Burial Rituals and the Reformations in Early Modern Europe

A Comparative Study

Master Thesis Comparative History

By Jeanine Curvers

Utrecht University

December 2010

Supervisors: dr. Jo Spaans &

Coordinator of the program: Prof. dr. Maarten Prak
Contents

Introduction ........................................................................................................................................3

Part I Burial rituals during the Reformation in Lutheran Germany, England, Scotland and France

Chapter 1 Burial rituals in the Middle Ages and different religious doctrines concerning it in the
Early Modern Period ...........................................................................................................................8

Chapter 2 Burial Rituals and the Lutheran Reformation in Lutheran Germany 1530-1570........11

Chapter 3 Burial Rituals and the Anglican Reformation in England 1547-1553 & 1558-1603.......15

Chapter 4 Burial rituals and the Scottish Reformation in Scotland 1559-1610............................20

Chapter 5 Burial rituals and the Catholic Reformation in France 1598-1650..............................25

Conclusion part I Determining the continuity or discontinuity of burial rituals.........................31

Part II Explaining the continuation of burial rituals throughout the Reformation

Chapter 6 Lutheran Germany ............................................................................................................34

Chapter 7 England ...............................................................................................................................38

Chapter 8 Scotland ..............................................................................................................................41

Chapter 9 France .................................................................................................................................45

Conclusion ........................................................................................................................................49

Bibliography .....................................................................................................................................52
Introduction

The Reformation in Europe started officially when Luther nailed his 95 statements criticising practices within the Catholic Church on the door of a chapel in Wittenberg in 1517, commencing a new era in Europe by changing its religious face. Without a doubt, the religious impact of the Reformation had never met its equal. After centuries of domination by the Catholic Church in Europe, other voices and opinions about Christianity were heard and listened to; new theological ideas were being researched and discussions arose about the truth of Scripture and how the true faith in God should be expressed. Since the Reformation changed religion and doctrine, or forced the existing doctrine of the Catholics to be re-valued and reassessed, for many centuries it has been assumed by historians that the Reformation consequently changed the customs, rituals and traditions that accompanied the doctrine of Catholicism. Historians based this notion on documents written by the reformers, their decrees, edicts and sermons and presumed that when Protestantism became the new religion of the country, the realm conformed to Protestant standards. Given that the new theology stated that rituals, customs, celebrations and traditions such as prayers to the saints, the Virgin Mary, offerings to images, and burial rituals and practices - which would be more radically transformed than any other ritual of the traditional church - were all to be eliminated or changed, this was in fact what happened according to the historians.

However, these edicts, sermons and documents written by the reformers did not take into account what was actually going on at the parochial level and nowadays historians are no longer content to define the Reformation by a study of these documents. Instead they examine the workings of the church and uncover information on how people practiced their religion through consistory act books, deposition books, testaments and last wills, visitation reports and annual accounts of churchwardens, enabling historians to study the life of the parishes. These documents added new dimensions to our understanding of the church, its relationship with the people and the practice of religion. It can show how behaviour and attitudes shifted or not; whether there was a total transformation due to the Reformation or if there was a certain

---

1 Diarmuid MacCulloch, Reforma of Europe’s house divided 1490-1700 (London 2003) 106-533. For further reading on the Reformation I refer to this book since it is one of the leading books of this time about the topic.
continuity instead. This change of perception among historians started in the 1960s when an intensive study of unpublished manuscripts was conducted. Since then historians have been able to study the Reformations, not only as they were defined by Luther, Calvin, Zwingli or other reformers, or the king, queen and their royal courts, or the Pope and his cardinals, but what actually happened for the ordinary lay folk.

These recent studies have revealed that certain rituals, customs and traditions did continue throughout the Reformation and beyond, even though they lost the theological basis these rituals were founded upon; various present-day historians such as Eamon Duffy argue that rituals - and in particular burial rituals - were one of the areas of recalcitrant continuing practices. In this thesis I want to investigate if this is true and if, despite the Reformation and all the turbulence it brought about, there in fact was continuation of rituals. By examining burial rituals in Early Modern Europe, I want to solve the contradiction between, on the one hand, historians arguing that burial rituals were affected most due to the Reformation, while on the other hand historians assert it was the most obstinate ritual of continuing Catholic practices.

The preference for investigating burial rituals has also been based on the following argument. The dead have always been an important factor in people’s lives and even in our postmodern world, where death has become a dreadful thing we need to distance ourselves from, it is still surrounded with ritual and commemoration. This was even more so in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period, where the lives of people were marked by frequent deaths of relatives, children and acquaintances. TheLate Middle Ages were obsessed by death and the dead were everywhere; they were a real presence in society. Stated even stronger, there are scholars who assert that pre-Reformation Catholicism was in large measure a cult of the living in service of the dead.

Because death and the dead are an important aspect of society, it is now widely recognized that the study of death can offer insights into the structure of historical societies. Studying attitudes towards the dead and death has long been an approach to study prehistoric and ancient

---

7 Haigh, English Reformation 15-21; Gittings, Death, burial and the individual 53-55.
10 Duffy, The stripping of the altars 301.
societies, in which death rituals and burial practices are seen as an example of social formations and as an important mechanism for social continuity. Since death was such a central and significant theme, with burial practices that were very specific and essential in the lives of the people in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period, it suggests that important insights into the society of these times can be found when studying death and burial rituals.\(^{12}\)

Continuing the ideas of the previous paragraphs, I want to raise the following question: did a change or adaption of the public religion lead to a profound change in rituals or did continuity prevail? In order to arrive at an answer, variables must be identified in order to decide what constitutes continuity or change – discontinuity. The following five variables have been chosen because they encompass the most significant aspects of burial rituals in the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Period:\(^{13}\) A) Presence of a priest at the deathbed and the funeral procession B) intercession for the dead C) tolling of church bells D) the funeral: burial services and the Mass E) the location of the burial site. I claim that if three or more variables are met, it means burial rituals remained in practice as they had been, implying continuation of burial rituals. I will apply these five variables to different Reformations, to be precise the Lutheran Reformation in Lutheran Germany, the Anglican Reformation in England, the Scottish Reformation in Scotland and the Catholic Reformation in France.

Even though historians opt nowadays for a more secular approach in scholarly work and it is possible to look at the Reformation from a fairly objective point of view,\(^ {14}\) we still have to be careful, because it is the well-known trap for historians to view history from their own cultural mind set, even though we pretend to be objective. Therefore, in essence, history is a projection of the present onto the past. Moreover, our contemporary perspective of history is based on the contemporary view of those prior to us, which makes our views influenced by all those before us. The question is how we can try to overcome this trap, because clearly, we cannot place ourselves outside our time. In order to try and reveal history as it happened, that is, to be as objective as possible, the comparative method can be of use.

The comparative method is a methodology used by both historians and sociologists, although it is more commonly used by the latter. There are distinctive features that will label one kind of research as comparative and therefore it is a particular kind of research with its own unique scholarly approach. Comparative Historical Analysis (CHA) is concerned with causal analysis. It

---


\(^{13}\) In chapter one a concise overview will be given on burial rituals in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period, defending the choice for these five variables.

tries to explain and identify causes that generate certain outcomes; in other words, it combines qualitative and quantitative research in order to discover patterns by researching multiple cases with the same historical phenomena in order to find an explanation for these phenomena. In this thesis though, I will do the exact opposite since there is one cause here, the Reformation, with different outcomes: continuity or discontinuity. Furthermore, comparative historians try to make comparisons between similar cases in order to explain certain phenomena. The same will be done in this thesis, since four different Reformations will be compared to each other. CHA concerns itself with analysing historical processes over time, not static events that took place at one point at a certain time.\textsuperscript{15} This is also true for this thesis, where each Reformation will be examined from the moment its doctrine was implemented until approximately fifty years later, in order to keep the Reformations, as the cause, directly connected to the continued or discontinued burial rituals.

Identifying causes or conditions and using them to make a comparative analysis is further established by the Boolean method, which I will use in this thesis. This method uses a table in order to show whether or not certain variables are essential during an event or process in history in order to produce a certain outcome. In the Boolean method there are two conditions: true (present) or false (absent). When a variable is true/present, this is represented by a 1. In the case that a variable is false/absent, this is represented by a 0. When absence or presence of a variable cannot be established properly, because the condition encompasses both absence and presence, the choice can be made to mark a condition as 0.5. Once all the conditions have been transformed into zeros and ones, it is possible to place them in a table. In this table we can then read exactly which variables or causes were of importance to the outcome (O). In some cases the use of a truth table is being conducted. This table shows all the possible combinations of the used variables. When certain combinations of variables are not present, it means that the research has not yet been completed and more information is needed before reaching a conclusion.\textsuperscript{16}

While the first part of this thesis investigates the continuation or discontinuation of burial rituals, using the Boolean method, the quest for identifying the causes why in certain Reformations burial rituals continued or discontinued will be done in the second part of the thesis. In order to accomplish this, several possible causes or variables for the continuity or

\textsuperscript{15} James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer ed., \textit{Comparative historical analysis in the social sciences} (New York 2003) 3-27. For more studies conducted using the comparative historical method, I refer to this book.

\textsuperscript{16} Charles C. Regin, \textit{The Comparative Method. Moving beyond qualitative and quantitative strategies} (Berkeley and London 1987) 85-102. In this thesis a basic form of the Boolean table is used and therefore other features of this method, for example truth tables, have been left aside. For more complete information on the Boolean method or comparative analysis, I therefore refer to this book.
discontinuity need to be formulated. These are: A= position of the government B= the position of the church C= actual practice of elite and ordinary folk. In A the position of the worldly authorities towards the Reformation and its stance on continuation or discontinuation of burial rituals will be explained in order to determine if this is an explanation for the continuity or discontinuity of burial rituals. For condition B the same will be done for the church. The position, uniformity and strength of the church in the Reformation and its opinion towards continuation or discontinuation of burial rituals will be examined. Condition C focuses on the behaviour of elite and ordinary people and examines whether this has influenced the continuation or discontinuation of burial rituals. These conditions will be presented in a second table according to the Boolean method as either absent (0) or present (1) in the conclusion of this thesis. When all the conditions have been transformed into ones and zeros, they will be placed in the second Boolean table, which encompasses all the possible combinations of the causal conditions, because each combination is represented as one row in the table. In the last column we can then read the outcome (O). Thus, the table will help us identify which combinations led to continuation or discontinuation of burial rituals in Early Modern Europe.

