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Remembering the Dead and Reminding the Living: Blessing of the Corpse and Burial in Sixteenth-Century Sweden

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Abstract: The article shows how Swedish reformers – through the *ordo* for the blessing of the corpse and the funeral – introduced a new focus in relation to the medieval tradition: from the deceased to the living. The reformers rejected the medieval idea of purgatory and refused intercession and the celebration of Mass before funeral. Therefore, the relation between the living and the dead must have suffered and the living would no longer be reminded of those who departed to the same extent as before. Instead, according to the reformers, during the funeral service the living would be reminded of their own condition, their certain death and Christian hope. Sources from late sixteenth century which demonstrate prohibitions of certain customs emphasize that the Swedish Reformation did not mean a sudden break with earlier tradition and custom, but that it was a *longue durée*.

Keywords: blessing of the corpse, burial, dead, death, reformation, Sweden

1 Introduction

Death concerned everybody in the sixteenth century. From early childhood, everybody – highborn and lowborn, men and women, young and old – had probably seen dying persons being prepared by the priest for the visitation of the sick.[1] They were all used to seeing dead bodies, taking care of them and

1 For the visitation of the sick in sixteenth-century Sweden and its medieval background, see Stina Fallberg Sundmark, *Sjukbesök och dödsberedelse: Sockenbudet i svensk medeltida och reformatorisk tradition*, Bibliotheca Theologiæ Practicæ 84 (Skellefteå: Artos, 2008). Stina Fallberg Sundmark, "Om konsten att dö på rätt sätt: Liturgi och teologi i den svenska utgåvan av Jean Gersons *Ars moriendi* (tryckt 1514)," in *Jean Gersons Ars moriendi: Om konsten att dö*, ed. Markus Hagberg (Skara: Skara stiftshistoriska sällskap, 2009), 35–67. Stina Fallberg Sundmark, "Bilden av dödsberedelsen: Några liturgiska och teologiska perspektiv," in *Memento Mori: Døden i middelalderens billedverden*, ed. Lena Liepe and Kristin Bliksrud Aavitsland (Oslo:

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following the dead to their last resting place. At the beginning of the century, when the priest handled the deceased according to medieval liturgy, people probably had a sense of security, as they were convinced that their family members and friends would be treated in the same way as their ancestors had been for centuries. Therefore, one can just imagine how people must have reacted when the Reformation ideas, with their partially new practices, were implemented. What would in fact happen to their dead? Could one trust that they would be treated in the proper way? Could one be certain of their salvation?

In this article we will see what would happen liturgically to a corpse in sixteenth-century Sweden, and above all, we will study how the blessing of the body at home and the burial in the churchyard were motivated and explained theologically by a focus on the relation between the living and the deceased.

During the late twentieth and the early twenty-first centuries, a greater number of studies were published on the views and practices relating to death during the Middle Ages and the latter part of sixteenth century Europe. One is Paul Binski's *Medieval Death. Ritual and Representation* (1996) focusing on different rites and ideas concerning death.[2] Burial practices in England and Scandinavia are studied from an archaeological perspective by Christopher Daniell (1997) and Kristina Jonsson (2009).[3] English perspectives of the medieval liturgical burial rites have also been examined, and the equivalent Swedish perspectives.[4]

In medieval tradition, prayers and Mass for the dead served as links between the living and the dead. In *Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1480–1750*

Novus, 2011), 9–24. Stina Fallberg Sundmark, "Preparing for Death: Aspects of Continuity and Change in Swedish Late Medieval and Reformation Traditions," *Journal of Early Modern Christianity* 2 (2015): 205–219.

2 Paul Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (London: British Museum, 1996).

3 Burial practices in English medieval and Reformation traditions, including from an archaeological perspective, are at the center in Christopher Daniell's, *Death and Burial in Medieval England 1066–1550* (London: Routledge, 1997). A number of Scandinavian graveyards are studied from an archaeological perspective in Kristina Jonsson, *Practices for the Living and the Dead: Medieval and Post-Reformation Burials in Scandinavia*, Stockholm Studies in Archaeology 50 (Stockholm: Department of Archaeology and Classical Studies, 2009). Burial practice in a Scandinavian context is studied from the perspective of Canon law in Bertil Nilsson, *De sepulturis: Gravrätten i Corpus Iuris Canonici och i medeltida nordisk lagstiftning*, Bibliotheca Theologiæ Practicæ 44 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1989).

4 An attempt to reconstruct a requiem Mass in late medieval York is made in Paul S. Barnwell, et al., *Mass and Parish in late Medieval England: The Use of York* (Reading: Spire Books, 2005). Medieval burial liturgy is also studied in Bertil Nilsson, "Död och begravning: Begravningsskicket i Norden," in *Tanke och tro: Aspekter på medeltidens tankevärld och fromhetsliv*, ed. Olle Ferm and Göran Tegnér, Studier till Det medeltida Sverige 3 (Stockholm: Riksantikvarieämbetet, 1987), 133–150.

