian in North Africa in the third century. A situation developed during the Decian persecution of Christians in North Africa (ca. 250 CE) when some of the faithful denounced their religion (they lapsed) and succumbed to offering sacrifice to the emperor to avoid death at the hands of the Romans. In the beginning, Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, sided with Novatian (a priest accused of apostasy and later, as the antipope, faulted with heresy and schism) and the other “rigorists” (church leaders) who declared that anyone refusing to perform the required penance for the serious sins in question (apostasy, heresy, idolatry) was to be denied the eucharistic *viaticum* even in times of grave illness or at death.²⁶ The implication was to deny the lapsed Christian all potential healing and protective elements of the eucharist not only in life, but also in death. Not all of the bishops agreed that the sin of apostasy should warrant such a harsh penalty and a dispute arose among church leaders as to who should and should not be provided with *viaticum* prior to death. Following the Roman Synod of 251 CE (which excommunicated Novatian), Cyprian changed his mind, calling for an end to the rigorism of Novatian and insisting on mercy for lapsed Christians who wanted to be reunited with God and the church.²⁷ Cyprian argued that, in a gesture of God’s mercy, the *lapsis* should be granted peace, reconciliation, and *viaticum* at death.²⁸ The implication of

²⁶ Cyprian, *Ep.* 15.264-268. An additional proclamation from Cyprian stated, “we have decided that those who do not repent, nor give evidence of sorrow for their sins with their whole heart, and with manifest profession of their lamentation, are to be absolutely restrained from the hope of communion and peace if they begin to beg for them in the midst of sickness and peril; because it is not repentance for sin, but the warning of urgent death, that drives them to ask; and he is not worthy to receive consolation in death who has not reflected that he was about to die”; see Cyprian, *Letters of Cyprian* (1-81), translated by Sister Rose B. Donna, *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* 51 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1964), *Ep.* 51. 23.

²⁷ Cyprian, *Ep.* 55.23. For the Synod of Rome (251 CE) and the Novatian controversy, see C. Hefele, *A History of the Christian Councils from the Original Documents to the Close of the Council of Nicaea, AD 325*, vol. I, translated and edited by W. R. Clark (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1894), Bk. 1, 93-97.

²⁸ For an additional overview of the situation during the persecution in North Africa and the stance taken by Cyprian, see Grabka, “Christian Viaticum,” 31. Also, Alfred C. Rush, “The Eucharist: The Sacrament of the Dying in Christian Antiquity,” *Jurist* 34 (1974): 18.

Cyprian's decree was the episcopate's recognition that the church could not (nor should it) deny the protective elements of the eucharist at the hour of Christian death; justice resided in God's hands. In other words, Christians were permitted to act on the behalf of the deceased doing what they could to ensure his/her safe journey beyond death; whether or not this journey would ultimately end with resurrection and/or rest in Abraham's bosom was a conclusion left up to Jesus Christ. What the outcome of the debate did was to reinforce (actually, preserve) the practice of providing the eucharist as *viaticum* at the time of death. Some Christians took this to include assisting the deceased *after* death, which created another problem. But that discussion is saved for later.

Along with belief in the perils awaiting the soul of the deceased on its journey into the afterlife, Christian families adopted the Greco-Roman belief that a special advocate and defender, a *psychopompos*, could be expected to accompany and protect the deceased on the way to paradise. Therefore, whenever it was accessible, Christ's body²⁹ in the form of the eucharist (as *viaticum*) supplied the necessary protection and provision for the journey to eternal bliss in "the bosom of Abraham," referring to the joy of family reunion in heaven.³⁰ This idea of *psychopompos* is evident in some of the paintings in the catacombs of Rome. Images dated from the second and third centuries appear in the Crypt of Lucina, located beside and joined to the catacomb of San Callisto, on the Via Appia; they display Christian beliefs about deliverance by applying "the decorative schemes that were in common use in

²⁹ Jerome, later in the fourth century, used the phrase, *corpus Christi accipiant* (receive the Body of Christ), in reference to the daily reception of the eucharist "according to the custom"; see Jerome, *Epistulae*, edited by Isidorus Hilberg CSEL 55 (Vienna: Tempsky, 1912), *Ep.* 71.6.

³⁰ Grabka, "Christian Viaticum," 27. Notably, the expression "bosom of Abraham" (e.g., Luke 16:22-23) is common in "the works of ancient Christian writers and hagiographers"; see Grabka, "Christian Viaticum," 25n148 for a list of examples in the literature. The "bosom of Abraham" is denoted as a place of repose or comfort after one's death. For the Jews, the state after death (Sheol) was believed to have a place of bliss for the righteous (Abraham's bosom) and a place of torment for the wicked (Hades).

similar contemporary pagan tombs.”³¹ For instance, illustrations of the Good Shepherd (representing Christ as the *psychopompos*) and biblical scenes (e.g., Jonah thrown into the sea or three youths in the fiery furnace—examples of deliverance from peril) presented a christianized idea of divine protection of souls during their journey/voyage from death to paradise or, as André Grabar states, “instances of the deliverance of God’s faithful servants in an hour of need.”³² In addition, early Christians believed that the angels came as guides and companions (as *psychopompoi*) at the time of death “to carry the soul to heaven.”³³ For instance, the *Acts of Perpetua and Felicitas* recounted a vision of Perpetua’s companion Saturus. In Saturus’ vision, he and Perpetua had been martyred and were being carried by four angels “whose hands touched us not” toward the East (Paradise) and they came to a garden where four more angels “more glorious than the others” greeted them and invited them to come in to meet the Lord.³⁴

³¹ See Roman art historian André Grabar, *The Beginnings of Christian Art*, translated by S. Gilbert and J. Emmons (London: Thames and Hudson, 1967), 89; for illustration of the Good Shepherd depicted in the catacomb of San Callisto, Crypt of Lucina, see 30, fig. 28 (a wall painting, early-third century).

³² Grabar, *Beginnings of Christian Art*, 102, 103, fig. 100, from the catacomb of San Callisto, Chapel of the Sacraments, “Jonah thrown into the Sea,” wall painting, early-third century; also, 101, fig. 102, from the catacomb of Priscilla, Cubiculum of the ‘Velatio,’ “The Three Children in the Fiery Furnace,” wall painting, mid-third century.

³³ Christ himself spoke of angels acting as escorts and protectors in the parable of the beggar, Lazarus, and the rich man; in Luke 16:22, Christ stated, “And it came to pass that the beggar died and was carried by angels into Abraham’s bosom.” The idea of angels as the companions/protectors of the soul after death will eventually appear in the early sacramentaries of the eighth century, e.g., in the *Commendatio Animae* over the deceased, the prayer includes the following concepts, according to historian Frederick S. Paxton: “the *commendatio* ... begged God to release the soul from the flesh; elicited the aid of the saints, martyrs, and all the blessed in that endeavor; and shielded the dying individual from the attacks of the demons who might hinder its passage” in Paxton, *Christianizing Death: The Creation of a Ritual Process in Early Medieval Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 206. See further, the *Gelasian Sacramentary* (Vat. Reg. 316) under section 91 of *Liber Tertius*, cited in Cyrille Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy: An Introduction to the Sources*, translated by W. Storey and N. Rasmussen (Portland, OR: Pastoral Press, 1986), 66.

³⁴ Perpetua, “*Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae*,” 11.12-13 states, “*Passi, inquit, eramus, et exivimus de carne, et coeperimus ferri a quattuor angelis in orientem, quorum manus nos non tangebant ... Et dum gestamur ab ipsis quattuor angelis, factum est nobis spatium grande, quod tale fuit quasi viridarium, arbores habens rosae et omne genus flores ... Ibi autem in viridario alii quattuor angeli fuerunt clariores ceteris: qui, ubi viderunt nos, honorem nobis dederunt, et dixerunt ceteris angeli: ‘Ecce adsunt, ecce adsunt,’ cum admiratione ... ‘Venite prius introit, et salutate Dominum.’*” Translation from Shewring, *Perpetua and Felicity*, 11.32-33.

In conformity with previous Roman practice, Christians adopted the notion that the ordinary dead (the family ancestors) could also fill the role of *psychopompos*. For instance, certain epitaphs indicated that the ordinary dead (including women and children) served in the role of advocate/intercessor. Take for example: “Anatolius erected this monument to his well-deserving son, who lived 7 years, 7 months and 20 days. May your soul rest well in God. Intercede for your sister.”³⁵ Or, in another case, the tomb inscription set up for Atticus stated: “Atticus, sleep in peace, and now, assured of your own deliverance, be mindful and intercede for our sins.”³⁶ Or, again, in a similar epitaph, situated near St. Sabina’s in Rome (ca. 300), the inscription implied that even infants were worthy of invocation: “Petition for your parents, Matronata Matrona. She lived one year, fifty-two days.”³⁷ These epitaphs show that the Roman concept of *pietas* supporting the mutually beneficial relationship between deceased and living members of the family continued. Continuance of the concept also contributed to the formulation of a specific view of “paradise” or “heaven.” As described by Cyprian, “There [in Paradise] a large number of our loved ones are waiting for us, and a large crowd of parents, sisters/brothers, and children anticipate us, [and] certain of their own salvation, they are interceding for ours.”³⁸ Accordingly, Christ in the eucharist, angels, the Christian dead,

³⁵ The Latin text states: “*Anatolius filio bene meranti fecit qui vixit annis VII mensis VII diebus XX ispiritus tuus bene requiescat in deo petas pro sorore tua*”; text and translation from O. Marucchi, *Manual of Christian Archaeology*, 4th Italian ed., translated and adapted by H. Vecchierello (Paterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1935), 221.

³⁶ Translation is my own. The Latin inscription states, “*Attice, dormi in pace/ de tua incolumitate/ secures et pro nostris/ peccatis pete sollicitus*”; *Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres*, edited by Ernst Diehl, 3 vols. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1925-1928), I. 2348 (hereafter cited as *ILCV*).

³⁷ Translation is my own. The Latin inscription states: “*Pete pro parentes tuos/ Matronata Matrona/ que vixit an[nus] I di[es] LII*”; see *Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae* I.2337 (hereafter cited as *ICUR*).

³⁸ Translation is my own. See Cyprian, *De mortalitate*, 26.602 : “*Magnus illic nos charorum numerus exspectat, parentum, fratrum, filioum frequens nos et copiosa turba desiderat, jam de sua incolumitate secura, et adhuc de nostra salute sollicita,*”

and eventually the martyrs and saints were all re-conceived by early Christians as the protectors and guides for the soul's journey after death.³⁹

Another interesting development from this period (180-300 CE), was the occurrence of myriad Orants (commonly female images with arms raised in supplication, nearly always standing and veiled) painted among the fresco motifs decorating Christian burial areas, especially in the Roman catacombs (e.g., the Orant called the “Donna velata”; the Orant between Two Shepherds; the Orants in the Susanna Story; or the Tomb of the Two Orants—all examples from catacombs in Rome).⁴⁰ According to Janet Tulloch, the Orant has typically been viewed by scholars as a symbolic metaphor or motif used in ancient art and architecture (paintings, sculpture, coinage, etc.) to render an ideal, a myth, or gender ideology.⁴¹ Tulloch also argues that Orants may have been representations of real women.⁴² Robin M. Jensen agrees and suggests that the Orant may have “successively progressed from the realm of the purely symbolic personification of a virtue [e.g., *pietas*], to the portrait of a specific but ordinary individual.”⁴³ Graham Snyder, in *Ante Pacem*, views the Orant as a Greco-Roman

³⁹ Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 56-59. For example, in discussing Paulinus of Nola's relationship with Saint Felix (fourth century), Brown points to the importance of a “patron saint” as guardian and protector, similar to the Greco-Roman notion of *daimōn*, the *genius*, and later “the guardian angel.” For further analysis of the cult of the martyrs, see medieval historian Robert Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 92-94, 97-99.

⁴⁰ Grabar, *Beginnings of Christian Art*, 101, fig. 96, from catacomb of Priscilla, cubiculum of the ‘Velatio,’ “Orant called the ‘Donna velato’ between the Magister and the Mother and Child,” mid-third century; similarly, 116, fig. 115, from catacomb of Priscilla, cubiculum of the ‘Velatio,’ “Orant called ‘Donna velato,’” mid-third century; 121, fig. 120, from catacomb called Coemeterium Majus, “Orant between Two Shepherds, detail, late-third century; and 119, fig. 118, “Portrait of a Young Woman” in the Tomb of the Two Orants in the catacomb of Trasona; late-third century, wall painting.

⁴¹ Janet Tulloch, “Art and Archaeology as an Historical Resource for the Study of Women in Early Christianity: An Approach for Analyzing Visual Data,” *Feminist Theology* 12, no. 3 (2004): 288.

⁴² Tulloch, “Art and Archaeology,” 300; Tulloch posits that given the aural and social aspect of ancient art, art and artifacts must be considered as social discourse, that is, it performed meaning, not simply embedded those meanings, 298; further, figures “painted on the wall of tombs may have been understood as among any of the following: funerary portraits of the deceased, living or other deceased family members shown with the newly departed, or representations of entities from supernatural realms,” 300.

⁴³ See Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 36.

symbol representing “deliverance” and *pietas* (duty to family, the state, the gods) and by extension to a sense of filial or community security; the earliest Christians, Snyder asserts, used the Orant to “reference the new, adopted family—the church.”⁴⁴ Nicola Denzey argues that the Orants who were presumed to represent the matron Susanna from the apocryphal book by the same name, may have been misidentified, and perhaps portrayed instead, the real woman buried in the chamber where the paintings appeared.⁴⁵ In dramatic distinction, Valerie Abrahamsen disputes all of these propositions and maintains that the Orant was an ancient goddess sought for protection and assistance in times of difficulty.⁴⁶ And while her idea of “a goddess” seems highly improbable, the notion of “protection and assistance in times of difficulty” could, arguably, correspond with Snyder’s idea of “deliverance” and *pietas*. Jensen offers further that by mid-fourth century, “the stance and gesture of the [O]rant figure was employed in a host of [other] full-length portrait representations including Mary, the saints, bishops, and martyrs.”⁴⁷ Snyder explains that the Orant figure as “peace in the face of conflict” began to disappear after 313 CE because deliverance “was no longer necessary.”⁴⁸ It

⁴⁴ Snyder, *Ante Pacem*, 35-36, 38. Snyder argues that the Orant is the most frequently occurring human symbol in Christian art culture emerging ca. 180 CE. He also maintains that the “Roman school” of archaeology (first begun as “Christian” archaeology in 1632 by Antonio Bosio) claims that before the time of Constantine the Orant referred to “the soul of the dead person,” 38.

⁴⁵ See religious studies scholar Nicola Denzey, *The Bone Gatherers: The Lost Worlds of Early Christian Women* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007), 108-112 and 288-89. Denzey also argues that some of the Orants may represent women’s ordinations. She cites art historian Janet Huskinson’s hypothesis that Orants may not have been symbols (e.g., representing the *ecclesia*/the church) but rather *actions*; that is, the Orants were women possessing “intellectualization ... learning, reading and praying ... [as] expert practitioners,” 8; see Janet Huskinson, “Gender and Identity in Scenes of Intellectual Life on Late Roman Sarcophagi,” in *Constructing Identities in Late Antiquity*, edited by Richard Miles (London: Routledge, 1999), 208-209.

⁴⁶ See New Testament scholar Valerie Abrahamsen, “The Orante and the Goddess in the Roman Catacombs,” *Journal of Higher Criticism* 9, no. 1 (Spring, 2002): 1-15. Abrahamsen challenges the “traditional” interpretations of the Orant and asserts that the figure may have represented an ancient female goddess that “Jews and Christian still looked to ... for solace, protection and deliverance,” 14.

⁴⁷ Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 36.

⁴⁸ Snyder, *Ante Pacem*, 40, 96.

was after the Peace of the Church that Christians were able to be more public in their worship and their symbols and art began to represent Christian culture and self-identity.⁴⁹

I propose building on all of these ideas to explain the Orant. Obviously, because Orants are almost always associated with the dead, they should be analyzed in the context of funeral practice. Therefore, I submit that the symbol/figure of the Orant represented a christianization of the Roman *pietas* (the virtue of familial devotion and duty) in which female family members protected their deceased kinsfolk through prayer. I agree with Tulloch, Jensen, and Denzey, that the Orant likely represented a real person (a woman) but I would add that the woman was very likely the ritual specialist (main caregiver) for the family. That is, here in the funerary setting of the catacomb, the Orant might suggest a “perpetual” presence, doing for the deceased what the surviving family could not do—be there *all the time* sustaining the soul departed. Another idea, along a different line of thought: Could the figure of the Orant portray the “the deceased” shown petitioning one or more of the ancestors for assistance on the journey to meet those waiting in heaven? The Orant presented as female, however, may raise the question of “gender-specificity,” but perhaps not, if the general understanding was that the “spirit” or “soul” of the dead was female—much as Sophia (σοφία) represented “wisdom” for the Jews and Greeks. Of course, that idea would then make my proposal much like Snyder’s alternative—that the Orant symbolized “deliverance” or a virtue like “pietas” for everyone. However, for a fuller analysis, one would need to investigate additional depictions of Orant figures found in alternative settings and contexts. Significantly, the Orant remains an intriguing subject, awaiting further research.

⁴⁹ Snyder, *Ante Pacem*, 2-3.

The Transitional (Liminal) Stages of the Funeral, 180-300 CE

Research for this study found a paucity of evidence (text and material) associated with Christian rituals for the transitional stages of the funeral for the deceased: (1) the wake, (2) the procession, or, what some scholars propose as (3) the “vigil” during this early period of church history. However, data was more forthcoming for the funeral procession—likely due to the public nature of carrying the body of the deceased through the community to the place of burial. The early Christian apologist and prolific writer, Tertullian, has been charged with denouncing the use of musical instruments in funeral processions.⁵⁰ However, the evidence used by scholars making this claim has more to do with Tertullian’s disagreement with Christians serving in the emperor’s military than with funeral rituals per se.⁵¹ Context is essential and was overlooked in this case. Tertullian argued in his disciplinary treatise, *De corona militis* (*On the Military Garland*), that warfare cannot be justified, that Christians should not be soldiers because to do so would be to honor the emperor over God and be willing to offer sacrifice to the emperor, therefore committing idolatry.⁵² He stated that soldiers might welcome the sound of trumpets in their funeral processions but Christians would find the loud music an annoyance and a serious disturbance to the spirit; instead, he continued, Christians would prefer to be awakened by an angel’s trumpet at the time of

⁵⁰ For example, Johannes Quasten, *Music and Worship in Pagan and Christian Antiquity*, translated by B. Ramsey (Washington, DC: National Association of Pastoral Musicians, 1983), 60, 125, 164-65. Quasten writes that early Christians (or just the clergy?) held an aversion to pagan cultic music ... [it was a] repudiation of all instrumental music ... most apparent in Tertullian,” 60; further, Quasten argues there was a “negative attitude of the Christian writers [of whom Tertullian is especially singled out] to every kind of instrumental funeral music,” 125. I submit that Quasten’s statements are broad generalization and unhelpful in terms of explaining the music for funeral processions in late antiquity.

⁵¹ Tertullian, *De corona militis*, edited by J.-P. Migne, PL vol. 2 (1844, repr. Brepols, 1981), 11.

⁵² Tertullian, *De corona militis*, 11.3, 11.6.

death.⁵³ The passage from Tertullian that is disputed is translated as follows: “Shall he be disturbed in death by the trumpet of the trumpeter, who expects to be aroused by the angel's trump?”⁵⁴ It was clearly misinterpreted to mean all Christians abhorred (and therefore refrained from using) any type of instrumental music (flutes, trumpets, tambourines, citharas, cymbals, sistrums, etc.)—in funeral processions. As verified by the condemnations of later councils, we know this was not the case; early Christians continued the Roman practice of accompanying the body of the deceased to burial with instrumental music because this was the Greco-Roman funerary custom. Later on, the bishops would attempt to change this practice by encouraging the use of voices (rather than musical instruments) in the form of decorous chanting or singing of biblical psalms of praise.⁵⁵

However, consternation concerning funeral processions using torches, lamps, and candles did exist among church leaders. Again, early Christians followed the ritual practices that prevailed in Roman culture. Tertullian objected to lamps, candles, and wreaths that adorned doorways because of their association with pagan cults of the dead or of the gods, declaring such practices by Christians to be “idolatry.”⁵⁶ Some scholars have taken Tertullian's text as indication of a general rebuke of lights at funerals. But, a point of caution:

⁵³ The key passage in Tertullian, *De corona militis* at 11.6 states, “*Mortuus etiam tuba inquietabitur aeneatoris, qui excitari a tuba angeli expectat?*”; my translation: “Will the dead, who expects to be awoken by the trumpet of the angel, be disturbed by the trumpet of the trumpeter?”

⁵⁴ Tertullian, *De corona militis*, 11.6.

⁵⁵ Early leaders urged the people to practice “the joyful character” of Christians “expressed in singing” as explained in Paul's letters; for example, from Eph. 5:19: “address one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord in your heart”; or from Col. 3:16, one should sing “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” Evidence shows that “Christian joy” was not a universal idea held within Christianity; see for example this study 123nn5-6 citing the New Testament and the diary of Perpetua.

⁵⁶ Tertullian, *De idolatria*, edited by G. Wissowa, CSEL 20 (Prague, 1890), 15.71: “*si autem sunt qui in ostiis adorentur, ad eos et lucernae et laureae pertinebunt. Idolo feceris, quicquid ostio feceris*”; my translation = “If, however, there are idols worshipped at doorways, then the lights and laurels are for that purpose [worship]. So, whatever is done to [for] the idols, is what is done to the doorway”; the implication was, do not decorate your doorways with candles and wreaths because that would symbolize idolatry.

Tertullian was but one voice in the earliest period of Christianity and because his texts happened to be preserved, his views are often taken as representative of the whole of this historical era. Such was not the case, however. For example, the funeral procession of Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, refutes Tertullian's viewpoint. When Cyprian was martyred in 258 CE, the deacon Pontius wrote in the *Acta Cypriani*—which was also included in the *Acta proconsularia*, an official legal document of the governor at the time—that the bishop's body was carried in a nighttime procession accompanied by lights to the cemetery of the procurator, Macrobius Candidianus.⁵⁷ The account mentions that torch bearers and local Christians carrying candles escorted Cyprian's funeral cortege while everyone in attendance chanted prayers (presumably, psalms) of triumph.⁵⁸ Pontius' narrative shows, once again, the continuation of Roman practices (e.g., use of candles and lamps to light the way for funeral processions at night, burial in a common cemetery, and the state's control over certain aspects of the funeral, i.e., when a procession could be held and where burial was permitted). Notably, Cyprian represents but a tiny portion of Christian membership at this time and evidence of the practices of “ordinary” Christians in terms of funeral processions is meager. But there are a few clues. Appearing in graffiti (third century) at the Cemetery of Saint Catherine at Chiusi in Italy, is a statement alleging that a woman named Fonteia Concordia was accompanied to burial with candles as was her husband, Stenius Gaudentius who died sometime later.⁵⁹ The best conclusion is that the use of lights and torches was maintained by Christians in their funerals; in fact, other than a few Christian accommodations, such as the singing of psalms

⁵⁷ *Acta Proconsularia Sancti Cypriani*, in *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, edited and translated by H. Musurillo (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1972), 168-75.

⁵⁸ *Acta proconsularia*, 5, which gives what was claimed to be “an eyewitness account.”

⁵⁹ E. Diehl, I.1578 A; and *ILCVI*. 1578 B.

(which could be restricted more to funerals of elite clerics), the traditional funeral procession continued in the traditional way, concluding in the cemetery.

The Incorporation (Post-liminal) Stages of the Funeral, 180-300 CE

The funerary stages of incorporation or reintegration involved burial rites and rituals surrounding *memoria* of the dead. In analyzing these topics, it is helpful to begin by understanding the early Christian idea of death. As implied above, there were diverse perceptions. As noted with the saints and inferred on several tombstones, it was believed some Christians passed through dangers on their journey to heaven. However, there was another alternative. Some Christians maintained that death was no more than a temporary “sleep” while one awaited the future resurrection; there was a hope (even expectation) of being reunited with loved ones after death. In the interim, the place of burial or sleep preceding resurrection, was called the *coemeterium* (Latin, meaning “place to sleep” or a tomb/grave).⁶⁰ Tertullian referred to death as sleep in his treatise, *De anima*, when he mentioned the death of a woman who “slept peacefully in Jesus.”⁶¹ References to death as sleep also appeared in Paul’s letters (1 Cor. 7:39, 15:18 and 1 Thess. 4: 12-14).

In support of the idea of “death as sleep,” there are tomb inscriptions from the early centuries that provide evidence. Two epitaphs are chosen as examples: (a) *Felicitas hic dormit in pace* (Felicitas rests here in peace), and (b) *Hic requiescat in somno pacis Marcia* (Marcia is resting here in the sleep of peace).⁶² The idea of the sleep of peace prior to the final

⁶⁰ See historian Alfred C. Rush, *Death and Burial in Christian Antiquity* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1941), 12-22. For further explanation of the term, *coemeterium*, see classicist/historian Éric Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity*, translated by E. Trapnell Rawlings and J. Routier-Pucci (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 4-5.

⁶¹ Tertullian, *De anima* (On the Soul), edited by J. H. Waszink, *Corpus Christianorum: Series latina* 2 (1954), 51.6 (hereafter cited as CCSL).

⁶² *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* 14.1904 (hereafter cited as *CIL*) and *ILCV* II. 3184 A.

resurrection, was referred to as *refrigerium*, which, for early Christians, meant refreshment “on the way to salvation and resurrection” when the world ended.⁶³ In this sense, *refrigerium* described the “state” of the soul; that is, the Christian soul was virtually “saved” but was “waiting/sleeping” in the grave in expectation of a future joyous existence with God in paradise. But there was a second meaning for *refrigerium* for Romans and Christians alike. Eliezer Gonzalez refers here to the idea of *refrigerium* as a “practice”; that is, the popular custom of families refreshing the dead by caring for them and feasting with them at the tomb.⁶⁴ There is more to say later about *refrigerium* practiced at Christian commemorative celebrations. For now, the point is that some Christians believed that once the body was buried (1) the deceased remained in a state of “sleep” (*in refrigerium*) at the tomb, (2) the deceased required care and food (*refrigerium* in the sense of “refreshment”) while waiting for “the life to come,” and (3) the deceased would enjoy eternal bliss in heaven following the final resurrection of the body, promised to all faithful Christians.⁶⁵

However, recent scholarship reveals that many Christians did not focus on the promise of resurrection. In the publication of a number of rather intriguing findings in 2006, 2007, and 2012, afterlife was not a major idea. A group of German scholars investigated the idea of resurrection as held by early Christians buried between the third and sixth centuries in places throughout the western Roman empire (Rome, Italy, Gaul, Spain, Africa). Roughly sixty thousand Christian grave inscriptions were examined for any hint/mention of the afterlife

⁶³ John Bodel, “From *Columbaria* to Catacombs: Collective Burial in Pagan and Christian Rome,” in *Commemorating the Dead: Texts and Artifacts in Context*, edited by L. Brink and D. Green (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 234.

⁶⁴ See historian of antiquity Eliezer Gonzalez, *The Fate of the Dead in Early Third Century North African Christianity: The Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas and Tertullian* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 139-40.

⁶⁵ See religious studies historian Jan Bremmer, *The Rise and Fall of the Afterlife* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 57-58.

and/or resurrection. Results showed (1) less than three percent of the epitaphs made any reference to life-after-death, (2) in terms of resurrection, even fewer inscriptions either mentioned or alluded to that idea, and (3) most remarkable of all was that the few epigraphs referring to resurrection belonged to clergy, monastics, or individuals buried in the vicinity of abbeys and monasteries.⁶⁶ By comparing the themes expressed on the epitaphs dated specifically between the third and fourth centuries, Jutta Dresken-Weiland determined that (1) fellowship with God/Christ remained very high across the third and fourth centuries but showed a downtrend, (2) there was a decline in requesting the dead to help the living or invoking the “community of saints,” and (3) there was an increase in sentiments of mourning between the third and fourth centuries.⁶⁷ The research pointed out that the earliest Christians were more focused on the interaction between the living and the dead and their shared fellowship with God/Christ. There was also the ongoing expression of sorrow and longing for lost loved ones. Some epigraphs echoed good wishes for the deceased, others wished intercession for their care, or the desire for the deceased to reside in communion with Christ. The following are illustrations of some of the epitaphs:

- (a) *Lucifere coiugi dulcissime omnen (sic) dulcitudinem cum luctum maxime marito reliquisset meruit titulum inscribi ut quisque de fratribus legerit roget Deum ut sancto et innocenti spirito ad Deum suscipiatur. Que vixit annus xxi, men viii, dies xv.*

⁶⁶ See religious studies historian J. Dresken-Weiland, “Vorstellungen von Tod und Jenseits in den frühchristlichen Grabinschriften des 3.-6. Jhs. In Rom, Italien und Afrika,” *Römische Quartalschrift* 101 (2006) 289-312; Ead., “Vorstellungen von Tod und Jenseits in den frühchristlichen Grabinschriften der Oikumene,” *Antiquite Tardive* 15 (2007): 285-301. And also, J. Dresken-Weiland, A. Angerstorfer und A. Merkt, eds., *Himmel – Paradies – Schalom. Tod und Jenseits in antiken christlichen und jüdischen Grabinschriften*, Handbuch zur Geschichte des Todes im frühen Christentum und seiner Umwelt I (Regensburg: Schnell, 2012).

⁶⁷ Dresken-Weiland, “Vorstellungen von Tod,” 286-87; concern for the welfare of the dead (*refrigerium*) was evident, and the lack of mention of resurrection was abundantly clear; see the article’s table and graph illustrating the research findings.

“As a reward for her virtues this tablet has been set up, so that any believers reading it should pray God to receive unto Himself this holy and innocent soul.”⁶⁸

(b) *Eugeni spirituuus (sic) in bono* [with image of a dove]

“Eugenius, may your spirit dwell in happiness.”⁶⁹

(c) *Victoria refrigeret ispiritus tus in bono.*

“May your spirit have comfort and happiness.”⁷⁰

(d) *Januaria bene refrigera et roga pro nos (sic).*

“Januaria, may you be refreshed and pray for us.”⁷¹

In sum, epigraphs during this period continued to repeat Roman ideas—intercession of and for the dead, expressions of mourning, and requests for happiness and *refrigerium* for the deceased. More to the point, the implication is that there were “practices” associated with the sentiments of petitionary prayers addressed to the dead; feasting with the dead was implied by setting up a tablet (as mentioned in example ‘a’ above); and ritual mourning and lamentation continued as per Roman custom.

Another major point about incorporation rituals in the earliest centuries of Christian history was *place* of burial. The gravesite remained a “family place” subject only to the preferences of the family and separate from public or state control. This study maintains that the burial place was ritualized (in terms used by Catherine Bell and Ronald Grimes) by the actions or rituals performed in that space. The grave and tomb were, therefore, *sacra familiae*.⁷² This was true for Romans in the past and continued for early Christians now in the

⁶⁸ See archaeologist Orazio Marucchi, *Christian Epigraphy: An Elementary Treatise with a Collection of Ancient Christian Inscriptions Mainly of Roman Origin*, translated by J. Armine Willis (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1912), 137, referring to no. 79, from the Lateran Museum, Rome.

⁶⁹ Marucchi, *Christian Epigraphy*, 138, no. 82, from the Cemetery of Callisto, Rome.

⁷⁰ Marucchi, *Christian Epigraphy*, 146, no. 90, from the Cemetery of Domitilla, Rome.

⁷¹ Marucchi, *Christian Epigraphy*, 151, no. 103, from the Cemetery of Callisto, Rome.

⁷² *Sacra familiae* as a concept—that is, the practices of *pietas* as duty, devotion, care, and attention toward one’s deceased kin—is acknowledged by Ramsay MacMullen, in “Christian Ancestor Worship in Rome,” *Journal of Biblical Studies* 129, no. 3 (2010): 611; though he does not label *sacra familiae* per se in his article, MacMullen acknowledges it “striking to find” in the fourth century “one of the two forms of cult—meaning cult

second and third centuries. As mentioned so often in discussions above, the relationship between the living and the dead meant families remained together beyond death; the living could maintain contact with those they loved but were now dead, because the dead, it was believed, were present at the grave or could be accessed through the grave.⁷³ The enduring presence of the dead, as though they were still living, was critical in the ancient world. That “death was not the end,” was a persistent concept within Roman tradition⁷⁴; it was a concept that endured among Christians, especially given the added guarantee of life shared with the extended family in the bosom of Abraham (with God) and resurrection of the body at the end of time, as promised by Christ. This study maintains that the particulars of death and the afterlife: (1) *refrigerium*; (2) resurrection; (3) the *who*, *when*, and *why* of entry into heaven; and (4) the presence of the spirit/soul of the dead in the tomb were all ideas in a state of development during early church history (180-300 CE). Doctrine had not yet been established in these areas of Christianity.

On the topic of “reintegration” of the deceased (the soul’s transition from the world of the living to the world of the dead), Mark Johnson’s research on the burial practices of early Christians is enlightening. He found that in Rome Christian family underground *hypogaea*

rendered to the ordinary deceased, or to the extraordinary [martyr/saint]—defined in terms that fit either one equally.” For more on *sacra familiae*, see the article by classicist Fanny Dolansky, “Honoring the Family Dead on the Parentalia: Ceremony, Spectacle, and Memory,” *Phoenix* 65, no. 1/2 (2011): 125-57; *sacra familiae* was considered the family’s program of domestic religiosity.

⁷³ Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, ch. 5 entitled “Praesentia” discusses the presence of the dead at the tomb only in terms of the “holy dead,” the martyrs and saints. MacMullen notes that it is surprising that Brown tends to treat the cult of the martyrs and saints quite separately from the cult of the ancestors (also referred to as the “ordinary” cult of the dead, a Roman practice that carried over into Christianity) especially considering Brown was early in the scholarship to claim that the martyr cult grew from the practices of the laity; see MacMullen, “Christian Ancestor Worship,” 61 In41. For another argument for the presence of the dead at the tomb, based on overwhelming visual and material evidence, see Snyder, *Ante Pacem*, 29; as Snyder suggests, why else would Christian Romans continue to dine with the dead and call upon the dead for favors? As he explains, “[t]he dead were very much present; they were localized so to speak.”

⁷⁴ On the Roman ideal that the dead would remain “a continuing presence among the living,” that their memory would endure, that there was some “hope for the continuity of the soul,” see Hope *Roman Death*, 38, 95.

(galleries) and private *areae* (fenced enclosures) “coexisted with pagan *necropoleis* through the third century.”⁷⁵ For example, the *Hypogaeum* of the Acilii (originally pagan) eventually became part of the Catacomb of Priscilla; but while considered “Christian” at that point, there were still many pagan inscriptions among the burials.⁷⁶ Similarly, other physical evidence makes clear that burials were mixed—Jews, pagans, and Christians side by side—for instance, in the catacomb at Hadrumentum in North Africa multiple pagan objects were found (e.g., one lamp with the figure of Serapis, another with the head of Medusa) along with a Jewish cinerary vase with bone fragments.⁷⁷ Further, in Sicily there are examples of Christian and Jewish tombs side by side at Noto Antica and Agrigento; and, in the catacombs near Syracuse, lamps were found in the same vicinity bearing both Jewish and Christian symbols.⁷⁸

Another matter pertaining to burial, is that around 215 CE, the deacon Callixtus (who later became pope 217-222 CE) was assigned by Pope Zephyrinus (198-217 CE) to organize the building of a *fabrica* or cemetery (later known as the Catacomb of Callixtus) on the Via Appia in Rome.⁷⁹ Several popes later, Pope Fabian (236-250 CE) authorized the building of

⁷⁵ See art historian Mark J. Johnson, “Pagan-Christian Burial Practices of the Fourth Century: Shared Tombs?” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 5, no. 1 (1997): 51.

⁷⁶ Johnson, “Pagan-Christian Burial Practices,” 51 citing the findings of P. Février, “Études sur les catacombs romaines,” *Cahiers archéologiques* 10 (1959): 1-26.

⁷⁷ Johnson, “Pagan-Christian Burial Practices,” 52 citing M. Carton and A. Leynaud, *Les catacombes d’Hadrumète: Première campagne des fouilles* (Sousse: Imprimerie Française, 1905), 75-80.

⁷⁸ See scholar of late antiquity L. V. Rutgers, “Archaeological Evidence for the Interaction of Jews and Non-Jews in Late Antiquity,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 96 (1992): 101-18, especially 112-14. Note, these lamps are another indication that lamps/candles/torches probably continued to be used in funeral processions.

⁷⁹ MacMullen, “Christian Ancestor Worship,” 597-613, esp. 600, citing Louis Duchesne, *Le liber pontificalis Teste, Introduction et Commentaire* (1886-1892) 2nd ed., 3 vols. (Bibliothèque des école françaises d’Athènes et de Rome and Paris: E. de Boccard, 1955-1957), 1:4, lines 34-35. Of note, the popes were known as “bishops of Rome” until at least the fifth century and Leo I. For more on the Catacomb of Callixtus, see Snyder, *Ante Pacem*, 159. Also, Johnson, “Pagan-Christian Burial,” 41-42. Some manner of “construction” (referred to as *fabricae*) took place beginning with Pope Zephyrinus; however, it is not clear whether the *fabricae* were simply cemeteries or whether they were the buildings known as “basilicas” (burial churches) that appeared in the fourth century after the Peace of the Church in 313 CE. Notably, the Catacomb of Callixtus contained the “Crypt of the Popes,” which was apparently the burial place of some eight popes between 235 CE and 310 CE; this cemetery then, was, in the beginning, the early formation of a “burial place for the bishops of Rome” but not open generally to other Christians; see Snyder, *Ante Pacem*, 159-61.

several more *fabricae* in the suburbs of Rome where Christians gathered to honor their ancestors; MacMullen maintains that these *fabricae* were established by the church to facilitate the cult of the dead practiced by lay Christians outside the walls of Rome.⁸⁰ Arguably, Callixtus and Fabian, and later Pope Sixtus II (257-258 CE), capitalized on the popularity of the cemeteries as gathering places, and began the building of *fabricae* (burial spaces) to include martyrs (and elite Christian families who so desired); this eventually encouraged other Christians and pilgrims to visit the “holy dead” (the martyrs), a practice that grew in popularity in the fourth century.⁸¹ The point, however, is these burial spaces are not cemeteries for ordinary Christians; they are specific constructs for ‘special’ Christians—the martyrs and the bishops of Rome.

Therefore, in terms of cemeteries as places of Christian burial, it seems reasonable to conclude that before Constantine and the Peace of the Church in 313 CE, the shared use of cemeteries by pagans and Christians actually supported the continuation of *family* funeral rites; it was the individual family who still controlled most of the cemetery space around Rome. Eventually, Christian burial places would come to include martyr tombs and shrines, but that is taken up in the next chapter of this thesis.

Turning to the subject of martyrs—the holy witnesses who died for Christ during the Roman persecutions—Cyprian wrote (ca. 258 CE) about a group of confessors being held in prison in Carthage awaiting execution. Cyprian’s letter about the situation explained that these saintly Christians could expect the crowns of martyrdom followed by eternal peace with God

⁸⁰ See MacMullen, “Christian Ancestor Worship,” 600, esp. n9 for more detail on the *fabricae* as perhaps equivalent to basilicas, but also that cemeteries were considered as “built things” or *fabricae*, as well; It was customary for Rome’s citizens, pagan and Christian alike, to gather in cemeteries at the tombs of their deceased families to remember and celebrate kinship ties.

⁸¹ MacMullen, “Christian Ancestor Worship,” 600; Pope Sixtus II and his six deacons were discovered in “their meeting place” (was it perhaps a building of sorts?) in the cemetery before they were martyred in the Valerian persecution.

in heaven.⁸² His statement (suggesting that the martyrs were immediately taken to heaven) seemed to counter the notion of “*refrigerium*,” that the dead slept and waited in the tomb until the end of time when they would be granted the heavenly reward (resurrection) they had already won. But, as revealed earlier in this chapter, the idea of “resurrection” was not in common use among ordinary Christians at this time. As shown by modern research, “resurrection” as a term did not appear in funerary inscriptions much, if at all, before the fourth century; prior to that time, grave inscriptions and graffiti more often included reference to “*refrigerium*,” that is, sleeping in peaceful repose (*in pax*) in the grave.⁸³ After the third century, as the notion of “resurrection” did become more common in the epigraphy, the reference to “*refrigerium*” significantly declined.⁸⁴ Therefore, Cyprian’s statement potentially poses some confusion. Did he mean that the martyrs were an exception to *refrigerium* and, rather than sleeping in wait at the tomb, were fast-tracked to heaven to be with God immediately? Did this notion change the understanding that departed family (ordinary Christians) remained in the state of *refrigerium* at the tomb awaiting resurrection to be with God? Or, were ordinary Christian souls also lifted to celestial reward with God (as the expression “in the bosom of Abraham” implied) immediately upon death as were the martyrs? There is more to examine on this topic in subsequent chapters, as my study continues to trace the development of late antique burial rites.

⁸² Cyprian, *Letters of Cyprian* (1-81), *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* 51, translated by Sister Rose B. Donna (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1964), *Epistle* 80.1.

⁸³ Gonzalez, *Fate of the Dead*, 139-40, citing Dagmar Hofmann, “‘Der Ort der Erfrischung’: *Refrigerium* in der frühchristlichen Literatur und Grabkultur,” in *Topographie des Jenseits, Studien zur Geschichte des Todes in Kaiserzeit und Spätantike*, ed. Walter Ameling (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2011), 103. Hofmann asserts that the distribution used in her research corresponds approximately to the distribution during the early centuries of Christian inscriptions in the Roman Empire overall.

⁸⁴ Gonzales, *Fate of the Dead*, 139 also cites Dresken-Weiland, “Vorstellungen von Tod und Jenseits in den frühchristlichen Grabinschriften der Oikumene,” *Antiquité tardive* 15 (2007), 286, which was mentioned above in this chapter at 135n66.

However, going back to the topic of martyrs, Peter Brown reports an early account of the cult of the martyrs in action. He notes that sometime around 295 CE a wealthy gentlewoman named Pompeiana, a Christian, was able to acquire the remains of a young martyr, Maximilianus of Tebessa in North Africa.⁸⁵ The account in *Acts of the Christian Martyrs* reports that the aristocratic woman Pompeiana was able to obtain the body of the saint following his execution and she brought it to Carthage where she buried it next to the body of the bishop Cyprian; when Pompeiana herself died thirteen days later, she “was buried in the same spot.”⁸⁶ As Brown points out, Pompeiana was obviously in a position of high privilege since she “had been able to obtain the body from the [Roman] authorities to the apparent exclusion of the kin” of Maximilianus and the burial place she provided for the martyr’s remains was “in a group of special tombs surrounding that of Saint Cyprian,” the martyred bishop of Carthage.⁸⁷ The “group of special tombs” apparently included burial space for Pompeiana herself and for her family, for as the report indicates, she had the young Maximilianus buried in one those familial spaces making him part of her personal family. Already, the cult of the martyrs was intimately tied to the cult of the ancestors or to what has been referred to as *sacra familiae*.

In the meantime, another question arises. What did Christian Romans without families do about their burials? For some middle-class Romans, voluntary associations or *collegia*—set up as guilds for craftsmen and for social affiliation in general—filled that need. One of the functions of Roman *collegia* was to look after the burial of their members.⁸⁸ Research has

⁸⁵ Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, 33. For more on the martyr Maximilianus, see *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, edited and translated by H. Musurillo (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), s.v. “Acta Maximiliani, 3,4. 248.

⁸⁶ *Acta Maximiliani*, in *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 3, 4. 248.

⁸⁷ Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, 33.

⁸⁸ Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 3., Besides their responsibility for burial of their members, other functions of the *collegia* included: gathering together those of the same occupation or working in the same trades, those living in approximately the same area, or those practicing the same religious affiliation; *collegia* (voluntary

shown that members of *collegia* were not of the poor class, but rather from the “social fringe just below the elites: they were the *plebs media* of merchants and artisans, relatively comfortable: employers rather than employees.”⁸⁹ Members paid dues, which, among other things, helped to defer the costs of funerals; in addition, members were obliged to attend the funerals of other members and their families, making the size of funeral processions and funeral monuments impressive enough to imitate the “social distinction” of the elite.⁹⁰ It has been argued that a *collegium* “used funeral practices to negotiate the status of individuals within the group and to promote a collective identity within the public sphere,” thus providing a “sense of civic importance.”⁹¹ Christians, like others in the Greco-Roman world, individually participated in existing *collegia* or sometimes organized themselves into new associations. Rebillard notes that there are only two specific references in Christian texts to *collegia*, and both deal with the organizations’ role in funerals, expressly burial.⁹² One reference is a letter from Cyprian that mentions Martialis, the Spanish bishop, who used a *collegium* for his son’s funeral. In the letter, Cyprian states that it was inappropriate for the bishop to arrange burial in the *collegium*’s tomb where pagan religious rites were performed at commemorative celebrations—these, of course, entailed libations and sacrifices forbidden to Christians.⁹³ The second reference comes from a poem composed by Commodian ca. 250-260

associations) were especially beneficial for filling the need for social relationships (e.g., attendance as a group at festivals, banquets, theatres, amphitheaters), and especially for comradeship for members without families. Importantly, membership in voluntary associations was more a matter of choice than a necessity. See also, Tertullian’s discussion of the small Christian community in Carthage in the late-second century, which contributed (*voluntarius*) to help the members, including their burial; see *Apologeticum*, 39.6.

⁸⁹ Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 39.

⁹⁰ Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 40.

⁹¹ Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 40 citing Onna M. van Nijf, *The Civic World of Professional Associations in the Roman East*, Dutch Monographs on Ancient History and Archaeology 17 (Amsterdam: Gieben, 1997), 43-49.

⁹² Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 50.

⁹³ Cyprian, *Ep.* 67.6.

CE; it warns that eternal damnation awaits anyone using a *collegium* for a funeral.⁹⁴ The criterion of embarrassment confirms that Christian membership in *collegia* was likely quite common during the third century, otherwise there would have been no need for complaint. Evidence also confirms that no Christian liturgy (that is, an organized collection of rituals in terms of language/prayer and prescribed action) yet existed for burial or commemoration of the dead. *Collegia* simply followed existing Greco-Roman customs for burial. As Rebillard points out, the *collegium* was a good example showing that “collective burial might reflect a choice unrelated to membership in a religious group”—whether Christian, Jewish, or pagan—and that “religion had little bearing on the choice of a burial place”; in short, Christians were not an isolated sect, but rather, were as integrated within Roman society as were the Jews.⁹⁵ Further, whether Christians were members of already existing *collegia* or set up their own, the tendency was still to follow traditional Roman burial rituals.

Cyprian wrote about burial in one of his treatises, *De mortalitate*, composed at the time of the plague that ravaged Carthage and other regions in North Africa (250-270 CE).⁹⁶ The event was especially calamitous, and many Roman citizens died. Cyprian was concerned at the time about the loss of hope among his Christian flock and he urged them to keep their hope and faith in Christ. The people somehow expected that God would spare Christians over the pagans, but of course, every family was affected by the disease. Eusebius described how Christians rallied together during the plague, took up the countless bodies of the dead, and closed their eyes and mouths; then, these saintly helpers lifted the bodies of the dead onto their

⁹⁴ Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 51 citing Commodianus, *Instructiones*, edited by J. Martin CCSL 128 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1960), 2.29.12-13.

⁹⁵ Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 56.