---

Part I: Burial rituals during the Reformation in Lutheran Germany, England, Scotland and France

Chapter 1 Burial rituals in the Middle Ages and different religious doctrines concerning it in the Early Modern Period

The term ‘Reformation’ is commonly used to indicate the beginning of Protestantism and it encompasses all those Christians who deviated from Catholicism in the sixteenth century. However, instead of one Reformation, many different ones emerged out of a broadly shared movement for ecclesiastical reforms: there was the Lutheran Reformation, the Anglican, the Scottish, the Zwinglian, the Calvinist, the Radical Reformation and many more. Even the Catholic reassessment of its religion in the sixteenth and seventeenth century is viewed as one of the Reformations. Considerable dissimilarities existed between the various Reformations which, despite being ‘Protestants’, adhered to very different notions, even so much that some Protestants were closer to the ‘old’ Catholic faith than to each other. Despite these many differences however, the Protestants agreed on the following: the idea of predestination and consequently the abolition of the concept of purgatory, which was a very important notion in the Catholic Church of the Middle Ages.18

The afterlife was a central theme in the Middle Ages and it was dominated by three notions: heaven, hell and purgatory.19 The belief was that all individuals could influence their post-mortem destination. If one led a good life, heaven would be waiting. A life full of sins was punished by a place in hell.20 Through a lifetime of piety, and - more importantly - deathbed ministrations of the church, everyone hoped and expected heaven would await him or her. Unfortunately, only saints who were without sin went straight to heaven and therefore purgatory became the fear of most Christians.21 The amount of time spent in purgatory before going to heaven was commensurate with the sins committed during someone’s live. Fortunately, there were ways for Christians to atone for their sins during their lives, such as giving alms to the poor, buying indulgences, as well as building new churches and going on pilgrimages. Moreover, Christians also had the power to reduce time in purgatory after someone had died. This derived from the idea that death was a transition within the community of Christians: despite the passage from life to death, the deceased remained within the church and continued

20 MacCulloch, Reformation 11-16.
21 Duffy, The stripping of the altars 341.
to benefit in purgatory from meritorious acts. These acts were expressed in burial ceremonies and rituals.

Plate 2. Ars Moriendi 1495-1498 Leipzig.

This already started with the deathbed. Dying was of significance, because the last hours of a person’s life could determine to a large extent how many years in purgatory would be awaiting him or her. It was therefore crucial to ‘die well’, also known as the *ars moriendi*. Dying well consisted of several elements. It was best to die peacefully, because an abrupt or violent death was a sign of interference of the devil. A person would be on his or her deathbed, surrounded by family and friends, confessing all the sins he or she had committed and consequently be absolved of all these sins by a priest, as well as being anointed by a one; the soul would be commended to God; the devil, who would try to seduce the dying person, refused. Thus, it was imperative that no Christian should die without receiving the last rites of the church from a priest.

In addition, the performing of post-mortem rituals was also of great importance. Intercession - praying for the dead - was one of the principal expressions of the ties that bound the community together. It was beneficial for the living as well for the dead, since it would shorten the time in purgatory for both. The Requiem Mass at the burial service was the most important time for these intercessions. Therefore, Mass was the highest expression of the burial rituals and was

---

24 Duffy, *The stripping of the altars* 349.
meant to reduce the time in purgatory. It was imperative that a priest conducted the Requiem Mass and that he would lead the funeral procession. In addition, the marking of the burial place in the consecrated churchyard or church with a cross and performing the final rituals was essential. It was believed that purgatory was located near the burial site, which reflected the idea of the closeness of the physical body with the soul and the bond between the living and the dead. For that reason the churchyard was located in the centre of the town, the centre of the community. Markets were held there, celebrations and more, and usually it was the most crowded place in the whole town. Both the funeral Mass and the procession that accompanied the corpse to the church and churchyard were surrounded by prayers, songs and the tolling of church bells. This all reflects the thought that the dead were still present amidst the living, and that the process of salvation could continue after death.

One of Luther’s main problems with the Catholic Church was the idea of purgatory. In 1530 he denounced purgatory altogether, stating that our place in heaven or hell was decided through God-given faith alone. No prayer, intercessor, image, or liturgical activity could affect the salvation of the individual, before or after his or her death. In England, where the new faith was based on Calvin and his doctrine, the belief in purgatory was also one of the first Catholic notions to be abandoned. Heaven and hell were predestined by God, according to the Protestants, and so the life people had led had no influence on this whatsoever, hence purgatory could not exist: either you went to heaven on Judgment Day, or you went to hell. Consequently, all the rituals concerning dying and death became obsolete. Secondly, Luther rejected the idea that the dead were part of the community of the living. Since the dead did not belong to the world of the living, there was nothing the living could do for the dead. As a result of these two ideas, the whole concept of salvation through the rituals that were to shorten one’s time in purgatory, such as a priest absolving the sins of a person on his or her deathbed, praying for the dead, tolling the church bells, accompanying the corpse to the church in a procession, conducting a funeral Mass and speaking the last rites at one’s grave at the consecrated churchyard, was nonsense to Protestants.

25 Binski, Medieval death 25.
27 Binski, Medieval death 24.
28 Harding, The dead and the living 180.
29 Houlbrooke, Death, religion and the family in England 38.
30 Koslofsky, The Reformation of the dead 23.
Chapter 2 Burial rituals and the Lutheran Reformation in Lutheran Germany 1530-1570

From 1517 onwards, Luther formulated his beliefs and reforming agenda, which spread all over Germany and beyond. At that time, Germany, or better still, the Holy Roman Empire, was ruled by Emperor Charles V. Although Charles V was a pious Catholic and felt he should protect and uphold the Catholic faith in his empire, the territorial lords in the German estates cherished divergent opinions. Many saw truth in Luther’s words and decided to side with him. Their support, which started from the 1530s onwards, led to the Lutheran Reformation taking over large parts of present-day Germany in the sixteenth century. This thesis is concerned with these parts of the Holy Roman Empire and therefore they will be labelled ‘Lutheran Germany’.

§1 The presence of a priest at the deathbed and the funeral procession

According to Lutheran doctrine, a violent or unexpected death had no influence on the soul as was the case for Catholicism. In popular opinion however, such a death continued to be unfavourable because no final sacraments would have been administered and reconciliation with God would therefore be more difficult. Moreover, people continued to believe that such a death signalled the presence of the devil. These attitudes were very hard to wipe out, even though pastors preached against these beliefs. Therefore, the role of the pastor remained important at the bedside and an ars moriendi developed within Lutheranism in the 1560s; the pastor instructed the dying in the proper understanding of death, heard a final confession that was followed by Communion – which was considered by many parishioners as a guarantee for entry into heaven - and consoled the family and friends. In addition, most second-generation Lutheran reformers were horrified at the thought of people dying without ministrations by the pastor, processions or songs, signalling ‘old’ habits coming back into practice. An example of this is the Maria Magdalena church in Breslau where in 1542 the people returned again to the practice of funeral processions with a cross and singing at funerals while at the same time in Wittenberg it was proclaimed that processions and pastors were again required at burials.

The participation of the community was important in the funeral procession, as it had been in medieval funerals, and so the Lutheran burial ceremony showed continuity with the ‘old’ Catholic ceremony: a procession including the pastor, family, the schoolmaster with the children,

32 See chapter 1 for more detailed information.
friends and neighbours, would bring the body to the churchyard under guidance of singing and blessings. Just as in pre-Reformation times, the clergy continued to wear a cassock and sometimes they carried an image of the crucified Jesus or crucifixes. The schoolmaster or schoolboys might also carry candles or torches, while singing hymns on the way to the grave. Overall, the processions were less elaborate for the common people, but for the nobles, leaders and the rich, the processions were very similar to Catholic ceremonies, with extensive procession rituals.

§2 Intercession for the dead

In 1530 Luther denounced the existence of purgatory. Instead, the dead would remain in a soul-sleep until their resurrection on Judgment Day. Luther was very unambiguous about the idea that once a person had died, he was separated from the world of the living and out of their reach, and therefore all praying should stop upon death. As an alternative, Lutheran reformers replaced intercession with a new theology: there was the promise of resurrection on Judgment Day as a consequence of salvation through faith alone.

Although intercession officially went out of practice, and public prayers for the dead were forbidden, there was some controversy surrounding this verdict. Catholic theologians of the University in Leipzig protested against this and other rulings that were designed to stop people from praying for the dead. In the seventeenth century wakes were still being held in the house of the deceased to prepare the corpse in anticipation of the funeral. Traditionally, this was a time for prayers for the dead, including candles burning next to the body and folk practices. Church ordinances and visitation reports condemned this traditional night watch over the corpse for fear of the continuation of intercession. In addition, people upheld the tradition of stating in their wills that the family should continue giving alms to the poor, which was a Catholic custom based on intercession. Although these customs were still upheld in certain places, it is unclear how many people participated in them and if the act of intercession took place at all during the wake. Moreover, giving alms to the poor can be based on charity rather than the need for intercession.