(1998), Ralph Houlbrooke focuses on how the Reformation resulted in the repudiation of prayers as instruments for helping the dead.[5] Craig M. Koslofsky also underlines the rejection of Purgatory, and with that prayers and Mass celebrated for the dead according to Reformation views, in his *The Reformation of the Dead. Death and Ritual in Early Modern Germany, 1450–1700* (2000).[6] A similar perspective is found in Peter Marshall's *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (2002).[7] In both Reformation England and Germany, the dead were separated from the world of the living according to the Churches' official position on this matter. Ecclesiastical acts at death and in particular at burial are studied from Swedish, Scandinavian and further international perspectives regarding the burial Mass, practices and regulations of the burial. The studies are conducted from the perspectives of Church history, history, Church law, sermon studies, cultural studies, art history and archaeology. This is the case in a number of anthologies such as *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (2000), *Preparing for Death, Remembering the Dead* (2015), *Cultures of Death and Dying in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (2015), *Dying, Death, Burial and Commemoration in Reformation Europe* (2015) and *Death in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times. The Material and Spiritual Conditions of the Culture of Death* (2016).[8] As we can see, there are international studies on the Reformation aspects of burial liturgy, but an in-depth perspective from Sweden is lacking.

Therefore, while previous research has revealed much about medieval and Reformation practices and views regarding death and the dead from an interna-

5 Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1480–1750*, Oxford Studies in Social History (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

6 Craig M. Koslofsky, *The Reformation of the Dead: Death and Ritual in Early Modern Germany, 1450–1700*, Early Modern History: Society and Culture (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000).

7 Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

8 Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall, ed., *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Tarald Rasmussen and Jon Øygarden Flaeten, ed., *Preparing for Death, Remembering the Dead*, Refo500 Academic studies 22 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015). Mia Korpiola and Anu Lahtinen, ed., *Cultures of Death and Dying in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Studies across Disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences 18 (Helsinki: Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, 2015). Jonathan Willis and Elizabeth C. Tingle, ed., *Dying, Death, Burial and Commemoration in Reformation Europe*, St Andrews Studies in Reformation History (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2015). Albrecht Classen, ed., *Death in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: The Material and Spiritual Conditions of the Culture of Death*, Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture 16 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016).

tional perspective, from a Swedish point of view, more could be said on the liturgical practice of the dead and the surrounding theological explanations. That would bring us to a deeper understanding of continuity and change in relation to medieval tradition and generate a more nuanced image of liturgical practice and its theological interpretation in Reformation Sweden.

In 1529, a synod for the entire church province of Uppsala (the larger geographical parts of today's Sweden and Finland) was gathered in the town of Örebro. This did not lead to any actual changes to the liturgy and no central liturgical parts were abolished, but new meaning was given to the existing liturgy.[9]

After the synod and on his own initiative, the Swedish reformer Olavus Petri (1493–1552) published a liturgical service book, called *Een Handbock pååSwensko*, here translated as *The Service Book of 1529*.[10] It was the first service book with Reformation characteristics in Sweden. In the medieval tradition service books were written in Latin while this one was written in Swedish. In the preface of the service book, Olavus Petri states that the shift in language was motivated by the fact that ordinary and/or lay people did not understand the contents of Latin prayers. The medieval use of Latin had also, it was argued, resulted in different abuses. Another reason for publishing this service book was the ambition of the reformer to produce such a book which was more in line with the Word of God. Olavus Petri points out that he had retained most of the ceremonies but removed the abuses, in accordance with the resolutions made by the Church Synod of Örebro. As an example, he mentions how salt, chrism and candles were used at baptisms in medieval tradition. According to him, these ceremonies were not used in the early Church and they were more of a decoration to the baptism than any power in themselves. The reformer also writes in the preface that he has given instructions for the blessing and burial of the

9 The decisions of the Synod of Örebro 1529, Emil Hildebrand and Oscar Alin, ed., *Svenska riksdagsakter jämte andra handlingar som höra till statsförfattningens historia under tidehvarfvet 1521–1718, första delen 1521–1560* (Stockholm: Riksarkivet, 1887), 117–122. On the Church Synod of Örebro in 1529, see e. g. Christer Pahlmblad, *Mässa på svenska: Den reformatoriska mässan i Sverige mot den senmedeltida bakgrunden*, Bibliotheca Theologiæ Practicæ 60 (Lund: Arcus, 1998), 18–19. Åke Andrén, *Sveriges kyrkohistoria, 3 Reformationstid* (Stockholm: Verbum, 1999), 59–64.