⁹⁶ Cyprian, *De mortalitate*, PL 4, edited by J. -P. Migne (Paris, 1887), especially 20-21.

shoulders and carried them to burial without pomp, without ceremony, without funeral processions.⁹⁷

Once burial was completed, the final step in reincorporating the bereaved in the community, and renegotiating identity without the deceased, involved commemorating the dead. In the late second century, Tertullian stated in *De spectaculis* (*On the Shows*) that Christians did not agree with ancient pagan (Roman) commemorations or “spectacles,” designed in ancient times to memorialize and honour the dead and/or the gods.⁹⁸ Tertullian also rebuked the “pagan places” where these celebrations served as “funeral rites” and were held “to appease the dead”; the locations in question included temples, arenas, amphitheatres, the circus, the stage, and sacrificial altars.⁹⁹ These places, claimed Tertullian, were inherently “defiled” because of the superstitious, immoral, and idolatrous activities enacted therein.¹⁰⁰ He maintained the original spectacles may have been designed to appease the dead and the gods (and so constituted idolatry), but “present-day” spectacles were simply a pleasure for the living.¹⁰¹ He insisted good Christians did not partake in the Roman spectacles; nor did they offer sacrifices to the gods or offer oblations to the departed as done by pagans.¹⁰² However, Tertullian did not rebuke commemorations at gravesites or relationships between the living

⁹⁷ Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica*, Vol. 2, Books 6-10, translated by J. E. L. Oulton, Loeb Classical Library 265 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932), 7.22.9.

⁹⁸ The spectacles included games, races and public shows known as *ludi*; gladiatorial contests and the human sacrifices of old referred to as *munus* (service due the dead or the gods); as well as the arts and music accompanying them; Tertullian did not perceive the places themselves as sinful, but rather what was done in those places as related to idolatry; see Tertullian, *De spectaculis*, edited and translated by T. R. Glover, LCL 250 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934), 7-8.

⁹⁹ Tertullian, *De spectaculis*, 10-13.

¹⁰⁰ Tertullian, *De spectaculis*, 10-13.256-67. See also, J. Patout Burns, and Robin M. Jensen, *Christianity in Roman Africa: The Development of Its Practices and Beliefs* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2014), 493.

¹⁰¹ Tertullian, *De spectaculis*, 12.264-65: “this class of public entertainment has passed from being a compliment to the dead to being a compliment to the living” = “*icet transient hoc genus editionis ab honoribus mortuorum ad honores viventium*,”

¹⁰² Tertullian, *De spectaculis*, 13.266-67: “dead men and gods are one and the same thing; we abstain from both kinds of idolatry” = “*dum mortui et dei unum sunt, utraque idololatria abstinemus*.”

and the dead; rather he seemed to acknowledge practices that represented *pietas* among family members and the ongoing connections between the living and the dead. For instance, he acknowledged the husband who offered annual oblations for his deceased wife.¹⁰³ And he recognized the widow who prayed for her deceased husband that he may find restful peace (*refrigerium*) while he waited for the resurrection; in short, Tertullian conceded the importance of maintaining a relationship between the living and the dead.¹⁰⁴ Further, as he explained in his treatise *On the Soul*, the position of the church on the soul-in-waiting should be understood as temporary repose or *interim refrigerium*; that is, “every soul is detained in safe keeping in Hades until the day of the Lord.”¹⁰⁵

In terms of assisting the “ordinary dead,” it seems that the bishop Cyprian encouraged surviving family to preemptively make “spiritual” offerings in the form of prayers/masses on behalf of departed kinsfolk. For instance, when an inquiry arrived from the episcopal see of Furnos in Tunisia, from the clergy (acting in the role of clerical “family”) asking whether an offering of a “prayer of supplication” might be permitted for their bishop who had just died, Cyprian’s responded in the affirmative.¹⁰⁶ It implies that the practice of spiritual “offering” to assist the dead may have been common (at least for clergy) in the third century in North Africa.

As noted, the idea central to Roman commemoration was the bond between the living and the dead. Activities involved in this ideal relationship comprised what has been referred to

¹⁰³ Tertullian, *Treatises on Marriage and Remarriage (De exhortatione castitatis; De monogamia)*, edited by V. Bulhart (Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1957); and in *De exhortatione*, 5.11.

¹⁰⁴ Tertullian, *De monogamia*, 5.10.

¹⁰⁵ Tertullian, *De anima*, edited by J. H. Waszink, *Vigiliae Christianae* 100, Supplements Series (repr. Brill, 2010), 55.5, which states, “*Habes etiam de paradiso a nobis libellum, quo constituimus omnem animam apud inferos sequestrari in diem domini*”; my translation = “You have writing from us about Paradise (heaven) in which we established that every soul is held in Hades till the Day of the Lord.”

¹⁰⁶ Cyprian, *Ep.* 1.2.1-2.

at various times as the cult of the ancestors, *sacra familiae*, the cult of the dead, and the cult of the martyrs.¹⁰⁷ According to MacMullen, these cults were different in name only and involved all the same practices (collectivity, *pietas*, and relationship); essentially, the cults could be spoken of as “equivalent” in terms of practice since both the “ordinary” deceased and the martyrs could be supplicated to intercede with God on behalf of the living.¹⁰⁸ The Roman ideal—the special bond between the living and the dead—remained a model for Christians, as well. It was no surprise, then, that Christian families considered *convivia* at the tombs (whether those of the ancestors or the martyrs) important. Architectural evidence at Christian tombs confirms this to be true: remnants of ovens, water wells and fountains, benches, tables and *mensae* have been found, along with vestiges of cutlery, pottery, pots, and even animal bones, thus disclosing what foods were consumed and how they were prepared on site.¹⁰⁹ Above all, the array of material evidence demonstrates that Christians “dined with the dead,” to use a phrase from Robin Jensen.¹¹⁰ A good example of *convivia* or *refrigerium* is revealed in an epigraph created in memory of Aelia Secundula. The inscription commemorated a beloved mother whose family planned to add a “stone dining chamber” to the grave, presumably for *refrigerium*, thus allowing the family to spend time remembering their matriarch.¹¹¹ The dedicants of the inscription for Aelia Secundula were Christians (identified

¹⁰⁷ Gonzalez, *Fate of the Dead*, 136. Also see Bremmer, *Rise and Fall of the Afterlife*, 58. Bremmer explains that funerary inscriptions from North Africa were more concerned with the cult of the dead than those in Rome and Italy. Further, see definition of “cult of the dead” in J. M. C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971), 61-62, which states, “[t]he Roman cult of the departed, whether public or private, had a double purpose: the cult provided that the dead survived in the memories of relatives, descendants and friends; and it also sought to ensure, through the medium of devout attention to their mortal relics in the tomb, comfort, refreshment, and perennial renewal of life to their immortal spirits.”

¹⁰⁸ MacMullen, “Christian Ancestor Worship,” 611.

¹⁰⁹ Jensen, “Dining with the Dead,” 118-119.

¹¹⁰ Jensen, “Dining with the Dead,” 118-21.

¹¹¹ This epitaph (*CIL* 8.20277 = *ILCVI*. 301, no. 1570) was set up in Satafis, North Africa. MacMullen notes that the phrase on the epitaph, “*lapideam placuit nobis atponere mensa*,” uses the word *mensa* in the sense of “building or “dining chamber”; he argues that the older and alternate meaning “table with a hole for sharing

by the term “sleep in peace” in the epitaph); the date of the epigraphy was 299 CE, and the woman named in the inscription as initiating the memorial, Statulenia Iulia, was probably the daughter of the deceased.¹¹² The inscription mentioned “refreshment” (*refrigerium*) both as a “state” (Aelia Secundula is sleeping) and as a “practice,” (the family was in the habit of bringing provisions—food/wine—to the tomb). The family of Aelia Secundula wished to share the gift of a meal in community by sitting upon cushions at their mother’s tomb and recalling fond memories from her life. In short, the function of the epigraph for Aelia Secundula was to demonstrate in a concrete way (1) the honor owed to the dead, (2) the affection between the family and the deceased, (3) fulfillment of the Roman *pietas*/duty to remember the deceased at anniversaries and festivals, and (4) communal sharing of the ritual, not only in the form of food and drink, but also as fellowship/kinship (*communitas*).

Scenes of funerary banquets, such as the one described by the family of Aelia Secundula, have been found painted on the walls of the catacomb of Marcellino and Pietro in Rome dated from the late third century.¹¹³ Early Christian art historians and archaeologists have been interested in these particular frescoes because they are well-preserved and are

libations and food with the dead” is the definition he prefers; *The Second Church: Popular Christianity AD 200-40*. (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 160n27.

¹¹² The epigraphy is repeated here in translation from MacMullen, *Second Church*, 58 as follows: “To the memory of Aelia Secundula: / We all have already spent much, as is right, on the burial, but we have decided furthermore to set up a stone dining chamber where Mother Secundula rests, wherein we may recall the many wonderful things she did, the while the loaves, the cups, the cushions are set out, so as to assuage the sharp hurt that eats at our hearts. / While the hour grows late, gladly will we revisit our tales about our virtuous mother, and our praises of her, while the old lady sleeps, she who nourished us and lies forever here in sober peace. She lived 72 years. Dated by the province’s year 260 [AD 299]. Statulenia Iulia set up [the memorial]”; *CIL* 8.20277 = *ILCV* 1570.

¹¹³ Janet Tulloch, “Women Leaders in Family Funerary Banquets,” in *A Woman’s Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity*, by Carolyn Osiek and Margaret Y. MacDonald with J. Tulloch (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 175; Tulloch states that the “oldest of these underground chambers appears to have been dug out sometime toward the end of the third century, between 290 and 300 CE.” The frescoes and painted inscriptions were created for wealthy Roman Christians at the time, 164. Notably, other catacombs in Rome’s underground burial spaces have similar wall paintings; e.g., Catacomb of Priscilla and Catacomb of Callixtus, among others.

representative of “a kind of Roman Christian hybrid in the history of early Christian art.”¹¹⁴ Janet Tulloch argues that the wall paintings are extremely important for their depiction of female figures in prominent positions in the banquet scenes. The women are shown raising cups at the beginning of the meals, presumably leading the enactment of funeral rituals.¹¹⁵ Her findings also tie in quite effectively with the earlier discussion in this study about the Orant’s appearance in the iconography that decorates the catacombs in Rome. Orant images are found intermingled with banquet scenes, suggesting perhaps, some sort of association or correlation—perhaps in terms of protecting or interceding for the dead, as implied in the discussion earlier in this chapter.¹¹⁶

Tulloch argues that the Christian and Roman depictions of women in the banquet scenes was evidence of changes in the “cultural perception of female respectability ... an index of women’s status and morality in the formation of the early church.”¹¹⁷ If women participated as ritual specialists at funeral banquets, then the possibility arises that Christian women were accepted as ritual specialists in other aspects of the funeral, such as leading ritual mourning and lament.

In agreement with Tulloch, Katherine Dunbabin concurs that a good deal of information can be gleaned from funerary paintings in terms of “patterns of behavior at the banquet” and the social interaction between diners even “more clearly than any surviving written material.”¹¹⁸ As discussed in the previous chapter, Roman families were responsible for their own funerals (unless the deceased was “a renowned military hero or a member of the

¹¹⁴ Tulloch, “Women Leaders,” 164.

¹¹⁵ Tulloch, “Women Leaders,” 165. For images from the Catacomb of SS. Marcellino and Pietro including some of the frescoes studied by Tulloch, see this thesis, Appendix B, figs. 2-5.

¹¹⁶ Regarding the Orant, see this study, 127-30.

¹¹⁷ Tulloch, “Women Leaders,” 192.

¹¹⁸ See archaeologist Katherine M. D. Dunbabin, *The Roman Banquet: Images of Conviviality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 6-7.

patrician class,” in which case, the state would assume responsibility under *sacra publica*). Evidence has accumulated to suggest that the women of the family—as “primary caregivers of the living”—managed and directed funeral rituals, including the funerary banquets.¹¹⁹ As mentioned above, Tulloch argues that women may even have had the responsibility of leading the banquet proceedings. According to archaeological data from the catacomb of Marcellino and Pietro, dining rituals for Christian families involved the sharing of wine between the living and the dead; the practice was evident by “the holes in the covering plates of subterranean *loculi*,” which made it possible to pour libations of wine via tubes to the deceased lying in repose below.¹²⁰

In reading the banquet scenes identified in the catacomb of Marcellino and Pietro, Tulloch offers additional analysis. She explains that a visual-studies approach is useful for interpreting the frescoes. She argues that the images in each scene do not have to represent real people, that “the image can still expose anthropological or sociological relationships that are typical for the culture and time period studied.”¹²¹ Furthermore, using visual-rhetoric theory “can help elucidate speech communicated through the looks and gestures among the various figures depicted in a scene, and the relationship of the inscriptions to the visualized action.”¹²² Applying such theories and methods reveal new messages in the depictions of

¹¹⁹ Tulloch, “Women Leaders,” 167, 169.

¹²⁰ Tulloch, “Women Leaders,” 172; for further information to add to MacMullen’s discussion about the *mensae* used in meals celebrated with the dead, see Tulloch’s expansion on the topic as she describes the catacomb of Marcellino and Pietro, which holds thirty-three *mensae* “constructed out of stone, tufa, or brick and mostly found in funerary chambers [*cubicula*], including chamber 45, where one of the banquet scenes is found,” 173.

¹²¹ Tulloch, “Women Leaders,” 176.

¹²² Tulloch, “Women Leaders,” 176; in addition to the analysis of the iconography “that identifies changes in visual conventions within Roman art and between Roman Christian and Roman pagan funerary banquet scenes, a visual-studies approach argues that such variations were due to changing convivial practices of real men and women in the external environment”; eventually, these changes “in real life” brought about changes in how the customs were presented “in the visual convention,” 177. Therefore, as acceptance developed within Roman society of women’s participation in the drinking of wine at banquets, so too did the artistic representation of Christian women drinking wine at funerary banquets appear more frequently in catacomb paintings.

women holding wine cups in the wall paintings in the catacombs. Because the woman with a wine cup is usually paired with a male figure also with a wine cup, they “form a pair for the purpose of toasting” the deceased.¹²³ Close attention to the gaze of the other participants reveals that they are looking intently at the central pair of toasters (male and female); in addition, the way the male and female toasters (likely the hosts of the banquet) are looking “intensely at the object they hold [the wine cup] ... suggests the importance of this particular drinking rite.”¹²⁴ Tulloch explains that, “stylized gestures in ancient figures enhance or stand in for oral communication”; and inscribed speech above certain figures can indicate the dialogue unfolding in the scene.¹²⁵ For instance, words above the first figure combined with words above the second figure with raised right arm in a gesture of exhortation would signify that the second figure is making the toast to the deceased. In another case, the dialogue is a command-response; for example, *Misce* = “Give mixed wine,” indicates the command spoken by the guest, and *Vivas* = “Cheers” or “To Life,” indicates the response from the host.¹²⁶ In terms of garments worn by the figures in the frescoes, one of the paintings in Marcellino and Pietro depicts the female host wearing a veil, which may signal “her special status in the community, with the banquet picture showing a celebration that she co-hosts.”¹²⁷ As Tulloch concludes, “the banquet scenes represented in the various underground household chambers

¹²³ Tulloch, “Women Leaders,” 183.

¹²⁴ Tulloch, “Women Leaders,” 183; in addition, the gestures of those making the toasts reveal other things were happening in the scene, e.g., an “oratorical gesture with of their free right hands” or a “right arm raised in exhortation,” or the pointing gesture (at a platter of food, for instance) of an “outstretched right arm,” 183-85.

¹²⁵ Tulloch, “Women Leaders,” 185. Sometimes the words of the toast may simply be “*Irene*” (Peace) or “*Agape*” (Love/Affection).

¹²⁶ Tulloch, “Women Leaders,” 190 citing Matthias Bös, “Aufschriften auf Rheinischen Trinkgefäßen der Römerzeit,” *Kölner Jahrbuch für Vor-und Frühgeschichte* 3 (1958): 21. In the case of the dialogue in the Marcellino and Pietro funerary meal inscriptions, the dialogue may be interpreted as follows: *Misce mi* = “Give mixed wine,” states the guest; to which the host/co-host replies, *Agape* or *Irene* = “Love/affection” or “Peace,” Tulloch, “Women Leaders,” 190.

¹²⁷ Tulloch, “Women Leaders,” 186, referring to the banquet scene from chamber 78, wall 2 of the catacomb of SS. Marcellino and Pietro, painted on the lunette (semi-circular panel) of the *arcosolium* (arched recess in the wall of the underground chamber), 179, fig. 8.4.

document the cultural memory of the hospitality provided by female heads of households in a funerary context.”¹²⁸

Significantly, during the second and third centuries (and, I would argue, for some time later), there were no official rites for death that demanded the presence of a priest; consequently, the path was open for women to be the leaders in private funerary rituals including the commemorative rites following burial.¹²⁹ As I will show in subsequent chapters, the presence of a priest would require negotiation with the family and, as a new custom, would take several centuries to develop. At this point though, it seems reasonable to conclude—based on *sacra familiae*—the previous practices of the Roman people in terms of commemoration of the dead and the continued incorporation of many of these same practices by Christian Roman families, along with the traces cropping up in the textual evidence and material culture—that women did, in fact, participate in funeral rituals in more roles than previously assumed.

Conclusion

Several observations can be made about the state of affairs up to the end of the third century. For one thing, early Christians maintained Roman ideas associated with funerals and the deceased. These concepts permitted the continuation of the Roman way of thinking about death, at least for a time, and until further developments, which would, in turn, inspire further adaptation. For all extent and purposes, the family remained in control of the funeral—its rituals, its places, and its agents. The rituals of the Roman tradition continued among early

¹²⁸ Tulloch, “Women Leaders,” 192; by the end of the third century, the cultural perception of female respectability (and independence) “is visually indexed by the woman’s role in relation to her household, as someone who has reared children and provided hospitality for family, close relatives, and friends,” 192.

¹²⁹ Tulloch, “Women Leaders,” 172.

Christian families with little alteration. Applying insights derived from Bell and Grimes, the places where the funeral rituals were performed had been ritualized by the Christian Roman family and made “sacred”; these places included the family-home, the path followed while transporting the deceased from the home to the burial site, and the place of the burial itself. These places were little changed in practice and meaning from the Roman; that is, the church and clergy had made few inroads as far as negotiating accommodation and/or innovation in the funeral process by the end of the third century.

The second point to make is that since the belief in the Roman virtue *pietas* persisted among early Christians, it was imperative for the living to care for and assist the dying and the dead including during their perilous journey into the afterlife. The first generations of Christians, still Roman, believed the soul’s journey after death was filled with all manner of danger (monsters, dragons, lions, and demons) and only a *psychopompos* or advocate/defender could adequately offer protection for the soul. These early Christian “defenders” included Christ as the Good Shepherd, Christ in the eucharist, the angels, the family ancestors, and finally, the martyrs who had already reached happy repose with God, and who would eventually become the patron-saints of Christians invoking their assistance.

Third, since the early Christians believed that the consecrated bread and wine, the Body and Blood of Christ (the eucharist) could confer blessings and protection upon contact, the eucharistic elements (the bread, especially) were perceived to be the ultimate *viaticum* or sustenance required for the dangerous journey to God. Therefore, during these early centuries, Christian families began to keep reserved eucharist on hand in their homes for daily use and for use in crisis situations of illness and death.

A fourth point was the emergence of the martyr cult from the belief of ordinary Christians that those who died for the faith were “kin.” Christians gathered up the bodies of these “holy dead,” buried them in their family burial places, and venerated them as saints who could be solicited to intercede with God for the rest of the family. The special relationship between the living and the dead was referred to in several ways—*sacra familiae*, cult of the dead, cult of the ancestors, cult of the martyrs—all of which involved collectivity, *pietas* and *communitas*. The bishops of the church recognized that the idea of “Christian family” was a natural fit for communal worship and began to appropriate the martyr cult by building *fabricae*—first in the form of cemeteries and later as burial churches (basilicas) for the use of wealthy Christian families—that ultimately became burial spaces for the martyrs, making it possible for the Christian elite to achieve burial *ad sanctos*. Thus, basilicas and *martyria* became places where Christians would gather for their memorial celebrations. In this way, church authorities were able to co-opt the martyr cult and persuade Christian families to worship in church sponsored facilities.

Fifth, previous interpretations of Tertullian incorrectly assumed he rejected many of the practices associated with funerary rites. However, as shown, early Christians did not reject customary Roman items such as musical instruments, candles, torches, and lanterns in their celebrations for the dead but rather incorporated these elements in their own rituals for the dead. Third- and fourth-century Christians viewed death as “sleep” or as the state of “*refrigerium*” experienced by the bodies of the departed as they awaited the return of Christ (and the final judgment); *refrigerium* also implied the practice of providing refreshment in the form of food and drink (feasting) shared with the dead at the tomb. Cyprian suggested that martyrs were taken directly to heaven without the necessary period of *refrigerium* to await the

resurrection. However, the concept of “resurrection” was not significant in the minds of most ordinary Christians during this period as indicated by the analysis of funerary inscriptions from the third century.

Sixth, in some instances, burial for Christians without families might be arranged by *collegia* or voluntary associations (generally comprised of pagans, Jews, and/or Christians). The *collegia* showed that burial was not a matter of membership in any specific religious group.

Seventh, an element of particular interest was the emergence of female representation in art and iconography—whether in the form of the praying figure known as the Orant or as female leaders at banquets—as depicted in wall paintings in the catacombs of Rome. This finding seems to dovetail with other scholarship which also notes the presence of Christian women as patrons, especially in terms of providing burial places (such as the catacombs) for the poor. It is significant, therefore, that evidence (even during this early period of Christianity) reveals women played more roles in the funeral process than was previously thought.

Finally, one of the major observations for this period pre-Constantine was that “dining with the dead” was continued by Christian families as part of their mourning rituals and a necessary part of Christian commemorative festivals. Material evidence (e.g., the architecture of funeral chambers in the catacombs, wall paintings and reliefs on sarcophagi) proves this to be true.

CHAPTER FOUR

Monastics, Martyrs and A Shift of Control 301-500 CE

Introduction

Until the dawning of the fourth century, early Christians, in the main, employed Roman traditional rites for death, burial, and commemoration of the dead. The previous chapter demonstrated that Christians maintained a belief in the journey of the soul after death that was wrought with dangers and required the assistance of guides and protectors (*psychopompoi*) for successful navigation into the afterlife. The family of the deceased was duty-bound (by the virtue, *pietas*) to ensure they did everything possible to keep the soul of the deceased safe on its journey. Whereas the Roman sustenance for the journey (*viaticum*) was a coin for Charon, Christians began using the eucharistic bread (often kept in reserve in the home) as *viaticum* to administer to the dying person, or as we will see, to the corpse in a last effort to provide assistance to the soul of the deceased.

When the martyr cult emerged during the Christian persecutions—initiated by Roman emperors including Decius, Valerian, Diocletian and others—families rallied to gather the remains of the martyrs and give them proper burials. In some cases, as in the example of Pompeiana the wealthy gentlewoman of Carthage mentioned in the previous chapter of this study, elite Christians were sometimes among those able to legally acquire martyr remains. Pompeiana chose to have the young martyr Maximilianus buried in her own family complex; then, when she herself died, she was buried right next to the martyr *ad sanctos*. Significantly, the cult of the martyrs was a natural outgrowth of the family’s cult of the ancestors or *sacra familiae* (domestic religiosity).¹ As such, the extension of the family cult of the ancestors

¹ “Ramsay MacMullen, “Christian Ancestor Worship in Rome,” *Journal of Biblical Studies* 129, no. 3 (2010): 611.

ensured the continuation of Roman funerary rituals by early Christians and the right of the family over funerals and everything that entailed. Death was considered “sleep” or a state of *refrigerium* where the body waited in the grave until the final resurrection; *pietas* demanded that families visit the tombs regularly and keep the dead nourished or “refreshed” with offerings of food and drink to honor the other meaning of *refrigerium*. The Roman tradition of maintaining strong relationships between the living and the dead simply persisted into the Christian era. Moreover, Roman tradition was practiced among ordinary Christians as *sacra familiae*, cult of the dead, cult of the ancestors, and the cult of the martyrs as just referenced. The features of these familial ties maintained the characteristics of collectivity (*communitas*), *pietas*, and strong bonds of trust and reciprocity, which were strengthened further through memory, family identity and ritualized family places (e.g., the familial home/*domus*, the family tomb/cemetery).

My thesis now moves into the fourth century, to the first Christian emperor Constantine, and to the Peace of the Church in 313 CE. This significant historical event meant the emancipation of Christians within Roman society. With the Edict of Milan (313 CE), Christians were no longer persecuted, they now held legal status, and their confiscated lands were restored. Did any of this affect how death was ritualized among Christian families? Did the new historical period impact the transitioning of the Roman to the Christian funeral? The aim of this chapter is to provide some insight.

Again, following the strategies adopted by this study—using the Roman funeral outlined by Valerie Hope (which was selected as “an ideal type” for purposes of comparison and organization) and the tripartite schema for rites of passage (developed by A. Van Gennep)

to frame the stages of the funerary process—this chapter analyzes the transition of the Christian funeral as it unfolded during the period 301CE to 500 CE.

Separation (Pre-liminal) Stages of the Funeral, 301-500 CE

The pre-liminal stages of the funeral process—dying and death and preparation of the body for burial—is where we begin. In terms of “dying and death,” as noted earlier, there was concern about protecting the deceased from dangers beyond death. It was believed that the soul could be protected on its journey through death in one or both of two ways: (1) receiving the eucharist (*viaticum*), the substance of Christian nourishment, and (2) soliciting help from the *psychopompoi* (Christ as the Good Shepherd, the angels, the blessed ancestors, and beginning in the late third century, the martyrs and saints as patrons who could provide the soul guidance and defense. This study hypothesizes that these concepts of protecting the soul on its journey into the afterlife were in transition, and that transition continued during the fourth to sixth centuries.

With regard to the eucharist, and noted by Paul Bradshaw, it took time for the laity to view the eucharist as a medium that could convey blessings and apotropaic powers.² This evolution took off in the fourth century during Constantine’s rule. One story that exemplifies the developing power of the eucharist involved Ambrose’s brother Satyrus. It happened that Satyrus requested some of the reserved eucharist from those on his ship because the vessel was about to be destroyed/shipwrecked (*naufragio*) in a terrible storm; he took the eucharistic bread (*viaticum*) and wrapped it in a handkerchief to clutch to himself as he jumped into the

² Paul Bradshaw and Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Eucharistic Liturgies: Their Evolution and Interpretation* (Collegeville, MI: Liturgical Press, 1989), 65.

sea just before the ship crashed onto the rocks.³ Satyrus believed that the eucharist was all he needed to be protected from imminent death and, indeed, he was spared. The “magical” nature of the eucharist was also evident in the use of amulets or pendants containing messages or prayers requesting protection and worn by some late antique Christians. One such pendant was discovered recently (2014) by archaeologists; the pendant contained a prayer citing “manna from heaven,” and Christ’s “institution of the eucharist at the Last Supper.⁴ This growing “magical” understanding of the eucharist would have consequences for its use within the funeral ritual as will become evident later in this study.

A matter of some controversy in the fourth and fifth centuries was the pre-death reception of the eucharist as *viaticum* for Christians. Many of the bishops in the fourth century wished to control who should or should not receive communion at the time of death. At the Council of Elvira (ca. 300/306 CE in Spain), the episcopate ratified (in eight separate canons) a redefinition of their restriction on deathbed eucharist; they declared that communion should not be administered even at the time of death (*in finem*) to anyone guilty of serious crimes against the Ten Commandments (e.g., murder, adultery).⁵ In this way, church leadership used the administration of the eucharist to the dying as a means of denying Christian membership after death—first, to lapsed Christians in North Africa in the third century, and then, to those

³ Also, Ambrose, *De excessu fratris liber primus*, CSEL 73 (Vienna : F. Tempsky, 1955), 43.232-33.

⁴ The amulet containing the message was found in Egypt (where arguably, climatic conditions allow for preservation), was dated ca 500s CE and written in Greek on papyrus, the flipside of which was a certified receipt for the payment of a grain tax; the pendant is now housed in the University of Manchester Library. See article, “One of World’s Earliest Christian Charms Found,” in *The University of Manchester News Online*, published 03 September 2014; accessed December 26, 2019, <https://www.manchester.ac.uk/discover/news/one-of-worlds-earliest-christian-charms-found/>.

⁵ For the Council of Elvira (306 CE), see C. J. Hefele, *History of the Christian Councils from the Original Documents to the Close of the Council of Nicaea, AD 325*, vol. I, translated and edited by William R. Clark (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1894), Bk. 1, 138-65; relevant canons include: 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 17, 63, and 64. Notably, “serious crimes” against the Ten Commandments would have automatically excluded the sinner from the people of God (the church).

guilty of severe sin, even as those guilty faced death in the fourth century. Further, this denial of Christian membership was ritualistically determined by the clergy. It was also problematic. Just as the episcopate varied in their reaction to lapsed Christians from the Decian persecution, so too, did the Elvira declaration meet with disagreement. It took until the First Council of Nicaea in 325 CE, when bishops from throughout the Roman Empire were called together by the emperor Constantine, that church leaders finally ratified (in canon 13) that the eucharist was to be recognized as the central rite for the dying, and no one at the point of death was to be denied its reception.⁶ Further, in the fifth century, at the First Council of Orange in Gaul (441 CE), the bishops decreed (in canon 3) that the eucharist was the “consolation of the dying” and was to be recognized henceforth as a *viaticum*.⁷ The implication was that all Christians, even penitents not finished their public penance, were assured the protection and spiritual sustenance of the eucharist before their journey through death; and it left God alone to judge who was a “good Christian” at the final judgment. However, it seems there was more at issue, this time involving deathbed eucharist.

As noted, there was a tendency for Christians to view the eucharist as assurance of safe passage through the dangers beyond death. Augustine invoked *Ps.* 90:13 to highlight Monica’s need of God’s protection against the dangers (he cited the lion and the dragon) as

⁶ See the First Council of Nicaea in *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, edited by J. D. Mansi, 31 vols. (Paris: H. Welter, 1901-1927), Bk. 2, 674. Also, see the First Council of Nicaea (325 CE) in Hefele, *History of the Councils*, vol. I, Bk. 2, 419-20.

⁷ For the First Council of Orange (canon 3) see C. J. Hefele, *History of the Councils of the Church*, vol. III, AD 431-451, translated and edited by E. H. Plumptre (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1883), Bk. 10, 160: “When penitents fall ill, then the Communion, the Viaticum, shall be given to them without the reconciling laying on of hands (that is, solemn reconciliation). That alone is sufficient for the dying.” Notably, the Fourth Council of Carthage (398 CE) reiterated, in canon 76: “One about to die is to be given the Holy Eucharist” and in canon 77: “Sick penitents shall receive the Viaticum”; see C. J. Hefele, *History of the Councils of the Church*, vol. II, AD 326-429, translated and edited by H. Nutcombe Oxenham (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1896), Bk. 8, 416. Significantly, by not requiring the official “laying on of hands” it maintained a situation in which the laity could give the eucharist; the “laying on of hands” necessitated the clergy to perform that rite; therefore, if the person was about to die, the family did not have to wait for a priest to arrive before they administered the eucharist themselves.

she navigated her way to heaven.⁸ To ensure that she be protected on that journey, Augustine arranged for the celebration of the eucharist at her tomb just before burial.⁹ Additionally, the hagiography relating Ambrose's death (397 CE), written by Paulinus the Deacon, tells that around Ambrose's body at the wake "a crowd of demons made such a clamor that they were being tormented by him [Ambrose] that their wailing could not be borne" by those in attendance; in this case, the sanctity of the holy bishop—and his frequent consumption of the eucharist—conquered the perils his soul faced at death.¹⁰ In other words, for many Christians the consumption or offering of the eucharist was deemed a powerful *viaticum* and necessary protection at the time of death. It was similar to the Roman custom of the coin for Charon placed in or on the mouth of the deceased at the time of death. Some Christians, however, may have taken the "similarity" between the coin and the eucharistic bread quite literally, for in 393 CE at the Synod of Hippo a ruling was pronounced by the bishops that prohibited the giving of the eucharist to dead bodies.¹¹ The practice apparently persisted, for the canon was reiterated in 397 CE at the Third Council of Carthage and again at the African General Council (held also in Carthage) in 419 CE—no eucharist shall be given to the dead because a

⁸ Augustine, *Confessions*, vol. 2 (Bks. 9-13) translated by Carolyn J. -B. Hammond, LCL 27 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 9.36.

⁹ Augustine, *Confessions*, 9.32. Note: the offering of the eucharist at a prayer service at the tomb prior to Monica's burial (which will be discussed shortly) did not require clergy. As interpreted by classicist and historian Robin Lane Fox, Monica's body was escorted to the grave by Augustine and the other Christians who gathered round Augustine; as these individuals "were not north Africans, they followed their local practice [in Ostia]. They prayed and celebrated the eucharist with Monnica, dead, beside them"; see *Augustine: Conversions and Confessions* (UK: Penguin Random House, 2015), 360. Note: Monica died in 387 CE and Augustine was not ordained a priest until the congregation at the church in the harbor town of Hippo, acclaimed him (though he was reluctant) a priest in 391 CE and Valerius the bishop "laid hands on him" to confer the sacrament of the priesthood there on the spot; Fox, *Augustine*, 411-412. Therefore, we know that Augustine did not celebrate the Eucharist in the role as "priest" for Monica at the time of her death.

¹⁰ See Paulinus the Deacon, *Vita sancti Ambrosii (The Life of Ambrose of Milan)*, edited by S. Kaniecka (Washington, DC: 1928), 10.48. Translated in Boniface Ramsey, *Ambrose* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 195-218 (ch. 4), "'The Life of Saint Ambrose,' as told by the Deacon Paulinus of Milan," esp. 48.215-16.

¹¹ For the Council of Hippo (393 CE), whose further particulars—while missing in the 393 CE record of the council—appeared in greater detail in the third Carthaginian Synod in 397 CE, states in canon 4, "The Eucharist shall not be given to dead bodies, nor baptism conferred upon them"; see C. F. Hefele, *History of the Councils*, vol. II, Bk. 8, 397.

corpse is incapable of actualizing the request of Christ, to “take and eat” the eucharistic bread as the Body of the Lord.¹² But episcopal declarations were not the end of it. As previously mentioned, from the earliest centuries “reserve eucharist” (the “extra” or “left-over” eucharistic bread and/or wine not consumed by the congregants at mass) was customarily distributed to the laity to keep at home. Additional evidence shows that reserved eucharist was part of regular mealtimes among Christians in the third and fourth centuries; for instance, the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus encouraged each Christian to “receive the eucharist before he tastes anything else” at everyday private meals, thus suggesting that reserved eucharist must have been a standard in many private homes and that anyone in the home could handle it.¹³ Further, according to several of the early Church Fathers, it was common to carry the eucharist for protection on perilous journeys, there was no ritual specialist required for delivery of the eucharist, and no required prayers were needed to accompany its reception.¹⁴ In other words, at this point in Christian history the information about reserve eucharist included (1) a growing acceptance of the eucharist as a vehicle of power, (2) easy access to

¹² See the canon 4 of the Third Council of Carthage (397 CE) in Hefele, *History of the Councils*, vol. II, Bk. 8, 396-97. For some discussion on this canon, see Gregory Grabka, “Christian Viaticum: A Study of Its Cultural Background,” *Traditio* 9 (1953): 39. For repetition of the ruling that the eucharist must not be given to corpses, see canon 18 of the African General Council (419 CE) in Hefele, *History of the Councils*, vol. II, Bk. 8, 469, ratifying canons of Council of Hippo (393 CE).

¹³ See Hippolytus of Rome, *Apostolic Tradition*, edited and translated from the Greek by G. Dix and H. Chadwick, 4th ed. (London: Routledge 2006), canon 36 (reported in this thesis 126n19). Note: *Apostolic Tradition* was an early treatise belonging to the category of Church Orders. The eighth book of the *Apostolic Constitutions* is derived from the *Apostolic Tradition*.

¹⁴ Grabka, “Christian Viaticum,” 40. See, Tertullian, *ad Uxorem*, edited by Emil Kroymann, vol. 70 (Vienna, 1942), 2.5. As well, Tertullian, *de Oratione*, edited by A. Reifferscheid and G. Wissowa, vol. 20 (Vienna, 1890), 19. And, Cyprian, *de Lapsis*, in *Opera Omnia*, edited by J. -P. Migne, PL 4 (Paris, 1844), 464-94. Also, Novatian, *de Spectaculis*, edited by G. Hartel, CSEL 3 (Vienna: 1871), 3.5.5. For more about the reserve eucharist, see Kim Bowes, *Private Worship, Public Values, and Religious Change in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 54-56. For the *Didache* (Greek) on the use of reserve eucharist in the home, see Aaron Milavec, *The Didache: Text, Translation, Analysis, and Commentary* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 68. Additionally, Jerome relates that in Rome it was common for families to reserve part of the eucharistic bread from church services to use/consume during the week; see Jerome, *Epistulae*, CSEL 54-56, edited by Isidorus Hilberg (Vienna: Tempsky, 1910-1918), *Ep.* 71.6.

the eucharist for lay Christians to take home, and (3) use of the eucharist as daily sustenance, for protection against death, and for safe travel.

However, the eucharist as *viaticum* was sometimes given after death as well. Understandably, when a family member died, the family was duty-bound to provide protection for the deceased against dangers thought to threaten the soul on its journey into the afterlife. For Roman families prior to conversion, this meant placing a coin in the mouth of the deceased. For Christian Romans it implied fortifying the deceased with eucharistic defense. Since reserve *viaticum* was available to the laity, family members (especially the women as main caregivers) would have been accustomed to handling and dispensing it.¹⁵ With the domestic sphere the locus of ritual activity for the dying and the dead, and the family holding control over funerary rituals, there was an absence of any ritual role for the clergy unless they were specifically invited by the family to participate. Further, using the eucharist at home maintained the ritualization of the home-place thereby keeping it *sacra*. Now, for growing numbers of families, both the Roman ritual (ensuring the safety of the deceased) and the new Christian ritual (using the eucharist as *viaticum*) were events enacted within the *domus*. We may also presume that the women of the household continued as ritual specialists leading the family in funerary rites such as administering deathbed *viaticum* and/or *viaticum* after death.

The matter of deathbed eucharist (especially in terms of feeding it to a corpse) continued to be of concern for the bishops through the fifth century. The source of concern was the perceived leniency of lay access to the reserve eucharist. The bishops identified the lack of church control over the activity of wealthy Christian families living on rural estates as one of the potential points of weakness. Historically speaking, this period witnessed

¹⁵ Significantly, as shown later in this thesis, there are indications that women are singled out in church councils in terms of handling the eucharist.

increasing numbers of aristocratic families, the larger urban *domus*, and the expansion of villa-estates out into the countryside in all regions of the empire.¹⁶ Church leaders began to direct their attention to the behavior of Christian families and clergy in rural villa-churches in Italy and Gaul. Villa-based Christianity on the property of the estate-family involved life-cycle ritual practices (among them, funerary rites), and included, along with the estate family members, their tenants, workers, and slaves. To provide a ritual space for this “seigniorial family” and its broader estate *familia*, it was now common to have a church attached to, or at least built close to, the villa to provide a place for Christian ceremonies, such as celebration of the eucharist (the mass).¹⁷ If clergy was needed for the estate church, then a presbyter, deacon, or bishop was ordained from the estate population according to the Theodosian Code (398 CE); these villa-based clergymen fell under the jurisdiction of the *dominus* or *domina* of the villa estate in a relationship much like the Roman patron-client system where *pietas* and *amicitia* were the overarching virtues.¹⁸ Kim Bowes explains that the rural estates in Spain, northern Italy, France, Britain, and North Africa operated on and were shaped by “seigniorial dependency relationships” or family/community bonds.¹⁹ In short, the situation meant (1) the

¹⁶ For a thorough review of the history of private Christianity and the growth of aristocratic villa estates, see Bowes, *Private Worship*, 4-8, 128-29, 157-61, 163-64, 170-72.

¹⁷ Bowes, *Private Worship*, 129-35. The churches were often covered in frescos, mosaic scenes, and large chi-rho symbols, 131. Many of the elite owners built enormous mausolea near the villa; the mausoleum might contain a crypt for storing relics or a necropolis for family graves, 137, 140. Some of the villa estates contained extra-villa churches or *martyria* (with relics or perhaps a martyr’s body) often made available to the surrounding community for worship, 149-51.

¹⁸ The Christian cult on the estate replicated the family relationship found in urban society, i.e., it was defined by its private religiosity and therefore varied from estate to estate; see Bowes, *Private Worship*, 160-61. Notably, the clergy of the rural villas were not anything like the bishops in urban settlements. Bowes explains, “most estate churches and Christian communities were founded by elite impresarios, independent of episcopal intervention and affective supervision. Bishops were still largely creatures of the city and had their hands full developing still-nascent Christian communities, consolidating their own fragile authority and marshalling their financial resources. The countryside simply did not appear on their limited radar ... Estate-based communities were simply different from those envisioned by the episcopate, and their hierarchy and very *raison d’être* were seigniorial, not episcopal”; see Bowes, *Private Worship*, 187-88.

¹⁹ Bowes, *Private Worship*, 159.

villa church was an extension of the Roman *domus*, and (2) as an extension of the *domus*, the villa church likely facilitated the practice of certain familial rituals, one of which was the funeral. Given this context, it is highly probable that Christians living on the rural estates conceived of the eucharist as protection against sickness and for security on the journey through death. In addition, since the clergy was part of the villa's household, the eucharist was probably readily available to all lay members of the estate-home. So we may conclude: (1) the *place* for the practice of funeral rites on the rural estate remained under the control of the family,²⁰ (2) estate families often built a church on their land, (3) the family was free to appoint their own clergy, (4) there was ample access to reserve eucharist on the estate, and (5) the overarching control of religious rituals (such as those employed for the funeral) remained with the estate family alone. Little wonder the urban episcopate perceived this abundance of ecclesiastical power in the hands of the laity (the private sector) with some anxiety. There is more to discuss about burial and the significance of rural cemeteries later in this chapter.

As a result of angst brought about by the villa estates in the West, bishops in the cities, representing the institutional church, did not agree that estate owners should wield religious authority over villa churches managed by a hand-picked clergy.²¹ A debate bristled between private villa Christianity and the urban public collective during the fourth century. It was no surprise, then, when a “whole host of conciliar canons” appeared either banning or restricting

²⁰ The matter of burial on villa estates in Gaul is interesting. According to Kim Bowes, there is evidence from the fourth and fifth century of a burial-church in the region of Geneva (eastern Gaul); it may suggest “a possible tendency to conflate burial and ritual structures,” that is, combined cemetery and church; see Bowes, *Private Worship*, 141 and fig.40 showing the development of a villa mausoleum/church in the fourth/fifth century. Notably, there is the implication that the cemeteries were part of the villa's landholdings and an extension of the *domus*. There is more to discuss on the topic later in this chapter.

²¹ Bowes, *Private Worship*, 219. The episcopate in the cities represented the formal church where bishops derived their status and authority from apostolic succession, personal moral qualities, liturgical privileges, and rights over doctrinal issues. Estate owners, on the other hand, perceived their authority as the same authority they exercised over family and dependents (*patria potestas*), especially over the estate itself and everything that occurred there, including religious practices; hence, the conflict.

private worship around this time.²² For example, the Council of Saragossa (380 CE) and the First Synod of Toledo (400 CE) both specifically censured the consumption of the reserved eucharist.²³ It seems the decrees were an effort to limit the practices of villa clergymen in providing the rural laity with unlimited reserve eucharist and the subsequent use of the available eucharist in alternative ways.

All of these many and varied concerns added complexity to the discussion of deathbed eucharist for Christians through the fifth century. Restrictions placed on the laity's access to reserve eucharist (especially in terms of the villa estates) invariably forced families to look for "creative" ways of obtaining the *viaticum* necessary for the protection of family members at death. It was equally probable that the family members, including women, searched for ways to acquire reserve eucharist. They may have gone so far as trying to smuggle the eucharist from church to home. In fact, that very possibility was affirmed in the rulings of the Council of Saragossa in 380 CE (canon 3) and the First Synod of Toledo in 400 CE (canon 14), both of which condemned those who received the eucharist at the church but did not consume it (presumably taking it home for domestic use).²⁴ It seems clear that the conciliar rulings were intended to control how the laity acquired *viaticum* for the sick and the dying (and yes, even for the dead).

²² Bowes, *Private Worship*, 192.

²³ For the Council of Saragossa (canon 3), see Hefele, *History of the Councils*, vol. II, Bk. 5, 293. For the Synod of Toledo (canon 14), see Hefele, *History of the Councils*, vol. II, Bk. 8, 419. See also, Bowes, *Private Worship*, 192, where she explains that in addition to restricting the consumption of the eucharist, the councils also banned "villa-based meetings and masses, and hymn-singing in the home"; the canons were an attempt to control private worship in Christian homes (e.g., on villa estates); in addition, the bishops suspected heretical activities flourished in private settings, especially among women, 192.

²⁴ Canon 3 of the Council of Saragossa states, "Whoever does not consume the Holy Eucharist given him in church, let him be anathema"; see Hefele, *History of the Councils*, vol. II, Bk. 5, 293. Canon 14 of the Synod of Toledo states, "Those who do not really consume the Holy Eucharist which they have received from the priest, shall be treated as 'sacrilegious'"; see Hefele, *History of the Councils*, vol. II, Bk. 8, 337.

Again, worth noting is that there is little discussion in the fifth century about home visits by a priest to intervene in times of severe illness and death. We may presume from the writings of Caesarius of Arles in the sixth century that the Romano-Christians of Gaul traditionally preferred folk healing techniques (herbs, potions, amulets of amber, incantations, and written spells) and customarily consulted soothsayers and diviners for prediction and control over sickness and death.²⁵ In a clear attempt to garner some measure of control over the situation, the two Councils of Vannes (461/491 CE) condemned certain forms of divination that had become “christianized” and were even “practiced and tolerated” by some of the clergy; two forms of divination that were singled out included *sortes biblicae* (books of the Bible were opened at random for advice and predictions) and *sortes sanctorum* (random selection of oracular responses from a collection of predictions).²⁶ But it would not be until the sixth century that Caesarius began a serious campaign to counteract the folk healing practices of the rural laity by urging the sick and dying to call on a priest to provide the eucharist, anointing with holy oil, and the laying on of hands “in Christ’s name” as a “better way” to be cured.²⁷

For Christians, the eucharistic bread was not only *viaticum* (sustenance for the journey to heaven) but, as Christ’s body, it was also a *psychopompos* (guide/patron/protector, and certainly the ultimate *psychopompos*) for the soul. However, Christ in the eucharist was not the only advocate of the soul; angels had escorted the souls of the departed to the bosom of

²⁵ William E. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: The Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 219-221.

²⁶ Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles*, 220. See C. J. Hefele, *History of the Councils of the Church*, vol. IV, AD 451 to 680, translated and edited by William R. Clark (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1895), 83 explains that canon 42 of the Council of Agde (506 CE) is the same as canon 16 of the Synod of Vannes; the canon states, “Clerics and laymen who meddle with the *sortes sanctorum* must be excluded from the church.”

²⁷ Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles*, 222; see Caesarius of Arles, *Sermons*, edited by R. J. Deferrari, vol. 31, *Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* (New York: Fathers of the Church Press, 1956), *Sermon* 19.5.

Abraham (heaven) in Luke 16:22 and in the first letter of Paul to the Thessalonians (1 Thess 4:16).²⁸ By the fourth century martyrs and saints also played a role in providing security for the deceased. An example of this belief appears in the Catacomb of Domitilla in Rome where a memorial painting was commissioned by a young woman named Veneranda in the fourth (or fifth) century.²⁹ See Appendix B, figs. 6 and 7. The image depicts the deceased, Veneranda, being guided by her early Christian foremother, Petronella, who was likely remembered “both as a martyr and a revered woman of the [W]ord” (suggesting that Petronella may have been a deaconess, or presbyter who preached the Word of God) and had been buried “for at least two centuries in the ‘private space’ of her extended family’s burial lands”; that is, in the catacomb named after Flavia Domitilla.³⁰

The fresco in question (Veneranda in the Catacomb of Domitilla) depicts the deceased, Veneranda, veiled and standing with her hands raised in the gesture of prayer (as an Orant) while the martyr Petronella is shown standing behind her in a position of support (as patron or *psychopompos*) guiding her to heaven; Veneranda gazes at a *capsa*—a basket containing a number of scrolls—which Petronella gestures to with her left hand; the *capsa* can be

²⁸ From the NSV in combination with the Greek Bible, see Luke 16:22, which states: “The poor man died και απενεχθηναι αγγελων εις τον κολπον Αβρααμ [and was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s bosom].” See another example in 1 Thess 4:16 where the text states: “For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, εν φωνη αρχαγγελου [with the call of the archangel] and the sound of God’s trumpet, will descend from heaven ...”; and additionally, see Hebrews 1:14: “ουχι παντεζ εισιν λειτουργικα πνευματα εις διακονιαν αποστελλομενα [Are not all angels ministering spirits] sent out into divine service for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?”