36 Ibidem 98, 97, 122; Christman, ‘The pulpit and the pew’, 284.
38 Cornelia M. Moore, Patterned lives. The Lutheran funeral biography in Early Modern Germany (Wiesbaden 2006) 25-26; Koslofsky, The Reformation of the dead 34.
40 Ibidem 66, 68.
41 Koslofsky, The Reformation of the dead 96.
42 Karant-Nunn, The Reformation of ritual 162.
§3 Tolling of church bells

In the pre-Reformation era, the funerary church bells were being tolled for various reasons. First of all, it was to let the people know someone had died. Secondly, it served to ban the devil. Thirdly, it gave the starting signal for intercession.\(^43\) In the first turbulent decades of the Lutheran Reformation, many burial rituals were denounced, and therefore some rural pastors decided to stop ringing the church bells whenever a person had died, since it was now viewed as superstition. However, the laypeople complained about this, forcing the clergy to accept a modest tolling of church bells, such as happened in Breslau and Brandenburg in the 1540s where tolling at death became a requirement.\(^44\) The main reason for the tolling of the church bells was to let the people know someone was sick or had just passed away.\(^45\) Despite some local differences, the practice of the tolling of church bells was common throughout Early Modern Lutheran Germany.\(^46\)

In some areas the peals were still used before or during the procession and to call upon the people as was common within Catholicism.\(^47\) Most likely, people continued to believe that the church bells were useful in banning the devil. The duration of the tolling of the church bells depended on the status of the deceased. For example, the parish of Brandenburg stated that family members could decide whether they wanted the small bell, the large one or both sounded together for their family member, but they had to pay accordingly. The poor would receive the tolling of a single, small church bell.\(^48\)

§4 The funeral: burial services and the Mass

Lutheran churches across Lutheran Germany had difficulties defining new rituals of Christian burial and how to conduct funerals.\(^49\) Ultimately they opted for a form of continuity with the old Catholic church, by replacing the Catholic Mass with the funeral sermon which then became the focus of the burial ceremony. These funeral sermons concentrated on the deceased and often included a biography in order to show how, in life, the deceased had zealously followed the lessons from Scripture and so had presumably achieved salvation. This way, the deceased were used to set a positive example for those left behind.\(^50\) The first printed sermons were held at the


\(^{44}\) Koslofsky, The Reformation of the dead 90, 94-95.


\(^{46}\) Koslofsky, The Reformation of the dead 90, 94-95.

\(^{47}\) Karant-Nunn, The Reformation of ritual 155, 183.

\(^{48}\) Koslofsky, The Reformation of the dead 100; Karant-Nunn, The Reformation of ritual 181.

\(^{49}\) Moore, Pattered Lives 26-30.

\(^{50}\) Ibidem 26-30, 94; Christman, ‘The pulpit and the pew’, 284-285.
By the end of the century this custom had spread and a pastor was to preach at every funeral - his role became again essential at funerals and his position by the late sixteenth century was nearly as high as that of a Catholic priest - and only in very unusual occasions did the pastor not hold service at the church but accompanied the body straight to the grave. Once the procession with the corpse had reached the grave, it was customary to preach also there a short sermon of maximum half an hour. These grave speeches did not derive from Lutheran doctrine, but from popular demand, following the tradition of their Catholic past.

All funerals were held shortly after someone's death. There was no delay except to wait for daylight. The length and the number of people present at a burial service was greatly influenced by the social status of a person: the richer and more important, the more time was spent at the funeral and sermons, and for those who could afford it, funeral sermons were accompanied with special music, in order to strengthen their representation in society. It was common at any burial service to give alms to the poor, as had been common in pre-Reformation times.

§5 Location of the burial site

The notion of justification by faith alone made burial in consecrated ground irrelevant; it would make no difference whether one was buried in a churchyard or in an open field. Moreover, the Lutheran reformers also wanted to end the physical community of the dead with the living. Clerical attempts to establish a clear separation between the dead and the living - cemeteries were to be enclosed and no longer used as market place - were largely unsuccessful, especially in rural areas, because the average Lutheran in the sixteenth century still felt connected to his dead relatives, friends and neighbours.

The separation of the dead and the living also meant arranging new burial spaces, outside the city walls. The process from intramural to extramural burial had started in the beginning of the

---

51 For more theological information on the Lutheran funeral sermons, I refer to: Cornelia N. Moore, Patterned Lives: The Lutheran Funeral biography in early modern Germany (Wiesbaden 2006) 27-30, 100.
56 According to Luther, if the health of the living would be in danger, they should relocate the dead. Second of all, he saw a clear spiritual separation of the living and the dead and wanted this also to be physical. Third of all, he argued that the soul-sleep of the dead would be best served if they could sleep in peace in a place located outside the walls of the busy and noisy town. Above all, graveyards were for the living and their spiritual development and inspire devotion and contemplation, this could best be achieved in a quiet place. Koslofsky, The Reformation of the dead 46.
sixteenth century across Lutheran Germany. The orders for extramural burial were unpopular, as was demonstrated in Leipzig, Freiburg and Zwickau. City councils protested, arguing that no proper place could be found outside the city walls or that the consecration of the new cemetery would be too expensive. Parish clergy and religious orders complained, because they feared a loss of income from burial fees. The peasants objected, because they refused to give up their traditional burial ground - their families were laid to rest there and they did not want to be separated from them. Moreover, they wanted to be buried in consecrated ground and not in a plain open field as if they were outcasts. In addition to the remodelling of the cemeteries, Lutheran reformers tried to get rid of all the charnel houses, because they regarded them as superstitious. This also proved difficult for the reformers to achieve: the charnel houses remained present, often even located in the centre of the city: in 1590 church officials were unpleasantly surprised when conducting a church-visitation in the lands of the count of Dietz, they found that every village still had its charnel house.

Chapter 3 Burial rituals and the Anglican Reformation in England 1547-1553 & 1558-1603

The Anglican Reformation is best typified by the regimes of King Edward VI (1547-1553) and Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603). Henry VIII initiated the Reformation by defying the Pope’s authority when he decided to divorce his first wife, but he reformed the church only in a minimal way, leaving further decisions to his son Edward VI. The latter made a start with the English Reformation, introducing the Common Book of Prayer and issuing Protestant decrees, such as the removal or confiscation of church images, but his reign was of short duration and he did not live long enough to see it all into practice. After Edward VI, the Catholic Mary Tudor became queen of England, reversing all Protestant policy and reinstating Catholicism as the dominant and exclusively permitted religion. Mary too was not given much time and after only five years in power she died, to be succeeded by her Protestant half-sister Elizabeth. Queen

---

59 The corpse would first be buried in a temporary grave. After some years the skeletal remains were removed and placed in an ossuary or charnel house. This is a vault or building to store human bones, serving as a final resting place of the skeleton. This customs was especially popular in places where burial ground was scarce.
60 Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of ritual* 178-179. Visitations were designed to test the effectiveness of religious policy, revealing responses of ordinary people to government policy. Visitations were held frequently, at least annually and carried out methodically. They were called church visitations because the unit of inspection was the parish church. Teams of ecclesiastical and lay officials passed from village to village and town to town. There they put questions to local officials (pastors, schoolmasters, mayors etc) and to a selection of ordinary folk. See: Gerald Strauss, ‘The Reformation and its public in an age of orthodoxy’ in: R. Po-Chia Hsia ed., *The German people and the Reformation* (New York and London 1988) 206.
Elizabeth I ruled from 1558 until 1603, trying to make sure the Reformation that had started under Edward VI would be implemented the way he had visualized it.62

§ 1 Presence of a priest at the deathbed and the funeral procession
Instead of fading away during the course of the Reformation, the medieval *ars moriendi* enjoyed a revival under Elizabeth. Ideally, the deathbed would be attended by family, friends, neighbours and a priest - the attendance of the latter was a requirement.63 Just as the *ars moriendi*, processions witnessed a revival under Elizabeth: there was an increase in the scale of processions, and a rise in attendance as can be seen by the increasing funeral costs - even though the Reformation called for a less elaborate burial with a shorter procession.64 The priest would lead the funeral procession to the church, where he performed the office of the dead, and afterwards he accompanied the corpse from the churchyard entrance to the grave, saying or singing certain texts from Scripture.65 This last part was a specific requirement stated in the Order for the Burial of the Dead. In addition to the priest, family, friends, neighbours and poor people attended the processions with some of them carrying crosses.66 The poor were often being paid to attend the procession. Therefore, the richest people had the largest number of people participating for them.67

*Plate 3. Funeral procession Elizabeth I 1603.*

§ 2 Intercession for the dead
When Edward VI introduced the Reformation, all prayers and acts of intercession for the dead were terminated by the Chantries Act of 1548.68 Many English men and women did not want the Reformation with its new rules and ideas and most of them were slow to accept it. In 1549 a rebellion arose with the aim of restoring the ‘holy decrees of our forefathers’. The people wanted

64 Harding, *The dead and the living* 251-252, 240-243; Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 52; Duffy, *The stripping of the altars* 267.
65 Houlbrooke, *Death, religion and the family in England* 265.
66 Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and death* 399.
67 Harding, *The dead and the living* 251-252.
68 Ibidem 179-180.
back the prayers for the souls in purgatory and all the other ancient ceremonies used by the Catholic Church. These notions were reinforced by the reign of Mary Tudor, under whose rule all funeral ceremonies were promoted again.\(^69\)

Therefore, in the mid-sixteenth century few people were convinced that purgatory was a superstitious fallacy, and laypeople persisted in their demand for all-inclusive burial rituals, including prayers for the dead. Also provisions for obits and month-mind anniversary prayers for all Christian souls were not uncommon in the wills of the 1550s, 1560s, and 1570s. Especially in the north and west of England, Catholic traditions lingered on for a long time after the Reformation and in some communities it was still customary in the 1590s to visit the corpse while saying prayers and the paternoster as the bells rang.\(^70\) Moreover, at many funerals a trace of intercession remained in the words spoken by the priest.\(^71\) Elizabethan reformers worked hard to extirpate acts of intercession, but it was so entrenched in society that this was a very slow process.\(^72\) Besides, although praying for the dead was officially eliminated from burial rituals, the revised Book of Common Prayer never formally forbade it.\(^73\)

Since intercession was officially purged from the burial service, the ritual of remembering and commemorating the dead was redirected by the authorities: it became common practice to give alms to the poor in return for remembering the deceased\(^74\) - by way of kneeling at the deceased’s grave and to say the Lord’s prayer or to pray to God for the king and queen. Another way was to give money to a school in order for the children to write the name of the deceased in a book each week.\(^75\) This way, money formerly given to the church for intercession and dirges were invested in poor relief and children, thereby shaping new Protestant traditions while at the same time continuity with traditional Catholic beliefs and practices was preserved.\(^76\)

### §3 Tolling of church bells

Bell ringing was an important feature of the process of death in Early Modern England. Before the Reformation, church bells were being tolled when a person was dying and it would signal the death of that person. It rang again at the time of burial and sometimes bells sounded for hours,

---


\(^71\) Harding, *The dead and the living* 236-240.


\(^73\) Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 42.

\(^74\) Gittings, ‘Urban funerals’, 172-173.