10 The Service Book is published by Bengt Hesselman, ed., *Samlade skrifter af Olavus Petri* 2 vols. (Stockholm: Sveriges Kristliga Studentrörelses Förlag, 1914–1915). Eric E. Yelverton has published an English translation of the Swedish Service Book in Eric E. Yelverton, *The Manual of Olavus Petri 1529* (London: S.P.C.K, 1953).

corpse and he hopes that those instructions will better agree with the Holy Scripture than what had been the case in the Latin manual.[11]

The Service Book of 1529 was reprinted in 1533 and 1537. In 1541, an officially approved service book was published, which was republished in 1548 after revision, and again in 1557 and 1586. In 1571, a Church Constitution was produced by a fellow reformer, the Archbishop Laurentius Petri (1499–1573, archbishop 1531–1573), and was officially approved. The Constitution contains instructions related to Church law as well as to liturgy, and the reformer, in that context, was producing material partly based on the Swedish medieval tradition.[12]

From this enumeration of Reformation sources, one might get the impression that there existed a linear development of Reformation ideas and practices during the sixteenth century. Older research considered that the Reformation in Sweden started by the time of the enthronement of King Gustaf Vasa (1496–1560, king 1523–1560) in the early 1520s, when Reformation ideas and practices were immediately introduced, decreed and embraced by everyone.[13]

However, unlike in Denmark for instance, the Reformation in Sweden was a lengthy process which was not concluded until the late sixteenth century and towards the beginning of the seventeenth. One reason for that was dynastic complications within the royal family, partly related to various religious attitudes among the different kings and pretenders to the throne. Gustav Vasa mostly regarded religion as an instrument for his political project. His son, Erik XIV (1533–1577, king 1560–1568) was influenced by Reformation ideas and his other son, Johan III (1537–1592, king 1569–1592) – married to a Catholic Polish princess – walked a middle ground between Protestant and Catholic ideas and practices. His son, Sigismund (1566–1632, King of Sweden 1592–1599) was Catholic, while his uncle Karl (1555–1611) – who was a clear pretender to the throne and later on became King Karl IX (1604–1611) – was clearly sympathetic to Protestant ideas.[14]

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11 The Service Book of 1529, ed. Hesselman, "Samlade 2," 313–317.

12 For the establishment of the Church Constitution of 1571, see e. g. Sven Kjöllerström, *Svenska förarbeten till kyrkoordningen av år 1571*, Samlingar och studier till Svenska kyrkans historia 2 (Stockholm: Svenska kyrkans diakonistyrelses bokförlag, 1940). The Church Constitution is printed e. g. in Sven Kjöllerström, ed., *Den svenska kyrkoordningen 1571 jämte studier kring tillkomst, innehåll och användning* (Lund: Håkan Ohlssons Förlag, 1971).

13 See e. g. Åke Andrén, *Nattvardsberedelsen i reformationstidens svenska kyrkoliv: Skriftermål och fasta*, Samlingar och studier till Svenska kyrkans historia 27 (Lund, 1952). Åke Andrén, *Högmässa och nattvardsgång i reformationstidens svenska kyrkoliv*, Samlingar och studier till Svenska kyrkans historia 32, (Lund, 1954).

14 Andrén, "Sveriges kyrkohistoria".

Another reason why the Reformation in Sweden took several generations to accomplish was the Archbishop Laurentius Petri, and what one could call his 'diplomatic attitude' towards the medieval tradition which resulted in the keeping of some liturgical practices, as well as some visual and material cultural artefacts in the church building. A further reason for the *longue durée* within the Swedish Reformation was related to local circumstances and the negative, or at least questioning, attitudes of the priest and/or congregation regarding new ideas and practices.[15]

As a result, medieval and Reformation traditions and practices were able to exist alongside each other for much of the sixteenth century and, in some cases, as late as the beginning of the seventeenth century. Studies of Mass and visitation to the sick have shown that the Swedish Reformation was a long one and that it is necessary to study Reformation ideas and practices against the medieval backdrop.[16] This has to be kept in mind as we take a closer look at the blessing of the corpse and the burial in sixteenth century Sweden. We will not undertake any detailed investigations of any possible origins of the relevant part of the service books of 1529 and 1541, but rather let the medieval *Manuale Upsalense* from 1487 provide background to, and perspectives on, the Reformation service books.[17]

15 See e. g. Magnus Nyman, *Förlorarnas historia: Katolskt liv i Sverige från Gustav Vasa till drottning Kristina* (Uppsala: Katolska bokförlaget, 1997). Martin Berntson, *Mässan och armborstet: Uppror och reformation i Sverige 1525–1544* (Skellefteå: Artos, 2010). Sven-Erik Pernler, "Den nya tron återspeglad i rummet, bilderna och orden. Glimtar från Skara stift 1525–1595," in *Vägen mot bekännelsen: Perspektiv på organisation, bekännelsebildning och fromhetsliv i Skara stift ca 1540–1595*, ed. Martin Berntson, Skara stiftshistoriska sällskaps skriftserie 79 (Skara: Skara stiftshistoriska sällskap, 2014), 43–89 (66–80).