²⁹ Nurse and student of theology Christine Schenk, *Crispina and Her Sisters: Women and Authority in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2017), 149; most scholars date the catacomb painting (shown in fig. 4.9, page 148) to ca. 356 CE though some suggest a date as late as ca. 460 CE.

³⁰ Schenk, *Crispina*, 156. Schenk agrees in part with historian of religion, Nicola Denzey and catacomb expert, Phillip Pergola that Petronella was neither the daughter of the apostle Peter nor originally a martyr; persuasive evidence point to the likelihood that Petronella was instead a wealthy *matrona* “who financed an early fourth-century burial chapel honoring Nereus and Achilleus [martyred soldiers], as well as her own memorial on the cemetery grounds of her kinswoman Flavia Domitilla,” 154-55. According to Schenk, a few generations later, the Christian woman Veneranda, chose to remember and revere Petronella as one who died as a female minister and a martyr more probably sometime in the third century; Veneranda, it seems, was modelling herself on the esteemed Petronella, a holy woman of faith and of ecclesial authority, 155-57.

understood as signifying Petronella's learnedness and authority depicted through symbolism in Roman art.³¹ Notably, this example demonstrates at least three important points: (1) Veneranda's family included in their ancestral burial chapel the remains of the woman Petronella who was designated as a martyr, though there is no evidence she was martyred. Veneranda, and presumably Petronella's remains or relics, were buried close to two affirmed martyrs (Nereus and Achilleus, Roman soldiers who refused to torture Christians) showing that the presence of martyrs' remains were welcomed into privately controlled family gravesites; (2) Veneranda herself was buried *ad sanctos*, close to the remains of her specially chosen patron, the martyr and minister of the church, Petronella; and (3) by choosing Petronella as her role model, Veneranda identified Petronella as someone who would inspire her and serve as mentor.³² There will be more to discuss on martyrs under the "incorporation" section of this chapter.

Other Roman rites for dying and death were evident in Christian funerary practices in the fourth and fifth centuries. For instance, the Roman rituals of the last kiss and the closing of eyes at the time of death persisted among Christians in both clerical and family settings. In one example, Ambrose imparted the final kiss to catch his brother, Satyrus' last breath. In performing this ritual, however, Ambrose modified (and effectively christianized) the Roman meaning of the rite by explaining that, instead of merely catching the final breath (or spirit of the deceased) in the final kiss, it was "an act of tenderness to one beloved" and that the rite

³¹ Schenk, *Crispina*, 148.

³² Significantly, this is a complex situation. Did Veneranda choose Petronella as a model for a good Christian life (as suggested above by Schenck)? Or, given the fresco's location in the catacomb showing Veneranda in an Orant position supplicating prayers and assistance, and Petronella's position behind her (with her hand at Veneranda's shoulder) and given Veneranda's designation of Petronella as "martyr," was Petronella being depicted as a *psychopompos*? Or, alternatively, was Petronella shown pointing to the scrolls a symbol of reassurance that Veneranda's education or knowledge of the gospels would assist her in the afterlife? And did Petronella have this awareness of her "client" because Petronella was a martyr?

infused him (Ambrose) with the purity and innocence of his brother. Ambrose also closed Satyrus' eyes when he died and described a personal struggle performing the rite: Ambrose stated that his own eyes were "hard" as they watched Satyrus die, his own hands were "cruel and unkind" as they closed his brother's eyes, and his own neck was "still harder" as he felt the weight of heavy sadness when Satyrus departed this world.³³ It should be noted that Ambrose is NOT conducting these rites as a cleric. Rather, he is performing the funeral rituals for Satyrus as a family member in the family home. In fact, he bemoaned the fact he had not died first, for had that been the case, then Satyrus and their sister Marcellina—the rest of the family—would have ministered the rites to Ambrose instead.³⁴ The incident emphasizes that the place for the enactment of funerary rituals still remained within the jurisdiction of the family and in the familiarity of the family-home at this time in the history of the Christian funeral; further, the fact that Ambrose is performing the funeral rites not as a priest, but as a brother and family member, indicates that the family and familial practices still dominated the Christian funeral process.

In a similar instance of a family member who was also a theologian concerned about appropriate Christian practices at the time of a family death, there is story about Augustine and his mother Monica. Despite his role as monastic leader in the late fourth century, Augustine performed his duty as son and closed the eyes of his mother when she died in Ostia (the port city of Rome). He described the moment of Monica's death as an ordeal of great agony, and his grief was palpable:

³³ Ambrose, *De excessu fratris liber primus (De obitu Satyri)*, CSEL 73 (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1955), 1.19; 1.36. Ambrose's christianization of the rituals of imparting the last kiss and closing the eyes of the deceased essentially maintained the legitimacy of the rituals and thereby ensured their continuation into the Christian era.

³⁴ Ambrose, *De excessu fratris*, 1.36.

there surged an enormous sorrow in my chest, and it turned into tears, but my eyes were stopped by sheer willpower and the flow of tears was swallowed back until it was dried up. And I was overcome by intolerable emotion. ³⁵

Augustine went on to affirm his mother's good character, asking God that she might avoid the dangers to the soul on its journey to heaven; and he offered a prayer for her safety:

Do not let the lion and dragon (*Ps* 90:13) become involved either by coercion or trickery. For she will not admit that she has debts to pay, in case she is challenged and seized by the shrewd devil.³⁶

It is clear, once again, that the welfare of the departed was of paramount importance to the living. It is clear, also, that the process of dying and death remained within the justification of the family. And so, the Roman customs persisted.

Another example of familial devotion and compassionate care for the dying is revealed in Jerome's letter to the young woman, Eustochium, written in 404 CE. In the letter, Jerome described the efforts of Eustochium to comfort her mother, Paula, who lay on her deathbed in her room of the monastery. It should be noted that these early monasteries still had the connotation of a "family-place" because, in many cases, they were villas, which the head of the families designated for monastic living and, in other cases, they comprised existing structures maintained through the patronage of a wealthy person such as Paula who gathered family members and others into a monastic community. Thus, the monastery where Paula died was a transitional *place* with its roots in the family and its character as a Christian "communal

³⁵ Augustine, *Confessions*, 9.12. My own translation. The Latin states, "*et confluebat in praecordia mea maestitudo ingens et transfluebat in lacrimas; ibidemque oculi mei violento animi imperio resorbebant fontem suum usque ad siccitatem, et in tali luctamine valde male mihi erat.*"

³⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, 9.13. My own translation. The Latin states, "*non se interponat nec vi nec insidiis leo et draco: neque enim respondebit illa nihil se debere, ne vincatur et obtineatur ab accusatore callido, sed respondebit dimissa debita sua ab eo, cui nemo reddet, quod pro nobis non debens reddidit.*"

place” only just emerging. In Jerome’s situation, some of the customary rituals are beginning to demonstrate change while others remain the same.

Jerome’s letter to Eustochium was filled with praise for the young woman’s’ virtue as the ideal daughter; he described Eustochium sitting at Paula’s bedside: “she fanned her, held her head, arranged her pillows, she massaged her feet, rubbed her stomach, smoothed down the bedclothes, she heated water, [and] brought towels.”³⁷ Significantly, these gestures of care were no different from what Eustochium would have provided her mother in their own home; but here the comforts are offered in a monastic “familial” setting. Jerome emphasized the scene further, describing Eustochium’s experience as follows:

She prayed continuously and wept profusely as she ran back and forth between her mother’s bedside and the cave (*specum*) of the Lord [referring to the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem] pleading with God that she would not lose her dear mother, hoping that if Paula had to die, that she [Eustochium] might join her on one bier that they might be carried to burial together. ³⁸

Then, as the illness progressed, Paula finally succumbed to death:

Then she drew silent and closed her eyes, waiting for the passing of her soul. She repeated the same lines of the psalm she had been reciting but so softly one could scarcely hear it. She put her finger to her mouth and made the sign of the cross on her lips. Then she breathed faintly and gasped for death. But even as her soul strained to be free, she turned her death into praise for God.³⁹

³⁷ My translation. Jerome, *Epistulae*, edited by Isidorus Hilberg, CSEL 54-56 (Vienna: Tempsky, 1910-1918), 108.28; the Latin states: “*Ipsa assidere lectulo, flabellum tenere, sustentare caput, pulvillum supponere, fricare pedes, manu stomachum confovere, mollia strata componere, aquam calidam temperare, mappulam apponere.*”

³⁸ My translation. The Latin states: “*Quibus illa precibus, quibus lamentis et gemitu, inter jacentem matrem, et specum Domini discurret, ne privaretur tanto contubernio, ne illa absente viveret: ut eodem feretro portaretur?*”; from *Letters of Jerome Online*, PL 22, edited by J. -P. Migne (Paris, 1845), *Ep.* 108.28, accessed January 24, 2020, <http://www.patrologia-lib.ru/patrolog/hieronym/epist/epist04.htm>.

³⁹ My translation. The Latin states: “*Post haec obmutuit, et clausis oculis quasi jam mortalia despiceret, usque ad expirationem animae, eosdem repetebat versiculos, ut quod dicebat, vix audire possemus; digitumque ad os tenens, crucis signum pingebat in labiis. Defecerat spiritus, et anhelabat in mortem; animaque erumpere gestiens, ipsum stridorem, quo mortalium vita finitur in laudes Domini convertebat*”; from *Letters of Jerome Online*, *Ep.* 108.28-29.

Jerome's clerical/monastic bias was quite apparent in his account of Paula's death; he stressed Paula's conformity to Christian ideals as she recited biblical psalms and signed herself on the lips with the cross as death overtook her. Prior to Bethlehem, both Paula and Eustochium had lived as ascetics, living a quasi-monastic life in an aristocratic household in Rome—a popular option for holiness in northern Italy at the time. By mentioning that Paula signed the cross just as she died, Jerome highlighted a female agent christianizing Roman rituals for dying and death. In addition, Jerome's letter to Eustochium must be viewed in context; it was “an announcement” of two major developments of different models of ascetic living that had begun arriving in Italy and southern Gaul from the East late in the fourth century.⁴⁰ The first development had monasticism substituting as “family” in some cases, thus creating a situation where the monks and nuns cared for each other in their respective communities as “family” in times of sickness and death—as seen in Paula's situation.⁴¹ The second development was the additional function of female and male monasteries as hospitals and hospices for the poor and homeless; it is clear that the evolution of hospitals in consort with monasticism was an extension of family care for the sick and dying.⁴²

To sum up this section on the transformation of the Roman funeral rites of separation, several points are significant: (1) on the one hand, the eucharist is now accepted and widely

⁴⁰ J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies* (London: Duckworth, 1975), 139-40.

⁴¹ Very little (if anything) is written about the care of sick and dying among monastics in the West; however, for a brief discussion of matters in the East, see classicist Peregrine Horden, “The Death of Ascetics: Sickness and Monasticism in the Early Byzantine Middle East,” in *Monks, Hermits, and the Ascetic Tradition*, edited by W. J. Sheils (Padstow, UK: Blackwell, 1985), 41-52.

⁴² Jerome claims the first hospital was established ca. 390 CE in Portus, near Rome, by the wealthy Fabiola; as penance for a sinful life, Fabiola sold all her possessions to build the hospital and to minister to the poor; see Jerome's letter to Oceanus in *Ep.* 77.6. For the development of early Christian hospitals in the eastern empire, see historian Andrew Crislip, *From Monastery to Hospital: Christian Monasticism and the Transformation of Health Care in Late Antiquity* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2005). This topic is another that lies beyond the scope of my study; however, it is a subject under-represented in the scholarship pertaining to the late-antique West and warrants further scrutiny. Crislip's monograph on sickness and monasticism in the East is the only detailed study to date, to my knowledge, on the subject of the development of the Christian hospital.

employed among ordinary Christians; it is seen as *viaticum* ensuring safe passage for the soul of the deceased to heaven, (2) on the other hand, there is conflict with the church clergy who wish to control the use of the eucharist in reference to the deceased, (3) a resolution to the issue—in the view of the episcopate—requires both education of the laity and clerical control over access to the eucharist, (4) the role of the *psychopompos* has moved from the family ancestors and angels to “special” family ancestors, the martyrs, who are now chosen as patrons charged with guidance and protection of the living, (5) notably, some funerary practices continue, but are re-interpreted (e.g., final kiss), while others are introduced (e.g., the eucharist is both *viaticum* and *psychopompos*), and (6) the monastery is a new “home place” where new Christian funerary practices can evolve.

Transition (Liminal) Stages of the Funeral, 301-500 CE

The liminal stages of the “Roman funeral process”—considered the “standard” utilized by this study for investigating the transformation through late antiquity—included the wake, procession, and eulogy. Eusebius’s account of the death of Constantine in 337 CE, as with the rest of his biography of the emperor, is filled with descriptions designed to cast Constantine as the Christian equivalent of Augustus, as emperor. However, between the lines, one still glimpses the transitioning of certain funerary practices. First, the funeral is still deemed the obligation of the family; that is, upon the emperor’s death, Constantine’s sons arrived to assume their familial duties.⁴³ Second, despite the obvious imperial overtones associated with Constantine, certain practices could be observed: (a) the wake was held within the imperial apartments (the familial place); (b) there was lamentation and mourning by the spearmen and

⁴³ Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, translated by Averil Cameron and Stuart Hall (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1999), 4.70.

bodyguards who rent their garments, prostrated themselves on the ground, struck their heads, and uttered cries of sorrow; (c) the body of the emperor was laid in a golden coffin, covered with a purple cloth, and surrounded by candles in golden candlesticks—indicating highly privileged status and royal identity (and arguably, the “divinity” affiliated with his position as emperor), and finally (d) the grand funeral procession was led by the second of his sons, Constantius (representing his personal family) preceded by a detachment of soldiers and followed by “vast multitudes” (indicating a wider relationship with the empire) as his body was taken to the church of the apostles in Constantinople where it was entombed.⁴⁴ It is only after Constantine’s body was entombed in the church dedicated to the twelve apostles and after the son Constantius had completed his funeral obligations that there was the inclusion of “Christian practices”—a mass and prayers along with a eulogy in the church.⁴⁵ In other words, even the great Christian emperor’s funeral adhered more to Roman practices and there was no indication of a specific Christian funeral service. The Christian elements were still just additions to the basic Roman funeral rituals. This pattern emerges in other descriptions, as well.

Similarities, for instance, appear in the case of Blaesilla, a young female ascetic of the late fourth century, Jerome mentions in his letter of consolation to Paula (Blaesilla’s mother) that during the procession carrying Blaesilla’s body to the cemetery, the “obsequies were celebrated with customary splendor. People of rank headed the procession, a pall made of cloth of gold covered her bier.”⁴⁶ Later, when Paula herself died in Bethlehem (404 CE), in acknowledgement of her holiness, the bishops paid her tribute by personally serving as her

⁴⁴ Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 4.65-70.

⁴⁵ Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 4.71.

⁴⁶ Jerome, *Ep.* 39.1; the Latin text states: “*et nobillium ordine praeunte, aureum feretro velamen obtenditur.*”

pallbearers—they personally “shouldered her bier” as far as the Church of the Savior in Jerusalem.⁴⁷ It had only been a few years earlier, in 397 CE, that Ambrose also served as pallbearer for his brother Satyrus in Milan. During the delivery of his eulogy for Satyrus, Ambrose referred to carrying his brother’s bier as a family duty, which he considered both a privilege and a personal comfort.⁴⁸ In the case of Paula, while it was mentioned that some bishops of the region served as pallbearers, Jerome also recounts that other bishops carried torches, lamps, and candles in the procession, and some led the singing of the psalms as the “whole population of the cities of Palestine” joined the procession.⁴⁹ The idea of privileged status (in this case special religious status as a “holy woman” and ascetic) is comparable (quite intentionally, it seems) with the special distinction provided to the emperor.

Something else is worth noting. Both the procession of Constantine (an emperor) and the procession of Paula (a renowned ascetic and holy woman) were accompanied with candles and torches. A church council in Elvira (Spain) had ruled in 306 CE against the use of lights of any sort at funerals; lights were said to disturb the peaceful repose of the spirits of the dead.⁵⁰ Arguably, the difference was regional (eastern versus western empire) and the

⁴⁷ Jerome, *Ep.* 108.30; the Latin text states: “*Translataque Episcoporum manibus, et cervicem feretro subjicientibus; cum alii Pontifices lampadas cereosque preferrent ...*” Another spectacular funeral procession is reported in a letter written by Jerome to Oceanus, dated 399 CE. In the letter Jerome mentioned the funeral entourage of a famed ascetic named Fabiola. He wrote that multitudes (in the thousands, he declared) came out from the city of Rome to watch Fabiola’s procession; he stressed that the “streets, porches, and roofs from which a view could be obtained were inadequate to accommodate the spectators; Jerome, *Ep.* 77.2-3. Undoubtedly, Jerome’s depiction of the size of the funerary procession is exaggerated (as was his portrayal of Paula’s entourage, previously mentioned). However, Jerome’s intention remains clear: it was important that the funeral processions of the two saintly women—Paula and Fabiola—were grand spectacles to match their holy lives; Jerome’s embellishments emphasized each woman’s status in the community and her prominence as an outstanding Christian, an exemplar, whose holiness provided inspiration for many. In a sense, Jerome was attempting to claim public space for the collective/institutional church: and the funeral procession, for Jerome, was one way to do this.

⁴⁸ Ambrose, *Death of Satyrus*, 1.43.

⁴⁹ Jerome, *Ep.* 108.30.

⁵⁰ Church leaders in Spain at the Council of Elvira (306 CE) rejected the use of candles, either in funeral processions or in the vicinity of Christian graves, stating in canon 34 that the lighting of candles during the daytime (for processions or for cemetery visits) was forbidden since lights disturbed the peace of the spirits of the deceased; see Hefele, *Christian Councils*, vol. I, Bk. 1, 150-51. A. C. Rush maintained that rejection by the

conciliar decree was also nearly a century old by the time of Constantine's and Paula's funeral processions. What may be more obvious is that there had been a change in perspective; whereas the practice was once forbidden, now it was permitted or at least tolerated. There appeared to be some acquiescence on the part of church officials about the efficacy of fighting tradition, that the laity's incorporation of Roman funerary practices was just too ingrained in the social matrix and too difficult to control, that perhaps things were best left alone, at least for the time being. In addition, it is entirely possible that "rejection" of certain funerary practices (in this case, of light/candles) was limited to only a few of the church leaders, since we have limited written evidence from a limited number of clerics. At any rate, denunciation of lights/candles was short-lived because the custom persisted and even became "acceptable" (e.g., for an emperor) by the end of the fourth century. It was the same for other Roman practices. In the case of funeral processions for Paula and the emperor just discussed, there is evidence that some of the episcopal denunciations were short-lived, only regional, or they were just ignored. Some practices continued or were performed alongside church-approved ritual (e.g. lamentations were performed at the same time as the chanting of psalms and prayers). Sometimes the church presented alternative rituals that were accepted by the people and integrated into their funerals (e.g., new prayers and votive masses were added in the sixth century, at least in the context of monastics, clergy, and perhaps their immediate families). It signaled a slow change to the status quo as elements from monasticism began to affect the

bishops of candles (or lights of any sort) at funerals had to do with the association of this practice with Roman funerals. According to Rush, the issue for the leaders of the church was that torches had a "religious significance" involving lights at the festivals of the gods and the emperor, as well as for the Roman "cult of the dead"; see Alfred C. Rush, *Death and Burial in Christian Antiquity* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1941), 221-23: Roman funerals had originally taken place at night when light was required for disposal of the body by cremation; then as cremation declined, burial at night was only for children and the poor or slaves; regular Roman funerals for everyone with means was to occur during the day, but the use of candles and torches accompanying the funeral procession persisted.

familial home-place and the character of the relationship between the living and the dead. At any rate, even in terms of mourning—where the singing of psalms was deemed by church leaders as the appropriate replacement for ritual lament—the family’s prerogatives concerning the elements of the funeral still superseded directives from the church. To this point in Christian history, there was still no set liturgy at either the pre-liminal or liminal stages of the funeral.

Incorporation (Post-liminal) Stages of the Funeral, 301-500 CE

Incorporation or “reintegration” involved the rituals of burial and commemoration of the dead. During the fourth and fifth centuries Christians did not develop separate burial grounds. Christian, pagan, and Jewish burials continued to be mixed. John Bodel points out that Christians were often buried in pagan *hypogea* and mixed burials sometimes occurred “in adjacent subterranean spaces connected by tunnels and galleries”; an example is the Catacomb of Agnese (which housed mixed pagan and Christian burials), alongside the Via Nomentana and at the Catacombs of Vibia (next to the cemetery of Praetextatus along the Via Appia) where there are frescoes identifying three priests of Mithras, a pagan husband and wife, and several inscriptions indicating graves of Christians, all dated around late-fourth century.⁵¹

As mentioned in the last chapter, the martyr cult rose in prominence beginning late in the third century and became more visible in the fourth. The persecutions of Christians ended in the Roman Empire with the death of Diocletian in 311 CE. Peter Brown notes that in 304 CE in Salona (in modern Croatia), an aristocratic woman named Asclepia had a memorial set

⁵¹ John Bodel, “From *Columbaria* to Catacombs: Collective Burial in Pagan and Christian Rome,” in *Commemorating the Dead: Texts and Artifacts in Context*, edited by L. Brink and D. Green (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 188. For the Vibia inscription, see *CIL* 6.142.

up over the grave of a female martyr, Anastasius, in a mausoleum intended for Asclepia's own burial and those of her family.⁵² Clearly, it was elite Christians whose privilege allowed them the acquisition of martyr remains and who had the burial space at their disposal for the interment of martyr remains on the family property.

Also mentioned in the last chapter was some discussion of the ideology behind the martyr cult. It was an out-growth of the Roman cult of the dead, cult of the ancestors, and of *sacra familiae*; all of which venerated the family dead.⁵³ Bonds of devotion and reciprocity had ancient roots in the Greco-Roman tradition. The Christians of the early centuries merely continued these funerary practices. With the persecutions of Christians, families had taken it upon themselves to embrace the "friends of God," those who had died for Christian beliefs; these martyrs were considered part of a larger Christian "family" and deserved the same *pietas* owed "ordinary" family members. Ramsay MacMullen theorizes that maintaining *pietas* between the living and the dead provided fertile ground for the emergence of the martyr cult. He discusses how the martyr cult flowed quite naturally from the Roman graveside cult for the ordinary dead, and he mentions the retention of all the old rituals: "the music, song, and dancing ... the generous banquets leading into all-night festivities, the torches, flowers, incense, processions."⁵⁴ Since early Christians believed that all those baptized were assured of salvation after death, the "baptism by blood" earned by the martyrs through their martyrdom for the faith meant they were also worthy intercessors for the living and could, therefore, serve as *psychopompoi*. Consequently, whether martyrs (often referred to as "the holy/special

⁵² Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 33-34, citing E. Dyggve, *History of Salonitan Christianity* (Oslo: Aschenhoug, 1951), 78.

⁵³ Ramsay MacMullen, "The End of Ancestor Worship: Affect and Class," *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, Bd. 63, H. 4 (2014): 487-513.

⁵⁴ Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 112-19.

dead”) or the family’s “ordinary dead,” both were counted as mediators/intercessors of divine benefaction. The idea of reciprocity involved the living’s provision of *refrigeria* (banquets at the gravesite) to be shared with the departed in return for “favours” of intercession to God for a happy death and afterlife for surviving members of the family.

As MacMullen puts it, because the cult of the ancestors was so deeply embedded in Greco-Roman culture, it seemed quite a natural thing for families to gather martyr remains in the early fourth century and bury them in family tombs. There was little need for much in the way of change in the rituals since *sacra familiae* or cult of the ancestors flowed organically into funeral rituals (especially memorial/anniversary celebrations) for the martyrs.⁵⁵ In discussing the emergence of the martyr cult from the “grass roots” (the social matrix), MacMullen noted that Brown “while acknowledging Christian ancestor worship (*Cult of the Saints*, 29) as a fact, treats the cult of the saints quite separately and as unique and novel, an essentially late-fourth-century invention (e.g., *Cult*, 21-22) in the form shaped by the elite of the time and unencumbered by its past.”⁵⁶ MacMullen is surprised, considering that Brown was one of the first to acknowledge the “creation” of the martyr cult as beginning with the laity in the late second century (mentioned in my previous chapter).⁵⁷

Also mentioned near the end of the last chapter, was the building of burial spaces (*fabricae*) sponsored by the institutional church, often funded by wealthy patrons, and located in the suburban cemeteries of Rome. It seems that the bishops realized there were more Christians gathering in the cemeteries to pray and worship (as part of the cult of the ancestors,

⁵⁵ Notably, MacMullen’s focus has been on the adaptation of funerary rites (as part of the cult of the ancestors) for what became the martyr’s cult; he has not followed the continuation of funerary rites per se. The tracking of the transformation of funerary rites is the task set out for this thesis.

⁵⁶ MacMullen, “Christian Ancestor Worship in Rome,” 611n41, citing Brown, *Cult of the Dead*.

⁵⁷ See Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, 33. Brown describes the gentlewoman Pompeiana’s appropriation of the body of the martyr Maximilianus in 295 CE. However, he makes no connection between the cult of the ancestors or *sacra familiae* with the developing martyr cult.

of course) than those who attended church services inside the city (where the congregations mainly comprised the literate elite).⁵⁸ As a result, the bishops, with help from the “bountiful funding” of the emperor (starting with Constantine after the Peace of the Church in 313 CE) and the Christian elite built structures known as burial churches or basilicas, in the cemeteries on the outskirts of the city.⁵⁹ As the number of Christians gathering in the cemeteries and holding celebrations for their dead (now including some of their martyred-saints) increased, the bishops realized the need for something bigger. Hence, the construction of a series of burial churches (*fabricae*/basilicas) in quick succession in suburbs of the city and along the roads leading into Rome—San Giovanni, St. Peter’s (also called Church of the Apostles, now San Sebastiano), SS. Marcellino and Pietro, S. Agnese, S. Lorenzo, and the Basilica on the via Prenestina⁶⁰ The basilicas were built over top of the catacombs, many had dining porches (*triclinia*), often wells/fountains for water needed for cooking and diluting the wine used at the banquets (*refrigeria*), and benches for sitting through the “all-night *vigilia*”; at San Sebastiano it was in the area where the benches were located that hundreds of graffiti messages were left for the saints, Peter and Paul, who were believed to be buried there.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Ramsay MacMullen, *The Second Church: Popular Christianity AD 200-400* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 52-53.

⁵⁹ MacMullen, “Christian Ancestor Worship,” 600. For discussion of the burial spaces/land around Rome owned and then gifted to the church for *fabricae* in the cemeteries and association with the patronage of women, see Carolyn Osiek, “Roman and Christian Burial Practices and the Patronage of Women,” in *Commemorating the Dead: Texts and Artifacts in Context*, edited by L. Brink and D. Green (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 243-70.

⁶⁰ MacMullen, *Second Church*, 80. For a list of the basilicas built in Rome between 312 and 400 CE, see MacMullen, *Second Church*, 80. For further details about the large and small basilicas/burial churches/*martyria* that were built elsewhere in the empire, both east and west (including North Africa), and were funded by the popes, the emperors (from Constantine on), and/or by wealthy elites, see MacMullen’s very detailed Appendix: “Churches Built Before 400,” in *Second Church*, 117-41.

⁶¹ MacMullen, *Second Church*, 79. For more on the triclinium on the site of San Sebastiano dedicated to Saints Peter and Paul, see classicist/historian David L. Eastman, “The Cult of Paul on the Appian Road,” in *Paul the Martyr: The Cult of Apostle in the Latin West* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 71-114. See also, Snyder, *Ante Pacem*, 180-89 for discussion of the controversy surrounding the burial places of Saints Peter and Paul and the implication of St. Peter’s and San Sebastiano.

Notably, MacMullen's research on Rome's burial churches seems to imply that some of the buildings did not always house the remains of martyrs; the buildings may have been graveyards with a funerary banquet hall without the presence of martyrs.⁶² If that was the case, it suggests the clergy supported the continuation of dining with the ancestors by providing special places for Christian families to feast and remember departed relatives—essentially celebrating the cult of the ancestors, of which the clergy did not always approve.⁶³

The veneration of the martyrs continued to undergo locational or *place* transformation in the fourth and fifth centuries. Before the end of the fourth century, each of the grand basilicas around the city of Rome quickly filled up with Christian family burials—in the floors and wall-niches—only about half of the basilicas were built over or near a martyr's shrine or memorial, according to MacMullen.⁶⁴ Remarkably, of the seven basilicas constructed in Rome in the fourth century, only one (St. Peter's) was inside the city (the rest were in the suburbs and usually built over existing cemeteries); only St. Peter's had an ambo, chancel, pulpit, altar, and bench for the clergy to sit upon for regular church services including celebration of the eucharist.⁶⁵ The others were built for "religious services for or with the dead," which means that church leaders knew, in building the burial churches, they would have to accommodate what was important to the laity—places to bury their familial dead and

⁶² MacMullen, "End of Ancestor Worship," 496n35, which indicates that SS Marcellino and Pietro originally had no martyr's burial; it was mainly a funerary banquet hall and graveyard.

⁶³ MacMullen dates the construction of the first church (basilica) inside Rome, S. Giovanni (originally Church of the Savior) as beginning in 312, with its dedication in 318 CE; see MacMullen, "Christian Ancestor Worship," 599n7. The Church of the Savior was not a burial church but instead a basilica with an altar for the celebration of the eucharist; that is, masses were held there; see discussion in MacMullen, "Christian Ancestor Worship," 598-99.

⁶⁴ MacMullen, "Christian Ancestor Worship," 600-601. It was at this time that greater funds were allocated by the emperor Constantine, the episcopate, and elite patrons toward the building of additional basilicas (also known as "funerary halls," "roofed cemeteries," or "covered graveyards") outside the city. For further details, see the Appendix entitled, "Churches Built Before 400" in MacMullen, *Second Church*, 117-41.

⁶⁵ MacMullen, "Christian Ancestor Worship," 601.

places/spaces for the living and dead to worship together (e.g., share in the funerary banquets, get together with relatives, collectively remember the departed, ensure the restful peace of the deceased, sustain bonds of affection and trust). It is most interesting that nowhere in either of his articles, “Christian Ancestor Worship” or “The End of Ancestor Worship” or in his book, *Second Church*, does MacMullen mention the clamoring for burial *ad sanctos* next to the holy martyr/saint that became so prevalent by the mid fifth century. It is true that we have Ambrose, in 379 CE, securing a privileged spot for his brother Satyrus to be buried next to one of the patron saints of Milan (Victor, the martyr).⁶⁶ And for himself, Ambrose negotiated a burial spot next to the saints/martyrs Gervasius and Protasius under the main altar in the Basilica Ambrosiana in Milan.⁶⁷ But it seems the desire for burial *ad sanctos* was only slowly evolving as something important and highly desirable. In fact, we do not hear about it again until Paulinus of Nola’s query of Augustine about the efficacy of burial next to a saint ca. 421-424 CE.⁶⁸ The idea of martyrdom/sainthood is not fully fleshed-out in the fourth century. Notably, this all the more supports my thesis—that the transformation of the funeral and the many rituals it encompassed was a gradual transition that took at least eight centuries (arguably longer) to achieve. In short, for the period of church history investigated in the present chapter, *ad sanctos* was not yet well established. At the same time, there were signs

⁶⁶ See classicist/historian Neil B. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital*, Transformation of the Classical Heritage Series, vol. 22 (Berkeley: University of California, 1994), 77-78; McLynn explains that Satyrus was buried in the *martyrium*, Basilica Ambrosiana in Milan, in the chapel adjacent to the sarcophagus of St. Victor.

⁶⁷ McLynn, *Ambrose*, 229. In one other example, in the small city of Velitrae (some twenty miles south of Rome), a certain “woman of rank” was deemed “worthy” enough—because of her good deeds (patronage to the church)—to warrant burial next to the holy relics of the local saint; see MacMullen, *Second Church*, 82. The implication seems to be that burial *ad sanctos* was something very special and one had to do something or give something to acquire that privilege. It seems the privilege might eventually become a “commodity” that could be “bought” and “sold.” There is more to look at later.

⁶⁸ See Augustine’s response to an enquiry from Paulinus of Nola regarding the widow Flora in 421 CE wondering whether she should have her son buried near Saint Felix, in Augustine, *De cura pro mortuis gerenda*, PL 40, edited by J. -P. Migne (Paris, 1861), 1.2-1.3.

that the church and its clergy were forecasting some manner of control over access to special burial with the martyrs. In other words, as suggested by MacMullen, the cult of the martyrs grew out of the Roman practices of visiting and honoring the dead, which the bishops appropriated together with the idea that a mutually beneficial relationship ought to be maintained between the two realms. In terms of the current study, this means there was continuation of specific funeral practices and attention to specific ritualized places like the cemetery. Further, the focus was now directed toward the martyrs as the special form of ancestor who could help the living, and by acting as *psychopompoi*, could assist the deceased on their journey to heaven. It would take additional time and the actual construction of *martyria* and churches before these places and rituals enacted there would come under the control of the church.

In terms of burial, diversity was an important consideration in the Latin West in the fourth and fifth centuries. While the debate over the martyr cult, burial churches, shrines devoted to the martyrs (*martyria*), privileged burial, and so forth, was something of a phenomenon in the urban centers like Carthage, Hippo, Aquileia, Milan, Ostia, and Rome, there was another situation playing out in the countryside. Beyond the urban centers, the growing numbers of landowners of rural villa estates in the fourth and fifth centuries were busy incorporating old Roman traditions and building large burial mausolea on their property.⁶⁹ Archaeologists have uncovered accumulations of burial places near villa residences (e.g., in Toledo and Geneva) to indicate, as time went on, additional funerary buildings (e.g., mausolea, basilicas) had to be added to the existing estate necropolis in order

⁶⁹ Bowes, *Private Worship*, 135. Building of necropolis on villa estates was especially popular in southern Gaul, Italy, and North Africa.

to handle growing numbers of familial burials.⁷⁰ It is important to note that the villa mausolea and basilicas were under the control of the family who oversaw the appointment of the clergy on the villa estates. We may assume, therefore, that funerary practices also remained within the family's jurisdiction on rural estates. In addition, a new kind of rural or "field cemetery" appeared in the fifth and sixth centuries introduced by Germanic migrants flowing into the northwestern parts of Europe.⁷¹ A single field cemetery might be large enough to include several thousand graves; the burials were sometimes in coffins or stone-lined graves, but more commonly in individual trenches.⁷² Many of these large burial grounds in western Europe had been laid out in rows in what were called, "row-grave cemeteries."⁷³ Bonnie Effros explains that this type of cemetery "likely included individuals of different religious persuasions," meaning that pagan burials were probably mixed with those of Christians; but, she adds, most had "no documented link to local church or secular authorities."⁷⁴ In terms of discerning the difference between pagan and Christian burials, scholars once thought that the distinction could be made because "pagan" graves held more grave goods.⁷⁵ Historian Megan McLaughlin adds that scholarship now agrees that grave goods were more about "the culture of Frankish warriors in the migration period [of the fifth and sixth centuries in Gaul] when a display of newly acquired wealth promoted a warrior's prestige"; further, during this period,

⁷⁰ Bowes, *Private Worship*, 140-41.

⁷¹ See historian Donald Bullough, "Burial, Community and Belief in the Early Medieval West," in *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society: Studies Presented to M. M. Wallace-Hadrill*, edited by P. Wormald, D. Bullough, and R. Collins (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 183.

⁷² Bullough, "Burial, Community and Belief," 183.

⁷³ Bullough, "Burial, Community, and Belief," 185.

⁷⁴ Bonnie Effros, "Death and Burial," in *Medieval Christianity*, edited by Daniel E. Bornstein (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 59.

⁷⁵ Megan McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints: Prayer for the Dead in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 111.

the church was not objecting to burial of “personal items of wealth” buried with the dead.⁷⁶ Therefore, since many of the burials in the row graves did contain grave goods, it becomes entirely possible/probable that any number of the graves were Christian.⁷⁷ The point to make, therefore, is that during the fourth and fifth centuries, Christian families continued to demonstrate their status, wealth, and familial connections by burying personal items (grave goods) with the dead. It also affirms the laity’s (1) control over individual burials, (2) in some cases, community control over cemeteries, and (3) the ongoing sharing of cemeteries; thus, confirming the continued authority of *sacra privata*. We may assume then, that the church still had little, if any, jurisdiction over the burial places of most Christians in the latter part of the fourth century.

The fourth century also saw the private patronage of burial sites within the context of charity. In some cases, the patrons were wealthy women who provided space in their own familial cemeteries or *hypogaea* in the catacombs for members of the poor in Rome. One example was the widow Turtura who arranged space for the burial of strangers and the poor in the underground basilica of Saints Felix and Adauctus in the Catacomb of Commodilla.⁷⁸ In another example, Faltonia Hilaritas, the patron of a private cemetery outside of Rome, made it available for the Christian poor who had no private means for burial; she eventually turned the

⁷⁶ McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints*, 111. See also, Bonnie Effros, “Grave Goods and the Ritual Expression of Identity,” in *Merovingian Mortuary Archaeology and the Making of the Early Middle Ages* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 119-74; Effros explains that the decline of grave goods was not due to religion; it was due rather, to the shift in how families showed their social status.

⁷⁷ McLaughlin, *Consorting with the Saints*, 111. McLaughlin argues that as late as the seventh and eighth centuries, archaeological evidence reveals Christian Frankish warriors and their wives “continued to be buried with fine weapons and rich jewelry”; the custom was finally abandoned not because of christianization per se, but rather due to “the growing influence of monasticism, with its emphasis on simplicity and humility” on the nobles of Gaul.

⁷⁸ Osiek, “Patronage of Women,” 268.

cemetery over to the church for their administration.⁷⁹ The inclusion of burial grounds for the poor seemed to be an extension of the Christian practice of caring for the sick and dying.

Besides the example of Turtura's generous charity for burial of the poor, Carolyn Osiek has indicated the significant evidence of the private patronage of women in terms of cemeteries and burial spaces made available to the poor, the homeless, and generally to those without means, not only in Rome but also in North Africa, Malta, and Syracuse.⁸⁰

Let me summarize the implications so far. With regard to burial in the fourth and fifth centuries, and in agreement with Bodel and Rebillard, most regions exhibited no church control over cemeteries, while other regions showed very limited church involvement.⁸¹ In other words, the reference is to a limited practice of a few bishops who arranged for the burial of a few individuals next to martyrs or saints and the creation, first through the patronage of cemeteries (often through the generosity of wealthy widows) for the bodies of the abandoned and the poor. In the main, it was still the family who controlled the cemeteries and therefore the burial practices and rituals performed in these spaces. The martyrs were included within family tombs and, with the patronage of elite Christians (again, frequently wealthy widows), some of these martyrs were interred in Christian family tombs even within the precepts of covered cemeteries and funerary halls. Meanwhile, in terms of the villa-estates, the mausoleums and/or the cemeteries located on estates remained familial places. This implies that burial and other mortuary practices remained under the jurisdiction of families. This is also reflected in commemoration practices, as we see next.

⁷⁹ Osiek, "Patronage of Women," 268. An inscription referring to this situation comes from the Christian cemetery at Velletri in Latium, *ILVC* 3681A.

⁸⁰ Osiek, "Patronage of Women," 255-64; Osiek notes the naming of many of the catacombs in Rome after women (likely the original owners of the space before turning it over to church management); e.g. the catacombs of Domitilla, Commodilla, Priscilla, Balbina, and Lucina, 255-64.

⁸¹ Bodel, "*Columbaria* to Catacombs," and Éric. Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity*, translated by E. Trapnell Rawlings and J. Routier-Pucci (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009).

In terms of the commemoration rituals performed by Christians in the fourth and fifth centuries, my discussion begins with beliefs about the presence of the deceased at the grave. The Greco-Roman belief that the spirits of the dead remained in the tomb simply carried over into Christian domestic religion. Peter Brown refers to the presence of spirits of the dead at the tomb as *praesentia*, the physical presence of the departed in the sense of the individual's place of burial (the grave), and/or in the sense of presence in a fragment or relic (e.g. bone) of the person or an item that had come in contact with the body (*brandea*).⁸² The idea was evident in the ruling issued at the Council of Elvira (306 CE)—referred to previously—which denounced the use of candles at funerals (in processions, at burial, during visits to the cemetery); canon 34 of the council stated: “*Ceros per diem placuit in coemeterio non incendi, inquietandi enim sanctorum spiritus non sunt*” (“It is forbidden to light wax candles during the day in cemeteries, for fear of troubling the spirits of the saints”).⁸³ The statement inferred that candlelight, even during the daytime, disturbed the souls of the dead lingering at the tomb, thus confirming the belief that the dead resided in a state of *refrigerium* at the grave.

Early Christians, both urban and rural, who “joined the church from a traditional background or perhaps their parents had done so” maintained many deep-seated beliefs including that the dead were forever linked to the living, that the dead needed help from the living, and that, in return, the dead would assist the living.⁸⁴ Verification of these beliefs appear in material/visual archaeological data. For instance, on many Christian tombs the epitaphs continued to address the *Manes* (the guardian spirits of the ancestors) with the abbreviation D M = *Dis Manibus* (to the gods and the *Manes*); the evidence is clearly

⁸² Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, 21 and also 87-92.

⁸³ For canon 34 of the Council of Elvira, see Hefele, *Christian Councils*, vol. I, Bk. 1, 150-51.

⁸⁴ MacMullen, *Second Church*, 76.

specified on “hundreds of Christian tombstones.”⁸⁵ Another indication of beliefs about the dead, mentioned earlier, was that the living assisted the spirits of the dead through *refrigerium* (in this case, considered as “care” or feasting) at the tombs of the family ancestors. Physical remains— dining tables or *mensae*, water wells to chill or dilute the wine, hearths for cooking, dining-couches or benches—revealed that Christian families retained the celebration of the Roman traditional days by holding “picnics” at gravesites; a good example resides with the graves and house tombs in Italy in Isola Sacra and Rome, though the phenomenon appears elsewhere in the empire, too.⁸⁶ Significantly, a *mensa* at the burial site provided the family the ability to prepare the meal on this “table-top” and, by using wine to wash food particles down the hole in the *mensa* and through a tube extending below the surface, the family was able to share a meal with the deceased resting in the sarcophagus/coffin buried below.⁸⁷ In this way the dead were nourished and cared for; in short, the dead received *refrigerium* from their kinsfolk. Additionally, illustrations of these family banquets (*convivia* between the living with the dead) remained on display in the frescoes on walls in the Christian catacombs and on relief panels of Christian sarcophagi.⁸⁸ For example, beneath the city of Rome in the underground burial chambers of the Catacomb of Peter and Marcellinus in Rome, a wall painting depicts a semi-circular table at which a group of diners (with captions written above their heads) call on

⁸⁵ MacMullen, *Second Church*, 76; MacMillan cites many examples, including in Ambrose’s basilica in Milan; see *Second Church*, 166n24.

⁸⁶ MacMullen, *Second Church*, 77-78. Traditional dates for *refrigerium* for many families included “a set of three days of remembrance post-inhumation, and then a fourth day on the seventh or ninth day, and then a fifth day on the thirtieth or fortieth, and then annually thereafter on the birthday of the deceased, on January 1, on a universal week in February ending on the 22nd, and on a later day or days (March, May, June) celebrated with flowers and a more elaborate liturgy,” 77.

⁸⁷ Robin M. Jensen, “Dining with the Dead: From the *Mensa* to the Altar in Christian Late Antiquity,” in *Commemorating the Dead: Texts and Artifacts in Context*, edited by L. Brink and D. Green (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 118-30. Sometimes the feeding tubes were as simple as “the necks of broken or even buried amphorae which held the remains (both cremated and inhumed) of the deceased,” 118.

⁸⁸ Jensen, “Dining with the Dead,” 123 and illustrated in figs. 4.11, 4.12, 4.4, 4.5, and 4.6. See also this study, Appendix B for examples.

servants Irene and Agape to refill their wine cups.⁸⁹ Similarly, sculptured reliefs, such as the panels on the sarcophagus held at Museo Pio Cristiano in Rome, illustrate the traditional family meal of bread, fish, and wine.⁹⁰ Like the third century architecture that assisted *convivia* at tombs (those of middle-class and elite Christians), the same features were maintained through the fourth and fifth centuries—e.g., in Rome and in the necropolis of Isola Sacra (between Portus and Ostia)—and included amenities such as water fountains, hearths for cooking, permanent couches (*biclinia*, *triclinia*),⁹¹ and semi-circular tables (*stibadia*) for serving food. The frequent occurrence of the *mensa* further reinforced the evidence that Christian families (as well as Christian clergy) maintained the Greco-Roman customs in North Africa, Rome, and regions of Italy.⁹²

As previously mentioned, along with the family’s funerary banquets held at the conclusion of the funeral proper, there were meals for the deceased held on various anniversary dates and in conjunction with various Roman festivals such as the *Parentalia*. In the fourth and fifth centuries, these activities were continued by Christians who maintained

⁸⁹ Note: Jensen interprets “Agape,” and “Irene” in the banquet scenes differently than does Tulloch; for Jensen these words are the names ofFor an image of the painting in the Catacomb of Peter and Marcellinus in Rome, see Jensen, “Dining with the Dead,” fig. 4.12, 125. For a more detailed analysis of this fresco and others in the catacomb of SS. Marcellino and Pietro (late third or early fourth century), especially the images in chambers 45 and 78, see Janet Tulloch, “Women Leaders in Family Funerary Banquets,” in *A Woman’s Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity*, by Carolyn Osiek and Margaret Y. MacDonald with J. Tulloch (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 183-86 and figs. 8.2-8.5. For visual examples from Tulloch’s discussion, see Appendix B of this study, figs. 2-5.

⁹⁰ Jensen, “Dining with the Dead,” 123, fig. 4.11; Jensen identifies her example as “Christian” though she does not date the relief.

⁹¹ Jensen, “Dining with the Dead,” 118, especially fig. 4.9, which is a photo of a *biclinium* at Isola Sacra in the necropolis at Ostia, Italy. See also Eastman, “Cult of Paul,” 71-114; Eastman discusses several sites in which *triclinia* were built and used during this period as part of the cult of the martyrs.