\(^76\) Duffy, *The stripping of the altars* 505.
day and night - the bells were being tolled longest for the rich. Their purpose was to alert the community, to summon attendance to the bed- or graveside, to bring comfort to the living, but mostly to assist the dying by signalling the start of intercessory prayers.

Bell ringing was treated with suspicion by the Protestants, because of their implication of intercession for the dead. Therefore, the ringing of church bells was prohibited during services in 1547 and 1559. Later on, the bishops only allowed a short peal before the burial and in some parishes in London fines were given if the ringing of different bells was employed. Notwithstanding, extensive bell ringing before, during and after funeral services remained an central feature of Anglican practice and was hard to stamp out by the bishops: the peals both at funerals and on All Soul’s eve, as well as prayers for the dead were the most persistent of Catholic practices, next to the use of candles, and crosses around corpses.

Since excessive tolling of church bells remained in practice, this caused alarm among the stricter Protestants. Official concern arose about the resistance of people holding on to the old rituals. These concerns reoccur again and again in visitations and ecclesiastical courts into the 1570s and beyond. Bishops, under pressure from the court, called upon the clergy to convince the people to leave their superstitious rituals behind. In the 1590s the situation in the north and west had hardly improved: ministers complained that whenever there was a death, the bells would be ringing all the time.

§4 The funeral: burial services and the Mass
The burial service was drastically shortened in the Common Prayer Book of 1552. The liturgical core of the Catholic funeral ceremonies - placebo, dirge and requiem - were curtailed and funerals were performed on a single day. However, the survival of the old religion was persistent and widespread during Elizabeth's reign and there were whole communities who did not take much notice of the new religion for a long time, and carried on more or less the way they always had, with clergymen celebrating both the new Communion as well as the old Mass. So, except among the strictest Protestant groups, the presence of a priest or minister was still

77 Harding, *The dead and the living* 203-204; Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and death* 399, 421; Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 134.
78 Duffy, *The stripping of the altars* 577.
79 Houlbrooke, *Death, religion and the family in England* 266.
80 Duffy, *The stripping of the altars* 577-578.
81 Gittings, ‘Urban funerals’, 172-173; Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual* 41.
82 Harding, *The dead and the living* 189-190; Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and death* 396.
required to conduct the service and to lead the prayers,\textsuperscript{84} the only change being that after the Reformation the presence of many priests was no longer customary.\textsuperscript{85}

Funeral sermons remained in practice, although Puritans objected, claiming that these sermons were not based on Scripture. Also Communion still took place now and then at funerals, despite the Protestant's fear they resembled a Mass of Requiem. However, mainstream thought after the Reformation was that the funeral was meant to benefit and to teach the living, and not so much to assist the soul of the deceased in purgatory.\textsuperscript{86} Thus, the words and theology behind a funeral sermon changed, following the instructions from the Crown and becoming increasingly more Protestant:\textsuperscript{87} funeral texts involved the idea of predestination. Yet the people required the minister to declare for everyone he buried, that they had died 'in sure and certain hope' of salvation, even though - following the idea of predestination - not all could be among the elect and saved.\textsuperscript{88}

In addition to burial services, memorial Masses also remained in practice: in the 1550s and 1560s, the funeral services were often repeated seven days later and again on the thirteenth day with candles burning and dirge; in the 12\textsuperscript{th} month this would be repeated. In the 1560s and onwards there is evidence of people asking for a weekly sermon conducted for them by a preacher after they had died.\textsuperscript{89} Generally, it was the case that people asked for funeral ceremonies as much as was permitted by law.\textsuperscript{90} Therefore, on the one hand, doctrine regarding funerals changed due to the Reformation, but the performance of the burial services remained more or less the same and was clearly connected to the ‘old’ Catholic practices.\textsuperscript{91}

\section*{§ 5 Location of the burial site}

Although Calvinist doctrine challenged the belief that specific burial places provided spiritual benefit for the soul, there is little evidence of a changed perception of spatial priorities in relation to burial. It can even be stated that the Reformation made little to no difference to the attachment of traditional places of burial: later sixteenth and seventeenth century Londoners were as dedicated to be buried in traditional places as their Catholic predecessors.\textsuperscript{92} This was true for the elite laypeople as well as for ordinary folk.

\textsuperscript{84} Houlbrooke, \textit{Death, religion and the family in England} 265.
\textsuperscript{85} Harding, \textit{The dead and the living} 236-240.
\textsuperscript{86} Houlbrooke, \textit{Death, religion and the family in England} 297.
\textsuperscript{87} Harding, \textit{The dead and the living} 189-190.
\textsuperscript{88} Duffy, \textit{The stripping of the altars} 590.
\textsuperscript{89} Hickman, ‘From Catholic to Protestant’, 128-129.
\textsuperscript{90} Duffy, \textit{The stripping of the altars} 566.
\textsuperscript{91} Harding, \textit{The dead and the living} 177.
\textsuperscript{92} Harding, \textit{The dead and the living} 55, 67.
For the elite, favourite places were in the chapel or church near the family pew, the high altar, before the rood, or beneath the altar or image of a favourite saint. Even the more radical Protestant reformers who opposed reverence for the dead body, and denounced burial in consecrated ground as superstitious, did in fact not reject church burial. There is evidence that this continued well into the seventeenth century.

Ordinary folk - middle class and poor people - would be buried in the churchyard. In the sixteenth century, a number of London parishes acquired new ground for the extension of their churchyards due to population growth and the many deaths caused by the plague and other illnesses. Many individuals had to be buried in common pits both within and outside the city walls. However, people wanted to avoid the shame of a pit burial somewhere outside the city walls. A response to deal with this seems to have been to pack as many corpses as possible into the available ground in the inner city. So, even with environmental problems, people chose the old churchyard above the new one and cared about the precise location of graves. Therefore, intramural burial in churchyards continued as before.

Chapter 4 Burial rituals and the Scottish Reformation in Scotland 1559-1610

In 1559 a religious revolution broke out in Scotland. The revolution was led by noblemen and encouraged by the preaching of John Knox. The latter had been in Geneva in 1553 and there he had been greatly influenced by Calvin. The Calvinist principles and models as set up in Geneva were continued by the Scottish Reformed church, the Kirk, which became the official church in 1560. The Kirk was run by an elected assembly of ministers and laymen: the General Assembly. The Scottish revolution was supported by Queen Elizabeth’s English government, which helped the Protestants significantly. Nonetheless, the Scottish Reformation differed much from the English Reformation: the Scots turned against their Monarch, Mary Queen of Scots, and the Scottish church decided on its own programme and constitution while in England the monarch

93 Ibidem.
94 Hickman, ‘From Catholic to Protestant’, 120-121.
95 Houlbrooke, Death, religion and the family in England 334-335.
96 Harding, The dead and the living 55, 67.
97 Houlbrooke, Death, religion and the family in England 334-335.
98 For more information on Calvin, his theological ideas and differences of opinion with, among others, Luther, I refer to one of the leading books on the Reformation: D, MacCulloch, Reformation. Europe’s house divided 1490-1700 (London 2003) 256-273.
was the head of the church. Aside from that, religious rituals were different from the English, because the Scottish Reformation followed a more severe and radical path than the English: it was even more hardline than its Genevan example. From 1560 until 1567, several Protestant, pro-English regimes ruled the country. In 1567 the Protestant boy-King James VI came to power and ruled until 1625.

§1 Presence of a priest at the deathbed and the funeral procession

Little is known about the ars moriendi in Scotland and there seems no evidence of this custom, nor the required presence of a priest at someone’s deathbed. After death had occurred it was customary to wash and dress the corpse for the wake. Sometimes, the body would not be buried for weeks after death had occurred: it was common for the corpses of the dead nobles to be disembowelled and embalmed. The Kirk tried to eliminate these customs from burial rituals, but this proved difficult.

Furthermore, the Kirk tried to ban the funeral processions that escorted the images of Christ or the saints together with the body of the deceased to the grave. The Kirk preferred a simple procession instead: a small company of the Kirk without either singing, reading, a minister present or any ceremony that had been customary before the Reformation, would bring the body to its grave and bury it without any form of ceremony. However, the Kirk was unable to eradicate superstition and regulation of popular tradition proved difficult, especially in the north and rural areas: extended processions with many neighbours, friends, family and hired people publicly processing would still take place from time to time. An example is the procession of the Marquis of Montrose in 1580, where choir boys joined the procession for the mourning and where family, friends and people holding banners were present. Nobles were being mourned at the grave and the corpse was being addressed there. These ‘old’ Catholic rites

100 MacColluch, Reformation 378-379.
103 Houston, Punishing the dead? 214-215.
105 Todd, The culture of Protestantism 1.
106 Ibidem 341.
were especially popular among some nobles. The General Assembly was still struggling in 1597 to prevent large processions, pictures and images being carried around in funeral processions and in 1605 there is evidence that 'superstitious' rites and ceremonies were still conducted such as crucifixes being carried along in processions.\textsuperscript{110}

\section*{§2 Intercession for the dead}

The pre-Reformation church in Scotland had various traditions by which the people could find help in order to reach heaven; one of those traditions was praying for the dead in order to reduce the number of years in purgatory.\textsuperscript{111} During the Reformation the Kirk reacted against this tradition, written in First Book of Discipline,\textsuperscript{112} because the notion of purgatory was rejected, and with that the usefulness of intercession.\textsuperscript{113} Therefore, the living could no longer help the souls of the dead with their prayers.\textsuperscript{114}

In the 1560s wills often continued to ask for prayers for the dead which suggests a continuing belief in the value of intercession. By the 1570s though, explicit requests of such prayers had almost disappeared from Protestant areas.\textsuperscript{115} In the Catholic areas of Scotland it remained longer in use longer as Catholic noblemen encouraged the people to maintain their beliefs. Evidence exists of people praying for the dead in the early seventeenth century, although it is very likely that this custom was only practiced by very few people.\textsuperscript{116} It can therefore be assumed that intercession quickly vanished in Scotland after the Reformation.