16 See e. g. Pahlmblad, "Mässa," 14–15. Fallberg Sundmark: "Sjukbesök," 24–25. On the continuity of the medieval Catholic tradition during the sixteenth century, see also different articles in the anthology Fredrik Heiding and Magnus Nyman, ed., *Doften av rykande vekar: Reformationen ur folkets perspektiv* (Skellefteå: Artos 2016).

17 For studies on the origins of these rites in *The Service Book of 1529*, see Oscar Quensel, *Bidrag till svenska liturgiens historia, 1 Historisk belysning af 1529-års handbok: Originaltexten jemte kulturhistoriska noter och bilagor* (Uppsala, 1890), 70–86. David F. Nylund, *Begravningsritualet och begravningsseder i den svensk-lutherska kyrkan* (Eskilstuna, 1917), 4–14. For an investigation on the changes of these rites from the 16th to the nineteenth century, see Edvard Rodhe, *Svenskt gudstjänstliv: Historisk belysning av den svenska kyrkohandboken* (Stockholm: Svenska kyrkans diakonistyrelses bokförlag, 1923), 401–423.

2 Bless the corpse or not?

According to the medieval *Manuale Upsalense,* the Church's caring for a dead person did not begin at the grave but instead began already at home. The first part was the blessing of the corpse. During the *commendatio animae,* in which the soul was commended into the hands of God, certain *collecta*, prayers and psalms, were recited, and the deceased were given absolutions. The main theological themes of these liturgical parts included notions that God would receive the deceased for eternal life in heaven, where he or she would encounter angels, patriarchs and all saints. After the *commendatio animae* would follow a number of vigils starting with vesper, continuing with nocturnes for three nights and concluding with laudes.[18] The corpse was blessed with prayers but also watched over by the priest, family members and neighbours to prevent the deceased from being snatched by the devil. Evil powers were thought to be more powerful during the night and therefore the nocturnes and night vigils were seen as particularly important.[19]

The Service Book of 1529 comprises a chapter called "How to bless the corpse", consisting of a fairly short order of exhortation, consolation and prayer. In the introduction to the chapter, Olavus Petri declares that it was the custom to bless the corpse before it was carried out of the house. It is pointed out that this could be done in the way outlined below, or in another way. What was important though, according to the reformer, was that it was done in what is called a "Christian way".[20] It is reasonable to see this as an indication that everything would be done according to the Christian faith and without a trace of what was regarded by the reformers as popular practice; for example, perhaps with elements of superstition.

The new Reformation idea not to bless the corpse is emphasized in *The Service Book of 1541,* and the chapter is simply called "Before the corpse is carried out of the house". This is further emphasized in the introduction to the chapter where it is stated that there had existed an old erroneous practice (*osedh*) where the priest was present as the corpse was being carried out. But

18 The *Manuale Upsalense* 1487, Isak Collijn, ed., *Manuale Upsalense [Stockholm 1487]: Den svenska kyrkans äldsta tryckta handbok efter det nyrekonstruerade exemplaret i Kungl. biblioteket,* Kungl. Biblioteket Handlingar N.F. 1 (Stockholm: Kungl. biblioteket, 1918), 63–95. See also Nylund, "Begravningsritualet," 15. Hilding Johansson, *Bidrag till den svenska manualetraditionen*, Lunds universitets årsbok N.F. Avd. 1, 47:6 (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1951), 45–51.

19 Louise Hagberg, *När döden gästar: Svenska folkseder och svensk folktro i samband med död och begravning* (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1937), 239.

20 The Service Book of 1529, ed. Hesselman, "Samlade 2," 349–351.

if he was present, then he should say some words of comfort to the friends of the deceased.[21] The Swedish reformers divided the ceremonies into the categories of compulsory ceremonies: abuse and *adiafora*. Examples of compulsory elements were time, space and instructions for service. By abuse they intended ceremonies for which they could not find any Scriptural evidence, and which were seen as connected with superstition, for instance the use of holy water. *Adiafora* meant ceremonies which were seen as optional or free and therefore not forbidden as long as they were performed without the wrong notions. As an example, the elevation at Mass was seen as an *adiaforon,* as long as it was not linked to any abuse.[22] There is no explanation in *The Service Book of 1541* as to why the blessing of a corpse was seen as abuse, but a reasonable assumption is that the reformers could not find any basis for it in the Holy Scriptures. In 1544 the blessing of the corpse was banned, both at the church door and in the house of the deceased.[23]

The Church Constitution of 1571 states that the priest was not required to be present when the corpse was carried out of the house, but if he was present, he would not bless the corpse as had been an erroneous practice used previously. Instead the priest would comfort the family and friends of the deceased through the word of God. When required, he would also assist in preventing misbelief through teaching.[24]

The service books do not indicate what might have actually taken place when the corpse was carried out of the house, but the Church Constitution of 1571 states that the carrying out could coincide with the tolling of the church bell, singing and other things that were customary, as long as all of this was done in an entirely Christian way. The people would first be told that those things would be more for the living than for the deceased, since the latter did not need any of that.[25]

We have now seen that the instructions regarding what would happen to the deceased at home according to medieval tradition were elaborate, comprehensive and varied; using different prayers, psalms and readings. In the medieval tradition, the priest would pray for the deceased for more than three nights,

21 The Service Book of 1541, *Een Handbook ther vthi Döpelsen och annat meer Christeligha förhandlas*, Uppsala fol. [Diiij]r.