⁹² MacMullen, *Second Church*, 55-56. Sometimes the *mensae* were dedicated to martyrs as indicated by the names inscribed nearby, e.g., the martyrs Rogatus and Vitalis are named in Tipasa, North Africa, in the “Alexander” church. Also, see Augustine’s *Serm.* 310.2.2, in PL 38.1415, in which he mentions the tomb of Cyprian (bishop of Carthage) and the *mensa* erected on the spot of Cyprian’s martyrdom; Augustine explains, “But the reason why this table of sacrifice, which is God’s, is still called the mensa of Cyprian is this: he was encircled there by persecutors, now, where it is venerated by his friends in prayer.”

adherence to the Roman model.⁹³ Some interesting insights about how early Christians remembered the family ancestors at the festival of *Parentalia* come from the writing of Roman poet and Christian layman, Ausonius from Bordeaux (a Roman province in Gaul in late fourth century). Ausonius authored “*Parentalia*,” an extended poem comprising numerous “constituent poems” about the various members of his family.⁹⁴ “*Parentalia*” is a good example of the deep bonds of kinship that existed within the late antique Christian family. The long poem demonstrates the strength of Roman virtues among family members by implying *pietas*, *concordia*, *prudencia*, *communitas*—not only while the members lived, but stretching beyond death into the afterlife.⁹⁵ Ausonius’ poetry is also another example of the mingling of the Roman “pagan” viewpoint with the Gallo-Christian perspective during the fourth century. Ausonius illustrates the continuation of the annual family festival, the *Parentalia*—the celebration to remember and honor dead parents and relatives with prayers and offerings (food, wine, flowers); and, although Ausonius was writing in the Christian era, his component poems employ numerous Roman terms such as, “shades” (*manes*: spirits/ghosts of the dead) and “Elysium home” (*Elysiam sortitus sedem*); the poems also invoke the names of several Roman gods/goddesses (Fate, Fortune/Chance, the Muses).⁹⁶ Further, Ausonius’ work refers

⁹³ For thoroughly researched background on the festival of *Parentalia*, see Fanny Dolansky, “Honouring the Family Dead on the Parentalia: Ceremony, Spectacle, and Memory,” *Phoenix* 65, no. 1/2 (2011): 206. Dolansky stressed the importance of family memory and the memorialization of the dead as the fundamental functions of the *Parentalia* festival.

⁹⁴ Ausonius, *Parentalia*, Books 1-17, translated by Hugh G. Evelyn-White, LCL 96 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919).

⁹⁵ An example of the deep affection that Ausonius felt for one of his uncles, Aemilius Magnus Arborius, is apparent in the third poem of *Parentalia*; he writes, “*Culta mihi est pietas patre primum et matre vocatis, dici set refugit tertius Arborius, quern primum memorare nefas mihi patre secundo rursus non primum ponere paene nefas.*” My own translation renders the text as follows: “Out of familial love I am called to name my father and mother first but Arborius is minimized if named third; still, it would be a horrible injustice were I to mention him first rather than as a second father.”

⁹⁶ Ausonius, *Parentalia*, Bk. IV.5.12; and Bk. IV.3.23.

often to the mourning performed by the living for the dead; this topic is discussed in detail in the final chapter of this thesis.

By the fifth century the episcopate complained that the *convivia* at the graves of the martyrs had gotten out of hand—there was too much food, too much wine, too much singing and dancing, too much partying; the celebrations had become too much like the pagan *pervigilia*.⁹⁷ Augustine observed that the festive meals and accompanying drunkenness at the tombs were especially problematic in North Africa.⁹⁸ Ambrose had dealt with *convivia* of the laity at the tombs of the martyrs in Milan and Augustine decided something similar had to be done in Africa, as well.⁹⁹ He sent a letter to his friend, the bishop Aurelius in Carthage, in which he explained that “carnal and ignorant folks” celebrating in the cemeteries was done largely “as consolation for the dead,” but it had become unacceptable, and, in Augustine’s estimation, needed to be tempered, rather than completely forbidden.¹⁰⁰ Augustine objected to the noise at vigils and he disapproved of the singing, dancing, and especially the drinking taking place at the tombs of the martyrs.¹⁰¹ Subsequently, in 397 CE at the Third Council of Carthage, the bishops wrote canon 29, declaring that, “Bishops and clergy shall have no meals in the church, unless when necessary for the refreshment of the guests, and then none of the people [laity] shall be admitted.”¹⁰² The canon seemed to imply that some of the clergy were

⁹⁷ MacMullen, *Second Church*, 77-80. As noted, the meal for the dead (*refrigerium*) was a common tradition for both Romans and Christians. For most Christian families, the meal was celebrated privately; however, it could become quite public when the subject of the commemoration was a martyr (e.g., the annual festival for Saint Felix in Nola, celebrated by pilgrims from far and near). For description of the Roman *pervigilium* (an all-night vigil), see Johannes Quasten, *Music and Worship in Pagan and Christian Late Antiquity* (Washington, DC: National Assoc. of Pastoral musicians, 1983), 169-72.

⁹⁸ Augustine, *Ep.* 22.6; Letter to Aurelius, bishop of Carthage.

⁹⁹ Augustine, *Ep.* 22.6.

¹⁰⁰ Augustine, *Ep.* 22.6.

¹⁰¹ Augustine, *Ep.* 22.6; also see Augustine, *Exposition on the Book of Psalms* (Ps. 1-72), edited by Paul A. Boer, Sr., new edition (Scotts Valley, CA: CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2012), 32.1.5.

¹⁰² See the Third Council of Carthage in Hefele, *History of the Councils*, vol. II, Bk. 8, 29.399n2. Also, MacMullen, *Second Church*, 61, 161n34.

engaging in the joyous celebrations of *convivia* at the shrines of the martyrs and some of the clergy were allowing members of the laity to join them in the festivities inside the basilicas. Understanding how deeply held this particular religious custom (ritual) was for the people, and not wanting to outright forbid their *convivia*—but at the same time being aware that controlling the behaviors of *some* clergy was important—Augustine together with Aurelius made a decision. They agreed that banquets in the cemeteries within their region should be allowed to continue but with some conditions: *convivia* could occur *as long as* some of the food was offered as alms to the poor and *as long as* there was not too much “ostentation” in the celebration.¹⁰³ The laity, however, did not appreciate restrictions on their time-honored practices; after all, they argued, their festivities were well-meaning and were intended to honor the martyrs as well as the ordinary dead. Unsurprisingly, the efforts of the bishops of Africa (elsewhere, as well) were largely unsuccessful. Christians persisted in their vigils for the martyrs. As well, the annual festivals for the dead (e.g., the *Parentalia*, *Rosalia*) continued, as confirmed in Augustine’s sermons.¹⁰⁴ Popular attachment to the festivals ran deep; besides, insisted the laity, memorial celebrations were among private rights and responsibilities awarded the family through the law of *sacra privata*. While the laity perceived the *Parentalia* (and the all-night vigils) as a means of honoring the dead, the bishops continued to call out the festivities as a type of pagan idolatry.¹⁰⁵ Augustine’s sermons, for example, challenged those Christians who defended the *Parentalia*; he attempted to convince them that nothing in the way of elaborate funerals or celebrations at the grave could bring

¹⁰³ Augustine, *Ep.* 22.6.

¹⁰⁴ For example, Augustine, *Opera Omnia, Sermones*, PL 38, edited by J. -P. Migne (Paris, 1841), *Serm.*, 361.6.6.

¹⁰⁵ Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 150-51.

reprieve to the dead if they had not lived a good life.¹⁰⁶ He repeated that only the offering of alms for the poor, prayer, and the eucharist were valid practices for aiding the dead.¹⁰⁷ In short, celebrations for the dead were, in Augustine's view, of no benefit to the dead and a solace only to the living as personal entertainment.¹⁰⁸ He was leaving the door open just a crack for Christians; on the one hand, the dead may not be assisted by the celebrations, but the living needed consolation in their bereavement so that order might be maintained in their lives—the festivals to praise and honor the dead were that remedy, a way of reincorporation. The important point from the perspective of this thesis is that celebrating in the cemeteries and at the tombs of the dead continued through the fourth and fifth centuries despite the episcopate's attempts to control it.

Mentioned previously in this study was that regular visitation to the graves of the deceased—on the third, ninth, and thirtieth day after death, for instance—was part of Greco-Roman commemoration of the dead. In terms of the Christian practice of bringing gifts/offerings to the tombs of the martyrs, the story of Augustine's mother, Monica and her attempts to visit the cemetery in Milan was already discussed.¹⁰⁹ The story applies to this

¹⁰⁶ Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 149. See also Augustine, *De cura pro mortuis*, which states, "We should not think that any aid comes to the dead for whom we are providing care, except what we solemnly pray for in their behalf at the altars, either by sacrifices of prayers or of alms," 18.2.

¹⁰⁷ See also, Heikki Kotila, "Memoria Mortuorum: Commemoration of the Departed in Augustine," *Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum* 38 (Rome: Institutum Patristicum, 1992), 98. Kotila explains that the three observances (eucharist, prayer and alms) were "all termed a sacrifice (*sacrificium*) for the dead," in referring to Augustine, *De cura pro mortuis gerenda*, 22. Notably, Augustine's statement is very similar to what is found in the *Apostolic Constitutions* in use in Syria around this time; see the *Apostolic Constitutions*, edited and translated by A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, ANF 7 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1885), 7.42.

¹⁰⁸ Kotila, *Memoria*, 76. Did the *Parentalia* endure into the middle ages and beyond? Unlike the *Lemuria*, the Roman celebration of the spirits of the dead, there is no information about whether the dates for the celebration of the Roman *Parentalia* were adapted by the church; the *Lemuria* was renamed the "Feast of the Virgin Mary and the Saints" (*Dedicatio Sanctae Mariae ad martyres*) and its date (May 13) was retained by Pope Boniface IV in 609 CE; eventually, the name of the feast was shortened to "All Saints" and moved to November 1 in the eighth century by Pope Gregory III where it remains to this day; see *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed., edited by E. A. Livingstone (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), s.v. "All Saints' Day," 41-42. The topic of adapted festivals could be an interesting future investigation.

¹⁰⁹ Augustine, *Confessions*, 6.2.2.

discussion of commemoration of the dead, as well. In review, by 385 CE Ambrose had forbidden the celebration of the *Parentalia* at the martyrs' tombs in his jurisdiction at Milan. But for Monica, having lived in North Africa in Thagaste where the ritual was common, especially during *Parentalia*, it was a surprise to her that she was prevented from the cemetery in Milan to do her visiting of the dead. She wanted to take wine and cakes to share with the martyrs, but the caretaker denied her entry.¹¹⁰ The episode effectively illustrated the differences in expectations between one locale and another during the fourth and fifth centuries. It is also a reminder that the church was only involved in regulating activity at the shrines/tombs of the martyrs at this time; the bishops still had little jurisdiction over the private/domestic funerary practices of the people, short of admonishing and rebuking their popular practices.

Accordingly, there was still no definitive ritual or ritual sequence offered by the church for commemorating the dead. Sometimes, however, individual families incorporated Christian practices with their own. One example was the eucharistic celebration offered by Ambrose for his brother Satyrus a week after Satyrus died in Milan (379 CE); notably, the eucharist was celebrated in a church following burial at the tomb.¹¹¹ At the death of Monica, mother of Augustine, the eucharist was celebrated in the presence of Monica's corpse, which had been placed beside the tomb prior to burial.¹¹² In this case, the eucharist was not celebrated in a church but it took place in the presence of the corpse. This study has repeatedly mentioned that customs differed from region to region and that was the case in this period of Christian history—the fourth and fifth centuries. The main observation is that there was no

¹¹⁰ It is not made clear in *Confessions* whether the caretaker was exercising control over the whole cemetery—which is unlikely given the evidence—or just access to the martyrs, which is more likely.

¹¹¹ Ambrose, *Death of Satyrus*, 2.2.

¹¹² Augustine, *Confessions*, 9.32.

real indication of a developing ritual devised and advocated by the church, though there was more attention to the sense of “community” as a Christian family. That said, however, the idea of offering the eucharist either at the burial or as an act of commemoration, happened to coincide with the *Apostolic Constitutions*, which advocated that one may offer a eucharist for the departed in the cemetery.¹¹³

While ordinary Christians honored their duty to visit the family tombs, they wanted to do more to remember and commemorate their dead. One idea was to have the names of the deceased mentioned during the eucharistic sacrifice of the mass. This recalls another episode in *Confessions*. During a deeply intimate dialogue with her son before she died, Monica beseeched Augustine, “I have only one request to make of you, that you remember me at the altar of the Lord, wherever you may be’.”¹¹⁴ Apparently it was the case until this time, that in some regions, after the readings of the mass, there was a prayer that was a general intercession for all Christians.¹¹⁵ Then, at a different part of the mass, the names of clergy (those living and perhaps also those departed) were read aloud from a list (*diptych*) kept on the altar; Augustine noted that the martyrs, whose names were also read, were supplicated for prayers (but not prayed *to*) and their names were read separately from the general intercession for all “those who have fallen asleep,” that is, the rest of the departed who needed assistance in getting to heaven.¹¹⁶ It is suggested that Augustine may have been pointing out that families held the responsibility for individual commemoration and that the church only offered a “general” intercession for those departed in case anyone was forgotten by their kinsfolk.¹¹⁷ For Monica’s

¹¹³ *Apostolic Constitutions*, 6.30.

¹¹⁴ Augustine, *Confessions*, 9.27.

¹¹⁵ Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 157, citing Bernard Botte, ed., *Le canon de la messe romaine: édition critique*, Textes et études liturgiques 2 (Louvain : Abbaye de Mont César, 1962), 67-69.

¹¹⁶ Augustine, *Sermons* 284.5 and 297.2.3.

¹¹⁷ Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 160.

part, she asked only “that she be remembered at God’s altar” meaning she wished to be prayed for; Robin Lane Fox muses that Augustine likely wrote *Confessions* in part to ensure just that—that his mother would be remembered in perpetuity through the prayers of everyone who read his text.¹¹⁸ Augustine’s position on prayer for the dead, as he expressed it in his treatise *De cura pro mortuis gerenda* (*On the Care of the Dead*) ca. 421 CE, was that prayer after someone died was useless because how they lived their lives was the sole determinant of whether they would be saved, provided they were baptized and were “not wholly evil.”¹¹⁹ He would, therefore, have been confident that his mother was saved.

Another indicator that the transition to a Christian prayer/liturgy for the dead continued, occurred in 416 CE. The bishop of Rome, Innocent I, wrote to the bishop of Umbria who had asked about when and whether it was proper to announce the name of someone who brought the offerings for a eucharistic sacrifice (the mass) to the church; the complete context of this request is unknown, but it was an implicit suggestion that offerings *might be made* on behalf of the departed.¹²⁰ Christians (at least clergy in the aforementioned case) were looking more and more to their superiors for alternate ways to celebrate departed kin in *memoria*. As we recall, the church did not yet dictate funeral rituals, nor would it have anything concrete to offer until the eighth century. Until then, it was still up to the family (or

¹¹⁸ Fox, *Augustine*, 362-63.

¹¹⁹ For Augustine’s position that alms, the eucharist, and prayers for the dead are beneficial only for those who were “worthy” while they lived, see Augustine, *De cura pro mortuis gerenda*, 1.2 and repeated in Augustine, *Enchiridion*, edited by E. Evans, CCSL 46 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1969), 29.110. Translation from Augustine, *Faith, Hope and Charity*, edited and translated by L. A. Arand, Ancient Christian Writers 3 (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1978), 70-72, 75-77 (hereafter cited as ACW). Again, Augustine’s line of thinking coincides with the *Apostolic Constitutions*, 7.41. It must be presumed that he had studied these church orders and had made them part of his own pastoral care.

¹²⁰ Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 155, citing R. Cabié, ed., *La lettre du pape Innocent Ier à Décentius de Gubbio (416)*, Bibliothèque de la Revue d’histoire ecclésiastique 58 (Louvain : Publications universitaires de Louvain, 1973), 22-23, 40-41.

religious community as “family”) to decide how much they would rely on their own response (and rituals) for death.

Conclusion

This chapter has visited the central themes of my thesis: family, place, memory, and funerary ritual. These themes were examined and analyzed for the period of Christian history, 301-500 CE. The highlights are reviewed in what follows. First, it seems the family was still largely in control of the funeral process. There were some changes, however. For example, in northern Italy, Gaul, Spain, and Britain, wealthy families in rural areas were actively establishing their own villa-estates. The families on these estates had garnered considerable control over private worship including funerary rituals, and they also had the power to select and employ their own clergy according to the Theodosian Code. Therefore, the jurisdiction of the family now incorporated several aspects of Christianity, including some of the practices of the institutional church (e.g. the eucharist and its distribution, and when and where to celebrate a mass). In short, most of the *sacra privata* to this point involved the family’s traditional domestic religiosity. The villa-estate also incorporated its own places/spaces, including the building of estate-churches for use by the family, the villa’s Christian tenants, and nearby neighbors.

Second was the development of the “monastic family” as a new form of family unit. Jerome was very involved in the establishment of household asceticism for elite women who gathered in community in specified households in Rome. Third, the control of the eucharist had become quite flexible, especially for estate families who had the advantage of private churches and the ability to appoint their own priests. Fourth, dying, death, and funeral rituals

remained the prerogative of all Christian families, whether the familial unit lives in the *domus*, villa, monastery/convent, or ascetic household.

Fifth, Christian families of the fourth and fifth centuries continued to utilize the same places as did the Romans for funeral rituals associated with death. These places/spaces included (1) the private “home-place” where dying, death and preparation for burial continued; but now such places might also mean a monastery, convent, or private home for wealthy ascetics led by a spiritual guide (e.g., the group of wealthy women in Rome led/directed by Jerome), (2) the more public route traversed by the funeral procession from the home to the cemetery (or in the case of monastics/ascetics, with a stop at the church), and (3) the “place” of burial. A new aspect of “place” was added during this period as the bishops began the appropriation of the martyr cult by building basilicas (burial churches, some housing the grave of a martyr). However, the notion of requesting burial *ad sanctos* was in the state of development.

Sixth, memorial rituals were now performed in private family cemeteries (which remained in the majority), but also in some newly erected basilicas, such as San Sebastiano, and SS. Marcellino and Pietro in Rome. Remembering the dead remained paramount for families because memory was integral to maintaining one’s social identity. Commemoration celebrations retained some of the Roman customs (e.g., feasting with the dead and celebrating certain festivals), which were extended to include the “holy dead” (martyrs). *Convivia* or feasting celebrations in the cemeteries caused angst for the episcopate as the laity persisted in their traditional customs but in terms of banquets (with the accompanying festive behaviors) for the martyrs. Christians continued to defend their authority over ritual performances

pertaining to the family departed. Families still deliberated over whether or not to invite clergy to participate in their private ritual activities.

Finally, with regard to commemorative celebrations, Augustine exhibited a certain tolerance for the old Roman practices because, as he stated, “it was impossible for the church to appear to urge Christians to neglect the memory of the ancestors.”¹²¹ Notably, he acknowledged that feasting practices fell within the jurisdiction of the family. It is also during this period that church councils issued condemnations regarding handling of the eucharist, improper mourning behaviors at funerals, and especially inappropriate memorial celebrations for the martyrs, all in an attempt to extend some manner of church authority over funerary ritual.

¹²¹ Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 152-53. See also, Augustine’s letter to Aurelius bishop of Carthage, urging tolerance, *Ep. 22.6*: “it appears to me that they might be more easily dissuaded from such scandalous and unworthy practices in these places, if, besides showing that they are forbidden by Scripture, we take care, in regard to the offerings for the spirits of those who sleep ... that they be not sumptuous beyond what is becoming respect for the memory of the departed, and that they be ... given on the spot to the poor. Thus, the appearance of neglecting the memory of their deceased friends, which might cause them no small sorrow of heart, shall be avoided, and that which is a pious and honourable act of religious service shall be celebrated as it should be in the Church. This may suffice meanwhile in regard to rioting and drunkenness.”

CHAPTER FIVE Clerical Negotiation for Control 501-800 CE and Beyond

Introduction

Until the sixth century, the transformation of the Roman to Christian funeral process showed more continuity than change. But there were several signs of transition. Clerics continued to defer to familial choices (and the rights of *sacra privata*) in terms of funerary rituals. The free use of reserve eucharist as *viaticum* by ordinary Christians in times of severe illness and death had become a source of conflict between the bishops and laity. Urban bishops identified clergy on villa-estates as making the eucharist too accessible to laity and, therefore, the source of the problem. The urban bishops were also concerned with how rural Christians were handling burial on villa- estates and conducting funerals in privately-owned churches in the countryside. As the church gradually co-opted the cult of martyrs through the construction of new basilicas (burial churches), the bishops attempted to exercise their hegemony in terms of who should be allowed burial near the martyrs and what sort of commemorative celebrations would be performed within the basilicas' precincts. The "monastic family" developed as monasticism reached the West and monks, nuns, and clergy living in monasteries and convents cared for their sick and dying, prepared the body for burial, and held their own funeral processions, just as did ordinary Christian families. Communal "Christian" identity also began to mean certain departures from Roman traditions, e.g., singing psalms instead of performing overt mourning behaviors; celebrating the eucharist at the time of burial; securing burial next to a martyr's tomb. Christian charity was advocated to include sharing leftover food with the poor following the feasting at martyr shrines and at the graves of deceased

kinsfolk. In short, the dynamic interplay between continuity and change in terms of the Christian funeral was well under way at the dawn of the sixth century.

This chapter examines the period 501-800 CE and indicates that assimilation, adaptation, and innovation in the Christian funeral process continued. New factors and various developments in western Europe stimulated societal change (social, geographic, political, and religious)—barbarian invasions and the creation of new kingdoms, the christianization of the Anglo-Saxons, and a shift from Rome as the “center of Christianity” to Gaul and Francia in cities like Arles and Trier. Gallo-Christians gradually accepted and adapted the modification of rituals proposed by their bishops. As my study tracked the changes from the sixth to eighth centuries—with a glimpse at developments into the middle ages—I found that under the direction of Charlemagne, a funerary liturgy began to take shape, and Gallo Christians began to place their trust more often with the clergy in responding to death, burial, and commemoration of the dead. However, the family still retained control in the home-place and at the cemetery and therefore could decide what should occur there. Those decisions were often led by the women whose primary concern was preserving family memory and identity.

The Separation (Pre-liminal) Stages of the Funeral, 501-800 CE

One of the rituals formalized by the church to assist the Christian about to die in the sixth century was the anointing with blessed oil (*chrism*). Caesarius of Arles was the first to incorporate clerical anointing of the sick and dying originally prescribed by the text of St. James (5:14,15). Caesarius’ rite would eventually become the basis for the “specifically clerical ritual of anointing” of the sick, and was linked with the reception of the eucharist.¹

¹ The passage from Jas. 5:14, 15 states: “Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save him

The bishop of Arles urged that both ritual acts (anointing with oil and reception of the eucharist) occur at the church, which may have been possible for some, depending on their illness, but for those gravely ill, it was clearly impractical to come to the church.² Caesarius' insistence that "anointing and communion were the only acceptable ritual responses to sickness" was clearly intended to control the activities of both priests and laity in the region of Arles, because there were, at the time, regular complaints that some clergy and many congregants were using divination and folk medicine for cures (*Serm.* 103.50.1). The eucharist had become a symbol of power by this time and was incorporated into strategies that were part of the "health system" of the people; that system included what we moderns regard as "magical thinking."³ It was part of an ongoing process which saw the names of Jesus and Mary incorporated into magical spells as "medicine." In his sermons, Caesarius specifically criticized mothers whose children were sick or dying; he asserted that in times of crisis, mothers too often sought charms, soothsayers, oracles, or sorcerers to heal their sons and daughters.⁴ He encouraged mothers to come instead to the church to ask the priest to anoint

that is sick, and the Lord shall raise him up." See Caesarius of Arles, *Sancti Caesarii Arelantensis Sermones, editio altera, CCSL Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* 103, edited by G. Morin (Turnhout: Brepols, 1953), *Serm.* 50.1.225. The Latin is written as follows: "Vos vero, fratres, sanitatem de Christo requirite, qui est vera lux; ad ecclesiam recurrite, oleo vos benedicto perungite, eucharistiam Christi accipite. Haec si facitis, non solum corporis, sed etiam animae sanitatem recipietis." My translation: "But, sisters and brothers, ask healing from Christ, the true light. Hasten back to the church to be anointed with holy oil and receive the Eucharistic Christ. If you do this often, not only your body but also your soul will recover wellbeing."

² Frederick S. Paxton, *Christianizing Death: The Creation of a Ritual Process in Early Medieval Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 50. Caesarius stressed that anointing with oil and communion be held at the church; the double ritual granted "both forgiveness of sins and healing" for not only the body, but especially for the soul." See Caesarius, *Serm.* 103.50.1; 103.13.3; 104.184.5.

³ Marvin Meyer and Richard Smith, eds., *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

⁴ Caesarius, *Serm.* 103.19.4-5 and 103.52.5. Besides criticizing the mothers, Caesarius also instructed any adult who was ill to seek help for him/herself from the priest; see *Serm.* 103.13.3 and *Serm.* 102.50.1. In addition, Caesarius' sermons reveal that some priests and monks had gone into the business of making amulets (charms) containing certain "sacred objects" of Christian significance (relics or copies of scriptural passages) to give to the laity to wear around their necks in times of sickness and death; see sermons in vol. 103: 12; 13.5; 14.4; 19.4, and 50.1.

the ailing child with holy oil and to provide the eucharist for healing.⁵ At the same time, Caesarius encouraged self-anointing (lay anointing), that Christians should “hurry to the church” for blessed oil to take home to anoint all in the family to insure healing and good health for both body and the soul.⁶ So the situation in sixth century Gaul was that Caesarius delivered more than one sermon to remind Christians at times of serious illness and danger of death, to trust in the church for it alone had the proper “cure.”⁷ He stressed that while the laity should be concerned for health of the body, more important still was the health of the soul, and spiritual care must not be overlooked; hence, the reason why the faithful should bring the sick to the church. But for the people of Arles, the home was still the “best” and most practical place to deal with sickness, dying, and death. Moreover, the home had been made a “ritualized space” because of the performance over the centuries of specific familial rituals.⁸ Further, Christians in the sixth century were not entirely convinced that ritual activities performed at

⁵ Notably, the laity in sixth century Gaul used the eucharist as an equivalent to folk medicine and magical cures.

⁶ Caesarius, *Serm.* 104.184.5 The text in Latin: “*Quantum rectius et salubrius erat, ut ad ecclesiam current, corpus et sanguinem Christi acciperent, oleo benedicto et se et suos fideliter perungerent, et, secundum quod Iacobus apostolus dicit, non solum sanitatem corporum, sed etiam remissionem acciperent peccatorum.*” My translation: “How proper and beneficial it would be [for them] to hasten to the church, to receive the Body and Blood of Christ [the eucharist], to faithfully anoint themselves and the others [children] with holy oil, and in conformity with what the apostle James says, receive not only healing of the body, but also forgiveness of sins.” For discussion about whether the Latin verbs are active or passive, thus, meaning “self-anointing” and one’s own consumption of the eucharist, or receiving the anointing and eucharist from the priest at church, see Henry G. J. Beck, *The Pastoral Care of Souls in South-East France During the Sixth Century* (Rome: *Apud aedes universitatis Gregoriana*, 1950), 246n24 and 244-48; aside from complex linguistics, I tend to side with the numerous scholars cited by Beck (247n26) and information that churches were few and far from the residences of the majority of the population (living in rural regions), and concur that sixth century Christians likely self-anointed in an attempt to heal their maladies and those of their families. For discussion about the reason that self-anointing became common, see theologian Paul Palmer, “The Purpose of Anointing the Sick: A Reappraisal,” *Theological Studies* 19, no. 3 (September, 1958): 320. According to Palmer, the practice of self-anointing carried on in the West until the Carolingian period; Palmer suggests the reason for this duration was the negligence of priests in visiting the sick. I would argue, however, the fault was likely not that the priests were neglecting visitations, but more that the laity were unwilling to invite the priests into their homes to visit the sick.

⁷ William E. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: Life, Testament, Letters* (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 1994), 222.

⁸ Jonathan Z. Smith, “The Bare Facts of Ritual,” in *Readings in Ritual Studies*, edited by R. L. Grimes (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1996), 480.

church were yet on par with those performed at home. The social identity of the family perceived the home to be the appropriate environment or *place* for care, guardianship, and basic support. Only over many generations would Christian families come to accept the church, the monastery, the abbey or convent, and church-controlled hospitals as ritualized places where they could identify with clerics and religious as part of the larger Christian “family” and count on the same support, solidarity, and security they had relied on in the “Roman household.”

Further was the continuing debate in the church over the use of the eucharist at times of serious illness and imminent death. The Christian’s right to the eucharist at the time of death was still in dispute in this latter period of late antiquity. In 506 CE, to remedy the situation, canon 15 at the Council of Agde (in Visigothic Gaul) stated: “the Viaticum is not to be refused to anyone who is near death.”⁹ For Christians the importance of securing a safe journey to God when one died remained of paramount concern. However, if a family member missed the opportunity to receive the eucharistic *viaticum* prior to death, then (as discussed earlier) there was some urgency on the part of the surviving family to acquire the eucharist to administer it to the deceased *after* death. In 517 CE at the Council/Synod of Gerunda in Spain, canon 9 defined *viaticum* as eucharist and penance received together *prior to* death.¹⁰ By adding penance alongside deathbed eucharist, the council of bishops implicated the presence of clergy. The church and its agents were now, in effect, “required” at times of dying and death for Christians. Whether the laity would adhere to the ruling was another matter.

⁹ For the Council of Agde (506), see C. J. Hefele, *History of the Councils*, vol. IV (AD 451-680), translated and edited by W. R. Clark (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1895), Bk. 13, 79.

¹⁰ For the Council of Gerunda, see Hefele, *History of the Councils*, vol. IV, Bk. 13, 106. For discussion of the progression in the meaning of *viaticum*—that is, how *viaticum* evolved from meaning eucharist alone to meaning eucharist plus anointing, to meaning eucharist plus anointing and penance, and finally to meaning eucharist plus baptism plus penance—see Gregory Grabka, “Christian Viaticum: A Study of Its Cultural Background,” *Traditio* 9 (1953): 28.

Unsurprisingly, feeding the eucharist to the deceased after death persisted among Christians in the sixth century, despite censure by the church. As expected, at a synod in Carthage (525 CE) the bishops upheld the proclamation of previous councils in that city (397 and 419 CE) and the canon concerning the topic was repeated once again: no eucharist shall be given to the dead.¹¹ The full extent of the situation became evident at the council in Auxerre in 578 CE. The bishops condemned the feeding of the eucharist to the dead, and also forbade interring the *viaticum* with the corpse at the time of burial.¹² The practice was obviously significant enough to warrant censure from the bishops; and, on the matter of interring the eucharistic *viaticum* with the dead, one is drawn to Gregory the Great's reference in *Dialogues* of Benedict of Nursia advocating the burial of the eucharistic *viaticum* with the dead, in particular, with clergy and monastics.¹³ Women, also, were mentioned in a canon of the Council of Auxerre and forbidden to handle the eucharist with uncovered hands.¹⁴ This ruling seemed to contradict the earlier situation when reserve eucharist kept in the home could be handled by anyone in the family. It also implied that women continued to administer the

¹¹ For the Synod of Carthage (525 CE), see Charles J. Hefele and H. Leclercq, *Histoire des Conciles d'après les documents originaux*, vol. 2, edited by Letouzey et Ané (Paris, 1908), sect. 238, 1069-74.

¹² For canon 12 of the Council of Auxerre (578 CE), which explains that a ban was placed on interment of the eucharistic bread and/or relics with the Christian deceased, see Hefele, *History of the Councils*, vol. IV, Bk. 15, 413-14. Also, Ildefonso Schuster, *The Sacramentary (Liber Sacramentorum): Historical and Liturgical Notes on the Roman Missal*, vol. 1, translated by A. Levelis-Marke (London: Burns, Oats & Washbourne, 1924), 255: "the Viaticum ... was sometimes placed also placed on the breast of the dead person." See Bonnie Effros, *Caring for Body and Soul: Burial and the Afterlife in the Merovingian World* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 45.

¹³ Gregory the Great, *Dialogi*, edited by Umberto Moricca, *Fonti per la storia d'Italia*, pubblicate dall'Istituto Storico Italiano 57 (Rome: Tipografia del Senato, 1924), Bk. IV, ch. 24. And, Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, translated by Odo John Zimmerman, *Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* 39, repr. (Washington, DC: CUA, 2002), 4.24; in this passage of the *Dialogues*, Gregory tells a story about the abbot Benedict, who gave a piece of consecrated bread to the parents of a young monk whose body had been ejected quite miraculously twice from the grave; when the eucharist was interred with the body in its third burial, the corpse remained in the grave this time in peaceful repose. Some questions to be asked: Was the placing of the eucharist with the burial already a common practice at the time? Was it a practice of clerics and monastics only? Notably, the council at Auxerre was convened at the very end of Gregory's life; so, was Gregory's story about the young monk a report on common practice or did it inaugurate (or at least, promote) the practice?

¹⁴ For the Council of Auxerre (canon 36), see Hefele, *History of the Councils*, vol. IV, Bk. 15, 414, which states, "No woman may receive the Holy Eucharist with uncovered hand."

eucharist to the sick and dying. Similarly, the Council of Reims (624-30 CE) censured women again for “carrying viaticum to the dying,” suggesting that the earlier decree in 578 CE (Council of Auxerre) forbidding women from handling the eucharist with the bare hand probably had everything to do with restricting women’s care of the dying.¹⁵ Christian families, however, stubbornly persisted in performing traditional rites for dying and death as part of Greco-Roman culture.

Notably, the episcopate objected to the old traditions more strongly in some areas of the West than in others. Therefore, the council rulings just discussed likely represented, in particular, areas of Gaul in late sixth century. But situations in Gaul could be very different than those in Rome or in Spain. Take, for example, another of the stories related by Gregory the Great (and repeated in one of his sermons delivered in Rome) about a mother-superior who administered the eucharist “by her own hand” four times to a young nun named Romula, suffering from paralysis, who lay on her deathbed.¹⁶ Aside from the difference in geographic location, the story raises several points as follows: (1) this is a monastic situation, albeit on a small scale since Romula’s tiny cloister of nuns comprised three sisters who lived together as a religious community in a small house outside Rome, (2) presumably the small monastic family had the advantage of reserved eucharist at their residence, not necessarily always a privilege for lay Christians in the sixth century, (3) the mother-superior gave the eucharist “by

¹⁵ Council of Reims, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, edited by J. D. Mansi (1764), vol. 10, 597-99. Also, see *Catholic Encyclopedia Online*, vol. 5, s.v. “Viaticum,” which states, “From a Decree of the Council of Reims (Regino, ‘*De eccl. disc.*’ I.cxx) it appears that sometimes even females carried the Viaticum to the dying, which practice the Council strictly forbade. Apparently for a while it was difficult to eliminate this abuse, for Hincmar, Archbishop of Reims, required the diocesan visitors to inquire whether the priests gave Communion to the sick with their own hand or by others, ‘*per se et non per quemlibet*,’ and whether they gave the consecrated particle to any lay person, ‘*cuiquam laico*,’ to carry it home for the sake of giving it to the dying (Martène, ‘*De antiq. eccl. rit.*,’ 1.1.v2),” accessed October 11, 2019, <https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=12026>.

¹⁶ Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, Bk. IV, chapters 16-17. And Gregory the Great, *Forty Gospel Homilies*, translated by David Hurst, Cistercian Studies (Dubuque, IA: Cistercian Publications, 1990), 40.11-12.

her own hand,” which was, perhaps a special advantage because of her status as “superior,” and (4) the jurisdiction of Rome may have had no issue with women handling the eucharist.¹⁷ Pope Gregory’s story follows the pattern mentioned in the previous chapter in which villa monasteries became places that combined familial practices with the clerical, and, due to the growing Christian identity of the “monastic family,” had begun to introduce Christian elements to the reception of deathbed eucharist.

The trend of innovating and adapting funeral rites for Christians facing death became apparent in an episode between Caesarius of Arles and his sister, Caesaria. In her role as abbess of the abbey of Saint-Jean, Caesaria asked her brother to compose prayers that could be recited when one of the nuns at the abbey died. The two sets of prayers—one for over the body of the sister at the time of death, and the other to be recited at graveside prior to burial—were to become basic to “all later Gallican and Frankish burial services, which developed within and around its basic structural elements.”¹⁸ Significantly, the two prayer-sets were associated with the two places which were previously controlled by the family—the home where death generally occurred, and the graveside at the time of burial; these were places where the family’s traditional funeral rituals were held. Caesaria, by asking for prayers that could be recited in these two “family” settings was essentially seeking new Christian rituals that could be performed by the monastic “family” as it functioned in these places. The first set of prayers (as the initial response to death) represented death as “a summons from God and the journey of the soul *migratio ad dominum*.”¹⁹ It mentioned that the soul’s destination was

¹⁷ For further discussion on the laity’s possession of reserved eucharist for the sick and dying and for protection during travel in late antiquity, see Archdale A. King, *Eucharistic Reservation in the Western Church* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965).

¹⁸ Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 52. The prayers devised for death and burial by Caesarius for his sister’s community of nuns were appended to the *Rule for Nuns (Regula virginum)*, which he wrote ca. 512 CE.

¹⁹ Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 54.

paradise, a place of light and peace, but the destination was only reached by crossing through “a region of darkness and shadows,” considered a place of danger.²⁰ Caesaria’s request intimates that ecclesiastical deathbed and burial prayers did not exist at the time; this was likely the case since death and burial rituals had always been the domain of the family. Interestingly, the request for new prayers by Caesaria (as *matrona* of her monastic community/family) implies the continuation of *pietas*, the duty and devotion of the family in care for the dead, specifically, in assisting them on their perilous journey to heaven.

Another rite of separation was the ritual of the last kiss imparted when the individual breathed his/her last. Discussions in the previous chapter pointed out that the rite was acceptable (even among clerics like Ambrose) in northern Italy, at least in the fourth century. The custom persisted and, as with the original Roman ritual, it was usually the nearest of kin who gave the last kiss as a Christian died.²¹ However, by the sixth century, ideas were changing. At the Council of Auxerre (578 CE) the bishops ruled against the kiss given to the dead; in fact, canon 12 of the council included a statement censuring Christians who practiced the kiss to the dead.²² Since it was commonly the mother or wife of the deceased who performed the ritual, one could speculate whether women were once again the source of episcopal concern. Families, after all, were still, by and large, responsible in the sixth to eighth centuries for the care of the dead; and women, specifically, remained ritual specialists for dying and death in the home. Previous scholarship hypothesized that the final kiss given to the dead was denounced simply because it was “a remnant of the pagan belief.”²³ But more recent

²⁰ Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 54.

²¹ Grabka, “Christian Viaticum,” 41-42.

²² Canon 12 of the Council of Auxerre, in part, is worded as follows: “Neither the Eucharist nor the kiss may be given to the dead”; see Hefele, *History of the Councils*, vol. IV, Bk. 15, 413.

²³ Grabka, “Christian Viaticum,” 41-42. See also Alfred C. Rush, *Death and Burial in Christian Antiquity* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1941), 105; it has been suggested that the final kiss may have been considered “a superstitious practice” by early church authorities; at the time of the Council of

study interprets the demise of the ritual kiss quite differently. From the beginning, the kiss exchanged between Christians signified “peace,” “unity,” “forgiveness,” and/or “orthodoxy”; it was especially associated with the “legitimate kiss” between family members and by extension between members of the larger Christian family.²⁴ But as the ritual kiss grew more ambiguous in its meaning (beginning in the sixth century), depending on how church leaders strategically appropriated and modified the various societal traditions (gesture, ritual, text and orthodoxy versus heresy) associated with the kiss between believers, it becomes clear that the ritual kiss imparted at death lost its original meaning of simply “capturing the spirit” of the deceased.²⁵ It was now being interpreted within a Christian context that had become fraught with issues about what the kiss signified in terms of membership in the church. The context for condemnation was this: the laity could not be seen as determining the orthodoxy or inclusion of people within the membership of the church. That was a clerical prerogative.

By mid-eighth century, the Carolingian reformers had launched a program intended to unify and codify Christian liturgies including those for death. The reformers set about locating different practices and prayers and reworking them to create a Christian liturgy, which they

Auxerre, the church was dealing with newly converted Gallo-Romans (consisting of various Germanic tribes) and the bishops were particularly concerned about rooting out “remnants of barbarism.”

²⁴ Michael Penn, “Ritual Kissing, Heresy and the Emergence of Early Christian Orthodoxy,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 54, no. 4 (October, 2003): 627-38. Over time, the meaning of the ritual kiss became multivalent and did not mean continued or permanent concord, orthodoxy, unity, and so on; see Penn, “Ritual Kissing,” 633. Penn’s article stresses new scholarship in ritual studies that points out the distinction between ritual’s role in promoting unity versus promoting distinction (inclusion/exclusion or orthodoxy/heresy).

²⁵ The purpose of this study has been to establish the continuation of Roman practices and the *late* development of a Christian funeral ritual process (liturgy). Accordingly, a full investigation of texts from 600-1000 CE was not conducted and, in that regard, a future avenue of research would be a fuller investigation of these texts in reference to the practices of rituals such as the final kiss, closing of eyes, strapping closed the mouth, laying arms to the sides, etc. In addition, there should be a fuller review of archaeological evidence in terms of the material remains of specific practices such as use of specific flowers, their species and colors. For example, there is an evocative article about the discovery of an elite tomb dated about 625/30 CE in Sicily that had a libation hole in a *mensa* and revealed cooking items thus demonstrating the late continuation of funeral dining practices; see R. J. A. Wilson, “Funerary Feasting in Early Byzantine Sicily: New Evidence from Kaukana,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 115, no. 2 (2011): 263-302. Along similar lines see the article, Penn, “Ritual Kissing, Heresy and the Emergence of Early Christian Orthodoxy,” mentioned previously.

directed be committed to writing. The earliest surviving manuscripts of this sort are dated to the late eighth century. As noted previously, the texts are of two types: the *ordine* (*ordo*) and the sacramentary. The *ordine* (*ordo*) was the written “description of a liturgical action (*actio liturgica*), a directory or guide for the celebrant and his ministers setting forth in detail the arrangement of the entire ritual procedure and how to carry it out.”²⁶ The sacramentary, by contrast, was “a presider’s book containing all the texts he personally needs for the celebration of the Eucharist, the administration of the sacraments, the presiding of the Hours of Prayer, and for a variety of other liturgical events” including funerals.²⁷

One very early *ordine*, the *Ordo XLIX*—which lays out a specific pattern detailing how the rituals should proceed for situations such as death and burial—was in Gaul ca. 750 after having been redacted at Rome ca. 700-750.²⁸ *Ordo XLIX* was “infused with a spirit of optimism concerning the salvation of Christian and the resurrection of the dead” and its liturgy progressed as follows: (1) when someone approached death, he was given *viaticum*, (2) the Gospel account of the Lord’s passion was read aloud, by a priest or deacon, until the person’s soul departed the body, and (3) as soon as the soul had left the body, antiphons, verses, and the Psalm 113 were recited.²⁹ Most notable, from the perspective of this thesis, is

²⁶ Cyrille Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy: An Introduction to the Sources*, translated by W. Storey and N. Rasmussen (Portland, OR: Pastoral Press, 1986), 135.

²⁷ Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy*, 64.

²⁸ Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy*, 187.

²⁹ Michael S. Driscoll, “Death, Dying, and Burial: Liturgical Considerations for the Early Middle Ages,” *Jurist* 59 (1999): 231. Paxton adds to the description of the *Old Roman ordo defunctorum* several other items: (1) as the sick person approaches death, he/she is given communion; then the gospel accounts of the Lord’s passion are read by priests or deacons until the soul departs; (2) the response *Subvenite sancti dei* is recited, then the verse *Suscipiat te Christus* and a psalm, e.g., Ps. 113 or 114 with the antiphon *Chorus angelorum*; (3) the body is washed and placed on a bier; the priest says the antiphon *De terra formasti me* and Ps. 22, 32, or 92; (4) the corpse is carried to the church and placed inside the building while everyone sings/chants psalms or antiphons, e.g., *Tu iussisti nasci me domine* and Ps. 41; (5) everyone present should continue to pray for the deceased until burial; they should sing/chant psalms, antiphons, and lessons from the Book of Job; a vigil should be held but without the use of “Alleluia”; and (6) when the body is buried, everyone sings the antiphon, *Aperite mihi portas iustitiae* and Ps. 117; see Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 39 table entitled Ritual 1, “Rubrics and psalmody of the *Old Roman ordo defunctorum*.”

what *Ordo XLIX* reveals about the participants in the rites for dying and death in the eighth century. First, the individual approaching death was administered the eucharistic *viaticum*, presumably by a priest. This implies that the family of the sick person would have invited the priest into the home for this purpose. Second, the gospel accounts of Christ's passion and death were to be read to the sick person by a priest or deacon. Again, the presumption is that the family initiated an invitation to the clergy to attend at the deathbed. Third, the verses and antiphons (responses recited by all those in attendance) called on the saints, Christ, and the choirs of angels to receive and carry up the deceased to heaven.³⁰ There are two implications that should be noted: (1) the idea of help from a *psychopompos* on the journey to heaven had persisted, and (2) the inclusion of antiphons (verse-response) suggests the continued participation of the family. Therefore, the family *and* the priest evoked the saints, Christ, and the angels to aid the deceased in their journey. This, in turn, supposes a continued belief in the presence of guardians (*psychopompoi*) who have now taken a definitive Christian form and a continued ritual function for the family respectful of *pietas* as virtuous duty and devotion.

The earliest extant manuscript of the second type of eighth century manuscript, the sacramentary or presider's book, was the Vatican Gelasian Sacramentary. It emerged around 750 CE having been hand-copied by the nuns in the scriptorium of the abbey at Chelles.³¹ This dissertation therefore confirms that there was no consistent *ordo* or sacramentary as early as the fourth or fifth century as argued by some scholars. It is only now, ca. 750 CE, that we can suggest the existence of an *ordo* like *Ordo XLIX* (described in the previous paragraph) or a

³⁰ The verses, responses, and antiphons are entitled: *Subvenite, sancti Dei; Suscipiat te Christus; Chorus angelorum te suscipiat*. The psalm (Ps. 113) entitled, *In exiit Israel*, concerns God's liberation of Israel/Jacob from the bondage of Egypt. For the first three stages outlined in *Ordo XLIX*, see Driscoll, "Death, Dying, and Burial," 231.

³¹ Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 102-103.

sacramentary as indicated by the Vatican Gelasian. This extant sacramentary—identified as *Codex Vaticanus Reginensis latinus* 316 (*Vat. Reg.* 316)—happens to contain in its third book, a mass for the sick and dying.³² Scholars have determined that the sections of *Vat. Reg.* 316 outlining the mass for the sick, prayers for a return to good health, prayers for death and burial, and commemorative masses are Frankish elements in the recension of a Roman book/sacramentary.³³ Significantly, the elements that Caesarius of Arles appended to the *Rule for Nuns* (ca. 534 CE) in terms of prayers over the body of a deceased sister and at the time of burial (as requested by Caesaria, the abbess of the convent of Saint-Jean) were reused in this sacramentary, except for a few minor changes.³⁴ In terms of separation rites, Caesarius' composition of "Prayers to be Said Over the Body" was a short service comprised of two prayers: *Pio recordationis affectu* and *Te domine*.³⁵ The second prayer service (comprised of four prayers) was to be said at the grave just prior to burial.³⁶ The two prayer services became basic "to all later Gallican and Frankish burial services, which developed within and around its basic structural elements" and subsequently appeared in sacramentaries developed in Gaul and Francia in the seventh and eighth centuries.³⁷

According to Michael Driscoll, the tone of the Frankish prayers was more "penitential," which reflects the attitude of Caesarius of Arles in his teachings about dying,

³² Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy*, 64-67.

³³ Driscoll, "Death, Dying, and Burial," 236-37.

³⁴ Driscoll, "Death, Dying, and Burial," 237. See also, Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 52-53; Paxton provides the Latin wording and a translation for each of the two prayers from Caesarius of Arles to be said over the dead body: *Pio recordationis affectu* ("The devout feeling of remembrance ...") and *Te domine* ("You, God"), 53-54.

³⁵ These prayers appeared in an appendix to the Rule for Nuns devised earlier by Caesarius for the nuns of his sister's convent at Saint-Jean. See Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 4, 52-53.

³⁶ Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 53, table entitled Ritual 2: "Prayer service over the dead and at the grave for Caesarius' sister's community," citing Sancti Caesarii, *Arelantensis opera omnia*, edited by G. Morin (Marietoli, 1942), 1.127-28.