\section*{§3 Tolling of church bells}

Tolling the church bells for the dead was before the Reformation a call to pray for the souls in purgatory and generally condemned by Protestants but was, also in Scotland, unmistakably surviving in the parishes.\textsuperscript{117} The Scottish church found it so difficult to overcome this 'superstition' from the Middle Ages that it was forced to adapt this to its own purposes.\textsuperscript{118} According to the Kirk, tolling of church bells was necessary to announce the death of a person. For this reason, the peals were only to give a short, simple ring. Still, the extensive use of the

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{110}Todd, \textit{The culture of Protestantism} 341.
\bibitem{111}Ibidem 315.
\bibitem{112}The First Book of Discipline is based on the works of John Knox concerning theology and construction of the church. For more information see: J. Kirk, \textit{Patterns of reform. Continuity and reform in the Reformation Kirk} (Edinburgh 1989) xvi.
\bibitem{113}Spicer, ‘Defyle not Christ’s kirk with your carrion’, 150.
\bibitem{114}Heal, \textit{The Reformation in Britain and Ireland} 455.
\bibitem{115}Ibidem 457.
\bibitem{116}Cowan, \textit{The Scottish Reformation} 170-171, 172.
\bibitem{117}Todd, \textit{The culture of Protestantism} 340; Heal, \textit{The Reformation in Britain and Ireland} 457.
\end{thebibliography}
church bells did not go out of practice\textsuperscript{119} and in the late 1570s there were occasions that more peals were ringing at funerals than was decent according to the reformers.\textsuperscript{120}

§4 The funeral: burial services and the Mass

In pre-Reformation times, the services and Masses for the dead were important because they provided support for the deceased and helped them on their journey through purgatory. Since there was now the notion of predestination and salvation through faith alone, the Kirk reacted against these elaborate rituals and Masses for the dead, seeing them as superstitious.\textsuperscript{121} Burial services primarily served to offer closure and to comfort the living with the assurance that the dead would sleep until resurrection, as was stated in the funeral sermon.\textsuperscript{122}

The burial service was reduced to a minimalistic form in the Book of Common Order.\textsuperscript{123} There was to be no singing or reading, although the Book of Common Order suggested that the minister could instruct the people on the nature of death and explain the Kirk's ideas on resurrection.\textsuperscript{124} Therefore, ministers might preach at burials and even Knox himself preached at funerals, like he did at the funeral of the Regent Moray as he was being buried in the church of St Giles in Edinburgh.\textsuperscript{125} Moreover, the funeral for the Marquis of Montrose in 1580 included a sermon, prayers and hymns.\textsuperscript{126} So, there was room for some burial services.\textsuperscript{127}

Especially in the first decades of the Reformation, the traditional, Catholic way of burial was customary and there is considerable evidence that in the 1560s a large number of ordinary people were still Catholics and adhered to the old ways. Reformers had to remind the people, as happened in Canterbury, that obits, dirges and anything of the sort were prohibited and that there should be no Communions or commemorations for the dead, nor associated rituals.\textsuperscript{128} Slowly, funerals were conducted according to the new norms wherever the Kirk became strongly established, but where the church was located far away and therefore lacked influence,

\textsuperscript{119} Houston, \textit{Punishing the dead}? 214-215; Todd, \textit{The culture of Protestantism} 340.
\textsuperscript{120} Heal, \textit{The Reformation in Britain and Ireland} 457.
\textsuperscript{121} Spicer, ‘Defyle not Christ’s kirk with your carrion: burial and development of burial aisles in post-Reformation Scotland’, 150; Heal, \textit{The Reformation in Britain and Ireland} 455-456; Houston, \textit{Punishing the dead}? 214-215.
\textsuperscript{122} Heal, \textit{The Reformation in Britain and Ireland} 455-456; Houston, \textit{Punishing the dead}? 214-215.
\textsuperscript{123} The Book of Common Order is the handbook on public worship in Scotland, discussing also burials.
\textsuperscript{124} Cowan, \textit{The Scottish Reformation} 155; Heal, \textit{The Reformation in Britain and Ireland} 455-456; Houston, \textit{Punishing the dead}? 214-215.
\textsuperscript{125} Moray was regent of Scotland from 1567-1570 for his nephew King James VI.
\textsuperscript{126} Todd, \textit{The culture of Protestantism} 341.
\textsuperscript{127} Cowan, \textit{The Scottish Reformation} 155.
\textsuperscript{128} Heal, \textit{The Reformation in Britain and Ireland} 456.
ancient burial services survived: for example, in 1580 it could be reported that ‘popish’ rites were still conducted at a funeral in Dunblane.129

§5 Location of the burial site
The Scottish reformers tried to ban burials within Kirks - which had been common in pre-Reformation times - because it was a house of prayer and preaching and not a graveyard. Furthermore, the floor had to be broken open, it was insanitary and moreover, it could also encourage superstition and the continuation of pre-Reformation beliefs. These were the views of the reformers, but not of the ordinary people.130 In reality the concept of the reformers failed utterly, because it was tradition to be buried in the Kirk and both lairds and ordinary laymen often violated the demands of the Kirk and insisted on Kirk burial.131 Therefore, the prohibition of Kirk-burial in 1588 resulted in opposition and disputes.132

The solution to these disputes was the so-called burial ‘aisle’. Due to liturgical changes, the chancel had become obsolete.133 As a result, in some churches the chancel was sealed off from the main body of the church so it could be used as a burial ‘aisle’. Thus, the elite could still be buried in the holiest part of the church building. Not only were older parts of the church adapted for burial, new burial vaults were built on the sites of the former chancels or at the east end of the church. After the Reformation, the local elite continued to build burial places for their families, which were divided from the church interior by a wall, to satisfy the Kirk's prohibition of burial within the church.134 In order to gain something by this ineradicable practice, the Kirk made people pay extra to be buried inside. The holier the place - the closer to the altar or the pulpit - the higher fees. Likewise, the Kirk required annual payment to leave the grave undisturbed, resembling the yearly remembering of the dead before the Reformation.135

131 Heal, *The Reformation in Britain and Ireland* 456.
133 The chancel refers to the space around the altar. Instead of the altar, which had been placed at the east end of the church, behind a rood screen, the pulpit became the focal point in services. The pulpit was placed in a central place where the minister and congregation could clearly hear and see each other. (Spicer, ‘Defyle not Christ’s kirk with your carrion’, 159).
For the common people, burial in the kirkyard was customary, because it was important to be buried in a traditional place and consecrated ground and the kirkyard was and remained a holy space. Further, people were willing to pay a lot of money for decorative gravestones and monuments; although intercession was forbidden, the dying wanted to be remembered and parishioners thought it important to label the hallowed ground where a body was buried with images of death and resurrection.

Chapter 5 Burial rituals and the Catholic Reformation in France 1598-1650

The Catholic Reformation in France started after the Edict of Nantes in 1598. It was a twofold Reformation: on the one hand there were regulations imposed from above. This entailed a restoration of the French Catholic Church, reconstructed along the guidelines of the Council of Trent. Agreements were made on the structure and the uniformity of the church and the Council tried to standardize liturgical practices in order to eliminate the confusing variety of rites. For example, a single rite for Mass was created, which was to be conducted everywhere in the same way. Furthermore, traditional opinions of the church such as the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the idea of purgatory, the saints and the Virgin Mary were reaffirmed. On the other hand, there was the laity’s renewed enthusiasm for devotional activity: at every point where Protestants had criticised traditional ritual practices – use of images, the cult of the saints, Masses for the dead - Catholics responded by reasserting the value of such rituals.

In France, the kings resisted the reforms of Trent to some extent because they feared too much influence of the Pope and they tried to compromise with the Protestants in the country. King François I had persecuted the French Protestants, the Huguenots, who were followers of Calvin, since the 1540s. The Huguenots grew in number and had many supporters among the nobility, and even in the royal family. Hatred ran deep and Huguenots clashed severely with Catholics during the last four decades of the sixteenth century, causing the losses of many lives and jeopardizing the royal house of France more than once. The culmination of this long drawn-out conflict was the massacre of St. Bartholomew in August 1572. It was in the monarch’s best interest to maintain unity in the country, hence the Edict of Nantes which entailed general

---

136 Todd, *The culture of Protestantism* 338.  
137 Ibidem; Brown, *Noble society in Scotland* 265; MacCulloch, *Reformation* 579  
138 MacCulloch, *Reformation* 464. Three times the Council of Trent convened. The first Council of Trent was from 1547-1548, the second 1551-1552 and the third 1562-1563. For extended information on the Council of Trent, see MacCulloch, *Reformation*, 234-237, 275-279, 303-309.  
139 MacCulloch, *Reformation* 322.  
141 Ibidem 224-225.  
amnesty for crimes committed on all sides in return for loyalty to the Crown. Moreover, under certain conditions, it allowed free worship for Catholics and Protestants.\textsuperscript{143}

\textbf{§1 Presence of a priest at the deathbed and the funeral procession}

For the people in France theology and doctrine on death and dying did not change and therefore the priest was expected to be at the deathbed, witnessing or writing wills, offering spiritual guidance and, most importantly, administering the last sacraments.\textsuperscript{144} This continued throughout the Early Modern Period.\textsuperscript{145} After death, the body would stay in the house until it would be brought to the church for its funeral by way of a procession. The body, forming the focus of the procession, was transported to the church through the streets, led by priests and friars. The corpse was accompanied, with the most honourable people in front, by family, friends and neighbours, as well as the poor, who carried torches and crosses, and children - usually orphans - who were hired to walk or sing in the procession.\textsuperscript{146} Even for those in France for whom theology and doctrine did change - the Huguenots - funeral processions remained in practice.\textsuperscript{147} The corpse was carried by six men followed by a procession\textsuperscript{148} and practices that had long been traditional were maintained, such as exhibiting the deceased in front of their houses before carrying them to the cemetery.\textsuperscript{149}

Paris had a very long history of royal funeral convoys and its procession tradition gained in significance during the later sixteenth century. The bourgeois of Paris were expected to drape their houses with black cloth and to stand outside them with a burning torch when a royal funeral procession passed by. At the funeral of Henry VI in 1610, the people had to clean the street in front of their door so the procession would not encounter the mud and filth. Moreover, 500 poor were at his procession and 200 at the funeral of the Duke of Anjou in 1584.\textsuperscript{150}

\textsuperscript{143} The conditions of the Edict of Nantes were not so favourable for Huguenots though and over the decades that would follow they lost rights until the Edict of Nantes was completely revoked in 1685. MacCulloch, \textit{Reformation} 471-472.