22 See e. g. Pahlmblad, "Mässan," 210, 234. Christer Pahlmblad, "Laurentius Petri, gudstjänstbruken och sakramentsfromheten," in *Laurentius Petri och svenskt gudstjänstliv*, Svenskt Gudstjänstliv 79, ed. Sven-Åke Selander (Skellefteå: Artos, 2004), 120–149 (123–124).

23 The Ordinance of Västerås 1544, ed. Hildebrand & Alin, "Riksdagsakter," 390.

24 The Church Constitution of 1571, ed. Kjöllerström, "Kyrkoordningen," 135.

25 The Church Constitution of 1571, ed. Kjöllerström, "Kyrkoordningen," 135.

while the exhortation, consolation and prayer in the Reformation service books were rather brief.

We will now look into the nature of the exhortation, the consolation and the prayer in order to establish the actual view on the relationship between the deceased and the bereaved during the time after a death.

3 The deliverance of the dead and consolation of the living

The *commendatio animae* and the vigils in *Manuale Upsalense* consist of a considerable number of prayers. According to those, the priest would pray that God received the deceased and conducted him or her to the bosom of Abraham. The priest would also pray that God cleanse the deceased from sin, save him or her from judgement, all evil, eternal death and hell; and instead grant rest, eternal peace and dwelling among the saints and chosen souls.[26] This means that, according to medieval tradition, the deceased was the ultimate focus in the blessing of the corpse. A central question here is whether this was changed or not in the Reformation service books.

When a priest officiated in accordance with the service books of 1529 or 1541, he would turn to the bereaved (i. e. family and friends present). He may have started his exhortation and consolation with the assurance that it was natural to grieve and be distressed when one's friends departed from this world. He would remind them how holy men and women in the Holy Scripture grieved. Christian grieving was, however, different from the grieving of the pagans who did not know God and therefore were thought to have no hope of resurrection after death. Christians, on the other hand, knew that this mortal life which was full of sin, sorrow and distress, would be turned into an eternal life *free* from sin, sorrow and distress. Death was thought of as leading to eternal glory, understood in the Holy Scripture as sleeping with the Lord until the resurrection on the last day. Then, those who were Christians would come together with God and the dead in eternal joy without any sorrow. It was promised to the grieving family and friends that they would never again be separated from the deceased. Because of this Christian hope, the priest would point out that the relatives should not worry about their deceased friends, but praise God who had given

26 The *Manuale Upsalense* 1487, ed. Collijn, "Manuale," 63–89.

them such consolation of a future resurrection and life with God.[27] The Christian hope was the theme paramount for the consolation and must have been a reminder of the safe prospects for their departed friend, as well as a basis for trust in view of their own future. Then, the priest would read from John 11:21–27, in which Jesus tells Martha that her brother Lazarus will rise from the dead. Jesus tells her that He is the resurrection and the life. Those who believed in him, even though they died, would live, and everyone who lived and believed in him would never die.[28]

The priest would then turn to the friends of the deceased again and explain the biblical passage stressing that Jesus was their saviour, who had given himself for them in death. Belief in him would give new and eternal life after death. The fact that they would be living again, and for eternity, should give them peace knowing that even if they lost their friends in this mortal life, they would come to see them in eternal life. The dead were separated from the living with a frail, sinful and mortal body but would receive a glorious, righteous and immortal body in the heavenly future. The people listening were exhorted not to bother too much about the perishable, since in the future they would receive what was eternal. Again, this was contrasted with the pagans, who, since they did not know about resurrection, felt great sorrow for their departed friends, because they had no hope of seeing them again. The priest would exhort the persons present to be prepared when God called them out of this miserable and evil world.[29]

So far, the focus was mainly on the bereaved and only indirectly on the deceased. But suddenly the perspective was reversed in a subsequent prayer. God would be addressed as the one who had made man mortal because of his sins, but who had, through the death of Jesus, saved man from eternal death. The priest would pray to God that he would see to the deceased and hear the prayer, provided that the deceased was in such a state that he would benefit from their prayers.[30] This is an interesting passage in which Olavus Petri seems to oscillate between the old and the new. According to medieval tradition, the intercession for the dead was a prominent part of the life of piety. One believed that the dead could pray for the living and that the dead benefitted from