³⁷ Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 52. Paxton argues that the first of Caesarius' two prayers over the body at death reflects "some of the calm confidence of the Roman *ordo defunctorum* that God will grant salvation to his people," 53.

death, and responsibility for one's offenses (sins) while on earth.³⁸ This new penitential "tone" contrasts with the triumphant joy and optimistic confidence reported by Paxton as prevalent in the "old Roman *ordo defunctorum*."³⁹ By mid-seventh century new tales of demons and severe suffering (because of one's sins while on earth) began to frighten Christians about what lay ahead when they died. As discussed earlier, there had been from the beginning a definite concern on the part of the living to protect the dead. Concern for *viaticum* and a protector *psychopompos* (patron saint, an angel, etc.) was paramount. However, whereas the previous dangers on the journey through death involved monsters and other "unknowns," these perils now included demons in consort with the evil of sin. At least, this was the argument of church leaders. Ordinary Christians had always held concern (arising from Roman tradition) about the journey of the soul (*anima*) after death. As discussed earlier, Perpetua's dreams (as written in her prison diary) and Augustine's prayer for his mother's safe journey to heaven, all allude to the perils in the passage between life and the afterlife. Therefore, I submit that the argument by previous scholarship about the general acceptance of a triumphant joy and optimistic confidence in terms of death in early Christianity is incorrect. The church fathers may have presented death in terms of triumphant joy and optimistic confidence, but the laity retained certain fears. At the same time, there were contradictory messages from some church leaders; they admitted the fears of lions, dragons, and/or demons at the time of death. For instance, as discussed in the previous chapter (chapter four) Ambrose's hagiographer (Paulinus the Deacon) reported that "a crowd of demons made such a clamor" following the bishop's death

³⁸ Driscoll, "Death, Dying, and Burial," 237. Also, see examples of Caesarius of Arles' admonitions to his congregation to repent before the day of judgment or face the possibility of "perishing forever," in *Serm.* 16.3; 18.1; 32.4; 42.1; 43.9; 57.1-4, 179.

³⁹ Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 38-42.

that spectators could barely tolerate it.⁴⁰ It seems concern was shifting from lions and monsters, as representatives of the devil or unstated dangers, to now demons associated more with sin. As demonstrated for centuries by the material culture, inscriptions, and practices (e.g., the Roman coin for Charon, the Christian use of the eucharist), the Greco-Roman concern about providing safe conduct of the deceased to the afterlife endured. What was different was the new focus on a more penitential model with the “monsters” being associated with sin. From the sixth century, fears for the dead increased steadily. The change in attitude shows why penance at death was to become, from this time forward, more of a concern and why the prayers of the church for the welfare of the dying and the dead would become ever more crucial.

An example of the heightened anxiety about what lay in store after death was published in the seventh century in Gaul by the Irish abbot, Fursey, who wrote about his near-death experiences and subsequent visions of the horrors awaiting souls (especially for the souls of those who had been less than faithful to God) after death.⁴¹ Around the same time, Barontus, a monk during the reign of the Merovingians, endured a comparable journey in his own near-death experience. His personal account told how “[d]emons had clawed and kicked him as he made his way through the air above the countryside of Bourges”; he was stopped before reaching the throne of God and forced to review all the sins of his past life and their price in terms of punishment before he was returned, greatly shaken, to his earthly home.⁴² These two accounts of visions, along with the writings of Gregory the Great effectively

⁴⁰ See Paulinus the Deacon, *Vita sancti Ambrosii (The Life of Ambrose of Milan)*, edited by S. Kaniecka (Washington, DC: 1928), 10.48

⁴¹ Peter Brown, “The End of the Ancient Other World: Death and After Life between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages,” from the *Tanner Lectures on Human Values* (delivered at Yale University, October 1996), Lecture I: “*Gloriosus obitus: Death and Afterlife 400-700 AD*,” 30-34. Accessed May 15, 2019, https://tannerlectures.utah.edu/_documents/a-to-z/b/Brown99.pdf.

⁴² Brown, “End of the Ancient Other World,” 72-73.

changed forever the western outlook on the afterlife; it resulted in fear of punishment, and ultimately one's self-awareness and moral accountability while on earth especially at the moment of death.⁴³

Transition (Liminal) Stages of the Funeral, 501-800 CE

For most of late antiquity, processions began at the home, traversed the community, and ended at a suburban cemetery where burial took place. Similarly, for monastics, the transit to burial began at the monastery, may have paused at the church for prayers, and proceeded to the cemetery for interment. The sixth century is rich with hagiographical accounts of the funeral processions of clerics/monastics (nuns, monks, bishops). One such example is the biography of Radegund, Queen of the Franks and abbess of Poitiers (d. 587 CE) as told by one of the nuns in the convent at Poitiers. The account, presented by the nun Baudonivia, was a supplement to Radegund's hagiography by Venantius Fortunatus. According to Baudonivia, when Radegund died, the whole community of sisters gathered round the deathbed weeping, wailing, and striking their breasts; then they sang psalms and in the breaks between psalms the nuns "broke into intolerable plaints."⁴⁴ When the procession carrying the body of the abbess left the gates of the monastery to travel to the place of burial, the nuns all stood on the walls lamenting loudly and crying out "from above that the bier on which the blessed woman was

⁴³ According to Brown, Gregory the Great's *Dialogues* succeeded in "tilting" early Christian notions about how sin was atoned for and/or punished in this life toward the fear of "the moment of death and the subsequent fate of the soul"; see Brown, "End of the Ancient Other World," 38.

⁴⁴ Baudonivia, "The Life of the Holy Radegund: Book II" in *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages*, edited and translated by Jo Ann McNamara and John E. Halborg with E. Gordon Whatley (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 21-24.102-103. The original Latin is found in Baudonivia, *De vita Sanctae Radegundis, liber duo*, MGH (Monumenta Germaniae Historica) SRM (*Scriptores rerum merovingicarum*), edited by Bruno Krusch (Hanover, 1888), 2.358-95. As for the term "plaints" in the English translation, the noun means "lamentation," "cry," or "mourn"; from the Latin *planctus* (from *plangere*, to beat/strike) and related verbs such as: *lamentor* (to lament, bewail); *lugeo* (to mourn, lament, to be in mourning); *maereo* (to grieve, lament, wail); *doleo* (to suffer, grieve for, and the noun, *dolor* = pain, grief, sorrow).

carried might pause under the tower” so they could catch one last glimpse of their beloved mother.⁴⁵

The biography of Eustadiola, a widow in Bourges (d. 684 CE), explains that she lived as an independent ascetic in the city “with no apparent formal vows or submission to an outside rule.”⁴⁶ An anonymous biographer recounts Eustadiola’s funeral procession to the basilica of Saint Paul, stating that “a crowd of innumerable people flowed together and all were overcome by infinite grief of spirit”; during the singing of psalms by “the clerks,” the “bitter lamentations” of the people “so often interrupted the spiritual hymns” that the clerks could “scarcely sing.”⁴⁷ In another case, the death of Rusticula, the abbess of Arles (d. 632 CE), was marked by a wake in the monastery of Saint-Jean. As stated by the biographer, Florentius (a priest of the church of Tricastina), the abbess was laid out “according to the custom of mourners”; then on the following day her body, lying on a bier “on gold and precious stones among crosses and tall burning candles of wax,” was carried out to the basilica of St. Mary.⁴⁸ The cortege was accompanied by “not only the faithful but even Jews joined the throngs of people assembled to venerate her at these services and they all strove to outdo one another with their tears.”⁴⁹ Notably, with the very Christian female icons just mentioned (Radegund, Eustadiola, and Rusticula) we see the continuation of the same funerary rituals—the deceased is presented on a funeral bier, she is transported in a public funeral procession accompanied by candles/lights, there are expressions of social status and

⁴⁵ Baudonivia, “Life of Holy Radegund,” 103.

⁴⁶ Jo Ann McNamara, John E. Halborg with E. Gordon Whatley, eds., *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 106-107.

⁴⁷ Anonymous, “Saint Eustadiola, Widow of Bourges,” in *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages*, edited and translated by Jo Ann McNamara, John E. Halborg with E. Gordon Whatley (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 8.110.

⁴⁸ Florentius, “The Life of Rusticula,” in *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages*, edited and translated by Jo Ann McNamara, John E. Halborg with E. Gordon Whatley (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 25.135.

⁴⁹ Florentius, “Life of Rusticula,” 25.135.

expressions of emotional grief by members of the monastic family—which parallel those employed by ordinary Christian laity. Again, the Roman funerary process is re-created within a monastic/clerical setting.

Curiously, the hagiographies/biographies just mentioned and others about the privileged elite (bishops, monastics, abbots, confessor-martyrs) began to include the miracles that God chose to perform through the virtuous lives of these saints *after* (and sometimes even *before*) they died.⁵⁰ The miracles performed by the deceased, either during the funeral procession, just prior to burial, or immediately afterward showed that the individual was not “gone” but was still present, now possessing God-given power that could miraculously heal.⁵¹ Significant for my thesis is that miracles are highlighted in the hagiographies of the women saints (discussed above) but there is no mention of a “vigil” held for them at the church prior to burial. Yet, previously noted was the description given by Paxton of the old Roman *ordo defunctorum* (which he estimates originated in the fourth to sixth century in Rome and was transported across the Alps into Gaul) that included in its rubrics a church vigil before the

⁵⁰ Peter Brown explains that a similar phenomenon was evident in terms of the martyrs in earlier centuries. He calls it *praesentia*, “the physical presence of the holy, whether in the midst of a particular community or in the possession of particular individuals”; see Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 88. Brown maintains that as early as the third century in Rome, the grave of the martyr Lawrence (one of the seven deacons who died in the persecution of Valerian ca. 258 CE) was eagerly sought by devotees who flocked to his shrine to experience *his presence in that place*, to ask for his intercession, or to be buried nearby *ad sanctos*, 88. In addition, any saint could *be present* in his/her relics or in items (*brandea*) that had made contact with his/her remains, 88. The situation in the fourth and fifth centuries led to the cult of relics, the translation of relics (via the webs of patronage), the phenomenon of pilgrimages, and even to the spread of Christianity into Gaul, Spain, Africa, 89-91. It was in the discovery, translation, and installation of saints’ relics into new communities that allowed Christians to believe that their community “had been judged by God to have deserved the *praesentia* of the saint,” 92.

⁵¹ For instance, immediately following the procession to the basilica of St. Mary in Arles, the abbess Rusticula bestowed healing upon one of the servants of the nuns’ monastery; This individual, a man who could no longer walk due to a severe illness, was told in his sleep to request that the nuns wash “the four corners of the pallet where the holy mother had rested” during her transport to the grave and then give him “the water to drink”; immediately upon drinking, the man regained perfect health and could walk again; see Florentius, “Life of Rusticula,” 27.135-36. In another instance, after the funeral procession of the widow Eustadiola, the holy woman “showed herself to be still present by restoring several people to health” in fact, according to her hagiographer, “so many miracles were performed at her tomb that she shone like the sun”; see Anonymous, “Life of Eustadiola,” 5.8-9.110.

body was taken (amid psalms and antiphons) to the gravesite. This vigil at the church involved psalms, responses, readings from the book of Job, and prayers for the soul of the deceased.⁵² But since the particular hagiographies of the women saints do not mention any such church vigil, it seems reasonable to presume that a “vigil” was, quite possibly, a ritual provided by the institutional church only for very special (male?) Christians. In other words, “vigils in the church” functioned much like the eulogies in the Roman forum—performed only for very special (male) Romans. Most important what the hagiographies confirm is that Christian funerals continued to follow the three places of the Roman funeral: the home, the procession through public streets, and the gravesite. The church-place does not yet emerge as a significant ecclesial funerary ritual place, that is, for everyone.

Incorporation (Post-liminal) Stages of the Funeral, 501-800 CE

As discussed in the last chapter (Chapter Five), Gallo-Roman elites built burial churches and mausoleums on their rural estates. Frankish aristocrats did likewise, locating some basilicas in villages so that the poor of the surrounding countryside could cluster their graves nearby.⁵³ Some of the elite class also had burial churches erected at monasteries. These “family monasteries” were endowed with large amounts of property and sometimes with collections of relics to enhance the prestige of the monastery and its patrons, as well as the privilege of burial there.⁵⁴ For example, in northern Italy, sixth century, a rural estate featured a church filled with burials; epitaphs and brick stamps indicate the burials were likely those of rural

⁵² Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 39, the table entitled “Ritual 1.”

⁵³ See professor of history and women’s studies, Megan McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints: Prayer for the Dead in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 112.

⁵⁴ McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints*, 112.

elites.⁵⁵ Significantly, in terms of the place of burial, evidence suggests that there was still consequential control exercised by the family. At the same time the merger of several trends had become apparent: (1) martyrs had been incorporated into burial areas established by the church, (2) relics and/or martyr remains were also included in the smaller villa churches,⁵⁶ (3) the villa necropolis (burial crypt) was built to hold the burials and memorialization of the seigniorial family, (4) villa churches provided burial places for the poor and surrounding rural populations, and (5) private churches on villa estates in northern Italy, Hispania, and Gaul would become models for the “parish churches” established by the institutional church in the West.⁵⁷ Notably, the concept of burials gathered close to church buildings on the estates had become more of a reality for ordinary Christians by the sixth and seventh centuries.

Another trend during this period of church history was the burial of bishops, monastics, and privileged laity *intra muros* (inside the church). For example, the burial basilica of St. Mary constructed by Caesarius of Arles, was built inside the city ca. 524 CE; Caesarius intended from the beginning that it would be the place of interment for his sister Caesaria the Elder, and the nuns of her abbey.⁵⁸ According to Caesarius’ *vita*, at his death in

⁵⁵ Kim Bowes, *Private Worship, Public Values, and Religious Change in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 150.

⁵⁶ Bowes, *Private Worship*, 142, 146; Bowes argues that “the popularity of relic veneration among the elite, plus the general tendency to incorporate ritual action in Christian estate-mausoleum design both suggest that the distinction between mausoleum and martyrium may have been blurred in the private sphere,” 146 where Bowes cites Andre Grabar’s seminal work, *Martyrium: Recherches sur le culte des reliques et l’art chrétien antique* (Paris, 1946).

⁵⁷ Bowes, *Private Worship*, 225 citing L Pietri, “*Les oratoria in agro proprio dans la Gaule de l’Antiquité tardive: un aspect des rapports entre potentes et évêques*,” in *Aux origines de la paroisse rurale en Gaule méridionale (IVe –IXe siècles)*, edited by C. Delaplace (Paris, 2005), 235-42 on the competition between the villa and parish churches.

⁵⁸ William E. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: The Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 118 referring to the *Vita of Caesarius*, Bk. I.57 written by Cyprianus, Firminus, and Viventius; for the *Vita of Caesarius*, see *Caesarius of Arles: Life, Testament, Letters*, translated by William E. Klingshirn (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 1994), 38.

542 CE, he, too, was buried inside St. Mary's alongside his sister and her fellow nuns.⁵⁹ In the cities, likely because of the insistence of elite laypersons demanding permission for burial closer to the church or inside the church building for burial *ad sanctos* next to the relics of saints interred there, the Council of Braga in Hispania (563 CE) issued a decree that no burial was permitted within churches, only outside the walls of the church.⁶⁰ Likewise, in Francia, the Synod of Auxerre (561-605 CE) reiterated that burial was denied *intra muros*; however, despite this conciliar canon, the bishop Eligius of Noyon (in Francia) allowed for his own interment near the altar of his local church; arguably, the bishop could overrule the canon to give special permission, in this case, for himself.⁶¹ In 658 CE at the Synod of Nantes in Francia, the need arose to repeat the earlier proclamation of Braga stating, "No one may be buried inside the church."⁶² Again, the decree was directed at churches (in particular, basilicas) of the holy martyrs, where increasing numbers of elite layfolk requested or expected interment within church walls *ad sanctos*.⁶³ Mark Johnson's analysis suggests that the bishops' promulgation probably allowed burials (if authorized by a bishop) to take place in the porticoes and the atrium of the church, but not "*infra ecclesiam vero*" (beneath the floors of

⁵⁹ Klingshirn, *Caesarius*, 260-61. Klingshirn argues that Caesarius likely had other reasons for his burial in St. Mary's alongside his sister and the deceased nuns of Saint-Jean's: (1) Caesarius' burial in the basilica, with relics of his clothing and vestments, meant "a focal point for his cult," (2) the location would become a site of pilgrimage, which would provide protection for his sister's monastery and ensure the nuns could remain there indefinitely, (3) the cult of St. Caesarius would "encourage gift-giving to the monastery that guarded his relics," (4) that, in turn, "could also help ensure the monastery's independence and survival," and (5) the "[p]opular validation of the founder's sanctity" would "stimulate respect for his final wishes," thus, making all of Caesarius' wishes for the continuation of his sister's religious community come to fruition; Klingshirn, *Caesarius*, 260-61. For Caesarius' place of burial, see *Caesarius of Arles: Life, Testament, Letters*, Bk. II, 50.65.

⁶⁰ For the Council of Braga (canon 18), see Hefele, *History of the Councils*, vol. IV, Bk. 15, 385; canon 18 states, "Corpses must not be interred within churches, but, for the most part, outside the walls of the church."

⁶¹ See Council of Auxerre (578 CE), canon 14, Hefele, *History of the Councils*, vol. IV, Bk. 15, 413: "No corpse may be buried in the baptistery," meaning in a church or part of the church used for conferring baptisms.

⁶² Synod of Nantes, canon 6, Hefele, *History of the Councils*, vol. IV, Bk. 15, 477.

⁶³ Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death: The Classic History of Western Attitudes Toward Death Over the Last One Thousand Years*, translated from the French by Helen Weaver (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 2000), 30.

the church proper).⁶⁴ The Synod of Aachen (809 CE in Gaul) also forbade *intra muros* but this ruling was reversed a few years later at the Synod of Mainz (813 CE also in Gaul) permitting *intra muros* burial for certain privileged Christians—bishops, abbots, and aristocrats from among the lay faithful (“*Nullus mortuus infra ecclesiam sepeliatur, nisi episcopi aut abbates aut digni presebiteri, vel fideles laici*”).⁶⁵ For those whose burial was permitted, interment was usually situated just outside the sanctuary. Further, the burial of certain privileged ecclesiastics (bishops, abbots/abbesses) was effectively considered “saintly” as early as the seventh century, meaning that these individuals were permitted burial in their official dress, insignia, and associated accoutrements despite church legislation that forbade “wrapping the dead in liturgical cloth [palls] or burying the dead with instruments necessary for Christian worship [e.g., relics].”⁶⁶ Clearly, announcing the identity of ecclesial members as privileged among the church community (or church family) was considered important at this time.

As indicated by the inconsistencies just presented, the parameters surrounding the how and where of Christian burial in the West were unclear. For most Christians (the “ordinary” faithful), it would not be until the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries in Italy and Gaul when burial would be permitted in church graveyards, or at least near the local church.⁶⁷ These later dates suggest, as Bonnie Effros points out, that most Christian families continued to bury their

⁶⁴ Mark J. Johnson, “Pagan-Christian Burial Practices of the Fourth Century: Shared Tombs?” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 5, no. 1 (1997): 44. Further, the Council of Paderborn (Saxony) in 785 CE ruled in canon 22 that members of the church (who were Saxons) were to be buried in church cemeteries “and not in pagan mounds”; the decree was intended to disrupt (if not obliterate) Saxon cultural influences after the people of Saxony had been conquered; see C. J. Hefele, *Histoire des Conciles d’après les documents originaux*, translated and edited by H. Leclercq et al. (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1910), 3.994; Synod á Paderborn en 785 et 786, canon 22: “*Les corps des Saxons chrétiens doivent être portés dans les cimetières de l’église, et non pas sur les tertres des païens.*”

⁶⁵ See the Synod of Mainz, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* (MGH), edited by G. H. Pertz (Hanover, 1906), *Legum sectio III, Concilia* II.1. 274. Also, see Effros, *Body and Soul*, 78.

⁶⁶ See the Council of Clermont (535 CE), canons 3 and 7, *Concilia Galliae a.511-695*, edited by C. de Clercq (Turnhout: Typographi Brepols editores Pontificii, 1963), 106-107.

⁶⁷ Bonnie Effros, “Beyond Cemetery Walls: Early Medieval Funerary Topography and Christian Salvation,” *Early Medieval Europe* 6, no. 1 (1997): 78.

kinsfolk in places of the family's choosing, apart from the control of the church.⁶⁸ In terms of consecrating burial grounds in the Latin West, there is no mention in the earliest *ordines* of any blessing of graves by the priest; only with the Carolingian reforms (ca. 800-900 CE) does this burial rite become part of the funeral liturgy.⁶⁹ Donald Bullough explains that the blessing of cemeteries was, in part, to appease those elites who had to be buried outside their local churches and who complained that they were not placed “close enough” to the saint's burial place, or to the saint's relics in the altar of the local church.⁷⁰

As discussed in chapter three of this study, church authorities struggled in the second and third centuries with how to handle the singing, dancing, wailing, and gesturing of Christians at public funeral processions, public burials, and celebrations of the martyrs at their shrines and *martyria*. Even Christian poets objected to the way grief was commonly performed—with emotional display and unrestrained vocal lament, especially on the part of women.⁷¹ Similarly, chapter four explained that some councils of bishops (e.g., in Carthage in 401 CE, canon 60) condemned dancing in the streets and plazas associated with worship at the funerary basilicas.⁷² Episcopal denunciation continued and by 589 CE at the Third Council of Toledo, canon 22 stated, “At funerals only psalms shall be sung. The special elegies, and the

⁶⁸ Effros, “Beyond Cemetery Walls,” 5n19.

⁶⁹ Bullough argues that the eighth century sacramentaries only provide formulae for *missae in cymeteriis* (masses in cemeteries) and make no mention of the blessing of burial grounds, see Donald Bullough, “Burial, Community and Belief in the Early Medieval West,” in *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society: Studies Presented to M. M. Wallace-Hadrill*, edited by P. Wormald, D. Bullough, and R. Collins (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 189-201; on the other hand, Bullough maintains that documents indicating rituals for blessing a grave appeared in the ninth century, at least for Christian families who invited the priest to do so. Effros dates the blessing of burial places to the tenth century; see *Body and Soul*, 78.

⁷⁰ Bullough, “Burial, Community and Belief,” 199, citing the documentation of the *benedictio cimeterii* in the *Claudius Pontifical*, vol. 1, dated to the tenth century.

⁷¹ For example, see Commodianus, “*Filios non lugendos*” in *Commodiani Carmina*, CSEL 15, edited by Bernhard Dombart (Washington, 1887), *Instructiones*, Bk. 2, 73.6, 32.7-11. The significant vocabulary includes: *plangere* (to beat, strike the breast in mourning); *os laceras* (tear the face); *tundis pectus* (beat the breast); *vestimenta diducis* (cast aside garments)—translation of the given passage is my own.

⁷² See C. F. Hefele, *History of the Councils of the Church*, vol II, AD 326 to 429, translated and edited by H. Nutcombe Oxenham (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1896), Bk. 8, 469.

custom of beating on the breast, are forbidden. Where possible, the bishop shall enforce this with all the faithful, and at least with the clergy.”⁷³ The phrase, “at least with the clergy,” likely signaled the behaviors of priests and deacons on the feast-days for the martyrs and saints, and that the bishops may have found the clergy was easier to control than those stubborn members of the laity who insisted on retaining the tradition of *sacra privata*. Along similar lines, from the same council, canon 23 stated, “Dances and unclean songs on feast days are forbidden”; again, the decree refers to the commemorative/anniversary days of celebration for the martyrs/saints, which invariably involved *convivia*.⁷⁴ The “dancing and unclean songs,” no doubt referred to ritual lament performances by women singing their lament poetry while performing rhythmic gestures and dance movements; these activities continued to be strongly denounced by church leaders in the sixth century. For instance, we noted above that Caesarius of Arles severely rebuked the feasting and the accompanying practices of the laity at the tombs. He used his sermons to denounce “unseemly” singing and dancing “at the very doors of the saints” (“*ballationes et saltationes ante ipsas basilicas sanctorum*”); he stated further that if those that came to worship at the basilicas were “Christians when they come in, they are heathens when they leave; for this custom of dancing

⁷³ For canon 22 of the Third Council of Toledo (589 CE), see Hefele, *History of the Councils*, vol. IV, Bk. 15, 421.

⁷⁴ See canon 23 of the Third Council of Toledo (589 CE) in Hefele, *History of the Councils*, vol. IV, Bk. 15, 421. Apparently, in some regions in the West, the clergy were known to invite laypersons to join them inside churches for *convivia* on feast days of the martyrs, to such an extent that the church councils had to rule on the riotous behavior; e.g., see the Council/Synod of Hippo (393 CE), canon 29, *History of the Councils*, vol. II, Bk. 8, 399, which stated, “Bishops and clergy shall have no meals in the church unless when necessary for the refreshment of guests, and then none of the people shall be admitted”; and as well, the Council of Carthage (397 CE) specified in canon 42: “no bishops or clergy should have parties in churches, and, so far as is possible, the people also should be barred from such parties, *convivia*”; cited by R. MacMullen, *Second Church*, 161n35.

lingers on as a heathen rite.”⁷⁵ The traditional rites of mourning and lamenting by women are explored in greater detail in chapter six of this study.

For the moment, the point to make is that because *martyria* and basilicas were under the jurisdiction of the church, the bishops could define the kinds of events, celebrations, and behaviors on these premises. That explains the episcopal letters, sermons, and church canons fundamentally opposing the traditional performances of mourning/lament by the laity. We may also conclude (using the heuristic of the rhetoric of condemnation) that the repeated opposition to these ritual practices through the sixth century meant the practices persisted. Arguably, the frustration for church authorities in trying to “rein in” popular practices at commemorative celebrations was related to the fact that some places where memorial practices occurred were still beyond the control of the clergy (e.g., cemeteries owned by families or burial sites at villa-churches), and in the case of feasting (*convivia*), even in clerically-controlled places such as *martyria*, the event was most usually a family-sanctioned, family-organized, and therefore family-managed ritual, a remnant of the Roman funeral, and difficult to wrest from the grip of tradition.

In terms of incorporating surviving family members back into society following deaths of kinsfolk, several issues still existed during the seventh and eighth centuries with regard to commemoration. In earlier stages of the funerary process, the focus was on caring for the corpse, mourning the deceased, and ensuring proper burial of the body. Attending to these matters was not only the duty of survivors, but a necessary way of processing loss and of initiating healing for survivors. Not only had the family lost a loved one, but the death also

⁷⁵ Caesarius, *Serm.* 13.4, which is written in Latin as follows: “*et si christiani ad ecclesiam veniunt, pagani de ecclesia revertuntur; quia ista consuetudo ballandi de paganorum observatione remansit.*”

meant the loss of critical family identity and memory. As a result, once the initial funerary obsequies had been discharged, and a satisfactory period of mourning had past—sometimes in a time specified by tradition—"consolation through *memoria*" and recognizing the "importance of family, friends, and a sense of community" followed as the next duty of survivors.⁷⁶ As stressed throughout this study, commemoration or memorial activities constituted what Van Gennep referred to as rites of incorporation; that is, actions designed to re-unite the surviving family with each other; re-negotiate the family's position in society without the deceased; and honor the dead at regular intervals and on the prescribed festival days. In the christianization of these rituals—beginning with monastics, clerics, and the elite, then later with the "ordinary faithful" as they were ready to accept clerical direction—it also meant the inclusion of prayers and offices for the dead emerging more definitively (in liturgical books) late in the eighth century. The bond between the living and the dead clearly remained high priority for Christians and the people needed to be reassured that the church would respect that priority.

At the same time, the relationship between the living and the dead created friction between church leaders and the social matrix. The bishops had always viewed the bond between the living and the dead with some suspicion. The cult of the ancestors (or *sacra familiae*) was considered "pagan superstition" by some. Some bishops such as Ambrose in Milan (in the fifth century) had simply banned family feasting (*convivia*) in the cemeteries. Augustine, on the other hand, offered a compromise and encouraged charitable giving of the excess food to the poor following funerary meals in the cemeteries.⁷⁷ Generally speaking, however, the church was slow to offer a substitute for what the people could do to adequately

⁷⁶ Jennifer C. Vaught, ed., *Grief and Gender, 700-1700* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), xi.

⁷⁷ Augustine, *Epistulae*, CSEL 34, edited by A. Goldbacher (Vienna: Tempsky, 1895-1923), *Ep.* 22.6.

remember their dead. Material evidence (architecture, epigraphy, wall paintings, relief sculpture) left in and around the cemeteries and tombs of late antique Christians reveal how families persisted, in their own way, to preserve the memory of their ancestors. An example of preserving memory (and family identity) appeared in a tomb inscription from sixth century Italy. It was likely erected by the husband of the deceased and her family and was written as follows:

Here rests in peace a servant of Christ, Maxima, who lived more or less 25 years. She (was) buried 9 days before the Kalends of July in the year when the most distinguished man [senator], Flavius Probus the Younger [was] consul [modern date = June 23, 525]. She lived with her husband seven years and six months. She [was] friendly, faithful, and very skilled in many things.

Hic requiescit in pa/ce ancilla C(h)risti Maxima/ qu(a)e vixit ann(os) pl(us) m(inus) XXV d(e)p(osita) (ante diem) VIII Kal(endas)/ Iulias Fl(avio) Probo Iuniore v(ir) c(larissimus) cons(ule)/ qu(a)e fecit cum maritum [sic] su(u)m [sic]/ ann(os) VII m(enses) VI amicabilem fidelis / in omnibus bona prudens.⁷⁸

Around the same time, in Gaul, there appeared another permanent reminder of the dead. In this case, the woman memorialized was among the clergy, so it is unclear whether her epitaph was set up by her *ecclesia* or by her own family; the two Christograms decorating the inscription confirm her clerical position:

Theodora, the deaconess who was well deserving rests here in peace. She lived 48 years more or less. Buried on [modern date = 22 July 539] when Paulinus the Younger [was] consul.

Hic in pace requiescat b[ene] m[erenti]. / Theodora diaconissa, quae/ uixit in saeculi annos pl.m. [plus or minus] / XLVIII. D(e)posita XI kal. Aug. V pc. / Paulini iun. U.c. ind. II / (two Christograms).⁷⁹

⁷⁸ ICUR 1 3252 = ICUR 6 17284. The English translation is my own. The identifying phrase, “servant of Christ” quite possibly referred to a deaconess (or perhaps a presbyter?) who was at the time married. See Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osiek, eds., *Ordained Women in the Early Church: A Documentary of History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

⁷⁹ *CIL* 6467 = *ILCVI*. 1238. The English translation is my own. Significantly, the epigraph indicates yet another role of women in late antiquity: that of deaconess of the church, a member of the clergy.

Part of the surviving family's ongoing care of the dead had to do with what Caesarius of Arles affirmed was both obligation and agency in assisting the dead to achieve salvation.⁸⁰ Further, as the monastic movement—notable for its asceticism, self-denial, and withdrawal from the secular world—rose to prominence in the sixth and seventh centuries, it became apparent that the laity perceived monks and nuns as potential partners in protecting the welfare of departed souls. For instance, wealthy elites were known to endow nearby monasteries and convents with land and/or funds in exchange for prayers and masses for their departed kinsfolk; and elite Christians might purchase for their family members the privilege of burial *ad sanctos* (near the tombs of the saints) to reserve a saint's advocacy for salvation.⁸¹

Therefore, despite complaints from the bishops about certain commemorative practices (e.g., feasting or anniversary parties often associated with self-indulgence), the bond between the living and the dead persisted among Christians. The practice of bringing offerings and sharing them with the dead at the cemetery persisted and the bishops continued to object to the popularity of the practice. No wonder, then, in 567 CE at the Council of Tours, canon 22 stated, “on the festival of the See of Peter [the re-named Roman festival of *Carista*, February 22, the day following the week-long *Parentalia*] ... [when some people] present meat offerings to the dead and partake of meats which have been offered to demons [referring to the cooking of food/meat for the *convivia* with the dead] ... the priests should root out these heathenish superstitions.”⁸² Christians were encouraged by the bishops to make offerings (bread, wine, monetary gifts for charity, etc.) at the church during the eucharistic celebration

⁸⁰ Caesarius of Arles, *Sermons*, vol. 2, *Serm.* 110.3.146-47.

⁸¹ McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints*, 189-90.

⁸² Council of Tours (567 CE), see Hefele, *History of the Councils*, vol. IV, Bk. 15, 393. For more about the Feast of the See/Chair of Peter, see Michael M. Winter, *Saint Peter and the Popes*, repr. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), 105. Again, the church's renaming of certain Roman festivals would be a useful study for the future.

(the mass) instead of partaking in the traditional Christian Roman feasting rituals at the cemetery. It was Gregory of Tours who first likened the practice of offerings made by the living for the welfare of the dead to a “communal act,” which he associated with the “Church of God” or *ecclesia Dei*, meaning the living on earth united together with the saints in heaven working as one large Christian family (the church of God) especially to help the souls that may need assistance on their journey to Paradise.⁸³ The people of Tours were urged to submit their offerings as alms, especially important for unbaptized family members who had died, in particular because of the growing concern that sin may detract from their salvation. Like so many other suggestions from the episcopate, this practice was more readily accepted by the privileged elite, the clergy, and monastics than among ordinary Christians in the sixth century. To show that his notion of *ecclesia Dei* and the offering of alms for the dead succeeded in helping the dead, Gregory told a story about a wealthy widow in Lyon who brought an offering of fine wine to the church every day for a year in memory of her deceased husband in the belief that his soul would repose in Paradise because of her regular offerings; Gregory shared that in a vision the husband revealed the wife’s alms released him from all obstacles preventing his ascent to heaven.⁸⁴

⁸³ Gregorii episcopi Turonensis. *Libri Historiarum II-X*, edited by Bruno Krusch and Wilhelm Levison, MGH SRM (Hannover, 1951), II.3 and IX. 9. Notably, Bk. II, chapter 3 includes the letter to Gregory from Eugenius, the bishop of Carthage (written during the Christian persecutions by the Vandals in North Africa amid Eugenius’ concern that his community—the *Dei ecclesias*—would be able to keep the Catholic faith despite their treatment by the barbarians. Gregory determined he would fight against the “Vandal heretics” who were purging the larger body of Christians he termed the *ecclesia Dei* (church of God), which included the living (on earth) and the saints (in heaven) helping the newly deceased to gain salvation; see Martin Heinzelmann, *Gregory of Tours: History and Society in the Sixth Century*, translated by Christopher Carroll (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 165, citing Gregory of Tours, *Hist.* II.3.41 and II 4.42.2. Notably, the *ecclesia Dei* would eventually develop into the formal church doctrine of the “Communion of Saints” at the Council of Trent (1545-63 CE).

⁸⁴ Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Confessors*, translated by Raymond Van Dam (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 1988), 64.70-71. As to the rest of Gregory’s miracle story—a dishonest subdeacon kept the widow’s fine wine for himself and replaced it each time with vinegar; the husband appeared to his wife one night to ask why her offering was so bitter and why it was taking so long for him to get to heaven, the subdeacon was found out, the deed was corrected, and the husband entered Paradise.

Arguably, a pattern of change had emerged. The care of the dead involving charitable works by the “Christian community” had existed well before the sixth century, but the concept of church membership as the “Body of Christ” (or “Church of God”), meaning the reciprocal interaction between the living and dead, did not appear in the literature as *ecclesia Dei* until Gregory of Tours. The event signaled how some ideas continued, other ideas were adapted, and still others emerged as new ideas in terms of funerary ritual. Consequently, the idea that the living could make a difference for the dead rose to the fore; Gregory of Tours re-imagined the cult of the dead to include “offerings to/for the dead.” The old Roman tradition involved offerings of meat cooked and shared at the *convivia* celebrated for the martyrs and saints at the tomb; the christianized ritual came to mean the offerings of bread, money (alms), or fine wine at the mass. Similarly, as mentioned above, the renamed “Feast of the See (or Chair) of St. Peter” (formerly the Roman festival of *Carista*, the last day of *Parentalia*) declared at the Council of Tours in 567 CE became a time for Christians to specifically offer alms at the church to assist the souls of those who had died. Gregory of Tours’ concept of *ecclesia Dei* acquired new meaning; the visible church on earth and the eschatological church (saints and martyrs now in heaven) were encouraged to work together—a person need only contract an exchange (using the clergy as mediator) with the saint/martyr to acquire his/her assistance. This development would eventually lead to the idea of the “communion of saints,” the spiritual binding between the faithful on earth, the saints in heaven, and later the souls in purgatory. This last idea, “souls in purgatory” leads to another transition in the Christian funeral—the idea of sin and the accountability of one’s soul.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ The later doctrine of the communion of saints would include the souls in purgatory, the place of purification of sins, which became a formal “place” in the twelfth century in the West; see, McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints*, 18-19. See also, Jacques Le Goff, *La Naissance du Purgatoire*. Bibliothèque des histoires (Paris:

As discussed previously, the notion of sin and personal accountability had not received much attention until the fifth century and Augustine. Until that time, baptized Christians who died were considered “saved,” essentially on par with the martyrs as far as reposing in God’s benevolence—as such, the living could solicit favors from both the martyrs and the blessed⁸⁶—even though the status of the martyr (who had suffered persecution and death to witness to the Christian faith) was more significantly elevated in “holiness.” At the same time, it was believed that those about to die and those already dead required two types of assistance; first, at the time of death the individual needed provision (*viaticum*) and protection/assistance (a *psychopompos*) for the perilous journey into the afterlife; second, once burial had taken place, the dead required *refrigerium* (nourishment/refreshment) in their place of quiet repose while they waited for the resurrection. Christians understood the perfect protector and defender—representing both *viaticum* and advocate (*psychopompos*) for a safe journey—was the eucharistic Body and Blood of Christ himself. However, Augustine (mentioned in chapter four) warned that the fate of the soul after death was entirely dependent on how the person had lived his/her life. The question of self-accountability was now a matter of some concern for Christians.

Consequently, it was no surprise when penance/forgiveness for one’s sins emerged as important in Gaul in the sixth century. Caesarius urged his congregation to “hurry to church” to receive anointing with oil and the eucharist for “health of soul as well as of body” (*Serm.*

Gallimard, 1981). Translation in A. Goldhammer as *The Birth of Purgatory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

⁸⁶ McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints*, 184; according to McLaughlin, “martyrs were already considered the preeminent intercessors ... [but] they were by no means the only ones. The ordinary dead might also be invoked in much the same way after death” and this is made evident by inscriptions that request help from the “ordinary” dead; e.g., *ILCVI*. 456, no. 2350.

50.1).⁸⁷ By early in the seventh century, a more fully developed concept began to materialize, that of a certain fire of purgation that would cleanse the soul of sins committed during one's lifetime in the event that appropriate forgiveness had not been acquired before death.⁸⁸

So it was that the stories of Gregory the Great became significant. In his *Dialogues*, Gregory told about shades of the dead visiting persons on earth to share the experience of punishment in the afterlife for sins committed while the shade/soul was alive. In each case, the soul pleaded for intercessory help from the person, begging for prayers and masses to help reduce or relieve the shade's suffering.⁸⁹ Gregory also used the passage from Paul (1 Cor 3:12-15), which stated that depending on the sort of "building" each person constructed over the course of his/her life—whether "in gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass or straw, ... fire will test the quality of each man's workmanship. He will receive a reward, if the building he had added on stands firm! If it is burnt up, he will be the loser; and yet he himself will be

⁸⁷ See the earlier discussion of Caesarius' admonitions to the laity to receive Penance from a priest so as to ensure a favorable verdict at the end of time; that is, "imperfect" Christians may be destined not for the fire of purgation but for the fire of hell for eternity; see Caesarius, *Serm.* 179.

⁸⁸ McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints*, 18-19. Notably, it was only since the scholarship of Le Goff, *La Naissance du Purgatoire*, that it was admitted a "place" of purgation came into awareness (as an intermediate location between heaven and hell, as a place required for purgation of the soul after death) only in the late twelfth century CE; see McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints*, 18; further, while McLaughlin points out that Le Goff has been roundly criticized for his basic reasoning and process, she essentially agrees with him on the date for the emergence of *purgatorium* (Purgatory).

⁸⁹ For example, Gregory the Great, *Dialogi*, 4.41. Notably, the record shows that as far back as the third century, Tertullian wrote in *De anima* that all souls would wait in Hades until the time of the final judgment when the soul (along with the body) would receive a final reward or punishment for the manner in which the person had lived his/her life; see Tertullian, *De anima*, edited by J. H. Waszink, *Vigiliae Christianae* 100, Supplements Series, repr. (Brill, 2010), 58. The first text that made the explicit connection between the fire of purgation and the efficacy of prayer for the dead was the "Dialogue on the Nature of the Soul" written by Julian Pomerius, a priest and grammarian, teacher of Caesarius of Arles in the sixth century; the "Dialogue" itself, is lost but mention was made of it in the writing of seventh century Julian of Toledo, *Prognosticon futuri saeculi*, edited and translated by Tommaso Stancati, *Ancient Christian Writers* 63 (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2010), 2.10. The first theologian to explain in explicit terms the full connection between prayer and purgation was Bede (d. 735 CE) in a sermon during Advent in which he distinguished a category of Christians who require purification of their sins before they can enter paradise; see Bede, *Homiliae*, PL 94, edited by J. -P. Migne (Paris, 1862), 30.1.4. Translation from Bede the Venerable, *Homilies on the Gospels*, Bk. I, "Advent to Lent," translated by Lawrence T. Martin and David Hurst (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian, 1991), 17.

saved, though only as men are saved by passing through fire.”⁹⁰ As McLaughlin asserts, the “possibility of being ‘judged and condemned’ at the last judgment on the basis of one’s sins was constantly represented in sermons and treatises” from the fourth through eighth centuries.⁹¹ Thus, statements by Isidore of Seville (ca. 560-636 CE) became relevant: he reminded Christians that each person would have to face an individual judgment followed by reward or punishment after death; furthermore there would be “two divisions” at that event: “the elect and the reprobate”—the latter would be divided into “those within the church who are evil” who would be condemned, and those “outside the church” who would simply be “damned” for eternity.⁹² Thus, the fate of the dead came to be re-visioned in terms of a final destiny associated with eternal judgment. There was a conviction that souls would require purging between death and the time of Christ’s return for the final judgement.

Care of the dead by the living continued as an expectation but some new ideas had been added during this period of Christian history—ideas about sin, the final judgment of the soul, and a more definitive understanding of a “fire of purgation” required if imperfect souls were to advance to heaven. The focus on what assistance the living might offer to the deceased had shifted. Church leaders began to define more clearly what they believed was necessary for the welfare of the dead and they encouraged the laity to accept direction from

⁹⁰ Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, 4.41.

⁹¹ McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints*, 186.

⁹² See Nancy Mandeville Caciola, *Afterlives: The Return of the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016), 56-63. Isidore was a younger contemporary of Pope Gregory the Great; Isidore’s twenty books of the *Etymologies* or *Origins*, would become “a basic instructional textbook and reference work for centuries to come,” well into the middle ages. As explained by Caciola, Isidore stressed the “importance of funerary rites” in addition to setting out “a precise set of conditions for restful versus restless deaths. As such, Isidore’s ideas complemented and extended Gregory’s, providing an underlying logic for the full, extended process of death, as well as a rationale for why some deceased individuals returned [in dreams/visions, for example] whereas others did not,” 63. See the theologian, archbishop, and encyclopaedist Isidore of Seville, *Sententiae*, PL 83, edited by J. -P. Migne (Paris, 1850), 596-97. Translation in Isidore of Seville, *Sententiae* (translated by Thomas L. Knoebel, *Ancient Christian Writers* 73 (New York: Newman Press, 2018), 1.27. Significantly, both the pagans and Jews believed that places (e.g. Hades, Elysium, Sheol, Tartarus, etc.) would be assigned to the dead according to what they deserved after living their lives.

the clergy for the performance of memorial/intercessory rites.⁹³ The *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great were mentioned earlier. His stories proved the power of prayer could liberate a sinner from the torment of punishment after death.⁹⁴ Moreover, Gregory's stories described the workings of the *ecclesia Dei*, the community of God (first mentioned by Gregory of Tours): the perfect souls who had led exemplary lives and those souls "perfected" in the fires of purgation earned the peace of heaven; these souls were now "patrons" who could intercede with God, asking for "amnesty" (*clementia*) for the sins of their "clients" still living on earth.⁹⁵ It became a concept of reciprocal exchange between the living and the dead facilitated through intermediaries, the clergy. Over time, variations of prayer for the dead were devised by the church. For instance, in the eighth century in Gaul, the votive mass (*missa specialis*) could be celebrated to fulfill the obligations of penance incurred by the sins of the deceased; this type of mass was contracted between members of the family and the priest who would say that mass in the name of the deceased.⁹⁶ In addition, the name of the deceased could be placed on the altar in written form the day the votive mass was celebrated.⁹⁷ Pope Gregory the Great had earlier offered assurance about the value of masses for the dead when he stated, "If their sins are not indissoluble after death, the holy offering of the saving sacrifice may bring aid to many souls even then."⁹⁸ In Francia in the eighth century confraternities of prayer became popular.

⁹³ Patrick J. Geary argues the following: "We must reject a conspiracy theory of ecclesiastical culture wrenching from the laity the major role in dealing with ancestors and suggest instead that the Church was given the role primarily because ecclesiastical institutions were better at maintaining and using these channels than were any secular institutions"; see Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 90.

⁹⁴ For example, the story of the monk of Justus showed the efficacy of communal prayer; see Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, 4.57.

⁹⁵ Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, 60-61.

⁹⁶ Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 98-99. The contract involved an offering (e.g. bread, wine, donation of money to the monastery/abbey) from the person requesting the votive mass given to the clerics/monastics who would undertake the saying/singing of the mass.

⁹⁷ Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 68.

⁹⁸ Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, 4.57.2.

The confraternities were voluntary associations, a new type of social institution comprised of clergy who were contracted to pray for members of the association (usually within a monastery) when they died.⁹⁹ At first, the confraternities included only the highest ranks of Frankish bishops, but over time they were extended to involve abbots, monks, priests and members of other monasteries.¹⁰⁰ Eventually, certain members of the laity—wealthy elite who were in a position to exchange property, goods, and protection with the clergy for prayers and masses—were included in the confraternities.¹⁰¹ Ever so gradually, intercessory prayer, anniversary masses, votive masses, and confraternities of prayer began to represent Christian “commemoration/*memoria*” for the dead; these intercessions over time became acceptable within the church’s “funerary practices,” though those practices were not yet a formal communal Christian funeral liturgy.

From the time of Pope Gregory the Great onward, it became the intention of the church to systematize Christian worship at least in the city of Rome and within the papal court.¹⁰² These “Roman” rituals spread across the Alps and into the Frankish kingdom through the travels of pilgrims, and, after 754 CE, with assistance from the Carolingian kings.¹⁰³ New rituals emerged from the “cross-fertilization” of the Roman rites with indigenous Gallican

⁹⁹ Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 101.

¹⁰⁰ One early confraternity originated in Attigny (755), another at Dingolfingen in Bavaria (772), and still another in Alsace (776-777), and then a partnership was established between the clergies in Reichenau and St. Gall in 800 CE. See Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 100-101. Further, in the 760s a gathering of more than forty Frankish bishops and abbots met in Attigny to formalize the commemorative services for each other’s deaths; the agreement stated that whenever one of the members died, the others would ensure the celebration of one hundred masses and psalters for his soul.

¹⁰¹ McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints*, 80. Inevitably, the complexity and diversity of performance and the sequence of the rituals increased among religious communities, not only in terms of how to commemorate the dead, but also how to ritually incorporate souls into the next life while easing their separation from this one; see Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 101. For example, commemorations of the dead were not always handled in the same way; while the monks at the monastery in Monte Cassino commemorated their deceased brothers every day (with masses, psalms, and offices of the hours), the abbey at Picardy included the names of those departed twice daily in their prayers, and the monks at Fulda elected to do so even more often, 134-35.

¹⁰² Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy*, 61.