\textsuperscript{144} Harding, \textit{The dead and the living} 236, 182, 183.


\textsuperscript{148} Roberts, ‘Contesting sacred space: burial disputes in sixteenth century France’, 142-143.


\textsuperscript{150} Harding, \textit{The dead and the living} 248, 245.
§2 Intercession for the dead

As stated in the previous paragraph, in the phase between death and burial the body would remain in the house. This custom was practiced for two reasons. On the one hand it would keep the body safe while it remained among the living. On the other hand it was the start to begin intercessory prayers in order to help save the soul. Intercessory Masses increased in importance in the seventeenth century: a growing number of people asked for more than sixty commemorative Masses - some weekly, some yearly - implying an extended period of intercession and commemoration. Due to this increase, churches required a large staff of priests in the seventeenth century in order to fulfil the need of these intercessory Masses next to maintaining the liturgical responsibilities of the clergy. In addition, new religious orders multiplied: nearly fifty new religious houses were founded in Paris between 1600-1670 and the laity joined the flourishing confraternities that saw to the saying of memorial Masses. Those who left money for intercessory and commemorative services were buying prayers for themselves, but it was not always enough to buy the church’s services and the goodwill of the intercessor was a vital contribution. Therefore, those who could afford it left money to the poor who, in turn, prayed for their benefactors’ souls. Therefore, prayers of the poor as intercessors were valued highly and charity remained an important aspect of intercession.

§3 Tolling of church bells

The purpose of bell ringing was spiritual: the bell was tolled when someone was in grave danger or dead in order to notify the parishioners so they could pray for him. A single bell was tolled immediately after death and longer peals were rung before or during the funeral service, to attract attention and prayers. This custom remained habitual as it had been in the Middle Ages. Also in the Protestant communities this ritual remained in practice.

§4 The funeral: burial services and the Mass

In France, the great majority of the population remained Catholic and for them the rituals were not questioned or altered much during the Reformation. The only reform of ritual was in 1614, which meant a simplification of the formal requirements for funeral Masses, leaving only

152 Harding The dead and the living 184, 238, 275, 192.
154 Luria, Sacred boundaries 118; Harding, The living and the dead 246.
155 Harding, The living and the dead 235.
156 Luria, Sacred boundaries 118.
157 Harding, The dead and the living 242.
158 Luria, Sacred boundaries 118.
159 Harding, The dead and the living 80, 203.
160 Luria, Sacred boundaries 124.
161 Evidence from many wills suggests considerable continuity. See: Harding, The dead and the living 192.
the Mass of Requiem. Masses and commemorative services remained a central aspect and the traditional funeral service and associated rituals of the Middle Ages were not undermined by the turbulence of the sixteenth century.

The number of people attending a burial service was important, because it was essential to the spiritual effectiveness of the funeral: to be short of prayers at the moment of death, was to jeopardise salvation itself. 162 For that reason, people requested secular clergy as well as religious orders to say the Mass. Confraternities, paupers to hold the torches, and children to sing in the choir were popular at a funeral, next to kin, friends and neighbours. 163 Especially the presence of friars was wanted and at the funeral of King Henri IV in 1610 were 224 Cordeliers, 190 Jacobins, 100 Augustinians and 50 Carmelites present. 164 The burial services were said over the body itself because prayers for a soul of which the body was physically present was believed to be more effective than prayer in its absence. Moreover, almost everybody wanted their burial ceremonies to be done in presence of their body so that they could participate for a last time in Mass. 165

Also for the minority communities of the Huguenots, continuity in rituals existed during the Catholic Reformation. Despite the doctrine of Calvinism, Huguenots also wanted some form of ceremony at their funerals, such as the attendance of a minister, a sermon and singing and praying after the burial. The rich continued to seek elaborate funerals and luxurious tombs and when baroque funerals became popular among the rich Catholics, it also became attractive for Huguenots to have large retinues, hired mourners and tombstone decorations. 166 In 1603 for example, the funeral of a high-ranking Huguenot included fifty horses to accompany the body to the cemetery. 167

§5 Location of the burial site

In the seventeenth century, an increasing number of laypeople - anyone who could afford it - sought to provide for their burial in churches. 168 There was a rise in private chapels and tombs assigned to individual families and more than ten percent of Paris’ population was buried in a

---

162 Harding, The dead and the living 234-235.
164 Harding, The dead and the living 236, 238, 275, 234-235.
167 Luria, Sacred boundaries 127.
168 MacCulloch, Reformation 464-484; Harding, The dead and the living 119, 129.
church. Church burial had been tradition for many centuries. People saw themselves after death as continuing participants in the worship of the community and therefore sought after certain places in church. The best places were near the altar where Mass was celebrated, in front of the crucifix or cross, an image or statue of Mary or saint.\textsuperscript{169}

\textit{Plate 4. Les Innocents cemetery in Paris. Around 1550 by Fedor Hoffbauer.}

In the churchyards ordinary people and the poor were buried. Cemeteries were like dormitories of the dead and it was believed that the soul would stay in close range of the body for the first months after death.\textsuperscript{170} Therefore, familial association with the place of burial was strong. In general, churchyards were filled with tombs, shrines, crosses, and other objects of devotion. Paris had a major burial place in the centre, located next to the main market, that served the whole community\textsuperscript{171} - except for those excluded from burial in consecrated ground, such as stillborn infants, plague victims and lepers as well as suicides and excommunicates\textsuperscript{172} - the churchyard of the Innocents. Decorations of the \textit{danse macabre} were displayed on the arcade around the cemetery, where also the charnel houses were located. It was said that the soil had come from the Holy Land and that bodies buried there would be consumed in nine days. Despite environmental problems, the graveyard was in the seventeenth century still used - even among Huguenots – as a place for Mass, meetings, gatherings, games, dances and for children to play, just as it had been in the Middle Ages, until it came to be locked at night in the course of the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{173}

\textsuperscript{169} Harding, \textit{The dead and the living} 42, 123, 75-76, 127, 130, 131, 147; Roberts, ‘Contesting sacred space: burial disputes in sixteenth century France’, 139.

\textsuperscript{170} Roberts, ‘Contesting sacred space: burial disputes in sixteenth century France’, 133.

\textsuperscript{171} Harding, \textit{The dead and the living} 105, 47, 72-76, 101, 104; Roberts, ‘Contesting sacred space: burial disputes in sixteenth century France’, 138, 139.

\textsuperscript{172} Roberts, ‘Contesting sacred space: burial disputes in sixteenth century France’, 138, 139.

\textsuperscript{173} Harding, \textit{The dead and the living} 105, 72-74; Roberts, ‘Contesting sacred space: burial disputes in sixteenth century France’, 138, 139.
Huguenots insisted on being buried in parish cemeteries near their Catholic forefathers and Protestant nobility continued to use the tombs in which their Catholic ancestors were buried. In many places Catholics and Huguenots shared the same cemetery. The Edict of Nantes, however, gave Catholics the sole use of their sacred buildings and spaces and commanded that the cemeteries of Huguenots and Catholics would be completely separated. In fact this did not always happen and wherever Huguenots were in the majority, they carried on burying their dead on Catholic cemeteries. In most places though, the use of Catholic cemeteries for Huguenots was fiercely opposed and from the 1630s onwards more and more cemeteries were broken up and Huguenot burial in Catholic churches and tombs was being persecuted.
Conclusion part I: Determining the continuity or discontinuity of burial rituals

Table 1: Boolean table to determine if there was continuity or discontinuity in burial rituals. ‘1’ refers to continuity ‘0’ to discontinuity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>O</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lutheran Reformation in Germany</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglican Reformation in England</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish Reformation in Scotland</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Reformation in France</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A = Presence of the priest at the deathbed and the funeral procession
   1= continuity of the ritual by the majority of the people
   0= discontinuity of the ritual by the majority of the people
B = Intercession for the dead
   1=continuity of the ritual by the majority of the people
   0= discontinuity of the ritual by the majority of the people
C = Tolling of church bells
   1= continuity of the ritual by the majority of the people
   0= discontinuity of the ritual by the majority of the people
D = The funeral: burial services and the Mass
   1= continuity of the ritual by the majority of the people
   0= discontinuity of the ritual by the majority of the people
E = The Location of the burial site
   1= continuity of the ritual by the majority of the people
   0= discontinuity of the ritual by the majority of the people
O = Outcome
   1= Continuity
   0= Discontinuity

Before analysing the Boolean table, I will explain first how I decided to mark certain rituals as ‘1’, ‘0’ or ‘0,5’. In most cases the proof for continuity was quite clear and therefore the judgment easily established. Some were less unambiguous though, such as intercession in the Lutheran Reformation and intercession in the Anglican Reformation. On the whole, I have let the thoughts and notions in the literature guide me in order to find an answer to the question if continuity or discontinuity prevailed. Moreover, my judgment was based on what the majority of the people did. This way, I acknowledged that although there is proof that in some areas of Lutheran Germany the practice of intercession continued, the majority of the people did not continue with this ritual. Therefore intercession has been marked with a ‘0’. Consequently, intercession for the dead in England has received a ‘1’ because all the literature on this subject overwhelmingly

---

177 As stated in the introduction, if three or more rituals would be classified as 1/continuity, the final outcome would also be 1/continuity.
suggested that the practice of intercession, in some form or other, was still appreciated by the
majority of the people.