27 The Service Book of 1529, ed. Hesselman, “Samlade 2,” 349–350; The Service Book of 1541, fol. [Diiij]r–[Diiij]v.

28 The Service Book of 1529, ed. Hesselman, “Samlade 2,” 350; The Service Book of 1541, fol. [Diiij]v.

29 The Service Book of 1529, ed. Hesselman, “Samlade 2,” 350–351; The Service Book of 1541, fol. [Diiij]v–Er.

30 The Service Book of 1529, ed. Hesselman, “Samlade 2,” 351.

intercession by the living. This was an expression of the caring attitude between the living and the dead and indicates in a clear way the solidary communion of the Church beyond the limits of time. The intercession was thought to do the dead a favour in purgatory.[31]

The reformers saw it differently and refused to accept the very idea of purgatory since they did not see any evidence for it in the Holy Scripture. In one of the early Reformation sources, it is stated that purgatory was extinguished by the Word of God. As a consequence, the reformers refused to accept any intercession for the dead since that would do the dead no favours.[32]

The wording in *The Service Book of 1529* seems to express either Olavus Petri's uncertainty over whether the intercession would benefit the deceased, or the fact that he did not at that time want to argue the question of intercession, but instead found an expression that would offer a compromise. This uncertainty is also expressed a year earlier when Olavus Petri claims that, on the one hand, one should not pray for the dead since that was not a commandment from God, but on the other hand, the reformer does not prohibit intercession for the dead or call it a sin since it was not possible to know if souls were indeed damned. Because of this uncertainty it would be possible to intercede for the dead and pray to God that he would show mercy upon the soul if it still needed help. The reformer exhorts the praying person to do this just once or twice and no more than that, being then satisfied that God had heard the prayer.[33] In *The Service Book of 1541* the wording of the prayer is similar, but the wording that the deceased would benefit from their prayers is altered to give the option to pray for the deceased.[34] The dead person is still in focus in this part of the prayer but the understanding of intercession, as something that would benefit the dead, is weaker.

This matter is also dealt with in the Church Constitution of 1571 where it is stated that the care given to those departed could not be of any use because those who died were already saved for eternal life (John 11:25–26) without intercession or help from their family. The dead are said to be resurrected

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31 Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c.1400–c.1580* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1992), 336–337, 346, 348–354, 368–369. For the expression 'solidary communion', especially concerning intercession for the dead, see Anders Piltz, "Communicantes: Aspekter på kyrkan som solidarisk gemenskap i svensk högmedeltid," in *Svensk spiritualitet: Tio studier av förhållandet tro–kyrka–praxis*, ed. Alf Härdelin, (Uppsala: Svenska kyrkans forskningsråd, 1994), 15–55 (29–31, 42–43).

32 *Een liten boock om sacramenten* 1528, ed. Hesselman, "Samlade 1," 426–437.

33 *En nyttog postilla* 1528, ed. Hesselman, " Samlade 2," 250–251. Also see *Swar påå tolf spörsmål* 1527, ed. Hesselman, "Samlade 1," 299–305.

34 The Service Book of 1541, fol. Er.

through Christ on the last day. It is also stated that a person who died without believing in Christ could not receive any help from his family. This view is based on a quotation from Mark 16:16 in which Jesus says "the one who does not believe will be condemned".[35]

The opinion as to whether the relationship between the living and the dead changed drastically or not at all during the Reformation varies to some extent among scholars. Eamon Duffy argues that according to the *ordo* of the funeral from the 1550s in England, the living simply could not contact the dead. There was a barrier, and the focus had changed from the dead to the living.[36] A similar conclusion is drawn by Susan C. Karant-Nunn from German sources. Still, Karant-Nunn thinks it likely that ordinary people in the sixteenth century continued to have a feeling of closeness to their departed loved ones.[37] Austra Reinis argues that after the Reformation people continued to perform "social duties" to their dead.[38] One can, however, draw the conclusion that when the ban on intercession for the dead was strictly observed, the result was most probably a weakened, or even a completely broken, fellowship between the living and the dead. Earlier expressions of a solidary communion of the living and departed disappeared.

The priest's focus emerges as being the most striking aspect when we compare the theological differences in the medieval and Reformation traditions. It is true, as we have seen in the Reformation tradition, that the *ordo* of the blessing of the corpse says something about the dead person in relation to intercession, but that it is in fact set in the context of their relationship to the living relatives and friends. The priest would explicitly turn to the people gathered, and the focus would thus be mostly on them; on their grief and hopes for resurrection and eternal life.

35 The Church Constitution of 1571, ed. Kjöllerström, "Kyrkoordningen," 134.

36 Duffy, "Stripping," 475.

37 Susan C. Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Ritual: An Interpretation of Early Modern Germany*, Christianity and Society in the Modern World (London/New York: Routledge, 1997), 178.

38 Austra Reinis, *Reforming the Art of Dying: The ars moriendi in the German Reformation (1519–1528)*, St Andrews Studies in Reformation History (Aldershot/Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 256–258. For further researchers' views on the issue, see references in Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall, "Introduction: Placing the Dead in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe," in *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1–16 (9–10).