¹⁰³ Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy*, 61.

rites; the result, of course, was a wide diversity of Romano-Frankish forms of Christian worship, making written records an important way to formalize and unite that worship.¹⁰⁴ Not only had the confraternities of prayer and contractual agreements between communities become more convoluted, but the rites of commemoration escalated in variety and inconsistency.¹⁰⁵ Accordingly, the Frankish bishops assigned the task of composing, copying, and transmitting sacramentaries and *ordines* to monks and nuns in the many monasteries of Françia and Gaul beginning in the eighth century. The resulting manuscripts provide some interesting data for this study as it examines the transition of the Christian funeral.

The earliest incident of “a Frankish ritual book created around a Roman core” was the Vatican Gelasian sacramentary (known in terms of its manuscript as the Old Gelasian or *Vaticanus Reginensis* 316); this particular sacramentary illustrated the convergence of “Roman” and Frankish/Gallic prayers and rituals, and (as noted) was composed and copied by a group of women, likely the nuns of the abbey of Chelles, near Paris (ca.750 CE).¹⁰⁶ The scriptorium at this abbey may have been selected, quite possibly because the abbess at Chelles happened to be Gisela, the sister of Charlemagne and daughter of Pepin, king of the Franks.¹⁰⁷ Interestingly, the Vatican Gelasian contained a compilation of prayers and rituals for death and burial including (1) the same rituals of Caesarius of Arles devised for his sister’s convent and amended to the Rule for Nuns ca. 534 CE, (2) the prayers from the Bobbio Missal¹⁰⁸ that

¹⁰⁴ Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy*, 62-63.

¹⁰⁵ Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy*, 62-63.

¹⁰⁶ Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 103.

¹⁰⁷ Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy*, 31.

¹⁰⁸ The Bobbio Missal was a liturgical book/codex, produced in Merovingian Françia ca. 800 CE. “It was copied in south-eastern Gaul around the end of the seventh and beginning of the eighth century and it contains a unique combination of a lectionary and a sacramentary, to which a plethora of canonical and non-canonical material was added. The Missal is therefore highly regarded by liturgists; but, additionally, medieval historians welcome the information to be derived from material attached to the codex which provides valuable data about the role and education of priests in Françia at that time, and indeed on their cultural and ideological background,” Yitzhak Hen and Rob Meens, eds., *The Bobbio Missal: Liturgy and Religious Culture in Merovingian Gaul*

elaborated on the ritual response to death begun with Caesarius, and (3) various prayers of Spanish or mixed attribution—suggesting local influence.¹⁰⁹ Also interesting is that the funeral liturgy in the Vatican Gelasian appears as a response to death in five stages that mimic comparable stages of the Roman funeral, which this study has used as an exemplar: (1) the washing and laying out of the body, (2) a ritual service before the procession to the cemetery, (3) a ritual service prior to burial, (4) a ritual service following burial, and (5) a final commendation.¹¹⁰ Do we know how the Vatican Gelasian sacramentary was implemented? How did ordinary Christians react to the new liturgical practices for death and burial? Effros makes the observation that the laity “effected their relationships with the dead without the spiritual intervention of clerics during much of the Merovingian period.”¹¹¹

Conclusion

The major points of this chapter may be summarized in light of my thesis themes: family, place, memory, and funerary ritual. In terms of “family,” the Christian family of the sixth to eighth century in western Europe was becoming more of a participant in the developing funeral liturgy directed by the clergy. On the one hand, family participation still addressed critical responsibilities originally associated with the Roman funeral; e.g., providing a safe journey for the soul into the afterlife; preparing the body for burial; mourning the dead;

(Cambridge, UK: The University of Cambridge Press, 2004), frontmatter; see Cambridge University Press Online, accessed January 11, 2020, http://assets.cambridge.org/052182/3935/frontmatter/0521823935_frontmatter.htm.

¹⁰⁹ Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 105-106. The Bobbio Missal (ca. early eighth century) originating from the town of Bobbio in northern Italy, preserves a mass for the sick/dying and includes the Epistle of James 5:13-16 (the basis of ritual anointing) and the gospel of Luke 4:38-40 (which recounts Jesus curing Peter’s mother-in-law of a fever), both of which emphasize physical healing.

¹¹⁰ Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 106.

¹¹¹ Effros, *Body and Soul*, 141. Effros suggests that the role of priests as “intermediaries” only began to increase in the seventh and eighth centuries.

burying the dead; caring for the deceased in the grave (*refrigerium*); and continuing to commemorate/remember the deceased. On the other hand, families were beginning to adopt some new ways of performing their responsibilities by accepting ideas proposed by the clergy. For example, during the sixth to eighth centuries it was more common for families to invite local priests into the familial home to oversee anointing of the sick and/or administering deathbed penance and the eucharist. Priests might be invited to return to the home to lead prayers over the body once death had occurred. The main point is that priests (or sometimes deacons of the church) were now more often included in the family event of death. The “new ways,” increasingly accepted by families, succeeded in expanding the *private-ness* of the family to include outsiders, in a sense making “family identity” more *public*. The change was, arguably, indicative that the clergy were gradually becoming more accepted within the whole of Christianity, thus producing a larger, more collective, Christian community. Furthermore, as families, over time released private responsibilities to clergy, the formal church assumed greater leadership and more the role of “ritual specialist” in the funeral process—a role previously held by the main caregivers in the family, the women.

In terms of “place,” this theme showed accelerated transition. The church was beginning to exercise greater control of places for the burial of the dead, and the church was now a place where the family could go to request intercessory prayers, anniversary or commemorative masses, and votive masses for their deceased kin. Still, the home persisted as the primary place of the funerary ritual process for many Christians. As mentioned above, the difference was that the local priest was more often invited into the family-home to offer “church-sanctioned” prayers and formal liturgy (e.g., anointing with oil, administering the sacraments of penance and the eucharist). However, because the home remained central for

dying and death, there lingered the potential for the family to continue old Roman funerary traditions and/or their own domestic practices, which remained a family prerogative. The same potential for continuing domestic rituals also existed in the places of burial, at the cemeteries, even as cemeteries became part of the formal church; that is, as burials were eventually allowed next to churches with some privileged burials permitted inside. Ultimately, even though church cemeteries were “communal and public” (available to all baptized Christians), each family was free to visit the graves of their kinsfolk where they could very well decide to perform domestic/private rituals of commemoration.

Regarding “memory,” funeral rituals still involved commemoration/*memoria* celebrations during this period, 501-800 CE. However, the feasting or *refrigeria* that used to remember the deceased in the family cemetery, now more often took the form of a eucharistic meal (a mass) celebrated at the church. Offerings (bread and wine) could be brought by the family to the church where an anniversary mass could be offered for the deceased on the third, ninth, thirtieth (or fortieth) day after death, and annually as *memoria*. Further, intercessory prayers, anniversary masses, votive (or contractual) masses, and confraternities of prayer—any of which could be arranged for deceased Christians—beginning with clergy and monastics, but later extended to the laity, would become more common in the middle ages.

In terms of funerary ritual, approaching the end of late antiquity saw considerable change (though some continuity remained) toward the development of a Christian liturgy for dying, death, burial, and commemoration. By the eighth century, clusters of funerary rituals were now being recorded in *ordos* and sacramentaries. These books of prayers and ritual processes would be the vehicles for an eventual Christian liturgy for funerals later in the middle ages. Analyzing the gradual but steady transition in funerary rituals throughout

Christian history means acknowledging what ritual studies has taught us. There are ranges within ritual-types; e.g., rituals that fluctuate from individual to collective, causal to formal, religious to political, personal to liturgical, and so on. Since one concern within the study of Christianity has been its focus on “the liturgy” (as a specific collection of formularies for public worship) to the exclusion of rituals as embodied actions connecting personal reality to the communal experience of reality, the findings of this thesis alert scholars to ponder another possibility. The examination of the late antique funerary process needs to signal to scholarship the potential of legitimate ritual practices that were domestic and familial in nature, and that the study of these private funerary rituals is as valid as the study of what the clerics, monastics, and Christian theologians and apologists may have previously written on the subject. This study found that the formal liturgies for death and *memoria* grew out of the informal/domestic religiosity of ordinary Christians and over time would become formalized and codified as the established funerary process sanctioned by the institutional church.

Having reviewed the chapter, it seems a good opportunity to show an example of how domestic funerary rituals persisted through the centuries, even into the modern era. Though the following example is well beyond the mandate of this thesis, families (as mentioned above) still had control of private/domestic rituals, which they could, at their own discretion, incorporate at any point in the funeral. Remarkably, as recently as the twentieth century a wake in the home was documented and filmed in the region of Puglia (also known as Apulia) in southern Italy where a Greek dialect called “Griko” is spoken. Puglia comprises most of what we might refer to as the “heel of the boot” of Italy. The year was 1959 and the town, the setting for the film, was Salento where filmmaker and director Cecilia Mangini documented a

family that had just experienced the death of their son.¹¹² The young man had died at home, and, as was the custom, neighbors (men and women) alerted by the ringing of the church bells, arrived to pay respects to the dead and to the bereaved—the mother, father, grandparents, siblings—and to join in the ritual mourning. Also joining the gathering was a group of professional “crying women” or *prefiche* (in Latin, *praeficae*) who came to lead in the mourning (ritual lament) for the deceased. We know the family was Christian as indicated by a crucifix mounted on the wall in the room where the body of the young man was laid out in repose; he was dressed in a royal blue suit; a large silver crucifix was placed on his chest, and flowers surrounded his body in the coffin. All women in the house—female relatives, visitors, and the professional mourners—were dressed in black and their heads were covered in black veils. The ritual mourning was ongoing but was led by the *prefiche* who carried white handkerchiefs, which they used to wave and shake while they moved in rhythm around the coffin. The other women, led by the head *prefica*, sang, cried, wailed, and shouted, stamping their feet to the beat of the lament poetry. As they gathered near the coffin, the women responded antiphonally to the *prefica*’s lament; the men sat or stood on the periphery of the room and remained silent. The lament built in tempo, volume, and intense emotion; some of the older *prefiche* began pulling their hair in a gesture of mourning. At this moment the priest arrived, escorted by one of the men. The women ceased their lament while the priest, reciting prayers, sprinkled holy water to bless the deceased and all those in attendance. Then it was time to take away the coffin. The distraught mother clung desperately to the sides of the coffin as the men reached out to lift it up, ready to leave the house. Once again, the women began

¹¹² Cecilia Mangini, “*Stendali: Suonano ancora* (The Bells Still Ring),” a YouTube video, 10:57, from a documentary film directed and written by C. Mangini, edited by Renato May, produced in 1960, filmed in Salento, Italy, 1959, accessed January 29, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ox01TQprvdM>. Search words: Stendali (Suonano ancora). See Appendix B of this study for selected scenes from the film.

their lamenting as both the mother and father collapsed in grief. The priest, and the church attendants carrying crucifixes, led the way as all the men and boys—those who had waited at the house and many others who appeared, dressed in their finest suits and fedoras—together with the pallbearers carrying the coffin of the deceased—began the long walk to the cemetery. The film ends, showing the women and close family members left behind. They remained at the house to continue their lamentations.

Notably, in this particular example, it was the custom of the town of Salento to have only men accompany the coffin to the cemetery and attend to the burial. The mourning women (female family, relatives, and the professional mourners) did not perform their ritual lament along the route to the cemetery, nor did they lament during the burial. This procedure is not always the case, however, as shown by other documentation conducted by twentieth-century anthropologists working in bordering areas including Sicily, Greece, and the Balkans.¹¹³ In some of these places, the priest arriving at the house of the bereaved has to knock before he is allowed to enter; in other instances, the entourage on the way to the cemetery stops at the church for a short prayer service for the deceased while the women remain outside and do not participate in the liturgy.

One might reasonably conclude, therefore, after looking at modern survivals of the funeral and mourning, two key points: (1) even long after the development of Christian liturgies surrounding death, burial, and commemoration and a codified sacrament for the dying—*extrema unctio* or Extreme Unction formalized in 1545 at the Council of Trent—

¹¹³ Margaret Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition*, 2nd ed., revised by D. Yatromanolakis and P. Roilos (Lanham, MA: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 44; Alexiou's example comes from rural Greece, in Mani—the central peninsula in southern Greece. Alexiou explains that “in some parts of [the island of] Chios and in Mani, the women have never reconciled themselves to their secondary position in church, and do not enter at all, preferring to wait outside.”

families have clung to their right of “private choice” to enact domestic/folk rituals on behalf of the dead in two key places—the home and at the cemetery, and (2) the relationship between the living and the dead has remained strong throughout the centuries. These observations ought to be part of legitimate discussions of *how* and *why* funeral rituals transitioned while changing and endured with considerable continuity over time.

CHAPTER SIX
The Ritual Mourning of Women:
Transitioning the Christian Funeral 180-800 CE and Beyond

Some Background

Previous scholarship has focused on the idea of the early introduction of a Christian funeral ritual/liturgy partly based on the idea that the positive Christian view of the afterlife required it. Associated with this assumption was the idea that the emotion of grief and its expression as mourning¹ were unnecessary, given the positive view of life eternal. Yet, as noted previous, Jutta Dresken-Weiland's review of some six thousand grave inscriptions showed that there was an increase in sentiments of mourning between the third and fourth centuries.² So this chapter will outline the evolution of grief and mourning as expressed through late antique funeral rituals and dispute previous scholarship on four points. First, there was a diversity of expression regarding grief. The earliest Christian thinkers were more aggressive about suppressing grief and its performative expression or *mourning*, on the basis it was "too pagan." However, various later Christian thinkers, similar to their earlier Roman counterparts (elite males) were more concerned about an appropriate decorum in reference to mourning; at the same time, they acknowledged the human need for grief. Second, mourning was still seen as a significant social expression. The trope of the distraught weeping and wailing woman continued as a social symbol in the Christian Roman world because there was a need for an appropriate expression of mourning and grief during times of significant loss. The emotional

¹ For a thorough discussion of the study of the topic of "mourning" in the Roman world, see V. M. Hope, introduction to *Memory and Mourning: Studies on Roman Death*, edited by Valerie M. Hope and Janet Huskinson (Oxford, UK: Oxbow Books, 2011), xi-xxiv.

² J. Dresken-Weiland, "Vorstellungen von Tod und Jenseits in den frühchristlichen Grabinschriften des 3.-6. Jhs. In Rom, Italien und Afrika," *Römische Quartalschrift* 101 (2006) 289-312; Ead., "Vorstellungen von Tod und Jenseits in den fruchchristlichen Grabinschriften der Oikumene," *Antiquite Tardive* 15 (2007): 286-87.

lamenting woman (or several of them) was a measure of the regard in which the departed was held by family and community. Third, as noted in previous chapters, the funeral ritual was predominantly enacted in either domestic spaces or public spaces that were minimally controlled by the church. This meant that the families, with their traditional ritual practices, remained in control of funeral rites for several centuries and only slowly did they relinquish aspects of the funerary process to the clergy. The continued use of non-clerical controlled spaces meant the continuation of specific mourning practices, especially in terms of female expressions of mourning—expressions of mourning that implied the continuation of lament. Fourth, consistent with the focus of this thesis, the current chapter concentrates on the performance of grief (i.e., mourning) in terms of the emergent Christian funeral. Also consistent with this thesis is the assumption that the earliest performances of funerary grief reflected the centuries-old practices of the family.

The Roman performance of grief reflected “both the social identity of the deceased and the moral and civic values of the society left behind”; in particular, it was “the living who [wore] the signs of grief on their bodies” since “grief found expression that was both visible and audible.”³ Those surviving a death in the late antique family were “the bereaved.” This group generally suffered intense emotions of loss, pain, anguish, and grief. The bereaved needed to act out those inner feelings of grief in external manifestations or outer displays of emotion, that we call “mourning” on view to the public. Such mourning performances were apparent as *planctus* (“the mourner’s body struck by self-inflicted blows”); *luctus* (“the sound of wailing”); and *squalor*, (“the disheveled and dirty appearance of the living mourner”).⁴

³ Anthony Corbeill, *Nature Embodied: Gesture in Ancient Rome* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 68.

⁴ Corbeill, *Nature Embodied*, 68.

Further, Roman mourning was gender specific. As classicist Anthony Corbeill explains, Roman women were expected to “take on themselves the public self-degradation that accompanies funerary rites, a role that could involve physical pain and blood-letting, while men normally avoid[ed] such extremes.”⁵ The function of female mourning was “to concentrate on ensuring the destiny of the individual corpse” while male grief was used “to maintain the continuity of the community and the status of families within the community.”⁶

The Female Performance of Ritual Lament

The additional function of ritual lament—the culturally prescribed mourning behavior performed at someone’s death often consisting of poetry, but not exclusively so—was mainly intended to heal the bereaved; it was an orchestrated confrontation of death that resulted in catharsis necessary for life to continue for the survivors.⁷ One genre of Roman ritual lament, called the “*nenia*,” was the “incantation of mourning following a eulogy to the deceased”; this eulogy or *laudatio funebris* was granted only to the most illustrious of Roman citizens, and was delivered typically in the public sphere, that is, in the Forum.⁸ Wealthy elite families might hire professional female singers (*praeeficae*) to perform the dirges and to direct the

⁵ Corbeill, *Nature Embodied*, 69. As well, see classicist, Gail Holst-Warhaft, *Dangerous Voices: Women’s Laments and Greek Literature* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 25; Holst-Warhaft maintains that lament/weeping “can be interpreted as a cry for help and ... women are thought to be more disposed to ask for help in the crisis engendered by bereavement.”

⁶ Corbeill, *Nature Embodied*, 69.

⁷ See Old Testament scholar, Frances Klopper, “Lament, the Language for Our Times,” *Old Testament Essays* 21, no. 1 (2008): 124. Also, anthropologist, Anna Caraveli-Chaves, “Bridges between Worlds: Greek Women’s Lament as Communicative Event” *The Journal of American Folklore* 93, no. 368 (April-June, 1980): 130.

⁸ See Dorota Dutsch, “*Nenia*: Gender, Genre, and Lament in Ancient Rome,” in *Lament: Studies in the Ancient Mediterranean and Beyond*, edited by Ann Suter (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 257. See also Seneca, *Apocolocyntosis*, translated by Michael Heseltine and W. H. D. Rouse, revised by E. H. Warmington, LCL 15 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913), 12.3.

spectators/participants of a funeral procession in the “particulars of mourning.”⁹ The way to perform “ritual lament” was determined by one’s culture. For Greco-Romans, socially prescribed poetry or antiphons were sung or chanted, often accompanied by musical instruments (e.g., the flute), and were further augmented by physical behaviors such as striking the breast, ripping one’s clothing, scratching one’s face and arms, stamping the feet, and clapping the hands.¹⁰ Given the oral nature of the lament, its performance by women as an expression of grief, and its significance as ritual, it is difficult to definitively indicate the existence of ritual lament within the sources. Therefore, this thesis has elected to focus attention on three significant aspects of ritual lament: (1) its accompanying physical expressions, e.g., beating the breast, tearing hair, ripping clothing, rolling in the dirt, etc.; (2) its ritual context; and (3) its places of enactment.

Lament, as an expression of grief, is one form of mourning. The mourning and lament associated with funerals and the rituals devised by families or communal units to make sense of death, are sometimes referred to as “the language of suffering”; lament is “not merely a vehicle for emotional release—it is a multifaceted human emotion”; it arises “from pain so intense that it cannot be articulated in words.”¹¹ Classicist Ann Suter clarifies the terminology surrounding ritual lament: (1) “ritual lament” specifically, must be distinguished from

⁹ See scholar of ancient gender studies, Ann Suter, introduction to *Lament: Studies in the Ancient Mediterranean and Beyond*, edited by A. Suter (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 11, citing the definition posited by Dorota Dutsch in “*Nenia*: Gender, Genre, and Lament in Ancient Rome,” in *Lament: Studies in the Ancient Mediterranean and Beyond*, edited by A. Suter (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 258-260.

¹⁰ See classicist, Karen Stears, “Death Becomes Her: Gender and Athenian Death Ritual,” in *Lament: Studies in the Ancient Mediterranean and Beyond*, edited by Ann Suter (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 140-43. For further description of mourning gestures, postures, and actions, see classicist, Darja Šterbenc Erker, “Gender and Roman Funeral Ritual,” in *Memory and Mourning: Studies on Roman Death*, edited by V. Hope and J. Huskinson (Oxford, UK: Oxbow Books, 2011), 44-45.

¹¹ Klopper, “Lament, the Language,” 125.

“funerary ritual” in general;¹² (2) “ritual lament,” as the expression of grief, is not the same as one’s expression of sadness and its attendant emotion; (3) in the absence of its actual performance, “ritual lament” may be *re-presented* in iconography or *re-enacted* in literature; this representation—the way “it is described . . . with what vocabulary and imagery”—is what modern scholars must rely on for analysis, and (4) significantly, “ritual lament” is not the same as non-ritual *lamentation* as a general activity “whether in literature, iconography, or real life”; ritual lament is “a way of acting that distinguishes itself from other ways of acting” and it “makes this distinction for specific purposes.”¹³ In other words, there are additional complexities in analyzing lament and its performance as it appears in the sources. For example, narrative descriptions of women wailing and weeping may not have been indications of the actual performance of ritual lament; similarly, condemnations by church authorities of women wailing and beating the breast did not necessarily negate lament behavior—women’s lamentation did continue at funerals, but the bishops were determined to control, restrain, limit, and perhaps eventually eliminate it. These distinctions become important when considering ancient lament performance since the actual enactment of the lament is not “present” (or actually happening in real time) and can be discussed only in terms of art and literature “from the past.”

¹² “Funeral ritual” or better, “funeral rituals [plural],” refers to all the rituals of the funeral process (rituals at the time of death, preparing the body for burial, the wake, the procession to the gravesite, burial, commemoration); “ritual lament” refers to the lament-song or poetry sung by women, as part of the mourning associated with the funeral. According to my working definition of “ritual” (see this thesis, ch. 2, 78), the women’s lament-song was “ritualized” (i.e., “ritual lament”) because it was: “a strategic way of acting performed as embodied experience in a particular place made sacred by the actions performed there.”

¹³ See scholar of ritual studies, Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 81.

Mourning and Ritual Lament, 180-300 CE

The writings of Tertullian, Cyprian of Carthage and Commodian focus on the issue of identity separation. Their argument is that Christian behavior must be distinctive from pagan behavior. This concern over identity is found throughout their discussions of funeral ritual.

Tertullian wrote *De patientia* (“On Patience”) in which he stressed that impatience cannot be excused for Christians even for “the loss of our dear ones.”¹⁴ He pointed out that grief is needless for death since Christians believe in the resurrection of the dead and he insisted, “[h]e who goes before us is not to be lamented, though by all means to be longed for. That longing also must be tempered with patience. For why should you bear without moderation *the fact that one is gone away whom you will presently follow?*”¹⁵ Consequently, while lamentation was discouraged, Tertullian acknowledges feelings of loss and suggests moderation in terms of coping with this loss. It appears that he disapproves of the ritual lamentation, but, at the same time, recognizes the inherent emotion of loss and separation, a truly normal human response to death.

Cyprian had similar admonishments for the Christians in Carthage. During the devastating plague ca. 250 CE, the bishop Cyprian protested against the practice of wearing dark garments as an expression of grief; however, this Greco-Roman practice was continued by the Christians in his city. He stated, that “dark garments should not be worn here [by the living], inasmuch as they [the dead] have already assumed white garments there [in heaven].”¹⁶ In other words, there should be no expressions of grief because the dead have

¹⁴ Tertullian, *De patientia*, edited by Jean-Claude Fredouille, Sources Chrètiennes 310 (1999), 9.1. Translation from Tertullian, “On Patience,” translated by S. Thelwall, in *ANF*, edited by A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, 24 vols. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1866-72), 9.1.

¹⁵ Tertullian, *On Patience*, 9.3.

¹⁶ Cyprian of Carthage, *De mortalitate*, edited by J. -P. Migne. *Patrologia Latina* 4 (Paris, 1887), 20.

received eternal life. Cyprian's rejection of grief also appeared in a treatise, *De mortalitate*, written ca. 252 CE. During the devastating plague of 252-253 CE, Cyprian, as bishop of Carthage, perceived the pain experienced by the Christians of his city and he sought to help them transition their grief. He wrote *De mortalitate* (which may have begun as a sermon) in an attempt to bolster and unify what he perceived as "the weakening Christian community" in the city and surrounding area.¹⁷ While *De mortalitate* has been identified as "the earliest Christian consolation in Latin," John Scourfield observes that Cyprian's consolation stands apart from typical consolations for several reasons: (1) it responds to the tragedy of an entire community—"mass bereavement"—and not just that of a particular individual, (2) it is neither a letter nor a funerary oration, and (3) its tone is "much more stark than is normal" for the early Christian centuries.¹⁸ Not until chapter 20 of the treatise does Cyprian truly confront "the question of the grief" as it manifests for those who had lost relatives to the plague.¹⁹ Cyprian revealed a positive, joyous outlook on death and urged his listeners to long for those deceased (victims of the plague) but not to lament them; and he implored the people to be strong, courageous, and obedient to the will of God, and to look forward to eternal life.²⁰ It was only in the final chapter of *De mortalitate* that Cyprian mentioned consolation for the bereaved. He noted that "a great number of loved ones" were waiting in Paradise for family to join them. As Scourfield points out, Cyprian's "attention is concentrated very much on the

¹⁷ See classicist, J. H. D. Scourfield, "The *De Mortalitate* of Cyprian: Consolation and Context," *Vigiliae Christianae* 50, no. 1 (1996): 23, 26. Cyprian's apocalyptic views are evident in this treatise: he suggests that "the end of the world is nigh ... the miseries of life will soon be over, and those who trust in God can rest secure ... and be reunited with their deceased relatives and friends," 27.

¹⁸ Scourfield, "The *De Mortalitate* of Cyprian," 12, citing Charles Favez, *La Consolation latine chrétienne* (Paris, 1937) who first made this claim in his monograph dealing with ancient consolatory texts. Scourfield's rationale for calling Cyprian's consolation rather unusual is outlined on 13.

¹⁹ Cyprian, *De Mortalitate*, 20 states, "*desiderari eos debere, non plangi*"; my translation: "desire them, do not lament/mourn."

²⁰ Cyprian, *De Mortalitate*, 24, states, "*pavore mortis excluso immortalitatem quae sequitur cogitemus*"; my translation: "Instead, let us set aside the fear of death and ponder the immortality that follows after."

personal future of the living” and not so much on their grief.²¹ In Scourfield’s view, Cyprian was speaking to the head and not the heart in his treatise and was “uncompromising in his rejection of grief as inappropriate for Christians.”²²

From another perspective, Paul Scherz views Cyprian differently. He maintains that we should not assume the total rejection of grief in Cyprian’s treatise because while Cyprian is quoted as stating, “our brethren who have been freed from the world ... should not be mourned” before continuing with “we know that they [our loved ones] are not lost but sent before ... that as travelers, as voyagers are wont to be, they should be longed for (*desiderari*), not lamented.”²³ Arguably, Cyprian was similar to Tertullian in that they both discouraged excessive mourning and ritual lament while at the same time acknowledging the human feelings of loss and separation from the beloved.

Further on this point, Charles Favez acknowledges the difference between *lugere* (mourning/lament) and *desiderium* (longing/missing) “in his classic work on Latin Christian consolation”; he clarified it as a distinction between “excessive grief and a virtuous grief falling near the Aristotelian mean.”²⁴ For instance, in Ambrose’s oration for his brother Satyrus, there are references to acceptable grief (*naturae dolor*), which Scherz argues “seems more like Seneca’s pre-passion.”²⁵ Further, the difference between *lugere* and *desiderium*

refers to categorically distinct passions with different objects. The words translated as longing or missing are variants of *desiderare* or *desiderium*, which can be translated simply as desire or longing, but which also has a technical

²¹ Scourfield, “The *De Mortalitate* of Cyprian,” 18.

²² Scourfield, “The *De Mortalitate* of Cyprian,” 18.

²³ See Professor of theology and ethics, Paul Scherz, “Grief, Death, and Longing in Stoic and Christian Ethics,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 45, no. 1 (March, 2017): 19, citing Cyprian, *On Death/Mortality*, 7.20.

²⁴ Scherz, “Grief, Death, and Longing,” 19, citing Charles Favez, *La Consolation latine chrétienne* (Paris: Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 1937), 149.

²⁵ Scherz, “Grief, Death, and Longing,” 19, citing Ambrose, “De Excessu Fratris,” in *CSEL* 73, edited by Otto Falle (Vindobonae: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1955), 1.10.214. Scherz cites Seneca, *Moral Essays*, vol. 1, translated by John W. Basore, 106–355, LCL 214 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1928), 2.2.5, 2.4.1.

meaning, since Cicero described *desiderium* as different from other passions felt at a loss. It is a subpassion of desire (*libido*), the desire for one who is absent, and is distinct from other passions felt at the death of a loved one, such as *luctus*, *maeror*, *dolor*, or *lamentatio*, because these are all subpassions of distress (*aegritudo*).²⁶

In short, Cyprian and Tertullian do not condemn grief per se. They understand grief in terms of bereavement; they simply condemn inappropriate mourning behaviors. Tertullian, for his part, had the sense that grief was needless, that the deceased should not be lamented, but they could be longed for.²⁷ In addition, if Favez is correct, the view presented by the two apologists (Cyprian and Tertullian) was substantially Roman (Stoic), sentiment which was christianized by the idea of assurance of joining one's deceased family members. However, given the Roman cult of the ancestors and ideas such as the Elysium Fields, it may have been more a matter of intensity and certainty, rather than new or different,

There was also another voice critiquing mourning and lament in this early period of Christian history. The poet, Commodian (third century) not only criticized Christians dressing in black/dark garments to show they were mourning the dead, but he also gave advice concerning how grief should and should not be expressed.²⁸ He wrote in "*Filios non lugendos*" ("That Sons Are Not to Be Bewailed") that even though the death of one's sons (referring to family members) leaves the heart grieving, this does not make it right to lament excessively (*nec plangere fas est*); furthermore, while the law (*lex*) acknowledges that it is prudent to grieve with one's rational mind, one should not do so with loud anguish in outward

²⁶ Scherz, "Grief, Death, and Longing," 19, citing Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, translated by J. E. King, LCL 141 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1927), 4.9.21.348; and 4.7.16.344.

²⁷ Tertullian, *On Patience*, 9 states, "*credentes enim resurrectionem Christi, in nostram quoque credimus, propter quos ille et obiit et resurrexit. Ergo cum constet de resurrectione mortuorum, uacat dolor mortis, uacat et impatientia doloris*"; my translation: "If we believe in the resurrection of Christ, then we believe in our own, because for us he died and rose again. Hence, there is surely resurrection of the dead; consequently, mourning is unnecessary, and likewise, grief is unnecessary."

²⁸ Commodianus, "*Filios non lugendos*" in *Commodiani Carmina: Instructiones CSEL 15*, edited by Bernhard Dombart (Washington, 1887), Bk. 2, 32.1-4. Translation is my own.

show (*prudenter ait animo, non pompa dolere*).²⁹ Commodian did not minimize grief, but he did object to the way it was commonly performed—with emotional *nenia* and *planctus* enacted by kinsfolk (mainly the women) and the hired *praeficae* in their singing, wailing, gesturing, and dancing. He suggested that a week was not a reasonable time to resolve true grief.³⁰ Significantly, Commodian’s criticism was not with the source of the sorrow but rather with the *way* that Christians continued to mourn like pagans, using unrestrained vocal lament and wild gesturing upon the loss of loved ones.³¹ Commodian writes, “Are you not ashamed to bewail your sons wildly in the manner of the pagans? / You tear your mouth [face], beat your breast and rend your garments. / Do you have no fear of the Lord whose kingdom you desire to see?”³² The last line of this verse is Commodian’s censure of Christians who seem to have forgotten that their children are not extinct after death (which was the philosophy of the Epicureans), but instead, will receive God’s promise of resurrection, confirmed in the teachings of Jesus.

In sum, Commodian, Cyprian and Tertullian were concerned with predominantly public mourning behaviors. On the one hand, these objections were very similar to those of

²⁹ Commodianus, “*Filios non lugendos*,” in *Instructiones*, Bk., 2, 73. Translations are my own.

³⁰ However, the full mourning period varied according to local tradition. For instance, Ambrose discusses the various customs for funeral rites: sometimes the third and thirtieth days after death were to be celebrated with thirty days as the total mourning period during the time of Moses, and sometimes the seventh and fortieth days for celebration with forty days of total mourning as with Jacob; see Ambrosii, *De obitu Theodosii*, edited by O. Faller, CSEL 73 (Vienna, 1955). Translation from Ambrose, *Funeral Oration on the Death of Emperor Theodosius*, translated by Roy J. Deferrari, *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*, edited by R. J. Deferrari, et al. (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, 1953), “Introduction,” 303. Ambrose states, “Both observances [thirty or forty days] . . . have authority because the necessary duty of filial piety is fulfilled,” again indicating the importance of the family bond; “Death of Emperor Theodosius,” 3.308. Notably, the third and thirtieth days were traditional Greco-Roman days of mourning, as well. For more on Roman rules and ideals for mourning, see Valerie M. Hope, *Roman Death: The Dying and the Dead in Ancient Rome* (London, UK: Continuum, 2009), 122-32.

³¹ Commodianus, *Instructiones*, Bk. 2, 73.6.

³² The Latin words used include: *plangere* (to beat, strike the breast in mourning); *os laceras* (tear the face); *tundis pectus* (beat the breast); *vestimenta diducis* (cast aside garments); translations are my own. For the relevant sections of Commodian’s poem, see Commodianus, *Instructiones*, Bk. 2, 73.32.7-11.

male philosophers of the time (e.g. Epicureans believed that death was annihilation so there was no point in demonstrative expression of grief for the dead because they were simply gone); on the other hand, all three—Tertullian, Cyprian, and Commodian—conveyed a christianized outlook that effectively established a dichotomy between pagan and Christian beliefs. There was now a more definitive distinction between the pagan Roman and the Christian Roman. The three men basically defined Christian identity as different from that of Roman paganism. They acknowledged the need to grieve for the deceased, although they placed limits on the extent of the mourning, the physical expressions of Christian grief. The situation was essentially a repeat of Roman attempts to limit expressions of grief in public funerals; that is, Solon had tried, the Twelve Tables had tried, Cicero had tried, and now leaders of the Christian community were attempting the same thing.

Mourning and Ritual Lament, 301-500 CE

Classicist David Konstan explains that loss bestows extreme anguish upon the bereaved for one all-important reason:

people who love each other form a kind of larger self ... one and the same self: they have projects in common and feel that what they do or achieve is not theirs alone but belongs to both of them. The loss of a person who is part of oneself is a kind of amputation: one's world changes, and it becomes necessary to redefine one's expectations, one's vision, the very meaning one has assigned to things. If we tend to imagine, then, that the deceased also miss these things, it is not because we indulge a childish fancy that the dead still perceive and feel such losses, but rather because the part of them that was part of us still dwells within us, and seems to be aware, as we are, that we are no longer the compound being that we were. If love is in some sense a union of selves, then the experience of loss upon the death of another is a response to a dissolution of that joint identity, and the survivor mourns the extinction of a common existence.³³

³³ David Konstan, "The Grieving Self: Reflections on Lucian's *On Mourning* and the Consolatory Tradition," in *Greek and Roman Consolations: Eight Studies of a Tradition and Its Afterlife*, edited by Han Baltussen (Oxford, UK: Oxbow Books, 2013), 143-44.

Konstan speaks to a universal truth, a human truth. Death of beloved family members wrenches one's heart and soul—and for good reason. It is significant that in the period of Christian history under discussion, people (Roman pagans, Jews, Christians) were probably quite aware of what Konstan articulates so well. The understanding of late antique Christians continued to focus on bereavement and how communal grieving ultimately assisted both the bereaved family and the bereaved community. Concerns about Christian identity were still secondary. The first example occurs with events in Augustine's personal life.

Augustine suffered through the pain of his mother's death in Ostia in the fifth century. In recounting this experience in *Confessions*, he elaborated on the meaning of "mourning." He admitted that his expression of intense grief for his mother was akin to a "newly-made wound" caused by the loss of "that most sweet and dear habit of living together"—a reference to the common identity shared by two souls bound together through kinship (as explained in the quote by Konstan).³⁴ Augustine found himself left destitute of Monica's comfort and his soul "was stricken"; he likened his grief to "life torn apart" when he stated that the life "of hers and mine together" had forever ended.³⁵ And while Augustine struggled to hide his grief, refusing to mourn outwardly, his young son Adeodatus did exactly that and cried out in spontaneous sorrow when his grandmother "breathed her last."³⁶ In response, everyone present urged the boy to be silent and Augustine's friend Evodius picked up a psalter and began chanting Psalm 101, thus signally everyone around the deathbed to behave

³⁴ Augustine, *Confessions*, vol. 1 (Bks. 1-8) and vol. 2 (Bks. 9-13), translated by Carolyn J. -B. Hammond, LCL 26-27 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 9.12.30.

³⁵ Augustine, *Confessions*, 9.12.30. For how grieving and ritualization of the funeral are necessary human devices for coping with death (especially in the case of very close family relationships, like the bond between Augustine and his mother) and for how efforts are made in different cultures to preserve some sense of "structured order" and "social identity" in the face of a personal crisis such as death, see anthropologist, Roy Rappaport, *Ecology, Meaning and Religion* (Richmond, CA: North Atlantic Books, 1979), 41 and especially the chapter entitled, "Ritual Regulation of Environmental Relations among a New Guinea People."

³⁶ Augustine, *Confessions*, 9.12.31.

appropriately and to join in the antiphon, "I will sing of your mercy and judgment, O Lord."³⁷ This incident allowed Augustine to describe in *Confessions* the reality of his own human grief; he conceded that sorrow and its expression were natural and normal but recognized the importance of tempering his own grief because observers, knowing him as a representative of the church, might interpret his mourning as weakness.³⁸ At the same time, Augustine would have been influenced by the Roman ideal demanding elite male discipline and emotional control. However, he indicated his belief that, more important than human grief was his higher responsibility, not only as a Roman male, but also as a Christian cleric, when he petitioned God to forgive Monica her sins so that she might find peace in death.³⁹ In addition to these restrictions on Augustine's personal need to grieve was the ultimate Roman duty (*pietas*)—that the family was obligated to attend to the welfare of the dead. We may conclude from this episode in Augustine's life that he must have understood his actions to be the "appropriate" Christian response to death.

Pursuing this episode in Augustine's life a bit further, we come to Monica's funeral. In the only example we have of a layperson's funeral, Augustine wrote in *Confessions* about the funeral procession for his mother, Monica. The passage reveals Augustine's objective to have everyone in attendance restrict themselves to decorous behavior. The passage states the following:

We did not think it right to celebrate the funeral with tearful dirges and lamentations, since in most cases it is customary to use such mourning to imply sorrow for the miserable state of those who die, or even their complete extinction. But my mother's dying meant neither that her state was miserable, nor that she was suffering extinction. We were confident of this because of the evidence of her virtuous life.⁴⁰

³⁷ Augustine, *Confessions*, 9.12.31; 9.12.29.

³⁸ Augustine, *Confessions*, 9.12.33-35.

³⁹ Augustine, *Confessions*, 9.12.35.

⁴⁰ Augustine, *Confessions*, 9.29.

This account is unusual because most reports about funeral processions for Christians seemed to indicate the *pompa* was a well-attended, that it was loud and chaotic (wailing women, singing, shouting, clapping, playing of music, etc.). However, church councils and some of the bishops' sermons signaled unhappiness with the behaviors of Christian participants. Monica's funeral procession stands in contrast. Augustine had been clear in his evaluation of the efficacy of public funerals and behaviors that accompanied them; he indicated more than once that funerary celebrations did, in no way, benefit the dead.⁴¹ As he stated, "funeral processions, crowds of mourners, expensive arrangements for burial, the construction of splendid monuments, can be some sort of consolation for the living, but not any assistance for the dead."⁴² Consequently, he made certain that Monica's funeral (at least the public part) would be decorous. Notably, Augustine, as the male family member in charge, has created, in a sense, a "new" Christian ritual for death. On the one hand, he acknowledges the need and reality of expressing one's grief in private—it actually helps the one who was bereaved, as he indicated in *Confessions*; but he fails to note that the community very likely needs to mourn and lament together. At the same time, it should also be noted that he acknowledges that "proper care of the dead" are "among good works"; he also does not try "to substitute the communal commemorations of the church for private services," which essentially allows for

⁴¹ For discussion of Augustine's position on extravagant funerary rituals for the dead, see Éric Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity*, translated by E. Trapnell Rawlings and J. Routier-Pucci (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 147-51. Further, he was a strong advocate for abolishing the *convivia* (banquets) in the cemeteries and insisted that the celebrations were in no way consolation for the dead; see Augustine, *Enarrationes in psalmos*, edited by E. Dekkers and J. Fraipont, CCSL 38-39 (Tuenhout: Brepols, 1990), Explanation 1 on Psalm 48, 15; and *Ep.* 22.6 (the letter to Aurelius, bishop of Carthage).

⁴² Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 132, citing Augustine, *Sermones*, PL 38, edited by J. -P. Migne (Paris, 1841-1855), *Serm.* 172.2.

the family to continue their own rituals for the dead (as a way of providing help for the living).⁴³ In other words, he is keeping the door open to private rituals such as lamentations.

The pomp and ceremony required by *pietas* and the mourning of the death of dear ones was captured by Prudentius in one of his poems, “*Hymnus ad exequias defuncti*” (“Hymn for the Burial of the Dead”) part of the collection, *Cathemerinon* (*The Daily Round*). In verses 12–13 of the poem, Prudentius reminded his audience that certain obsequies were traditionally expected for the dead. These rites were related to Roman *pietas*, the duty of families to care for and support kinsfolk. Prudentius stressed that the expectation to treat the deceased with respect was now even greater for Christians because death was the promise of resurrection (new life) for both body and soul:

That is why we take so much care
with graves, and why the last honors
receive the limp limbs, and
the funeral procession pays them respect,

Why it is the custom to spread over them
linen cloths of pure, gleaming white,
and myrrh and Arabian
medicaments preserve the body.⁴⁴

The lines of Prudentius’ poem regarding graves, last honors, funeral processions, and so on mentioned rites that were considered ‘universal’ practices; they were the rituals traditionally awarded all who died, even strangers.⁴⁵ But it was the excessive public mourning for the dead that Prudentius decried as he admonished those who mourned inappropriately, reminding

⁴³ Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 132, citing Augustine, Sermones, PL 38, *Serm.* 172.3.

⁴⁴ See classicist and scholar of Latin, Gerard O’Daly, *Days Linked by Song: Prudentius’ Cathemerinon* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012), 294–95 quoting v. 12–13 of “Hymn for the Burial of the Dead” (*Cath.* 10). O’Daly cites the Latin: *hinc maxima cura sepulcris / inpenditur, hinc resolutos / honor ultimus accipit artus / et funeris ambitus ornat; / candore nitentia claro / praetendere lintea mos est / aspersaque myrrha Sabaeo / corpus medicamine servat.*

⁴⁵ Servius, *Commentary on Virgil’s Aeneid*, translated by K. W. Gransden, *Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 6.218, 6.8; 11. 64, 11.206.

them in verses 29–30 that death for Christians signaled resurrection and “life’s renewal” so should be joyous:

Why does the crowd of survivors scream,
 stir up their silly, howling laments?
 Why does mindless grief in mourning
 blame laws so surely fixed?

Quiet now, sad complaint,
 stop your crying, mothers!
 Nobody should mourn for dear ones,
 this death is life's renewal.⁴⁶

In these stanzas, Prudentius, similar to previous Christian writers, is advising against excessive mourning given the Christian assumption of resurrection and eternal life. However, for most Christian Romans, customary mourning was required as part of the practice of *pietas* and devotion. The funerary procession where, in the words of the poet, “and mourners go with solemn dirge and footstep slow / Love’s last sad tribute to a friend” indicated the need for ritual lament as a way to “pay the tribute of a sigh as when our kin to rest are borne.”⁴⁷ It seems the issue was mainly the intensity of the mourning because, picking up again on Prudentius’ poetry, not only was burial a Roman duty, but so was there a precept in terms of lamenting the dead. Prudentius makes reference to the biblical Tobias in “Hymn for the Burial of the Dead”:

For the same law bids all
 to lament, our lot is one,
 in a stranger's death we grieve
 for the deaths of our own kindred.

The begetter of saintly Tobias,
 a holy and venerable hero,

⁴⁶ Translated by O’Daly, *Days Linked by Song*, 298-9, citing the Latin: *quid turba superstes inepta / clangens ululamina miscet? / cur tam bene condita iura / luctu dolor arguit amens? / iam maesta quiesce querella, / lacrimas suspendite, matres: / nullus sua pignera plangat, / mors haec reparatio vitae est.*

⁴⁷ Prudentius, “*Hymnus ad exequias defuncti*” (“Hymn for the Burial of the Dead”) in *Liber Cathemerinon*, translated by R. Martin Pope (London: J. M. Dent, 1945), verses 12 and 17.

though his meal was duly prepared,
gave priority to the law of burial.⁴⁸

Accordingly, mourning the dead persisted and the bishops of the fourth and fifth century Roman West continued to call for “moderation”; in some cases they also attempted to regulate “the conduct of rites” around the tombs of the martyrs.⁴⁹ The fact remained, however, Christian families still controlled funerary rights because of the right to worship as guaranteed by *sacra privata*. Romans were free to worship as they deemed appropriate including how, when, and where to mourn. Prudentius referred to this freedom in *Cathemerinon* 10, quoted above. Gerard O’Daly interprets these passages to mean that the need to mourn or lament is a human “law” that binds all of us; that is, “we grieve for deaths closer to home” for ourselves and loved ones.⁵⁰ Further, as mentioned earlier in this study, grief is a natural human emotion; the bereaved “feel for the loss of a person who has been a continual presence in their thoughts” and this “sense of privation” and longing cannot be escaped.⁵¹

Another poet of note during this period was Ausonius of Bordeaux (fourth century). His poems of commemoration may be regarded as re-presented (or re-enacted) ritual lament; in other words, Ausonius’ poetry used “ritual language” about re-presented ritual action.⁵² This “performed language” of ritual comprised words that were formalized, collective, stylized, and repetitive (through speech or song, intonation, pitch, rhythm, etc.); similarly, his poetry of ritualized “embodied action” comprised the postures, gestures, and movements (e.g.,

⁴⁸ Translated by O’Daly, *Days Linked by Song*, 297 citing the Latin (v. 17-18): *quia lex eadem monet omnes / gemitum dare sorte sub una / cognataque funera nobis / aliena in morte dolere. / sancti sator ille Tobiae, / sacer ac venerabilis heros, / dapibus iam rite paratis / ius praetulit exequiarum.*

⁴⁹ O’Daly, *Days Linked by Song*, 302.

⁵⁰ O’Daly, *Days Linked by Song*, 307.

⁵¹ Konstan, “The Grieving Self,” 144-45.

⁵² By way of comparison, social anthropologist Paul Connerton (best known for his work in memory studies) explains that ritual in real time is performative; it is both performed in language and embodied in action; see *How Societies Remember* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 58-59.

dance) physically enacted by those who participated.⁵³ In other words, there were definitely characteristics of ritual lament in his poetry. We can apply these understandings to Ausonius' work entitled "Parentalia"—the lengthy poem comprised of multiple shorter poems, each of which was dedicated to one of Ausonius' family members.⁵⁴ "Parentalia" was self-declared as the author's own "dirge" or lament (*nenia*), sung in pain/sorrow (*dolor*), unbearable anguish (*maeror*), and in tears (*fletos*).⁵⁵ However, unlike actual ritual lament, readers of "Parentalia" have only Ausonius' words to consider; his ritual actions can only be implied and are therefore termed "re-presented" or "re-enacted" ritual lament discussed earlier.⁵⁶ For instance, one of the constituent poems entitled, "Attusia Lucana Sabina, My Wife," is a touching tribute to Ausonius' wife, Sabina. Even though the poem was written thirty-six years after Sabina's death and Ausonius had grown old, he expresses (in words) his sorrow and anguish for his wife, referring to his emotional longing, not in the past, but in the here and now, describing his pain as "a wound that cannot bear a touch."⁵⁷ Again, the ritual "action" is absent; we can only surmise from Ausonius' words what his feelings/attitudes (and by extension, his performed actions) must have been. He speaks to Sabina in the first person as if she were present, saying,

*Te fleo ...
Nee licet obductum
senio sopire dolorem; ...*

*torqueo deceptos ego vita caelibe canos,
quoque magis solus,
hoc mage maestus ago.*

I have mourned and mourn you still.