As can be seen in the table, twice a ritual has been marked with 0.5. This has been done for the
following reason. Scotland was not a clear-cut case of continuity or discontinuity. Intercession
was abolished and officially burial services and processions also. Still, there is evidence of people
conducting burial services and processions in ways reminiscent of Catholicism. It is not clear
though to what extent these rituals were still conducted: how common were the funeral
processions and burial services: did they involve the majority of the people, or were they
exceptions? Were the Highlands of Scotland mainly Reformed or not? In these cases I was unable
to find a well-founded answer. This is partly due to the circumstance that remarkably little is
known about death in medieval and Early Modern Scotland. Therefore, without some sense of
specifically Scottish medieval attitudes towards death, it is difficult to make assumptions if any
change had taken place and it’s not sure in which direction death rituals developed. Moreover,
the literature on the subject seems to be contradictory.\(^{178}\)

When examining the table, we can draw various conclusions. Starting with the first column,
three out of four Reformations continued with the presence of a priest at the deathbed and the
funeral procession while the fourth Reformation - the Scottish - continued partly with this
tradition. Leaving the second column aside for a moment, the third, fourth and fifth column also
show continuity with the rituals in question - again except for Scotland where burial services
and Masses for the dead continued only partially. Looking at the second column, it can be
established that in two of the four Reformations intercession for the dead was no longer
practiced. Lutheran Germany and Scotland with their strong Lutheran and Calvinist doctrines
respectively, tried to abolish most of the ‘old’ Catholic doctrine and traditions. Eradicating
intercession for the dead was very important, because this ritual went wholly against the new
theologies with their doctrine of predestination and the elimination of purgatory. Therefore this
column tells us that as theology in these two countries changed drastically, so did the ritual that
most explicitly gave expression to Catholic doctrine. Theology in England changed also, going
from Catholicism to Protestantism, but even though the Anglican faith was derived from
Calvinism, due to political reasons and decisions, the Church of England was forced to take a
middle road between Protestantism and Catholicism, leaving the custom of intercession for the
dead intact in many places. France continued with the custom because doctrine on death and the
afterlife did not change for them.

\(^{178}\) Brown, Noble society in Scotland 251.
When we then take a look again at the other columns, something interesting can be observed. Even in the strictest Protestant countries – Lutheran Germany and Scotland – the rituals repertoires remained in place or in the case of Scotland, was only slightly altered. This reveals that even with a drastic change in theology, as exemplified by intercession for the dead, the other - more social - rituals remained the same. I refer to these rituals as social because funeral processions, burial services, the tolling of the church bells and the choice of a burial place entailed many social aspects as will be explained in part two of this thesis. This tells us that even where theology changed, social rituals attached to religion apparently did not.
Part II: Explaining the continuation of burial rituals throughout the Reformation

In part I of this thesis I have established the continuation of burial rituals in Lutheran Germany, England, France and partly in Scotland. What I have not yet touched upon is why the burial rituals continued as they did. In this part II of the thesis, I will take a further look at this question and propose and explanation for this continuation of burial rituals. To this end, I will investigate three possible cause(s). The first one is the role of the government: what was its position regarding the enforcement of the Reformation and, more specifically, regarding burial rituals? Was it in favour of continuity or did it to achieve the opposite and how did it go about this? The second condition is the church. What was the position of the church: was it prepared to condone the old rituals or did it insist on rooting them out? Was the church united in its beliefs, or was the level of uniformity low? What was its ability to safeguard its newfound notions and its power to enforce continuation or discontinuation of the rituals? The third explanatory group that might have caused continuation refers to the actual practice such as behaviour and customs the laypeople – elite and ordinary – upheld. Were they perhaps responsible for the continuation of the burial rituals and if so, why?

Chapter 6 Lutheran Germany

§1 The government: position in the Reformation - continuation of rituals or not

Plate 6. Lutheran and Catholic areas 1560.

The German territorial states were part of the Holy Roman Empire, which was ruled by Emperor Charles V. The German Estates enjoyed many liberties and the territorial lords were in command and could exercise sovereignty over the local population. In the 1520s Luther won over a substantial section of the German princes and city councils, which resulted in Lutheranism becoming the dominant religion in many German territories – most of them located in the north. Charles V, like other medieval emperors, felt it was his duty to preserve the Catholic faith and therefore he refused to acknowledge Lutheranism and wanted to abolish it, curbing the traditional territorial freedom of the princes and cities. The latter responded by forming a military alliance, the Schmalkaldic league, with the purpose of defending the Reformation in their territories. In 1546 the emperor declared war on them. Initially the

179 Dixon, *The Reformation in Germany* 1-10.
victory was for the emperor but the Protestant princes ultimately succeeded and forced Charles V to sign the peace of Augsburg in 1555, which stated that each ruler of a territory could decide its religion.  

In the Lutheran areas, the Protestant church became a territorial church under the authority of the territorial prince or city council; the Protestant Church was an institution of governance. The regional lords were directly involved in the running of church affairs and all aspects of religious life fell within the purview of the secular authority: the clergy was subject to secular rule, the ecclesiastical structure merged with the organs of civic governance, the legal immunity of the church was abolished, Catholic clergymen were dismissed and the wealth of the Catholic Church confiscated. While variations between territories existed, the princes regarded conformity in religion and ritual uniformity in their own state essential. They tried to accomplish this by uniform church services, staffing the parishes with approved orthodox clergy and launching effective educational programmes, such as adult catechism classes.

In all, we can state that the Reformation in Lutheran Germany was largely accomplished by the territorial lords. They were keen on following Luther and his doctrine and, moreover, they were head of the new Lutheran churches. Since Lutheranism wanted to break with the past, Catholicism and its rituals, the territorial rulers did not favour continuity of these rituals. Rather, they unsuccessfully tried to achieve the opposite. Despite their new churches, new services, rules, decrees and catechism classes, they were unable to stop tradition from continuing.

§2 The Church: position in the Reformation – continuation of rituals or not

The Reformation began a new age in the exercise of power in the German estates with unprecedented thoroughness: the expansion of church administration, the detail of church ordinances and the increased frequency of visitations. These parish visitations were used to observe and reform the beliefs of the common people and to inform the princes of their behaviour towards the new religion. This way they wanted to make sure people had abandoned popular belief and folk religion. Visitations were also used to investigate the clergy and to discipline them according to the norms of the new church.

---

181 MacCulloch, Reformation 174; Dixon, The Reformation in Germany 1-10, 136-137.
182 Hughes, Early modern Germany 39; MacCulloch, Reformation 162-164; Dixon, The Reformation in Germany 115.
184 Karant-Nunn, The Reformation of ritual 150.
186 Koslofsky, The Reformation of the dead 82-83; Karant-Nunn, The Reformation of ritual 156; Dixon, The Reformation in Germany 162.
Another approach of reforming the people was through teaching. For that reason catechisms were composed: short ones for ordinary people, longer ones for the teachers and pastors. Non-attendance or deficient knowledge of the catechisms was followed by a fine or banishment from taverns, baptisms or church fairs until permission was granted by the pastor. In addition to catechisms, preaching and sermons were of great importance to teach the people about Lutheranism, while rituals became less important. Reformers used any public opportunity to preach, and during the Sunday sermon, local secular officers were instructed to inspect the village to suss out truants.

Overall, the clergy devoted many hours to educate and reform the people. The pastor was appointed by the sovereign and he was the final link in a chain of command, reaching from the prince or city councils down to the churches and households of the parish. Except for sermons and preaching, the parish pastor was very much involved in parish affairs. They were the judges of proper behaviour and discipline and they had the power to enforce these rules. Overall, the church, as an extension of the state, claimed authority over major aspects of people’s lives.

It was the aim of the new church to convert the people to Lutheranism and it did everything in its power, which was considerable, to reach this objective. ‘Old’ Catholic burial rituals were not part of this doctrine and in the first decade of the Reformation, Lutheranism rejected any services for the dead. In time, though, old habits came back into practice, partly because even Lutheran reformers were shocked at the thought of people dying without a priest, procession or songs. In addition, funerals were also helpful for the church in proclaiming their doctrine: through the sermon and biography of the deceased the numerous living who attended the burial service were instructed on how to lead their Lutheran lives. So funerals made for a good occasion to preach more about Lutheran doctrine. Therefore the church derived some benefit from continuing these rituals.

187 MacCulloch, Reformation 164-165.
190 Dixon, The Reformation in Germany 158-159, 145.
191 Hughes, Early modern Germany 39; MacCulloch, Reformation 163.
192 Koslofsky, The Reformation of the dead 92.
§3 Actual practice of the laypeople - elite and ordinary - regarding the continuation of rituals during the Reformation

In Lutheran Germany, lay responses to Lutheranism varied. In most urban areas it was popular among the laity and especially guilds supported the early reform movement. In other places, though, Luther and his doctrine were rejected or ignored. Villagers resisted the religious indoctrination by the reformers, because they wanted to preserve their local culture, customs and rituals because of tradition, force of practice and popularity, which ensured the survival of rituals and customs.

In addition, funerals remained important in order to show social order in society. Without a proper burial, the distinction between an honourable and dishonourable funeral would be lost and therefore it endangered the social functions that were part of a funeral. Dating from before the Reformation, burial among the Christian community was often denied to dishonourables: suicides, unbaptised babies, criminals and those who practised dishonourable professions such as prostitutes and executioners. They were buried outside the city walls before dawn or at night, without the ringing of church bells or the participation of clergy and community in the funeral procession. Also a pauper’s burial differed from a ‘normal’ burial: often they were buried outside the city walls, which was a clear humiliation of the family of the deceased. Therefore, the rich ensured that they would be buried in or near the central urban church. Therefore, funerals served to distinguish between the good in society and the bad, and between the rich and the poor.

Status and class difference was another reason for people to hold onto rituals. Just as funeral sermons, wedding sermons were expected of pastors: first the elite, but later also the laity, thought these sermons, alongside with special music, the length of the ringing of the peals and high-status inner-city burials would enhance their standing in society. This was partly due to the fact that society in the church became more hierarchical during the sixteenth century.