4 The burial

According to the *Manuale Upsalense*, the actual Order for Burial (*ordo sepulture*) would be preceded by Mass. When Mass was finished, the priest would then offer prayers. During a responsorium he would thurify the body with incense and sprinkle it with holy water. After prayers and absolution of the dead, the body would be carried to the grave accompanied by antiphons, Psalms and prayers. Then the priest would bless the grave, sprinkle the body and the grave with holy water and finally thurify both again with incense. During the recitation of a psalm, the body would be lowered into the grave. Afterwards, earth were shoveled into the grave. The *ordo sepulture* was concluded with prayers, thurification and another psalm.[39]

In the service books of 1529 and 1541, no Mass is prescribed; the burial would commence directly in the graveyard.[40] In earlier sources from the Swedish Reformation, Masses for the dead were completely abolished, since they were not thought to benefit the deceased at all. In addition, it is emphasized that the purpose of celebrating Mass was to eat and drink the body and blood of Christ, something that those who had departed were not able to do, for obvious reasons.[41] In 1544, Masses for the deceased were banned.[42] In spite of this, the Church Constitution of 1571 had to state, more than two decades later, that no Mass, nor vigils or anything similar, were to occur, neither before nor after the funeral, as had previously been customary. This is explained by the fact that those who were dead in Christ did not need any such service. The Church Constitution also declares that this was indeed the understanding of the early Church and that those later introduced ceremonies were inspired by pagans.[43] Despite the total lack of expression in the Church Constitution for a willingness to offer "assistance to those departed", the Constitution nevertheless rules that the deceased must be buried properly. Through careful arrangements, the bereaved may demonstrate their love for the deceased and proclaim the hope of resurrection.[44]

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39 The *Manuale Upsalense* 1487, ed. Collijn, "Manuale," 102–111. See also Johansson, "Bidrag," 55–56.

40 The Service Book of 1529, ed. Hesselman, "Samlade 2," 352. The Service Book of 1541, fol. [E]v.

41 *Swar vppå jtt ochristelighit sendebreff* 1527, ed. Hesselman, "Samlade 1," 177. *En nyttog postilla* 1528, ed. Hesselman, "Samlade 2," 251. *Een liten boock om sacramenten* 1528, ed. Hesselman, "Samlade 1," 425, 436–438.

42 The Ordinance of Västerås 1544, ed. Hildebrand and Alin, "Riksdagsakter," 390.

43 The Church Constitution of 1571, ed. Kjöllerström, "Kyrkoordningen," 135.

44 The Church Constitution of 1571, ed. Kjöllerström, "Kyrkoordningen," 134.

The *ordo* of the Burial in the service books of 1529 and 1541 is, in contrast to the medieval one, liturgically quite poor. According to the Reformation service books, the funeral would start with the corpse being brought to the grave and lowered into it. The priest would then throw three shovels of soil on the corpse saying, "You are dust, and to dust you shall return". Then the priest would say a longer prayer. While earth was shoveled over the corpse, a hymn could be sung, either one of the two proposed by the service books or an alternative one. After that the priest would read from 1 Thess 4:13–18, followed by an exhortation to mourners.[45] Neither of the service books mention the sprinkling of holy water or thurification with incense. The Church Synod of Örebro in 1529 did not ban the use of holy water but emphasized that it must be used to remind people of the baptism and not be used to absolve sins.[46] The use of holy water and incense was banned in 1544.[47]

We now turn to investigate what the *ordo* of the burial stated about any link between the departed and those left behind.

5 The deceased in the background and the living on stage

According to the longer introductory prayer in the service books of 1529 and 1541, God is said to be the one who made man from dust and bound him to return to dust. At first, in this *ordo,* the focus was on the deceased. God was asked to show mercy on the deceased person and to hear the prayer, if the mourners could pray for him – using the same wording as would have been used in the prayer also said at the home of the deceased, according to *The Service Book of 1541*. If the mourners did pray, they would pray that God should be merciful towards him, let him rest with the patriarchs, and let Jesus wake him up on the last day. After that, focus was on the mourners attending the burial. God was asked for mercy in granting the mourners awareness of their own mortality, on the shortness of life on earth, and the need to seek out what is eternal. The ideal for the mourners was to live on

45 The Service Book of 1529, ed. Hesselman, "Samlade 2," 352–359; The Service Book of 1541, fol. [E]v–Fijr.

46 The Church Synod of Örebro 1529, ed. Hildebrand and Alin, "Riksdagsakter," 120.

47 The Ordinance of Västerås 1544, ed. Hildebrand and Alin, "Riksdagsakter," 390.

earth, in accordance with God's will, that they, together with the departed, would resurrect to eternal life.[48]

The hymns incorporated the mourners that were present. The overriding theme is that everybody living on earth is sinful and prey to death and sin. In the second hymn, those singing confess their sins and beseech God for His mercy and the cleansing of their sins. It is repeatedly stated in the first hymn that no one but the Triune God may save man.[49]