⁵³ Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 58-59. Connerton argues that commemorative celebrations function effectively as "mnemonic devices"; commemorative activities are important for their power to shape communal memory, which they do by ritual re-enactment.

⁵⁴ Ausonius, *Parentalia*, Bks. 1-17, translated by Hugh G. Evelyn-White, LCL 96 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919).

⁵⁵ Ausonius, *Parentalia*, 4.3.24; 4.4.13, 14.

⁵⁶ Suter, "Introduction," 14-15n1.

⁵⁷ Ausonius, *Parentalia*, "Attusia Lucana Sabina, My Wife," translated H. G. Evelyn-White, 9.3.

Age has crept over me,
but yet I cannot lull my pain ...

I tear my grey hairs mocked by my widowed life,
and the more I live in loneliness,
the more I live in heaviness.⁵⁸

The poem is a memorial of a loving husband longing for his beloved wife. As a commemoration for Sabina, Ausonius' words and re-presented emotion/actions imply that his lament is real:

*Laeta, pudica, gravis, genus inclita et inclita forma,
Et dolor atque decus coniugis Ausonii.*

Cheerful, modest, staid, famed for high birth as famed for beauty,
You were the grief and glory of Ausonius, your spouse.⁵⁹

Ausonius, through poetry, refers to the physical act of tearing his hair/beard to express the depth of his grief. There is an understanding that some of the "overt" expressions of grief continue to convey the depth of the emotion Ausonius must have felt.

In Milan (ca. 386 CE) Ambrose decided he would persuade his congregation to pray in one voice through the singing of hymns, together, in unison. It was, perhaps, the bishop's way of trying to get his flock to discard disruptive lamentation (e.g., at funerals or anniversary celebrations for the martyrs). At first, he tried dividing the congregation in Milan into two antiphonal choirs to sing psalms during Holy Week in Milan.⁶⁰ This was received rather well by the congregation, so Ambrose went on to compose his own hymns and to teach them to his

⁵⁸ Ausonius, *Parentalia*, "Sabina, My Wife," 9.9.4-18.

⁵⁹ Ausonius, *Parentalia*, "Sabina, My Wife," 9.9.23-24.

⁶⁰ See classicist/historian Neil B. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital*, Transformation of the Classical Heritage 22 (Berkeley: University of California, 1994), 200.

choirs.⁶¹ Historian, Michael S. Williams explains why the hymns composed by Ambrose were unique for the time; they were

connected with popular songs and with acclamations, whether theatrical, political, or religious. Ambrose's hymns in particular share with songs and acclamations a number of formal features, being regular in form ... and being similarly intended for popular and untrained participation. The most important parallel, however, lies in what may be called their function or effect: for just as did songs and acclamations, Ambrose's hymns demonstrated and articulated the unity of a diverse population by allowing the constituents to express themselves in a single voice.⁶²

It turns out that this description of Ambrose's hymns, especially in terms of their form and function, compares closely to descriptions used by classical writers (e.g. Seneca, Cicero, and others) when discussing Roman funerary lament.⁶³ Ambrose's hymns continued in the antiphonal or responsorial form, but that form of singing was not new; it had long been practiced in Greco-Roman performances, it was common in the East, and the Romans knew of it especially when led by hired female singers (*praeficae*) at funerals.⁶⁴ Perhaps it was this similarity to lament-singing, but Ambrose's hymns, sung antiphonally, proved quite

⁶¹ According to McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 201, these particular hymns "were designed to mark specific points in the daily round (dawn, early morning and evening...)." Nowhere have I found that Ambrose's hymns were composed for funerals.

⁶² See historian Michael Stuart Williams, "Hymns as Acclamations: The Case of Ambrose of Milan," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 6.1 (2013): 108. Notably, the Christian Church modelled itself on the unity and consensus advocated by the Roman emperors and officials; the goal was "unanimous approval and agreement," 116. Williams explains further, "A crowd that acted together, and in the process showed its strength, was not to be argued with, and it represented much that mattered in Roman politics and religion: unity, common identity, consensus, and, ultimately, authority and legitimacy," 120. See also, theologian and scholar of patristics, Johannes Quasten, *Music and Worship in Pagan and Christian Antiquity*, translated by B. Ramsey (Washington, DC: National Association of Pastoral Musicians, 1983), 66-72, which discusses the ancient idea and significance of singing in one voice (*una voce dicentes*).

⁶³ Seneca, *De consolatione ad Marciam (On the consolation for Marcia)*, translated by John W. Basore, vol. 2, Seneca's *Moral Essays*, LCL 254 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932), 2.3.4, 7.3. Also, Cicero, *De legibus (On the Law)*, edited and translated by Clinton Walker Keyes, LCL 213 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928), 2.61-62 describing the *nenia* following the *laudatio funebris*. Also, Virgil, *Aeneid*: Bks. 1-6, translated by H. Rushton Fairclough, revised by G. P. Goold, LCL 63 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 4.337-338; and Lucian, *De lueta (On Funerals)*, vol. 4, translated by A. M. Harmon, LCL 162 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925), 12-13. As well, from the fourth century, see Ausonius, "Parentalia," 57-95.

⁶⁴ See classicist Thomas Habinek, *The World of Roman Song: From Ritualized Speech to Social Order* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 238.

successful in his city and have lasted over the centuries.⁶⁵ Classicist Roy Deferrari, in translating the hymns, writes that the bishop has been called “the father and founder of Latin hymnody” by modern scholars.⁶⁶ In Deferrari’s estimation, Ambrose “introduced a more lively and melodious song,” which, in the fourth century, was “rendered not by professional singers alone, but by the whole congregation, singing alternatively in two choirs.”⁶⁷ These antiphonal hymns were commended, explains Deferrari, “as both a consolation and a kind of rallying cry for the faithful of Milan.”⁶⁸ Ambrose becomes an example of how some Christians rather than “fighting” the trend, christianized it. He took a form of lament-singing, re-envisioned it, and made it endure, but in a slightly different style.⁶⁹

Augustine, however, considered Ambrose’s hymns as something of a dichotomy. He saw in the hymns both their “aesthetic appeal” (owing to their power to unite and solidify the congregation), and “their distraction” (arising from association with the popular/secular songs and chants of the people) as a source of suspicion, at least for himself and other clergymen.⁷⁰ This suspicion echoed the church’s perception of ritual lament performed at funerals by the laity—on the one hand, mourning and lament comforted and healed the bereaved; on the other

⁶⁵ For example, Ambrose’s hymn “*Aeterne rerum Conditor*” appears in the Roman Breviary used by Catholic bishops, priests, and deacons; see *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Breviary,” accessed February 14, 2020, <http://www.catholic.com/encyclopedia>.

⁶⁶ Ambrose, *Theological and Dogmatic Works of Ambrose*, translated by Roy J. Deferrari, Fathers of the Church: A New Translation 44 (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1963), xiv.

⁶⁷ Ambrose, *Theological Works of Ambrose*, xv. Also, McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 195, 200-201, 225-26. There are several critical editions of Ambrose’s hymns. One source in Latin is edited by August Steier, “Untersuchungen über die Echtheit der Hymnen des Ambrosius,” *Jahrbücher für klassische Philologie*, Supp. 28 (1903), 651-53; another, edited by Jacques Fontaine *et al.*, is *Ambroise de Milan: Hymnes* (Paris: Cerf Éditions du Cerf, 1992), 149-51, 211-13, 237-39 and 273-75.⁶⁷ An English translation of the four hymns considered “authentic”—that is, the ones affirmed by Augustine—can be located in Ramsey, *Ambrose*, 167-73.

⁶⁸ Ramsey, *Ambrose*, 65.

⁶⁹ A speculation is offered: performance of lament might not have been limited to a select group of professional women—otherwise Ambrose’s development would not have worked; or perhaps, it was more the idea of “antiphonal singing” that was the appeal for the people; the answer to this dilemma is not something I have encountered in my research. It remains to be explored at another time.

⁷⁰ Williams, “Hymns as Acclamations,” 109.

hand, mourning performances generated an ancient fear of lament as a sort of ‘magical’ communication between the living and the dead.⁷¹

Overall, public mourning and ritual lament were not well-received by the episcopate in the fourth and fifth centuries. The bishops denounced public manifestation of grief and judged the mourning behaviors of the laity as inappropriate and excessive. Reality on the ground, however, was that despite every attempt by ecclesiastics to uphold the bishops’ expectation for decorum in funeral processions, the laity resisted. An example appeared in a letter by Jerome to Paula criticizing Paula’s emotional mourning behavior at her daughter Blaesilla’s funeral.⁷² The behavior had caused scandal among spectators who criticized that Paula had to be carried “fainting out of the funeral procession” and that Paula’s excessive emotion was unbecoming a holy woman like herself. Jerome chastised Paula’s weeping, stating, “Tears which have no meaning are an object of abhorrence. Yours are detestable tears, sacrilegious tears, unbelieving tears.”⁷³ He berated Paula for her lack of faith in the resurrection and life eternal. Several years later when Paula died, Jerome reported there was no weeping or lament at all during her funeral procession, only the orderly chanting of psalms and the singing of male bishops.⁷⁴ Similarly, in writing about the *pompa* for the famed female ascetic Fabiola, Jerome recalled the multitudes in attendance, the chanting of psalms, and how everyone followed the church’s prescribed way of restrained mourning.⁷⁵ One wonders whether

⁷¹ Caraveli-Chaves, “Bridges between Worlds,” 130-31. Regarding Greek influence on Roman culture, see Giovanni Comotti, *Music in Greek and Roman Culture* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 48.

⁷² Jerome, *Epistulae*, edited by Isidorus Hilberg, CSEL 54-56 (Vienna: Tempsky, 1910-1918), *Ep.* 39.6 (letter to Paula). Translation from Jerome, *Principal Works of St. Jerome*, translated by W. H. Fremantle, Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, series 2, vol. 6, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wallace (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1892), 39.6.

⁷³ Jerome, *Ep.* 39.6.

⁷⁴ Jerome, *Ep.* 108.30 (letter to Eustochium, Paula’s daughter).

⁷⁵ Jerome, *Ep.* 77.11 (letter to Oceanus); Jerome discusses Fabiola who gave away her wealth and established the first hospital for the poor and homeless, *Ep.* 77.6.

Jerome's accounts of the two funeral processions were totally accurate; or, perhaps, were his descriptions more in line with episcopal expectation?

Additional reality on the ground is found in the rhetoric of condemnation stated by other bishops, such as Arnobius of Sicca and Zeno of Verona. In North Africa, Arnobius of Sicca (a Christian convert and apologist) used ridicule and sarcasm more than argument to chastise the mourning behaviors of congregants in song, dance, and music during funeral processions. In *Adversus nationes*, he indirectly derided musical instruments (flutes, castanets) and bodily enactment (dance), especially as performed by women in public, suggesting that such performances could be likened to the obscene activity of “harlots, sambucists and harpists in order to surrender their bodies to lust.”⁷⁶ In similar fashion, Zeno, bishop of Verona in northern Italy complained about women who mourned “violently” by lacerating their cheeks, tearing their garments, and “piercing the heavens” with uncontrollable wailing during public processions to the cemetery.⁷⁷ Further, Ambrose in Milan is documented as having disparaged women's lament performance during the eulogy for his brother Satyrus at gravesite in 379 CE. In a particularly harsh indictment of the lament performances of women, Ambrose critiqued female mourners as tantamount to evil and sin when he stated,

But it is common with women to make public wailing, as though they feared that their misery might not be known. They affect soiled clothing, as though the feeling of sorrow consisted therein; they moisten their unkempt hair with filth; and lastly, which is done habitually in many places, with their clothing torn and

⁷⁶ Arnobius of Sicca, *Adversus nationes*, edited by A. Reifferscheid, CSEL 4 (New York: 1875), 2.42.2: “*ut inlandis bucculas distenderent tibiis, cantionibus ut praeirent obscenis ...concrepationibus sonores, quibus animarum alia lasciviens multitudo incompositos corporum dissolveretur in motus, saltitaret cantaret, orbes saltatorios verteret et ad ultimum clunibus et coxendicibus sublevatis lumborum crispitudine fluctuaret,*” or “that they should swell out their cheeks in blowing the flute, that they should take the lead in singing impure songs and raising the loud din ... [the] crowd ... led in their wantonness to abandon themselves to clumsy motions, to dance and sing, form rings of dancers and ... raising their haunches and hips ... with a tremulous motion of the loins,” translation from Arnobius, *The Case Against the Pagans*, Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation 1, edited by J. Quasten and J. C. Plumpe, translated by G. E. McCracken (New York, NY: Newman Press, 1949), 2.42.2.

⁷⁷ Zeno of Verona, *Tractatus*, edited by Bengt Löfstedt, CCSL 22 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1971), 1. 5.4, 16.5.

their dress rent in two, they prostitute their modesty in nakedness, as if they were ready to sacrifice that modesty because they have lost that which was its reward. And so wanton eyes are excited, and lust after those naked limbs, which were they not made bare they would not desire. Would that those filthy garments covered the mind rather than the bodily form. Lasciviousness of mind is often hidden under sad clothing, and the unseemly rudeness of dress is used as a covering to hide the secrets of wanton spirits.⁷⁸

However, the criticisms of the bishops had little effect on the funerary traditions of Christian families in the fourth and fifth centuries. When “excessive lament performance” persisted, the *Apostolic Constitutions*—the eight treatises prescribing church liturgy, organization, and moral conduct (ca. 380 CE)—stipulated that decorous singing of psalms “shall henceforth be the norm” for Christians whenever they participated in funeral processions.⁷⁹ This edict, like the others, seemed to produce little effect on ordinary Christians. However, one Christian family in Rome followed the prescription of the bishops. Their gravestone erected in the cemetery of Saint Cyriaca on the Via Tiburtina in Rome documented a procession to the burial site that did, in fact, include the peaceful singing of psalms and/or hymns. The epigraph dated to the fourth century was written as follows: “*Hymnis est a nobis ad quietem pacis translata,*” expressing that the deceased was escorted “to the sleep of peace amid the singing of hymns.”⁸⁰

In summary, this section has detected some acknowledgement by church clergy of grief in terms of a deep yearning for the deceased and there is some concession that this

⁷⁸ Ambrose, *On the Decease of His Brother, Satyrus*, Bk. 2, translated by H. de Romestin, E. De Romestin, and H. T. F. Duckworth in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, series 2, vol. 10, edited by Philip Schaff (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1896), 2.12.

⁷⁹ *Apostolic Constitutions*, edited and translated by A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, in *ANF 7* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1885), 6.30. Among the psalms suggested were: *Ps.* 114, 115, 22/23, 31/32.

⁸⁰ See religious studies historian, Alfred C. Rush, *Death and Burial in Christian Antiquity* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1941), 234. For the inscription in question, see *ILCV*, 3 vols., edited by E. Diehl (Berlin: 1924-1931), II. 4711. Further, see New Testament scholar Graydon F. Snyder, *Ante Pacem: Archaeological Evidence of Church Life before Constantine*. 2nd ed. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2003), 225, which explains the phrase, *in pace* used in inscriptions to indicate the owners/dedicators and dedicants, were Christian. For another example, see Snyder, *Ante Pacem*, 232 citing an epitaph dated mid-third century, *ILCV* 3335; and *ILCV* 1578A dated 290-320 CE.

longing could be considered as appropriate grief. The issue that remained was the episcopate's condemnation of specific mourning behaviors. Yet, despite constant condemnation and attempts to replace the "inappropriate" and excessive behaviors with the singing of psalms and prescribed hymns, the performance of ritual lament endured among Christian families probably because the clergy did not yet have full control of funerary rituals or the places of those rituals, nor did they yet have anything to offer the laity in terms of a comparable response for death.

Other Forms of Ritual Lament: The Laudatio funebris and the Consolatio mortis

As noted in previous discussion of the Roman funeral, it was sometimes the case that prominent persons received an oration or funeral speech (*laudatio funebris*) in the forum in Rome. This distinction was also bestowed on prominent Christians, although the oration (eulogy) in their honor was performed usually by an ecclesiastical leader (often, a bishop) in a church, either before or following burial. Therefore, the funeral speech was formal, was performed by an elite male, and it borrowed from the Roman genre, the *laudatio funebris* but with Christian accommodation. On some occasions, however, the eulogy took on the characteristics of consolation or the genre known as *consolatio mortis*. In either case—*laudatio funebris* or *consolatio mortis*—the speech and its delivery constituted another form of ritual lament (a specific action performed for a specific purpose, in a place of significance) similar to the *nenia* enacted by professional women mourners. Except, in this instance, the ritual lament was performed by men. In other words, the ritual lament at a funeral could be accomplished in two ways: (1) by professional women (*praeficae*) hired for the purpose of

celebrating/lamenting the dead in songs and poems known as *neniae*, and (2) by men in their funeral orations in the form of *laudatio funebris* or *consolatio mortis*.⁸¹

This study has already discussed Ambrose and the death of his brother Satyrus in Milan. During a funeral service for Satyrus in 379 CE, Ambrose delivered a funeral oration in the form of *laudatio funebris*. This genre was closely related in form to the lamentation performed by the wailing women (*praeficae*) at funerals; ritual lament's structure consisted of: (a) addressing the deceased, (b) remembering and praising past accomplishments of the deceased, (c) imagining the future without the deceased, (d) declaring the plight of the bereaved, (e) wishing the return of the deceased, and (f) inviting all to share the mourning.⁸² These elements closely paralleled those prescribed for the *laudatio funebris*: (a) praise for the virtues of the deceased, (b) praise for how the deceased lived up to the grand achievements of his ancestors, (c) edification of the audience (especially the bereaved), (d) exegesis of classical texts/authors,⁸³ (e) the speaker's personal feelings of loss, and finally (f) consolation/sympathy for the community affected by the death.⁸⁴ This was essentially the form of Ambrose's eulogy

⁸¹ See musicologist, Alfred Sendrey, *Music in the Social and Religious Life of Antiquity* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1974), 303 and 319.

⁸² Caraveli-Chaves, "Bridges between Worlds," 135-36. For further discussion about lament structure, see Margaret Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition*, 2nd ed., revised by Dimitrios Yatromanolakis and Panagiotis Roilos (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), 132-33. Also, Alfred Sendrey explains that knowledgeable wailing women were in great demand to legitimate the 'proper' funeral, especially for distinguished Roman families, so that *praeficae* were hired often from great distances to lead the mourning and to help with the consolation and healing of the bereaved; see Sendrey, *Music in Social Life*, 303, 319, 410.

⁸³ The *laudatio funebris* or *consolatio mortis* genres of funeral speeches or written messages were intended to lament the loss of someone special and to offer solace to the bereaved. Instead of references to classical literature, church leaders used biblical exegesis and hagiography to strengthen the messages in their compositions. See classicist J. H. D. Scourfield, "Toward a Genre of Consolation," in *Greek and Roman Consolations: Eight Studies of a Tradition and Its Afterlife*, edited by H. Baltussen (Oxford, UK: The Classical Press of Wales, 2013), 15-17. Scourfield distinguishes the *laudatio funebris* (the public eulogy, usually delivered orally) from the *consolatio* (the more private letter, poem, or inscription of consolation intended for those bereaved), although he agrees that these formats overlap with each other and even with exhortations for and/or admonishments against funerary lament; further, in some cases the Christian consolation may have been intended for a wider and more public audience, as with Ambrose's funeral orations for the emperors Theodosius and Valentinian II, as well as Ambrose's consolation letter to the bishops of Macedonia (*Ep.* 15).

⁸⁴ Crawford, "*Laudatio Funebris*," 17-17.

for his brother. He stated that the death of Satyrus was a deep loss for the family (Ambrose and his sister, Marcellina) and also identified the death as a blow to local Christians who knew Satyrus as the administrator of secular affairs in the archdiocese of the city.⁸⁵ The eulogy turned to consolation when Ambrose employed “the vocabulary of mourning: words such as *maeor*, *dolor*, *fletus*, *lacrima*, and their derivatives ... no fewer than 149 times in the eighty short paragraphs” in total.⁸⁶ Ambrose’s speech was a personal lament and followed the rubrics of the Roman *consolatio*, comparable to those of the *laudatio* and the *nenia*, just identified.⁸⁷

Besides the funeral speech for Satyrus, Ambrose also delivered two other orations, one for the emperor Valentinian II (d. 392 CE) and another for Theodosius (d. 395 CE). In both cases the speeches followed closely the Roman *laudatio funebris* format but with Christian adaptation.⁸⁸ Ambrose’s funeral sermon or *laudatio* for Valentinian was preached more than two months after the young emperor died (or was murdered) in Gaul in 392 CE.⁸⁹ A sizable

⁸⁵ Priest and professor of theology, Boniface Ramsey discusses the life of Ambrose of Milan in *Ambrose* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 17. See also, Paulinus the Deacon, “Life of St. Ambrose” (*Vita S. Ambrosii*), translated by J. A. Lacy in *Early Christian Biographies: Fathers of the Church 15*, edited by R. Deferrari (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1952, 2001), 48.151.

⁸⁶ McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 75.

⁸⁷ See classicist, J. H. D. Scourfield, *Consoling Heliodorus: A Commentary on Jerome, Letter 60* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 16-22. Also, classicist Jean-Michel Hulls, “Poetic Monuments: Grief and Consolation in Statius *Silvae* 3.3,” in *Memory and Mourning: Studies on Roman Death*, edited by V. M. Hope and J. Huskinson (Oxford, UK: Oxbow Books, 2011), 151-52 where he outlines the major rubrics of the *consolatio*: (a) the author begin with encouragement to lament, (b) then he commands/reproaches the mourners to cease grieving, (c) he offer consolation to the bereaved family, (d) the most common medium for the *consolatio* was the written letter or elegiac verse, and (e) the *consolatio* tradition was intimately intertwined with the other two traditions, *nenia* and *laudatio*, and the three traditions influenced each other, e.g., Statius’ *Silvae* 3.3.

⁸⁸ O. C. Crawford, “*Laudatio Funebris*,” *The Classical Journal* 37 no. 1 (October, 1941): 17-27. Crawford includes numerous contributors to the definition of the *laudatio funebris* including Lucian, Polybius, Plutarch, Cicero, Quintilian, Pliny, and others. See also, Hulls, “Poetic Monuments,” 152 where he asserts, “the Romans themselves had a separate tradition of mourning and consolation: the *laudatio funebris* (‘eulogy’) that was largely independent of Greek rhetorical models and the *nenia* (‘funeral lament’) seems to have fulfilled similar functions to Greek *threnoi* (‘lament’). Roman consolations were most commonly either written as letters and/or in verse, especially elegiac verse, and perhaps the most extensive verse example is the *Consolatio ad Liviam*” by Ovid.”

⁸⁹ Ambrosii, *De obitu Valentiniani*, edited by O. Faller, CSEL 73 (Vienna, 1955). Translation from Ambrose, *Funeral Oration on the Death of Valentinian*, translated by Roy J. Deferrari, *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*, edited by R. J. Deferrari, et al., 263-302 (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, 1953), “Introduction,” 264.

part of the oration critiqued excessive mourning behaviors (weeping, tears, lamentation, etc.) and Ambrose reminded those in attendance (especially the emperor's two sisters) to go ahead and grieve, but not so excessively as to lose the memory of their beloved.⁹⁰ The speech offered solace to the bereaved by recalling the life of Valentinian as a way of granting both the deceased and his family proper honor and praise.⁹¹ Ambrose watched the sisters throwing themselves on their brother's tomb and reminded the women that their grief, while certainly justified (Valentinian had died very early, at age twenty-one), was unnecessary, that there was no need for extreme mourning since the young emperor was a virtuous Christian and had earned eternal life.⁹² Here, Ambrose acknowledged the grief of the sisters and recognized their expression of deep yearning and loss; it was the extreme mourning that was "offensive." In referring to Valentinian's pre-deceased step-brother Gratian (who had ruled the farthest western provinces of the empire while Valentinian was in Gaul), Ambrose pursued the idea of strong family bonds; Valentinian should not be separated from his brother (not even in death) because the two were "family."⁹³

A short time later, Ambrose delivered the eulogy for the Emperor Theodosius, this time on the fortieth day after the emperor's death in 395 CE.⁹⁴ The occasion was marked with a funeral service in Milan, a celebration of the eucharist, and finally an oration over the deceased prior to the departure of the cortege for Constantinople where Theodosius would be buried. In his *laudatio*, Ambrose mentioned the assistance of Honorius (the eleven-year old

⁹⁰ Ambrose, *Death of Valentinian*, 40.283.

⁹¹ Ambrose, *Death of Valentinian*, 2-3.265-66; 26-27.277; 39-41.283-84.

⁹² Ambrose, *Death of Valentinian*, 42.284. Valentinian was not baptized when he died; however, Ambrose confirmed that the young emperor had indicated his desire to be baptized by Ambrose much earlier, and therefore, Ambrose argued, just as the martyrs were "washed in their own blood, his [Valentinian's] piety and his desire have washed him, also"; therefore, the young emperor would receive the heavenly sacraments and enjoy eternal peace, 51.287 – 54.288.

⁹³ Ambrose, *Death of Valentinian*, 54.288-89.

⁹⁴ Ambrosii, *De obitu Theodosii*, CSEL 73, edited by O. Faller (Vienna, 1955), 369-401.

son of Theodosius, now declared the new emperor) at the altar for the celebration of the eucharist; it represented Honorius' "just due to his father Theodosius," which was comparable to what Joseph did for his father Jacob on the fortieth day after death.⁹⁵ Again, Ambrose spoke about the family of the deceased—in this case, those who had predeceased the emperor: Theodosius' first wife Flacilla, his daughter Pulcheria, and his son Gratian—stating that they were waiting in heaven for the arrival of the emperor to be with God.⁹⁶ The heavenly reward, insisted Ambrose, had been ensured by the "heritage of faith" passed down through an imperial family line beginning with Constantine and his saintly mother, Helena.⁹⁷ Here, as with Valentinian, Ambrose emphasized the family bond, in effect, referring to what may be considered as the Christian cult of ancestors. The eulogy concluded with Ambrose's commendation of the boy-emperor Honorius who wept as his father's body was sent on the "long and distant journey" for burial in Constantinople; this moment was doubly sorrowful since neither Honorius nor Ambrose were to escort the former emperor to his grave.⁹⁸ Notably, the points made by Ambrose indicate his recognition that the loss, longing, and separation by death produced the normal response of mourning—and it was appropriate! Finally, Ambrose assured everyone that Theodosius would be accompanied by choirs of angels and "a multitude of saints" to paradise.⁹⁹ It was clear that the belief in advocates and protectors (*psychopompoi*) of the soul on its perilous journey to God had persisted for Christians.

⁹⁵ Translation from Ambrose, *Funeral Oration on the Death of Emperor Theodosius*, translated by Roy J. Deferrari, *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*, edited by R. J. Deferrari, et al. (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, 1953), 3.308; 4.308.

⁹⁶ Ambrose, *Death of Theodosius*, 36.323–40.325.

⁹⁷ Ambrose, *Death of Theodosius*, 41.325–48.329.

⁹⁸ Ambrose, *Death of Theodosius*, 54.331.

⁹⁹ Ambrose, *Death of Theodosius*, 56.332.

Ambrose's contributions in terms of Christianity and the Roman *laudatio funebris* are interesting. The accounts appear to demonstrate that the emotional mourning associated with women seems to continue while the funeral eulogy is beginning to emerge as an alternative expression (Christian consolation) focusing more on the pain brought about by the absence of the deceased. Further, the genre also includes Christian confirmation of resurrection and eternal life and, at least for the elite, the church becomes the place for this rather than the Roman Forum.

As mentioned above, the funeral eulogy (commonly performed orally before an audience of mourners in a public place), could also be delivered more privately in writing, especially as a *consolatio mortis*. Communication in the fourth and fifth centuries was oral before it was text, so while a speech for the deceased could be performed by an authoritative voice—an elite male (Roman or Christian) using the spoken word with gesture and voice intonation before an audience—that same oration could be written down and sent to the family of the deceased in the form of a letter.¹⁰⁰ In other words, the response to death could be rendered in a written text which recorded an intended oral performance.¹⁰¹ Upon receiving the letter/written document, the recipients very likely had someone (perhaps a skilled slave) read aloud its contents; in this way, the written language was restored to the oral. Some examples of the “oration-as-letter” are presented next.

Jerome's Letter 23 was written to Marcella on the loss of her friend, Lea; the two women were leaders of religious societies for female ascetics in Rome but Marcella was not present at Lea's death, and blamed herself for not administering “the last sad offices which are

¹⁰⁰ See scholar of philology and gender studies, Katharine Derderian, *Leaving Words to Remember: Greek Mourning and the Advent of Literacy* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 3-4.

¹⁰¹ Derderian, *Leaving Words*, 3-4. See also, Habinek, *World of Roman Song*, 8-9, 158-59.

due to the dead.”¹⁰² Jerome provided *consolatio* for Marcella, he praised the deceased (Lea) for her life of humility and self-denial, and advised the survivors to maintain Christian hope because Lea had been “welcomed into the choirs of angels [to be] comforted in Abraham’s bosom.”¹⁰³ Again, there is the allusion to the memory of the deceased and the creation of a “new identity” among the ancestors. Another letter by Jerome (*Ep.* 60) was sent to console his old friend Heliodorus, now a bishop, on the loss of a nephew. This *consolatio* revealed Jerome’s own sorrow—his tears and sighs—as he joined his friend in mourning while at the same time instructing him not to mourn excessively but to set a limit. Jerome also advised Heliodorus not grieve that he has lost a nephew, but rather to rejoice that he was once able to claim him as family.¹⁰⁴ Finally, Jerome reminded his friend to check the flow of tears lest “your deep affection for your nephew may be construed by unbelievers as indicating despair in God.”¹⁰⁵ This is a reference to the clerical trepidation of judgement in the public sphere. Here we have, once again, the acknowledgement of grief, but concern over how Christian mourning practices in public may be perceived by non-Christians.

Paulinus, the bishop of Nola in northern Italy, also composed a letter of consolation (*Ep.* 31), in this case, for his friend Severus to pass along to bereaved parents who had lost their young son Celsus only eight years of age. Ironically, years earlier Paulinus and his wife, Therasia, had suffered the death of their own son named Celsus, who lived only eight days.¹⁰⁶ Using a christianized *epikedeion* (lament poem), Paulinus wrote *Carmen* 31 (a *consolatio* composed as a hymn) advising the parents not to grieve for their son with the pagan

¹⁰² Jerome, *Ep.* 23, Introduction/Commentary.

¹⁰³ Jerome, *Ep.* 23.4.

¹⁰⁴ Jerome, *Ep.* 60.7.

¹⁰⁵ Jerome, *Ep.* 60.14.

¹⁰⁶ Paulinus of Nola, *The Poems of St. Paulinus of Nola*, in English translation by P. G. Walsh, *Ancient Christian Writers* 40 (New York: Newman Press, 1975), Poem/*Carmina* 31 to Pneumatius and Fidelis, parents of the eight-year old Celsus.

hopelessness of uncertainty about life after death, but rather to rejoice in the Christian knowledge of the eternal blessedness attained by their son, Celsus.¹⁰⁷ By instructing the couple not to grieve unduly but instead to prepare their own souls for eternity “if they wish[ed] to see Celsus again,” Paulinus could be perceived as essentially consoling himself for the loss of own infant son.

Finally, the written funerary oration or *consolatio* could also be written as an epigram or funerary inscription, another genre of lament. One example was composed ca. 420 CE by Paulinus of Nola for Cynegius, son of the widow Flora who had requested her son’s burial next to Felix, *ad sanctos*; the epigram was written in part as follows:

Cynegius has ended his life while in the bloom of manhood, and he rests in the holy abode of tranquil peace. The holy house of Felix now contains him; Felix has received him and possesses him through the long span of years. Felix our patron now takes joy in his silent guest ... he [Cynegius] will deservedly be joined to Felix before the throne; meanwhile he lies in peace in Abraham’s bosom.¹⁰⁸

In a second example, the sixth-century poet Venantius Fortunatus, working in the Merovingian court of Gaul, followed a three-part formula for consolation for his epigrams, which included (1) *laudatio* or *exordia* to praise the “moral worth” of the individual, (2) *lamentatio*, to address the fears of grief and “the fate of the wicked,” and (3) *consolatio*, to allow the bereaved to mourn but in combination with encouragement and hope.¹⁰⁹ Sometimes Fortunatus was quite personal in composing an epigram and such was the case with the

¹⁰⁷ Paulinus of Nola, *Poems of St. Paulinus*, “Introduction,” 14.

¹⁰⁸ *CIL* 10.1370 = *ILCV* 3482. The inscription for Cynegius is damaged and the beginning of every line has been broken away. Therefore, P. G. Walsh has taken some academic liberty to restore the translation; see Walsh’s explanation in Paulinus of Nola, *Poems*, 421n3.

¹⁰⁹ See classicist, Judith George, *Venantius Fortunatus: A Latin Poet in Merovingian Gaul* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1992), 93-94.

inscription created for a deceased layman named Basilius. Paulinus' Poem 4.18 reveals the poet's personal friendship and affection for Basilius, whom he addresses in the first person:

Tears prevent me from pronouncing the name of my friend (*amantis*)
 And my hand can scarcely write the painful words.
 A wife's affection compels me to give a few words to his tomb;
 If I speak, I suffer, if not, I am cruel.¹¹⁰

The epitaph goes on to affirm the age of Basilius at the time of his death and the number of years Basilius and his wife, Baudegund, had been married (unusual for epigraphic writing).¹¹¹

In terms of *lamentatio* and *consolatio*, the poem for Basilius ends with the following lines:

“Though you have departed this mortal life, you are not to be mourned, / since, dear friend (*dulcis amice*), your homeland now is heaven.”¹¹² Significantly, Fortunatus began the epigram with an acknowledgement of tears and grief for the loss of his friend—he felt loss and longing for Basilius; however, at the end of the inscription, as Fortunatus points out, mourning becomes unnecessary if one believes Basilius now resides in heaven.

To sum up this section on the emergence of a “new” form of Christian ritual lament—the *laudatio funebris* and the *consolatio mortis*—one of the aspects to remember is that the expression of grief and mourning continued. However, there is now the concern that it not be seen as an indication that the Christian mourner has lost belief in eternal life. This means that the funeral rituals, from the perspective of the laity, will necessarily continue to accommodate the emotions of loss, deep yearning, and the pain of separation and absence—potentially informally (by individuals and their families) since that accommodation is not yet offered by the church.

¹¹⁰ See professor of Latin, Michael Roberts, *The Humblest Sparrow: The Poetry of Venantius Fortunatus* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 16, translating lines 1-4 of Fortunatus' epitaph to Basilius.

¹¹¹ Roberts, *Humblest Sparrow*, 15, quoting lines 21-14 of Basilius' epitaph.

¹¹² Roberts, *Humblest Sparrow*, 16, quoting lines 25-26 of Basilius' epitaph.

Mourning and Ritual Lament, 501-800 CE

Ongoing condemnation by the bishops (in sermons, letters, treatises) for the mourning practices enacted by lay Christians continued. In addition, church councils renewed their condemnation of specific mourning behaviors by issuing more prohibitions. The canons of church councils repeatedly ruled that only psalms were to be sung at funerals (e.g., the Third Council of Toledo in 589 CE and later at the Council of Rome in 826 CE).¹¹³ The public singing of lament-songs or dirges in funeral processions was officially forbidden in canon 22 of the Third Synod of Toledo; only psalms were permitted and the same canon also banned the beating of breasts.¹¹⁴ The bishops clearly realized the difficulty they faced in declaring these regulations because canon 22, outlining the “proper” way to mourn, stated that it was to be enforceable, *if possible*, “with all the faithful, and at least with the clergy.”¹¹⁵ The wording of the canon suggested that attempting to change traditional funerary rites (especially ritual lament) was not always successful and certainly not without problems. The decree appeared to have little effect on Christian communities because a similar ruling would appear yet again in the ninth century at the Council of Rome (826 CE).¹¹⁶ So, what can be understood about the situation? Church condemnations show that the mourning practices of the people continued. At the same time, and quite remarkably, despite the prohibitions, mourning practices were being given tacit acceptance through hagiographical accounts written during this period.

¹¹³ See the Third Council of Toledo (589 CE), canon 22, in C. J. Hefele, *History of the Councils of the Church*, vol. 4 (AD 451 to 680), translated and edited by William R. Clark (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1895), Bk. 15, 421; and the Council of Rome (826 CE), canon 35, in Edward H. Landon, *A Manual of Councils of the Holy Catholic Church*, rev. ed., first published in 1909 (London: Aeterna Press, 2015), 99.

¹¹⁴ For the Third Synod of Toledo (canon 22), see Hefele, *History of the Councils*, vol. 4, Bk. 15, 421: “At funerals only psalms shall be sung. The special elegies, and the custom of beating on the breast, are forbidden. Where possible, the bishop shall enforce this with all the faithful, and at least with the clergy.”

¹¹⁵ Hefele, *History of the Councils*, vol. 4, Bk. 15, 421.

¹¹⁶ For the Council of Rome (826 CE), canon 35 forbidding the singing and dancing of women at vigils and commemorations, see Landon, *Councils of the Holy Catholic Church*, 99.

These accounts of holy women suggest that lamentation and mourning were appropriate in specific situations, as we shall see in what follows.

During this later period of late antiquity, mourning practices for dying and death were still not entirely in line with church norms, even among clergy and monastics who, we must assume, were bound by vows of obedience to episcopal expectations. Acceptable mourning behaviors at times of dying and death (especially for religious communities) were supposed to be decorous, without performances of ritual lament, and were to employ the chanting of biblical psalms. Early in the sixth century, Caesaria the sister of the bishop Caesarius in Arles, requested of her brother the creation of a short prayer service to be recited over the body when a nun of the abbey of Saint-Jean died. It seems probable that Caesaria's request was an effort to prescribe a more "decorous" response to death, more in line with the expectations of the male leaders of the church. It is not entirely clear whether the prayer service was to be held over the nun's body at the time of death or later at the vigil/wake for the deceased in the basilica of St. Mary inside the city of Arles.¹¹⁷ Assuming, then, that decorum was likely the motive behind the prayer service, that is not what occurred when the bishop Caesarius himself died in Arles (542 CE). His death, it seems, presented a departure from the prescribed norms. According to Caesarius' biographers (the priest Messianus and the deacon Stephanus), while

¹¹⁷ The intention of the prayers over the body of the deceased nun was to pray that God would forgive her sins and welcome her into the company of the saints where she would wait in joy and peace until the final resurrection; see historian Bonnie Effros, *Caring for Body and Soul: Burial and the Afterlife in the Merovingian World* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 169. See also, Effros, *Body and Soul*, 167 citing Germain Morin, ed., S. Caesarius Arelantensis episcopus, "*Regula sanctorum virginum aliaque opuscula ad sanctimonialia directa*," in *Florilegium Patristicum* 34 (Bonn: Sumptibus Petri Hanstein, 1933), 30. Caesarius of Arles appended these prayers to the *Rule for Nuns*, which he had already created for his sister Caesaria the Elder's community ca. 512. However, the exact date of the appending of the prayers is not known, though there was a final emendation of the *Rule* in 534 CE during the time that Caesarius' niece, Caesaria the Younger was abbess. This may have been the date the prayers were actually added to the Rule; however, the prayers may have been used before then since Caesaria the Elder, having requested the composition of the prayers from the beginning, would have wanted them used at the time of her own death (ca. 525 CE). For further discussion, see Klingshirn, *Caesarius*, 104-105.

the bishop lay on his deathbed the nuns of the nearby Saint-Jean monastery were so grieved that their tears, groans, and laments drowned out the singing of psalms.¹¹⁸

Similar to the events in Caesarius' hagiography concerning rituals performed at the time of death, is the record of Radegund, the abbess of Poitiers, as recorded by the nun Baudonivia. Her hagiography states that the "whole congregation" gathered round the abbess' bier were "weeping and wailing" as they "struck their breasts with hard fists and stones and raised their voices to Heaven clamoring [*clamare*: to shout, complain, lament]."¹¹⁹ They cried out, "Lord, spare us this heavy loss. You are taking our light. Why will you leave us in darkness?" ... [Then the] whole flock stood around her bed singing the psalms. And whenever the psalms ceased for a space, they broke into intolerable plaints [*plangere*: to cry out, to lament]."¹²⁰ The account relates that, "From our innermost selves, from our heart of hearts, the tears flow, wails and moans break forth and nothing can console us while we make our lament We weep and we mourn On that same morning when this great evil befell us [and Radegund died], one voice, one plaint, one clamor penetrated the very heavens."¹²¹ Following the death of the abbess, the nuns of Radegund's cloister who were not allowed to leave the confines of the abbey, had to watch the procession of their beloved matron from the walls of their enclosure. As the *pompa* carrying Radegund's body to the church of St. Mary in the city passed below them, the nuns, according to the biographer Baudonivia, "lamented so loudly that their grief drowned out the psalms, rendering tears for psalms, groans for canticles, sighs for alleluias ... they cried out from above that the bier of the blessed woman might pause

¹¹⁸ Messianus and Stephanus, *Vita of Caesarius of Arles*, translated by William E. Klingshirn (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 1994), 2.47.64.

¹¹⁹ Baudonivia, "The Life of Holy Radegund," in *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages*, edited and translated by Jo Ann McNamara (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), Bk. 2, 21.102.

¹²⁰ Baudonivia, "The Life of Holy Radegund," 2, 23.103.

¹²¹ Baudonivia, "The Life of Holy Radegund," 2, 21-22.102.

under the tower” so they might see her one last time.¹²² Significantly, Baudonivia records that the mourning behaviors that took place at this point were the same “inappropriate” performances that were repeatedly condemned by the episcopate; moreover, they carried on even within the precincts of the monastery.

Remarkable as Baudonivia’s hagiography was—a nun (a woman!) reporting the “inappropriate mourning behaviors” of her sisters in a monastery—Gregory the bishop of Tours concurred with that account in his own documentation. He recalled that when he arrived in time for the end of Radegund’s wake (or vigil), he found that “a large crowd of nuns” were standing around the bier “weeping and saying: ‘Holy mother ... We have left our parents, our possessions, and our homeland, and we have followed you. What will you leave us except perpetual tears and endless grief?’ They said these words ... while they wept.”¹²³ Gregory does not criticize the nuns’ behavior. Clearly, lament performances—notably, associated with nuns and occurring alongside the singing of songs—were acknowledged and even legitimized, in this case, by a bishop, Gregory of Tours.

The same mourning behaviors persisted, and they are mentioned again, a century later, at the death of Rusticula, another of the abbesses of Saint-Jean in Arles. Florentius, Rusticula’s hagiographer and a priest, recounted the sorrow expressed by the many nuns who were present. Florentius wrote, “None could stop groaning, weeping and wailing as they mourned the pious mother they had lost ... Universal love demanded universal mourning and the sorrow of all who loved her was a seedbed of tears.”¹²⁴

¹²² Baudonivia, “Life of Radegund,” 2, 24.103.

¹²³ Gregory of Tours, “Blessed Radegund of Poitiers,” in *Glory of the Confessors*, translated by Raymond van Dam (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 1988), 104.106. This hagiography is written by Gregory himself in the first person.

¹²⁴ Florentius, “The Life of Rusticula,” in *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages*, edited and translated by Jo Ann McNamara (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 24.134.

Then again, in the seventh century, this time in the city of Bourges, another account told of the widow Eustadiola who had chosen the religious life after her husband died, gave away all her wealth, and founded a monastery. When she died her body was conveyed to the basilica of Saint Paul in the city.¹²⁵ Her unknown biographer wrote that from “all sides of the town, a crowd of innumerable people flowed together, and all were overcome by infinite grief of spirit. Their bitter lamentations so often interrupted the spiritual hymns of the clerks that they could scarcely sing.”¹²⁶

Remarkably, all the stories are the same—the nuns lamented the death of their esteemed mother superior in very “Roman-esque” fashion. Could it be that there was some measure of independence or *sacra privata* in terms of funerals within the monasteries? Monastic communities were, after all, religious “families.” Could there have been some accommodation for the nuns as members of a monastic family, at least within the context of death, for the enactment of funerary rituals that addressed, personal loss and the accompanying grief and sorrow? Certainly, by performing the elements of ritual lament the nuns were able to preserve the memory of their deceased *matrona* and the identity of their religious community.

Arguably, the hagiographers of the aforementioned accounts used a variety of “tropes of lament” in their stories—weeping, wailing, striking of the breast, clamoring to heaven. The actions (rituals) were identical to what we know of funerary practices among Christian

¹²⁵ “Life of Eustadiola, Widow of Bourges” embedded in the “Life of Bishop Sulpicius of Bourges,” *Acta Sanctorum*, 131-33 in *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages*, edited and translated by Jo Ann McNamara (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), “Life of Eustadiola,” 5.8.110. Note, Sulpicius served as bishop of Bourges 624-647 CE; McNamara estimates that the widow Eustadiola’s hagiography “probably dates from the early eighth century This excerpt is from *AS* [*Acta Sanctorum*], June 8, 131-33,” see 107 in McNamara’s preamble notes; therefore, the widow’s life (594-684 CE) was added to the calendar well after she died. It is not known who the author of Eustadiola’s hagiography was, when it was written, or when exactly it was added to Sulpicius’ life.

¹²⁶ “Life of Eustadiola,” 8.110.

Romans throughout late antiquity. The descriptions are part of the narrative construction of the text. The lament is certainly “represented lament,” which also suggests more of a fictional (literary) presentation. Yet, the descriptions only work within the narrative if such behavior was well-known within the culture. This study maintains, therefore, that the descriptions may not be accurate in terms of specific death events; but they quite likely reflect authentic practices. That being said, the hagiographers did not hesitate to report censured mourning behaviors occurring in a monastic setting.¹²⁷ It seems reasonable to conclude, therefore, that monastic communities along with the people in the towns surrounding the monasteries continued the traditional response to death, loss, and the pain of separation through mourning and ritual lament. And we know this to be the case from the many church councils that documented sanctions against mourning behaviors among Christians in the West. The canons of condemnation suggest that attempting to change traditional funerary rites (especially ritual lament) was not always successful and certainly not without problems. However, episcopal decrees appear to have had little effect among the laity—and perhaps, among nuns in the monasteries, as well.

In summing up this section, it may be noted that (1) church condemnations of mourning behaviors persisted; (2) conciliar canons banned certain lament performances, e.g., public singing and dancing, beating the breast; (3) hagiographies of holy women included the

¹²⁷ When the deceased was a prominent male, the situation was apparently different. For instance, in the eighth century (ca. 754) the biographer Willibald wrote about the burial of Boniface the first archbishop of Mainz, a “high ecclesiastic,” granted the privilege of burial inside the church. According to Willibald, Boniface’s burial was attended by many “faithful men and women from distant and widely scattered countries”; the crowds of faithful, along with strangers and citizens entered the church where Boniface was to be buried and they “were oppressed by sorrow and grief, yet rejoiced abundantly and were glad,” see Willibald, *The Life of Saint Boniface of Mainz*, translated by George W. Robinson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), 90. The account acknowledges there was sorrow and grief among the participants at the burial event, but any excesses were quickly overcome through moderation and compliance with the bishops’ expectations for appropriate behavior. The outcome at Boniface’s burial, according to Willibald, was the singing and chanting of psalms and responsorials and the recitation of prayers with decorum and propriety.

very behaviors that were condemned; (4) the response to death in public was therefore comparable among the laity and female monastics; and (5) the mourning and ritual lamentation of female monastics was tolerated by some bishops.