According to 1 Thess 4:13–18, Paul says that those who are dead and believe in Jesus will be resurrected. Having read that epistle, the priest could direct the following exhortation to the mourners: the priest asked the mourners to see themselves in the corpse, and realize that they are mortal and that one day their bodies will be rotten as well and return to dust. Man must die because of his sins, but God has shown mercy by letting his son suffer on the cross to overcome death and offer Christians resurrection and eternal life. It is stated that, in the same way as Christ was resurrected and never died again, so all Christians will resurrect. Olavus Petri repeats the theme from the blessing of the corpse and states therefore that there is no real need for grieving the dead, since, unlike the pagans, the Christians have hope of reunion. The priest continues to say that it is certainly quite natural to grieve a dead friend, but the focus for grieving should rather be on the sin that caused man to die. A moderate grieving, however, was far from punishable, as indeed many persons described in both the Old and the New Testaments grieved their dead. But the point was that the grieving should be moderate and not without hope of resurrection. Through the death of Jesus, man's death was a medicine which gave a true life, a medicine which was thought to cure a sinful man, since sin was killed through death. The illness of sin was hard, and death was a difficult but good cure. The priest's exhortation was concluded with an invitation to ask God to grant mercy to his people on earth for a life that did not fail to realize what was spiritual and eternal. After his exhortation, the priest would indicate that the mourners should leave.[50] The exhortation in *The Service Book of 1541* is similar but shortened. In addition, there are further passages from the Holy Scripture (John 5:25–29, 1 Cor 15:50–57, Job 19:25–27, Ezek 37:1–6) with optional use of the exhortation from the chapter before the corpse is carried out of the house.[51]

48 The Service Book of 1529, ed. Hesselman, "Samlade 2," 352–353; The Service Book of 1541, fol. [E]v–Eijr.

49 The Service Book of 1529, ed. Hesselman, "Samlade 2," 353–354; The Service Book of 1541, fol. Eijr–Eiijr.

50 The Service Book of 1529, ed. Hesselman, "Samlade 2," 354–359.

51 The Service Book of 1541, fol. Eiijr–Fijr.

The Church Constitution states that it was permitted to give alms to the poor since it was a good and Christian deed in itself. The people would be taught that one helped the poor according to the law of God. It is, however, stated that neither almsgiving nor a person's will could be instruments for release from purgatory. Such ideas are not based on the Holy Scriptures, but introduced by the so-called popish and the pagans.[52] According to medieval notions, almsgiving to the poor and bequests for the benefit of oneself or a relative could shorten the time in purgatory.[53] The Church Constitution, on the other hand, encourages almsgiving only if intended to help the poor on earth and not in life after death.

We have seen that also in the *ordo* for the funeral, the living people gathered were set in focus and the deceased was mentioned mainly only implicitly, except for the introductory prayer.

6 Conclusion

We have seen here how the Swedish reformers introduced a new focus through the *ordo* for the blessing of the corpse and the *ordo* for the funeral. In the medieval tradition the focus had been, to a great extent, on the deceased and on that person's prospects of reaching eternal life. In the Reformation tradition, on the contrary, the focus was set on the living and their hope for resurrection and eternal life.

We have also seen how the custom of intercession for the dead in purgatory was important in medieval tradition, while the reformers rejected the idea of purgatory and were ambivalent to, or even refused, intercession for the dead. The reformers also rejected the celebration of Mass before or after the funeral. In medieval tradition, a Mass would be celebrated at least in relation to the funeral and on the anniversary of the day of death. Without such an annual occasion for commemoration, the relationship between the living and the dead must have suffered. The living would not be reminded of those departed to the same extent as before. Instead, according to the reformers, the living would be reminded in the funeral service of their own human condition, their certain death and Christian hope. One could perhaps say that through the shift in focus, the Reformation changes shifted from a desire to take care of others to an emphasis on one's own person. Here we see a clear discontinuity with the earlier tradition.

52 The Church Constitution of 1571, ed. Kjöllerström, "Kyrkoordningen," 135–136.
53 Duffy, "Stripping," 358–361.

Much is said about the time after death in the Reformation Services and related instructions. Nothing is said about hell or purgatory in the liturgical sources, but, as we have seen in other sources, purgatory was completely rejected. In the centre are heaven and eternal life. The deceased was buried in dust waiting for the last Day of Judgement and resurrection.

It is interesting to notice that, as late as in 1571, the reformer and Archbishop Laurentius Petri had to comment on and even prohibit certain customs, which, according to the reformers belonged to a medieval tradition. This gives an indication that the Reformation did not mean a sudden break with the earlier tradition and custom but was a slow ongoing change, in which developments were dependent on the priest, the congregation and geographical area.

The change from liturgical actions, such as the use of incense or sprinkling of holy water, to the focus on the spoken word in exhortations, as well as in consolations, emphasizes the image of the Medieval tradition as talking to the heart and different senses, and the Reformation tradition as being directed to the ears and the brain.