Mourning and Ritual Lament Beyond the Eighth Century

If this study were to extend a bit further, into the middle ages, its trajectory—that is, tracing the patterns of mourning and ritual lament as performed through the stages of the funeral process—would lead to the town of Ivrea in northern Italy during 980-996 CE. The bishop of this region was Warmundus (or Warmund). It is said that he was “an intellectual and accomplished poet,” a patron of the arts including “commissioning books rather than architecture,” and that he was fond of directing the illustrations of manuscripts and sacramentaries.¹²⁸ Of particular interest is his beautifully illustrated *Warmundus Sacramentary* depicting various church liturgies (such as baptism and ordination) including “the *Ordo in Agenda Mortuorum*, the liturgy for the dying and the dead” broken down into its various stages.¹²⁹ Warmundus himself authored the poems written around the edges of the ten illustrations/miniatures; the poems “comment on [the] miniatures and adorn the frames” of each of the illustrations.¹³⁰ Art historian Gillian Mackie explains that the “Order of Christian Burial” is portrayed by an unidentified artist(s) in ten illustrations showing each phase of “a

¹²⁸ Gillian Mackie, “Warmundus of Ivrea and Episcopal Attitudes to Death, Martyrdom and the Millennium,” *Papers of the British School at Rome* 78 (2010), 220-21.

¹²⁹ Mackie, “Warmundus,” 237. There are two sets of illustrations in the Sacramentary; the second set illustrates the “tortures inflicted on the martyrs who are commemorated on All Saints’ Day, 1st November”; see Mackie, “Warmundus,” 236-37.

¹³⁰ Mackie, “Warmundus,” 235. Mackie attributes Damien Sicard’s *La liturgie de la mort dans l’église latine des origines à la réforme carolingienne* (Munster, 1978) with first acknowledging “the prayers and readings that accompanied each stage of this last journey to the grave,” 238. Michael Driscoll confirms there is little doubt about the significance of the scenes in the Warmundus Sacramentary since each depiction “bears an inscription along the borders [thus] instructing the reader concerning the meaning”; see priest and theologian Michael S. Driscoll, “Death, Dying, and Burial: Liturgical Considerations for the Early Middle Ages,” *Jurist* 59 (1999): 243.

Christian's mortal sickness and death, matching each illustration with the appropriate liturgical prayer from the church's cycle for the 'setting forth of the soul'.¹³¹ Significantly, the ten illustrations depicting the stages of the funerary process are congruent with the stages of the Roman/Christian funerary sequence that has been tracked in my study. Copies of the illustrations in the Sacramentary may be found in Appendix B.

As for the Warmundus Sacramentary, the phases/stages are delineated as follows: (1) the "mortal illness" and the "imposition of penance in preparation for the *viaticum*, the last communion," (2) the "readings, chants and prayers from the clergy, and always the grieving wife and family," (3) the person dies, "as indicated by the small *homunculus* that issues from his mouth and represents the soul,"¹³² (4) the "washing and wrapping of the body," (5) the body is placed on the bier, (6) the deceased lying upon the bier, "leaves the house in a cortège for the church, site of a prayer service," (7) "Mass is celebrated" at the church, (8) the "cortège proceeds from the church to the burial place," (9) the gravediggers prepare the grave, and (10) "a sarcophagus is opened by the sextons and the body is placed within."¹³³ The most interesting aspect of the set of illustrations as it pertains to this dissertation, is what medievalist Patrick Geary has also observed: a female mourner is depicted in eight of the ten scenes, and in the sixth scene "she is the central figure. In comparison, the clergy appear to be peripheral to the scenes and are drawn as smaller figures."¹³⁴ Geary notes that, by contrast, in most texts at the end of late antiquity, women were rarely mentioned as having any role in the

¹³¹ Mackie, "Warmundus," 237-38.

¹³² The *homunculus* is the depiction of a little man/small child (the soul) and is shown issuing forth from the mouth of the deceased; see Mackie, "Warmundus," 238.

¹³³ Mackie, "Warmundus," 238. For photographs of the ten illustrations, see Patrick Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 54-59. The images are reproduced in Appendix B of this thesis.

¹³⁴ Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 54.

mourning rituals surrounding the dying and death of the Christian.¹³⁵ If nothing else, the images provide an interesting implication: there is a certain level of acknowledgment and acceptance of mourning performances and ritual lament (typical among the laity in their families) that existed among church leaders, e.g., Warmundus who would have approved the illustrations as drawn in his sacramentary, and Gregory of Tours, mentioned earlier in this chapter—despite the formal rebukes of church canons. Therefore, the *Warmundus Sacramentary* is an exception in its material evidence and deserves particular mention in this study.

Another art historian, Thomas Dale has additional comments about the illustrated manuscript:

the Sacramentary of Bishop Warmundus of Ivrea is remarkable for its very early display of an extensive cycle of narrative images documenting the ritual preparation for death and burial accompanying the *ordo defunctorum*, anticipating by four centuries the extensive illustrations of the Office of the Dead in the Book of Hours. It is also unusual in its insistence on the presence of the body of its donor, Bishop Warmundus, in texts and images within the book. The bishop's body is inserted into the very prayers he recited during the mass as a performative model for ritual action ... [Part of] the book's function [was] as a living form of self-commemoration that was activated every time the liturgy was performed in the cathedral over which Warmundus presided and in which he would eventually be buried.¹³⁶

Historian Lisa Bitel argues that the *Sacramentary of Warmundus* is remarkable for its portrayal of women “involved in all the stages of death and burial of men, watching, mourning, and lamenting.”¹³⁷ This observation is especially germane given that women's participation in funerary rituals had drastically declined in written texts since the fourth

¹³⁵ Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 51-52.

¹³⁶ Thomas Dale, “Corpses, Portraiture and Self-Commemoration in the Sacramentary of Warmundus of Ivrea ca. 1000,” *Corpus: Pre-Modern Books and Bodies*, Centre for Humanities, Mellon Workshop (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin, 2012), 1.

¹³⁷ See historian Lisa M. Bitel, *Women in Early Medieval Europe 400-1100* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 272.

century. Geary adds another useful insight: “The iconographic freedom of these scenes and the presentation of the characters in contemporary dress suggest that these scenes are taken from actual burial practices for the laity.”¹³⁸ Implied then, is that rather than an exclusive ecclesiastical perspective, as is often the case in the texts written by male church leaders, the sacramentary appears to reflect the funerary practices of ordinary Christians. This observation is confirmed by Michael Driscoll who also noted that the figures depicted in the illustrations are “dressed in costumes of the period,” which suggests the illustrations represent “actual practices” at the end of the tenth century.¹³⁹ Those portrayed in the ten drawings appear to portray family, friends, clergy, and professional funeral workers. Driscoll affirms that the illustrations are “free from any kind of traditional or iconographic constraint. They draw their inspiration from the realities of everyday life and the customs of the time.”¹⁴⁰

So, what can be gleaned from an examination of the funerary process as seen through the illustrations in the Sacramentary of the Bishop Warmundus of Ivrea, specifically in terms of mourning and ritual lament? The images are made available in Appendix B of this study. The first four illustrations portray the separation rites for the funeral of the Bishop Warmundus. In the first scene, a woman sits in the posture of mourning at the head of a man’s deathbed, “her left hand on his pillow, her right holding her cheek in a sign of sorrow.”¹⁴¹ She is “watching, mourning, and lamenting,” while the man’s family looks on.¹⁴² In the second scene, the woman stands near the bed as a companion, in support, possibly reciting a lament prayer/hymn; “the dying man is placed naked on a haircloth which lies on the floor” as the

¹³⁸ Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 53-54.

¹³⁹ Driscoll, “Death, Dying and Burial,” 242.

¹⁴⁰ Driscoll, “Death, Dying, and Burial,” 243. According to Driscoll, the Warmundus’ liturgical book is one of a kind in its illustrations of the family and/or friends in rituals surrounding dying, death, and burial.

¹⁴¹ For description of the scene, see Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 54; for illustration, see Plate 1 (folio 191r), 55.

¹⁴² Bitel, *Women in Early Medieval Europe*, 272 and fig. 14 on 173.

woman “leaning over him beats her breast and tears at her clothing.”¹⁴³ In the third scene, “the man breathes forth his soul [symbolized by the image of a *homunculus*] in the presence of clerics and laity. A woman, her hair disheveled, reaches for him and must be forcibly restrained.”¹⁴⁴ The woman is perhaps trying to catch the last breath in a kiss, or is trying to respectfully close the eyes of the deceased. Finally, scene four depicts the washing and preparation of the corpse for burial; “the naked body is seated in a chair and washed by two men.”¹⁴⁵ The men are lay persons, possibly professionals hired to do the obsequies. The woman is not present in this scene. In summarizing these four scenes portraying the separation rites of the funeral, the following points are noted: (1) postures of mourning and sorrow, (2) embodied actions of the mourning—e.g., what appears to be quiet recitation, beating the breast, pulling at disheveled hair, tearing the clothing, reaching for the deceased, and (3) intensity of the emotion—e.g., showing the attempt to restrain the woman from reaching out to the corpse.

The next four illustrations of Warmundus’ funeral signify the transition rites (or liminal rites, according to Van Gennep’s schema). Scene five portrays the same woman illustrated in the earlier drawings, standing beside the deceased; “the body, which has been wrapped in a shroud, is placed in a coffin and covered with a cloth, while [the] woman tears at her disheveled hair.”¹⁴⁶ Presumably, this scene depicts the end of the wake (there may have been one at the bishop’s residence?) since the corpse is shown fully prepared and dressed for burial prior to placement in the coffin. In scene six the woman is now the central figure as “the

¹⁴³ For description of the scene, see Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 54; for illustration, see Plate 2 (fol.193r), 55.

¹⁴⁴ Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 54; for illustration, see Plate 3 (fol. 195v), 56.

¹⁴⁵ Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 54; for the illustration, see Plate 4 (folio 198v), 56.

¹⁴⁶ Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 54; for the illustration, see Plate 5 (fol. 199v), 57.

funeral cortege moves toward the church. Both the pallbearers and those members of the *familia* accompanying the coffin cry out [indicated by their open mouths], but the featured figure is a woman, her arms raised and her mouth wide in lamentation.”¹⁴⁷ In the seventh scene, the setting “is in a church, probably at the vigil. While the priest reads the liturgy, mourners continue to cry out and the woman throws herself on the coffin.”¹⁴⁸ Finally, scene eight depicts the procession transporting the deceased from the church¹⁴⁹ as it nears the cemetery. “Once more the pallbearers and crowd lament while the woman, her hair disheveled, strikes her breast.”¹⁵⁰ Again, the woman is given the central position in the illustration. In recapping the scenes of transition, the following elements of lament are evident: (1) the woman tears/pulls at her disheveled hair, (2) the mourning gestures include raised arms and an open mouth to indicate vocalization—i.e. performing lament song/poetry, (3) not only the woman, but the others in attendance join in the lament behavior (vocalizations) as evidenced by the open mouths, (4) the woman throws herself onto the coffin

¹⁴⁷ Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 54; for illustration, see Plate 6 (fol. 200v), 57.

¹⁴⁸ Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 54; for illustration, see Plate 7 (fol. 201v), 58.

¹⁴⁹ We know that by the end of the eighth century, the Carolingian reformers had collected and documented the rites for Christian funerals in books called *ordines* and sacramentaries. Included in the books were lists of the prayers, verses, psalms, and antiphons to be sung/recited during the procession to the church. It is this type of list that appears near the back of the liturgical book owned by Warmundus. Recorded are the twelve prayers necessary for the “transfer of the body to the church”; in all cases, the prayers offer praise to God and plead for his mercy on the soul of the deceased; see Michael S. Driscoll, “*Per Sora Nostra Morte Corporale*: The Role of Medieval Women in Death and Burial Practices,” *Liturgical Ministry* 10 (Winter, 2001): 14-22; esp. see the table at 18; notably, the *ordo* only gives the procedure/order for the officiant to follow and it provides short titles for the prayers, not their full wording; abbreviations are used, e.g., R = response, V = verse, etc. My translations of the prayer titles are as follows: (1) six antiphons, (2) Ps. 64—*Te decet hymnus* = “A Hymn to You,” (3) *Deus cui omnia vivunt* = “God, for You All Things Live,” (4) R. *Libera me* = “Response: Deliver Me,” (5) V. *Clamantes et dicentes* = “Verse: Shouting and Singing,” (6) *Kyrie* = “O, Lord,” (7) *Pater Noster ... Requiem aeternam* = “Our Father ... eternal rest,” (8) *Fac, quaesumus* = “Make It So, We Pray,” (9) *Inclina, domine* = “Bend, O Lord,” (10) *Omnipotens Dei misericordiam* = “Almighty Merciful God,” (11) *Deum iudicem* = “God is Judge,” and (12) *Obsecramus misericordiam* = “We Implore Your Mercy.” Presumably, these twelve prayers were recited, possibly by a priest or bishop, and responded to antiphonally at certain intervals by participants of the processions—one *pompa* to the church, the other to the cemetery.

¹⁵⁰ Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 54; for illustration, see Plate 8 (fol. 203v), 58.

in a gesture of extreme sorrow, loss, and longing, and (5) the gesture of striking the breast is repeated.

The last two illustrations in the Warmundus Sacramentary show the re-integration (incorporation) stages of the funeral process. In scene nine, two gravediggers prepare the tomb while another two men remove and lift the top of the sarcophagus in preparation for the arrival of the deceased.¹⁵¹ The woman is not in this illustration. Finally, scene ten depicts the family of clerics and lay people gathered around the tomb.¹⁵² The illustration “shows the burial. As the priest, accompanied by the clergy, blesses the cadaver, which has been lifted from the coffin, the woman, her hair in disarray, reaches out for the body and must be forcibly restrained by a layman” to prevent her from throwing herself into the tomb with the deceased.¹⁵³ In sum, the key elements of mourning depicted in the illustrations include (1) the entire family (clerics and layfolk) gather to mourn at graveside, (2) the woman’s physical state is once more underscored (her disheveled hair is once more emphasized) and (3) she makes a second attempt to throw herself onto the corpse, thus indicating her extreme emotional distress, sorrow, and deep loss/yearning.

Conclusion

In terms of death, mourning has always been about the expression of acute feelings of grief, loss, and the pain of separation.¹⁵⁴ In late antiquity women were both agent and the medium “through which a kin group was able to display ‘correct’ grief and emotion ... both for the kin group itself and for the social whole. This grief was ‘required’ as one of the means by which

¹⁵¹ Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 54; for the illustration, see 59, Plate 9, fol. 205r.

¹⁵² Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 59; see illustration (Plate 10, fol. 206v).

¹⁵³ Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 54; for illustration, see Plate 10, fol. 206v.

¹⁵⁴ Stears, “Death Becomes Her,” 151.

the social crisis initiated by death was resolved.”¹⁵⁵ Women’s knowledge of how to perform funeral rituals correctly in the domestic domain, particularly rituals of mourning, was of paramount importance in late antiquity. Not only were women deemed healers, they were also keepers of memory for the family and/or community, and their songs of lament were the way that memories were preserved and passed down through generations.¹⁵⁶ Karen Stears argues that women’s role as memory-keepers using lament-songs, which were orally transmitted, made women the “guardians” and “inventors” of parts of family tradition that were even “more detailed and personal” than the family records created by funerary inscriptions and tombs.¹⁵⁷ Perhaps most importantly, women’s ritual lament served a social function through a series of contrasts; it facilitated dialogue between the living and the dead, between the mourner and the deceased, between the past and the present, and between the individual and the community.¹⁵⁸ The language of lament was essentially a “bridge” between realms; rather than merely describing, lament poetry had the “capacity to *affect* and even *prescribe*” the behavior of the bereaved and the community suffering the loss.¹⁵⁹ The oral performance of ritual lament allowed the female leader (*praefica*) to help the “bridging” occur, thus effecting, in the words of Caraveli-Chaves, “a communal confrontation with death and, through it, a catharsis.”¹⁶⁰ However, as we have seen, many leaders of the early church rejected women’s ritual lament and insisted it be replaced by the singing of biblical psalms. The result was to supplant oral tradition with written (inscribed/literary) tradition. Paul Connerton, best known for his work in memory studies, explains that “any account which is transmitted by means of

¹⁵⁵ Stears, “Death Becomes Her,” 151.

¹⁵⁶ Stears, “Death Becomes Her,” 148-49.

¹⁵⁷ Stears, “Death Becomes Her,” 149.

¹⁵⁸ Caraveli-Chaves, “Bridge Between Worlds,” 139-41. Caraveli-Chaves uses evidence of modern lament survivals in Crete in the 1970s for her research on women’s funerary lament.

¹⁵⁹ Caraveli-Chaves, “Bridge Between Worlds,” 143.

¹⁶⁰ Caraveli-Chaves, “Bridge Between Worlds,” 144.

inscriptions is unalterably fixed, the process of its composition being definitively closed.”¹⁶¹ Oral culture, on the other hand, is more flexible, open-ended, and dynamic.¹⁶² The consequence of exchanging oral transmission (in this case, funerary mourning or ritual lament) for standard canonical text (e.g., psalms) was substantial. Connerton notes that the exchange of *oral* for *inscribed* implies that the memories of a culture “begin to be transmitted mainly by the reproduction of their inscriptions rather than by ‘live’ tellings”; this, in turn, makes improvisation “increasingly difficult, and innovation is institutionalized.”¹⁶³ In an oral culture, therefore, ritual lament formally recalled and implemented memories in “performances repeatedly recited by the custodians of memory” (women); these standardized lament performances were passed down through generations with the help of the “rhythms of oral verse” and “the co-operation of a whole series of bodily motor reflexes” to facilitate remembrance.¹⁶⁴ The essential function of the language of ritual lament was threefold: (1) to collectively confront death and begin catharsis, (2) to heal the living through song and bodily enactment, and (3) to provide “the narrative bridging” between mourners and the dead so that life might continue for the bereaved.¹⁶⁵ As Caraveli-Chaves explains it, “[l]ament language is magical language seeking to remedy death and heal the living ... kinship ties are ... affirmed and continuity of generations is ensured”; in other words, lament promotes a “dialogue between the living and the dead” and helps “cope with the fear of death,” ultimately healing the bereaved and the community as well.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶¹ Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 75.

¹⁶² For discussion about the way performances enable the transmission of cultural memory, see a book that has been very influential in performance studies by Diana Taylor, introduction to *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* by D. Taylor (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), xiii-xx.

¹⁶³ Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 75.

¹⁶⁴ Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 76.

¹⁶⁵ Caraveli-Chaves, “Bridge Between Worlds,” 130, 142.

¹⁶⁶ Caraveli-Chaves, “Bridge Between Worlds,” 151-57.

As discussed in this study, ritual lament was a key component of the funerary process. Grief, sorrow, loss, and deep yearning—these were basic emotions from the time of the death through to commemoration and *memoria*. As a consequence of their public performances of remembrance, women in late antiquity met with severe rebukes from church officials, as demonstrated by the many conciliar canons censuring mourning and lamenting behaviors at Christian funerals. At the same time, church officials did acknowledge and recognize grief and intense desire for the dead even though attempts were made by the church to bring mourning in line and make it acceptable and decorous. One critical reason for the persistence of ritual lament was the continuation of the family's control over the stages of funerary rites in terms of when they were performed, what those rites would be, and especially where they would occur (i.e., in the home, through the streets on the way to burial, and at the cemetery). Even though censure appeared repeatedly against the mourning practices of late antique Christian families, women's performance of ritual lament persisted well into the middle ages.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Summation and Implications

The purpose of this research was to track and examine the transformation of the Roman funeral through late antiquity in the Latin West. Setting the phenomenon of transformation within the themes of family, place, memory, and ritual, I asked: What difference does it make to the understanding of the transition to a Christian liturgy for death when the process is viewed through the hermeneutic lenses of suspicion, rhetorical condemnation, and close reading of the sources realizing the existence of both formal (institutional) and informal (domestic) Christianity in late antiquity? By way of clarifying the phenomenon, I examined its treatment by authors over the past eight decades representing a variety of disciplinary approaches— Greek and Roman studies, classics, early Christian studies, history, religious studies, anthropology, mortuary studies, liturgical studies, gender studies, etc.—and identified the transformation of the funeral as a complex interplay among and between the Christian family and the formal church, sacred places, social memory, and ritualization of the funeral. My research followed the work of Peter Brown and other scholars of late antiquity; it applied the definition of the Roman funeral as delineated by Valerie M. Hope; and it incorporated the insights and perspectives of scholars from the social sciences—e.g., Paul Connerton in memory studies; Catherine Bell in ritual studies; and Ronald Grimes in place studies—to assist with the critical analysis of the data.

With these considerations in mind, I argued that late antique Christian families relied on the traditional Roman funeral as the foundation of their response to death. This foundation, however, vacillated between continuity and change, resistance and assimilation, and adaptation and innovation throughout late antiquity until, around the eighth century under the

direction of Charlemagne, there emerged a schema for a funeral liturgy adopted by the institutional church that gradually began to satisfy Christian families in their relationship with the dead.

I maintained that the liturgy for Christian death was not simply something created by the clergy in Rome and then brought to western Europe for adaptation in the sixth to eighth centuries, as F. S. Paxton and some other scholars would have us believe. Instead, the liturgy was developed slowly in a long and convoluted transition involving individual Christian Roman families and the Roman funeral process. This study argued that while there was clerical input during the transition, equally important were crucial contributions by families and their ritual specialists, the women of the family, who helped channel the transformation from the Roman to the Christian funeral. Rituals for dying, death, burial, and commemoration began with the family. Care of the dying and the dead were mainly handled by the women of the family; so too, was the mourning of the dead a female responsibility. The performance of ritual lament—especially lament song, poetry, and antiphons enacted at all stages of the funeral process—made the communal expression of grief and rage at the loss of the deceased possible; it allowed the family of the deceased and the community at large “a ritualized language” with which to speak about death and to face it head on.¹ It also allowed the community and the family to commit the deceased to memory, a critically important consideration in an oral society.² In addition, mourning the dead was not only part of the funerary process, it was a way of making sense of loss and a way of returning order to life turned upside down.

¹ Gail Holst-Warhaft, *Dangerous Voices: Women's Laments and Greek Literature* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 10.

² Holst-Warhaft, *Dangerous Voices*, 123-24.

Consequently, the goal of this thesis has been to demonstrate that it was the interaction of Christian Roman families, their women folk, church leaders, monastics, and clergy that created the outline of a Christian liturgy that began to emerge from the Roman funeral process beginning in Gaul in the eighth century.

It was Éric Rebillard's work, *Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity* (2003/2009) that first presented a challenge to the long-held belief in the early control of the church over Christian burial sites.³ Rebillard recognized the needs and expectations of the laity and the notion of Christianity as part of the broader transformation of the Roman Empire. He incorporated the paradigm shift postulated by Brown and those embracing the propositions of Robert Redfield that a "perpetual dialectic" existed between the "little" religious traditions (domestic religiosities) of the people and the "great" religious institutions led by theologians and clergy.⁴ The new paradigm recognized the ever-present dynamic of continuity and change. Rebillard concluded there was no evidence to confirm the provision or control by the church of collective burial grounds in the third century; he affirmed that ordinary Christian families decided on their own where to bury their dead and were therefore not obligated to utilize church-authorized cemeteries until much later. Like Hope, Rebillard factored the role of the people into his investigation of the Christian rituals for death. However, his picture of transitioning to Christian funeral rites was incomplete. First, he examined that state of affairs just as far as the fifth century. Second, he only considered burial places to the exclusion of other funerary rituals in his investigation. Questions remained. If the Christian funeral (in its many facets) transitioned from the Roman, had ordinary Christians also contributed to the

³ Éric Rebillard, *The Care of the Dead in Late Antiquity*, translated by E. Trapnell Rawlings and J. Routier-Pucci (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009).

⁴ Robert Redfield, *The Primitive World and its Transformations* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1953).

transformation of funerary rituals other than burial? How did the Christian liturgy for death come to take the form it did in the eighth century? The answers to those questions, and others, have been the thrust of my own study.

My challenge was to view late antiquity and the transition of the Roman funeral through different lenses. Ritual studies and mortuary studies were chosen for that task. Using the insights and tools of ritual studies and invoking affiliated social sciences—place studies along with performance and practice theory—helped to analyze funerary rituals in terms of places/settings, the agents, the bereaved, the community, and the kinesthesia and the synesthesia of embodied ritual actions that comprised the entire funeral process. Similarly, the understandings and methodologies of mortuary studies were especially useful in working with the archaeological and material/visual evidence of funerals in late antiquity. Memory and identity studies offered additional tools for analyzing why commemoration was essential, not only for the Romans, but equally for late antique Christians in the Latin West.

Specifically, my key findings may be enumerated in terms of the main themes of this study: the family, place, memory, and ritual. I found that that these perspectives overlapped. For instance, family and place interacted with each other. The Christian Roman family retained past traditions and rituals of the Roman funeral process in one way or another and depending on region, throughout late antiquity. The norms of *sacra privata* in the Roman world ensured the right of the family over their practices of domestic religiosity dealing with matters such as death, burial, and commemoration of the dead. The family-place—the home or *domus*—had been ritualized (made special/sacred) by the religiosity performed by the family in that setting; in particular, this study examined funeral rituals enacted by Christian Romans in their homes (care of the dying; rituals at the time of death; rituals of washing,

anointing, and dressing the body of the deceased; holding a wake for the deceased; and preparing/organizing the procession to the gravesite). The rituals performed by the family were equated to the cult of the dead or the cult of the ancestors and were termed *sacra familiae* in my study. *Sacra familiae* continued at the cemetery, another “place” ritualized by the family; in this case, the rituals of burial and commemoration of the dead. In addition, the route traveled by the family carrying the body of the deceased between the home and the cemetery was also a family-place-in-transit; rituals during the procession characteristically involved mourning behaviors and ritual lament (typically performed by women). Funerary rituals specific to these “family places” (the home-setting, the cemetery or gravesite, and the route between home and the cemetery) were found to be particularly resistant to church control during the late antique period.

Another aspect of the family with regard to funerary ritual and ritual space involved the independence of Christian Romans on villa estates in the Latin West. My study found that families on rural estates often selected their own clergy, built their own churches, and buried family members and the dead from surrounding communities on villa lands. Again, the family held jurisdiction over all of these rituals, which included providing the dying and the dead with the eucharist as *viaticum*. The church hierarchy became extremely anxious about the independence of villa families and issued several decrees (church canons) renouncing the freedoms enjoyed on villa estates, particularly in terms of the eucharist, its use and availability.

My study discovered something else about the family and its jurisdiction over the funerary process. During late antiquity, the definition of “the family” metamorphosed to include communities of monastics (monks or nuns) and *collegia* (composed of members of a

common trade, for example) that either mimicked or supported what the *domus* could offer individuals. Again, as “families” these new social units also claimed control over their family rituals for death, burial, and commemoration of the dead. For example, a *collegium* often arranged the burials of its members and their families. Monastic families regularly included funerary rituals adapted by their clerical superiors.

The “family” theme also integrated “memory.” My research found that women played a significant role as memory-keepers and “guardians of family identity” in late antiquity. This was especially true of the funerary process as it transitioned from the Roman to the Christian. As mentioned, the cemetery was a family-place where commemoration (or remembering) of the dead was celebrated. One particular ritual focusing on memory was feasting with deceased kin at the family tombs. My study discovered that while the bishops opposed the wild festivities that accompanied dining with the dead, some church officials (e.g. Augustine in North Africa) were hesitant to outright oppose these family gatherings. As Augustine explained, it was important the people not assume the church “required them to abandon the tombs of their relatives” on special days of remembrance such as the *Parentalia*.⁵ Some bishops like Augustine in Hippo and Aurelius in Carthage therefore tolerated feasts of remembrance so long as the poor who were present in the cemetery were fed with the leftovers from the *refrigeria*; in this way, the banquets could be considered as alms and “offered as a way of comforting the dead,” not as part of any communal rituals “directed by the church,” but remaining as “a family initiative.”⁶

It was later that clergy were invited to perform specific rituals for the family. These rituals (e.g. administering the eucharist and penance to the dying or celebrating a mass for the

⁵ Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 148 citing passages from Augustine, *Ep.* 22.6.

⁶ Rebillard, *Care of the Dead*, 148-49.

deceased) eventually became part of the church liturgy for death beginning in the eighth century. Meanwhile, other non-liturgical rituals such as mourning the dead and lamentation performance remained part of familial tradition. This study found that women were the common factor in these particular funerary rituals. Previous scholarship has discussed the role of Christian women as patrons of tombs and cemeteries, participants and leaders in funerary banquets, deaconesses, and participants in the commemorative celebrations and rituals associated with the martyr cult. However, my research discovered more. When the previous studies are combined with the participation of women in terms of (1) deathbed rituals such as providing the *viaticum*, (2) prayer or petitionary actions suggested in the symbolism of Orant figures in funerary art, (3) overseeing the funeral rituals for fellow female ascetics, (4) initiating the development of prayers for the liturgy (e.g. the request of Caesaria, the sister of the bishop of Arles, for prayers at the deathbed and burial of nuns), and (5) continuation of rituals involved in mourning and lament during the funerary process, then women must be viewed as major factors and authentic contributors in the transition of the Roman to Christian funeral.

In short, this thesis found that the Christian family maintained their control (*sacra privata/sacra familiae*) in matters of death, burial, and commemoration as far as memory, ritual, and place were concerned during the period ca. 180-800 CE. Part of the reason for the situation was simply a lack of alternatives offered by the church at the time. Further, the continued dominance and importance of the family was evident in the rural estates in the Latin West. The church had to gradually assume responsibilities for the dying and the dead (e.g., anointing the sick and dying; offering prayers and masses for the dead; celebrating

memorial/anniversary masses for deceased as requested by families). The family was never replaced by the clergy; the family remained the fundamental participant.

In terms of place, Christian families retained the *sacra* of place—the familial home, the route taken by the procession, and the tomb/grave at the cemetery. *Place* was a slow transition because home was made *sacra* by the family through rituals and this continued for many centuries until the clergy were invited into the family space. The concept of *place* in terms of a ritualized journey through social space during the funeral procession was christianized through modified rituals (e.g. the singing of psalms). As for the *sacra* of the cemetery, the church was seen to exercise some control over burial spaces (first for clergy, then for martyrs, and finally for elite Christians) through the development of burial churches (basilicas), churchyard burials, and burial inside the church for the privileged few.

In matters of memory or remembering the dead (involving rituals intimately associated with family identity), a shift occurred in late antiquity. The focus moved gradually from the family's private commemorative activities such as *refrigeria* at the cemetery, to communal masses on anniversary dates celebrated in a church and conducted by clergy with family participation.

Ultimately, this study found there were many factors working together to create the shifts or transition from the Roman funeral to a Christian liturgy in late antiquity. Afterlife beliefs, the development of ideas about sin and penance, the concept of “communion of the saints,” and increasing ecclesiastical concern over appropriate Christian behaviors and performances of funerary ritual all played a role. Significantly, in terms of practices, the creation of monastic families was pivotal because these religious families required their own rituals that reflected their Christian identity. The result was that from Ambrose and Augustine

through to the nuns and Caesarius of Arles, one sees important contributions influencing the transition to a Christian liturgy for death. Moreover, the findings of this study would not have been possible without a new reading of the available documents and material culture. The data needed to be assessed in light of my theories about the transition of funerary rituals from the Roman to Christian and the influence of the family in that transition. The study's innovation involved a shift from reading text and material culture assuming that christianization took place from the top down. Rather, I was able to prove that the transition to a Christian liturgy for death was largely a movement from the bottom up, from the social matrix (especially from the family) to the institutional church. It was Kim Bowes who initiated this type of approach. She maintained that "a vast and powerful world of private religiosity" had been written "out of the history of the late antique Christianity"; she then proceeded to investigate private churches and monasteries and the "great estate churches of the rural western empire" looking at the "extraordinary range of private ritual activities undertaken by late antique people" and their contributions to public Christianity.⁷

Finally, as noted above—given the prominence of women on various levels particularly in terms of the funeral process—some new information has been disclosed about the roles of Christian women in late antiquity. This new information suggests future investigation. First, the Orant was not only found in the catacombs but was also depicted on everyday objects like jewelry and coins. Why? Second, this study touched on the eucharist as a power object in reference to healing, providing protection and aiding the dead. It was suggested that women instigated this practice, but were there other ways women employed the eucharist we do not yet know about? Third, what about the development of hospices, hospitals

⁷ Kim Bowes, *Private Worship, Public Values, and Religious Change in Late Antiquity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1-2.

and use of monasteries to provide medical attention, and what impact did this have on funeral practices, the role of women and the interaction of the family with these institutions? Fourth, what more can be learned about the continuation of women's ritual lament as an expressive form of mourning? As per the discussions in this study, male Christians adopted and adapted some of the tropes associated with the Roman eulogy and consolation (*consolatio mortis*), which also shared elements with the genre of lamentation as usually performed by women. It seems this continued. For instance, a study by Janthia Yearley of the University of York in 1983 identified a medieval literary genre called "*planctus*." Yearley defined it in a way similar to the *nenia* in my own study. *Planctus*, argued Yearley was "a formal lament containing an utterance of grief composed at the death of a king, poet, patron, bishop or other important personage ... It [was] usually written in syllabic verse (including a number of sequences), [was] occasionally in prose, and was normally set to music."⁸ Her definition appears (more or less) on par with "*nenia*" or the lament-song performed at funerals in late antiquity described in my thesis; however, *planctus* for my purposes referred only to the "embodied actions" of ritual lament.⁹ Significantly, Yearley identified *planctus* as a formal "literary genre" by the middle ages when it had become unified, codified, and definitely accepted by church officials as suitable for the funerals of privileged (presumably male only?) Christians. One may ask:

⁸ Janthia Yearley, "The Medieval Latin Planctus as a Genre," PhD dissertation (University of York: York, UK, 1983), 48.

⁹ For discussion of *planctus*, see this study, 22n45, 23nn52-53, 100, 108n156, 220n44, and especially chapter six, 249, 257. Compare to Yearley, "Latin Planctus," 47; Yearley describes the history "of the word *planctus*," stating, "its most important usages refer either to mourning and lamentation associated with death or destruction or to a song or poem of lamentation often at a funeral." Further, for Yearley the *planctus* of ancient Roman times mentioned in Statius, Seneca, Lucan, and Juvenal, occurred "normally in poetry, and meant generally 'a striking or beating accompanied by a loud noise,' and, more specifically, either the sounds associated with mourning (breast-beating and wailing), or a song or poem of lamentation," 46. Additionally, Yearley, "Latin Planctus," 23 argues that the Latin *planctus* could also be related to "the classical tradition of grave inscriptions and epitaphs and to a lesser extent to the threnody and *nenia* ... continued in classical Latin literature although the *nenia*, which ... replaced the threnody, did not achieve the status of a literary genre."

Did the medieval genre of *planctus* derive from women's ritual lament as it was performed in late antiquity? Yearley's survey of a large number of Latin *planctus* and the *planctus* in several other languages in western Europe showed male composition only and did not indicate whether only men performed the *planctus*.¹⁰ Therefore, it would be of interest to learn: (1) Was women's lament the source of the genre of *planctus*? (2) Did women compose any of the medieval *planctus*? (3) Did women perform the *planctus* or was it strictly left to men?

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Comparison of the Ritual Sequence in the Funeral Process in Late Antiquity

A. C. Rush <i>Death and Burial in Christian Antiquity</i> (1941), 91-273.	J. M. C. Toynbee <i>Death and Burial in the Roman World</i> (1971), 43-54.	V. M. Hope <i>Roman Death: The Dying and the Dead in Ancient Rome</i> (2009), 71-96.
<i>Actions performed before and at death</i>	<i>At time of death</i>	<i>At the death</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • straightening the limbs • catching the last breath in a final kiss • placing coin (<i>viaticum</i>) in the mouth of the deceased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comforting the person on his deathbed • catching the soul (final breath) in a last kiss • closing the eyes • calling the name of the deceased (<i>conclamare</i>) • ritual lament continued until disposal of the body • setting the body on the ground (<i>deponere</i>) • washing the body • anointing the body • dressing the body • laying a wreath on head of the deceased • placing a coin in the mouth of the deceased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the last kiss, • closing the eyes • calling out the name of the deceased • placing the body on the ground
<i>Actions performed following death</i>		<i>Following death: preparation of the body</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • closing the eyes and mouth • calling out the name of the deceased (the <i>conclamatio</i>) • washing the body after the <i>depositio</i> (lifting the body to the floor) • anointing the body using oil/salt/resin/perfumes/ointments and/or spices • clothing the body • crowning the dead 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corpse is washed in warm water • corpse is anointed • corpse is adorned with garlands of flowers • a coin is placed in the mouth of the deceased • the jaws are bound • wrapping the body in a shroud or dressing in suitable clothing • a death mask of the deceased may be made

<i>The Wake in the home and/or the Vigil at the grave</i>	<i>The Exposition of the Body or Lying-in-State (collocare)</i>	<i>The wake in the home</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • arrival of family, relatives, friends to pay respects • lamenting begins; includes performing <i>planctus</i>/gestures along with <i>nenia</i>/song/dirge and/or music • lamenting from the time of death till the disposal of the body • mourning involves especially the women, but men also mourned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • placing the feet of the deceased toward the door of the house • displaying the body in the <i>atrium</i> • setting out candles, torches, and lamps, fruits and flowers around the funeral bed • lighting incense-burners • arrival of visitors and family to pay respects • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • displaying the body of the deceased with feet to the door in the <i>atrium</i> • surrounding the body with foliage, burning incense, torches, perfumes, spices • mourning by the family: the bereaved wore dark clothing, dirtied their hair with ashes, sometimes cut their hair, beat their breasts, scratched their cheeks; dramatic gestures were more specific to women • the bereaved behaved in ways opposite to the norm (not eating or washing, acting like the poor) • visitors arrive to pay respects • hired female mourners and/or musicians may complement and/or support the mourning • hired female mourners may lead the singing of dirges, and the lamentation (wailing, shouting, etc.)
<i>Funeral procession</i>	<i>Funeral Procession (the pompa)</i>	<i>Funeral Procession to the cemetery</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • transporting the body to the gravesite amid torches, lamps, and candles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • transporting the deceased in a public funeral procession from the home to the place of disposal outside the city boundaries • wearing black • carrying the bier, four to eight male bearers carry the bier • accompanying the cortege with torches • perhaps hiring musicians and professional female mourners • stopping in the Forum for upper-class Romans • perhaps displaying masks of the family's ancestors by actors in the procession • mourning by relatives in the cortege 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mourning (singing, wailing, chanting, shouting, gesturing) might be led by professional women • playing of musical instruments • carrying of torches and incense burners • perhaps parading the <i>imagines</i> (masks of the ancestors) • carrying of the bier of the deceased by several bearers • people of the community gathered along the way and/or accompanied the deceased to the grave

		<p><i>Eulogy for the deceased prior to burial</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for the elite, the <i>laudatio funebris</i> (eulogy) was delivered in the Forum • for the elite, the public eulogy was part of the funeral spectacle to reinforce the family's status in the community
<i>At the gravesite</i>	<i>At the place of disposal</i>	<i>At the gravesite</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • calling the <i>vale</i> or farewell to the dead • delivering the eulogy or <i>laudatio funebris</i> (a male of family) • singing the final <i>nenia</i>, sung by a woman of the family or hired female mourner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • throwing earth on the corpse • cutting off of a finger (<i>os resectum</i>) in the case of cremation • placing grave goods with the body • placing coin in the mouth of the deceased, if not yet done • name of the deceased called for the last time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivering a simple speech of praise (eulogy) • providing literary praise to preserve the memory of the deceased and to comfort the bereaved
<i>Burial of the body</i>	<i>Disposal of the corpse</i>	<i>Burial of the body</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cremation or interment of the corpse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • burial or cremation of the body • if cremation, the body was burned, then ashes were gathered into an urn/container • if interment, the body was placed in the earth, in a tomb or sarcophagus or on a shelf (<i>loculus</i>) in the rock walls of <i>hypogea</i> or catacombs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • impart final farewell (<i>vale</i>) • minimal interment should be a few handfuls of dust • if cremation, the sacrifice of a sow to the goddess Ceres made the grave legal • performing the ritual of <i>os resectum</i> (severing a bone and burying it) • if cremation, items and offerings were brought by the family to place with the deceased • perfumes and spices might be added to the funeral pyre • if inhumation, the body was put directly in the ground, or encased in a wooden coffin/sarcophagus, or in a house tomb or underground in <i>hypogea</i> and catacombs • if cremation, the sacrificial meat was divided between the dead, the bereaved family, and Ceres

	<i>The Post-Funeral Practices</i>	<i>Post-funeral rites</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • purification with fire and water • cleansing the home of the deceased • honoring the dead with a meal at the gravesite (<i>silicernium</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • purification with fire and water (<i>suffitio</i>) • sweeping the house of the deceased • on the ninth day after the funeral, further cleansing rituals • on the ninth day after the funeral, feasting again at the gravesite (<i>cena novendialis</i>); this formally ended this period of mourning; now the living and the dead were “symbolically united” (also later at subsequent festivals) • for the elite, the ninth-day feast may include distributing meat to the public
	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Services for the dead</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eating a meal at the grave on the ninth day after the funeral (<i>cena novendialis</i>) • pouring a libation on the grave • commemoration on prescribed days with food-offerings (shared with the dead), further celebratory meals, gifts of grave goods (jewelry, coins, weapons, toys for children, etc.) • memorializing with violets and roses • perpetuating the cult of the dead through the generations 	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Commemoration of the dead</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the elite may have included gladiatorial contests, theatre events, etc. to enforce their social hierarchy, to unite the community • regular feasts at the tomb promoted contact between the living and the dead • annual festivals celebrated the dead • feasting at the tombs was intended as entertainment for the living (eating, drinking, dancing)

Appendix B
 Images from Late Antique Material Culture

Fig. 1: The Tombstone of Beratius Nikatoras Zakaria, from Hypogeum Campana in Rome, dated ca. 200 CE.



Photo accessed April 3, 2020.
<https://www.sciencephoto.com/media/527334/view>.
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Figs. 2–5: Selected Images of the Banquet Scenes in the Catacomb of SS. Marcellino and Pietro in Rome.



Image accessed March 17, 2020, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Agape_feast_03.jpg. Public domain.

Fig. 2: Banquet scene from Catacomb of SS. Marcellino and Pietro in Rome, late third century CE. From chamber 45, wall 2. Long dark shape is an empty *loculus*. Janet Tulloch, “Women Leaders,” 191 suggests the scene depicts a dialogue (words are written above the heads of the participants) between the guests and the host and co-host; therefore, the male in the center (the guest drinking from his cup) has likely just requested the host to mix more wine, saying, “Misce nobis,” (= Mix wine for us); while the female (the host/co-host) seated on the far left at the end of the sigma table raises her cup in a toast saying, “Agape!” (= Love and Affection).

Fig. 3: Detail from Fig. 2: The female figure (the host) is depicted raising a toast at the funerary banquet. The inscription above the woman's head: "*Agape. Misce nobis*" is written such that the word "*Agape*," on the left, indicates the words of her toast, "Love, Affection!" The two words "*Misce nobis*" on the right edges of the inscription, written one above the other, indicate the request, "Mix wine for us," spoken by the male guest sitting in the center, See Tulloch, "Women Leaders," 184-91.



Fig. 4: Banquet scene from Catacomb of SS. Marcellino and Pietro in Rome, late third century CE. From chamber 78, wall 3. Tulloch, “Women Leaders,” 177, 179, 183-90 suggests a dialogue between the male in the center and the woman on the far right. The male guest is dressed differently than the other men; he points with both hands toward the platter in front of the sigma table; and he gives the command, “Misce” = “Give mixed wine” (something like “Fill my glass” in modern speech); the female to the right wears a veil perhaps indicating she plays a special role at this banquet (as Host?). She responds by raising her right hand, which holds a wine vessel (a small shallow dish) while proposing the toast, “Agape!” = “Love and affection!”



Image accessed April 3, 2020, <https://repository.westernsem.edu/xmlui/handle/1866/692>.
Unrestricted online access.

Fig. 5: Detail of Fig. 4: The female figure is depicted giving a toast at the funerary banquet. The inscription above the woman's head: "*Agape. Miscē*" is written according to the speech model of "command and response." The female host (shown here) is exclaiming the toast, "*Agape*" = "Love, Affection!" as she raises her wine cup in response to the male guest (in the center of the painting) who has requested "*Miscē*" = "Mix [wine for me]". For further discussion, see Tulloch, "Women Leaders," see "Women Leaders," 186-87, 190-91.



Fig. 6: Image of Veneranda and Petronella from Catacomb of Domitilla in Rome

Illustration accessed from the Web Gallery of Art, April 4, 2020, https://www.wga.hu/support/viewer_m/z.html. Permitted for educational purposes.



Fig. 7: *In situ* fresco depicting Veneranda and Petronella, from the Catacomb of Domitilla in Rome, showing the setting of the fresco painted in an *arcosolium* (an arched cell intended for a sarcophagus).



Accessed March 15, 2020, <https://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?html/zzzarchi/04c/3/domitil5.html>. Free resource of art history for students.

Figs. 8 and 9: Images from the Warmundus Sacramentary (ca. 1000 CE) from the section at the back of the book laying out the liturgy for the dead entitled *Ordo in agenda mortuorum*. Michael Driscoll explains, “[t]he quality of the codex is somewhat inferior as the velum on which the ritual is written is so thin that the writing bleeds through from the recto to the verso sides,” in “Death, Dying, and Burial,” 242. The colored facsimile edition of the manuscript: *Sacramentario del vescovo Warmondo di Ivrea: fine secolo X: Ivrea, Biblioteca capitolare, MS 31 LXXXVI* (Pavone Canavese) (Turin: Priuli & Verlucca; Ivrea: Diocesi di Ivrea, 1990). The five pages of images reproduced below are from Patrick Geary's book *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 55-59. Permission granted by Princeton University Press.



Plate 1. The woman watches at the deathbed (fol. 191r).



Plate 2. The woman mourns the dying man (fol. 193r).

From Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 55, Plates 1 & 2.

Figs. 10 and 11: Images from the Sacramentary of Warmundus of Ivrea, continued



Plate 3. The woman is restrained while the man breathes out his soul (fol. 195v).



Plate 4. The corpse is washed (fol. 198v).

Figs. 12 and 13: Images from the Sacramentary of Warmundus of Ivrea, continued.



Plate 5. The woman tears her hair as the body is placed in a coffin (fol. 199v).



Plate 6. The woman laments as the cortege approaches the church (fol. 200v).

From Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 57, Plates 5 & 6.

Figs. 14 and 15: Images from the Sacramentary of Warmundus of Ivrea, continued.



Plate 7. The woman throws herself on the coffin (fol. 201v).



Plate 8. The woman again laments as the cortege approaches the cemetery (fol. 203v)

From Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 58, Plates 7 & 8.

Figs. 16 and 17: Images from the Sacramentary of Warmundus of Ivrea, continued.



Plate 9. Gravediggers prepare the tomb (fol. 205r).



Plate 10. The woman attempts to throw herself onto the coffin as it is lowered into the tomb (fol. 206v).

From Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, 59, Plates 9 & 10.

Figs. 18–23: Selected scenes from Cecilia Mangini’s 1960 documentary film “Stendali (Suonano Ancora) depicting a funeral in Salento, Italy in 1959, 10:57. Presented on YouTube, directed and written by C. Mangini, produced in 1960. Accessed January 29, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ox0ITQprvdM>. Search words: Stendali: Suonano Ancora.



Fig. 18: The “Crying Women” (*Prefiche*) of Salento arrive at the wake.



Fig. 19: Ritual lament is performed in a Christian home.



Fig. 20: The lament-singer tears her hair.



Fig. 21: The women console the bereaved mother.



Fig. 22: The body of the young man is removed from the home for burial. The women cling to the coffin as the men carry it from the home.



Fig. 23: The bereaved mother is consoled by the women who remain in the home after the deceased is taken to burial.

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