Lastly, despite contrary doctrine, people believed that pastors could forgive sin on someone’s deathbed and it was terrible if that person would die without repentance, absolution and the last

---

194 MacCulloch, Reformation 171; Dixon, The Reformation in Germany 75, 99, 102.
197 Koslofsky, The Reformation of the dead 102.
199 Koslofsky, The Reformation of the dead 92-93, 105.
sacraments. This was also true for burial without ceremony or interment in unconsecrated ground. Even though Lutheranism separated the living from the dead, people still felt somewhat related to the dead and therefore upheld their rituals and traditions.201

Chapter 7 England

§1 The government: position in the Reformation - continuation of rituals or not

In 1547 the boy-King Edward VI ascended to the throne of England. In his name the Protestant Regency Council ruled and in the years that followed new Protestant rules were enacted.202 When in 1553 the Catholic Mary Tudor became queen, all was to be restored to its pre-Reformation state. With the ascendance to the throne by the Protestant Queen Elizabeth Tudor in 1558, the Anglican Reformation came back to life with the Elizabethan Settlement: in 1559 Parliament was summoned to decide on a Reformation bill, reviving royal supremacy and the establishment of a new church. After some modification – initially the Catholic bishops in the House of Lords were against it and the lay aristocracy followed their lead - it passed in both houses as the bill of Supremacy.203 Another bill, the Uniformity bill was more difficult to accept. The Council had to make major concessions to get its bill past the Lords. In the end, the bill passed with only three votes difference, partly due to the replacement of some bishops by the queen and partly because of the fact that the bill kept more Catholic features than was originally planned.204 And so, Elizabeth had to accept a moderate Reformation due to the House of Lords, which was mainly Catholic. Therefore, she tried to arrange a settlement of the church that tried to strike a balance: a middle way between conservative and moderate Protestants.205 An example of this is the introduction of prayers for the dead in the doctrinally Calvinist burial service of 1552, which reveals clearly the compromise nature of the Elizabethan settlement, to appease all parties rather than establish a firm doctrine for the English Church.206

201 Ibidem 168, 156, 178-179, 180.
202 Protestant rules such as the removal or confiscation of church images, shrines and mass equipment, the introduction of English prayers in the Latin mass, the replacement of Latin-rites by the first and second Book of Common Order, the clergy being allowed to marry, the exchange of altars for Communion tables and more. For more information see: Haigh, English Reformations 168; Helen Parish, ‘England’, 228.
203 The bill of Supremacy deleted the liturgical provisions from the Reformation bill, making it a supremacy bill only. This bill made the queen supreme governor of the Church. See: Haigh, English Reformations 239, 240.
204 Uniformity Bill entailed the following: it abolished mass and it reintroduced the second prayer book of Edward VI of 1552 as the prescribed worship of the English Church, but with crucial modifications. It removed abuse of the Pope from its prayers and it allowed a Catholic understanding of real presence in the Eucharist, the vestments and ornaments for the service were to be as for mass and the minister was to stand in the place the Catholic priest had stood. It also forced people to attend service on Sunday in a Anglican Church. See: Duffy, The stripping of the altars 566, 567; Haigh, English Reformations 240.
205 Haigh, English Reformations 241-242, 243; Solt, Church and state 81, 208.
206 Gittings, Death, burial and the individual 42.
One method of making sure that the population was reformed according to the new doctrine and
no longer clung to old beliefs, consisted of questions, injunctions, which bishops sent to be
answered by all parish clergy.\(^{207}\) Enforcement of the Protestant injunctions was not particularly
harsh during the 1560s and many found it possible to keep their Catholic beliefs and rituals
while attending the new Communion service.\(^{208}\) This was to some extent due to the concessions
made to the Lords: it was much easier for priests to celebrate Mass and Communion in ways
barely distinguishable from the old service, as well as conducting burial services containing
covert words hinting at intercession, with minimal risk of arrest.\(^{209}\) There were royal
commissioners, however, who were to see to the enforcement of the injunctions such as the
removal of images and equipment for Mass and funerals.\(^{210}\) This increased dramatically after
1569 because the Catholic nobility in the North rebelled against the queen and the Pope
excommunicated her in 1570.\(^{211}\) Parliament responded with a drastic increase in recusancy fines
and in 1581 a new anti-Catholic statute was enacted: it was now treason to reconcile oneself
with the Church of Rome and also the execution of Catholic priests became more frequent.\(^{212}\)

§2 The Church: position in the Reformation – continuation of rituals or not

The Elizabethan Church, like the government, was torn between moderate and conservative
Protestants.\(^{213}\) Parish churches went their own way and while some adhered to Protestantism,
others upheld the old belief and continued the traditional customs such as bells being tolled for
the dead on All Hallows’ eve. This was in part due to clergymen: many held onto the old ways,
because almost all early Elizabethan parish clergy had been originally recruited as Catholic
priests and even by 1576, thirty-seven percent of the clergy in three archdeaconries had been
ordained before 1559.\(^{214}\) These men played a crucial role in sustaining the old faith and rituals
through Elizabeth’s reign and beyond.\(^{215}\)

There was little Protestant bishops could do about this. Parishioners concealed breaches of
Protestant rules and deviant priests went unreported for years. In 1566 the ecclesiastical
commission issued subscription tests to the Act of Supremacy, the new Prayer Book and the

\(^{207}\) Ibidem 43.
\(^{208}\) Injunctions were royal orders on ecclesiastical affairs. Todd, ‘England after 1558’, 369.
\(^{210}\) Recusancy refers to those people not attending the Anglican service. Todd, ‘England after 1558’ 369.
\(^{211}\) The aim of the rebellion of the Northern earls was to re-establish Catholicism and to release Mary Queen of
Scots, who was imprisoned by queen Elizabeth. During the rebellion, the cathedral in Durham was occupied and
mass was celebrated as before the Reformation.
\(^{212}\) Haigh, *English Reformations* 263.
\(^{213}\) Todd, ‘England after 1558’, 367.
\(^{215}\) Scarisbrick, *The Reformation* 140, 142.
Injunctions of 1559 - only a third of the clergy subscribed.\textsuperscript{216} Also, the church courts examined parishes to determine whether they had the new Bibles and Prayer Books and removed their altars, icons, roods and vestments.\textsuperscript{217} Furthermore, a dispute arose between the bishops and the more traditionally minded parishioners and clergy concerning the performance of burial rituals and other rites of passage. While the bishops tried to get rid of funeral sermons and the ringing of church bells, some local clergy and the laypeople fought for, and succeeded in keeping these rituals in practice.\textsuperscript{218} This unease over lingering Roman Catholic beliefs concerning burial rituals continued to appear in the bishops’ injunctions throughout the reign of Elizabeth I and even beyond.\textsuperscript{219}

\textit{§3 Actual practice of the laypeople - elite and ordinary – regarding the continuation of rituals during the Reformation}

Although Calvinist doctrine wanted to abolish many of the old Catholic rites, this was in fact difficult to enforce, because these new rules as were set up in the end of the 1540s angered many laypeople: resentful parishioners were enduring the removal of images, the restriction of (burial) ceremonies and the seizure of equipment from guilds. Protestants were a minority then and had not received mass support: gentlemen and lay folk were still hoping to continue the old order and when Elizabeth I became queen, she did not receive such a warm welcome from the people.\textsuperscript{220}

The evidence for the continued belief in Catholicism is the revolt of 1569 by the Northern earls. Six thousand men rose up in arms, of which eighty percent joined because of religious loyalty.\textsuperscript{221} The survival of the old faith would have been impossible without the country houses of laymen- and women, which acted as Mass-centres, creating communities of Catholics and sheltered priests. Many rituals, such as Mass, prayers for the dead and pilgrimages continued as before. Also non-elites adhered to Catholicism: of six women imprisoned in 1577, five were middle class\textsuperscript{222} - their support lasted until the seventeenth century due to shortage of priests and fear of persecution. Catholicism, largely depended for its survival on the gentry, concentrated in the north and west of England.\textsuperscript{223}

\textsuperscript{216} Haigh, \textit{English Reformations} 243, 248-249. \\
\textsuperscript{217} Todd, ‘England after 1558’, 369. \\
\textsuperscript{218} Duffy, \textit{The stripping of the altars} 590. \\
\textsuperscript{219} Gittings, \textit{Death, burial and the individual} 43. \\
\textsuperscript{220} Haigh, \textit{English Reformations} 172, 235, 238; Duffy, \textit{The stripping of the altars} 566; Solt, \textit{Church and state} 99; Scarisbrick, \textit{The Reformation} 145; Todd, ‘England after 1558’, 369. \\
\textsuperscript{221} Haigh, \textit{English Reformations} 257. \\
\textsuperscript{222} Scarisbrick, \textit{The Reformation} 141, 156. \\
\textsuperscript{223} Haigh, \textit{English Reformations} 266; Gittings, \textit{Death, burial and the individual} 44. For more information see: Gittings, \textit{Death, burial and the individual} 53-55.
Besides crypto-Catholics, Protestants also continued with ‘old’ customs and rites, because rituals, such as funerals, encompassed secular social importance in addition to the devotional. A funeral gave a person the opportunity to be honoured and to be defined socially: the more was spent and the grander and more elaborate the funeral, the higher the social status would be; funerals were a way to express social hierarchy. This might also explain the increase in the number of people attending funerals: it was not longer to pray for one’s soul, but it was tradition and it carried social significance. A person’s social position could also be seen by whether the ceremony took place inside the church or outside in the churchyard.

In this respect burial locations were equally cardinal. A preference for location can be partly attributed to a continuing belief in the spiritual benefit certain burial places held, partly it had to do with status. Burials in the parish churchyard were for the poor and middle class, while the elite would be buried in the church. People did not want to lose this prerogative because of the Reformation, especially since other rituals that could show status were eliminated. Therefore, church burial became even more valuable in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Apart from the importance of status, funerals and other rituals were also needed in communities: it re-established relationships during the eating and drinking which followed burial rituals and it was a way for the community to cope with death, especially since the doctrine of predestination did not give much comfort to the surviving friends and relatives.

Chapter 8 Scotland

§1 The government: position in the Reformation - continuation of rituals or not

The position of the government of Scotland regarding the Reformation differs somewhat from the other countries. Instead of a top-down relation where the government decided the dominant religion, the Reformation in Scotland came about bottom-up: it started as a national revolution in 1559 and it was not the Crown but the Protestant churchmen and their lay supporters who, with the help of England, took the lead in the Reformation and overthrew Mary Queen of Scots. From 1560 onwards, Protestant regimes ruled the country. The government made Protestantism the dominant religion by overthrowing the Catholic Mary and created the Reformation in Scotland. Therefore, Catholicism, with all its rituals was to be abandoned.

---

226 Cressy, Birth, marriage, and death 397.
227 Harding, The dead and the living 23, 38, 50-56; Gittings, Death, burial and the individual 115.
228 Gittings, Death, burial and the individual 55, 63.
230 MacClloch, Reformation 295; Kirk, Patterns of reform 344-345.
In 1567 King James VI officially came to power, but back then he was just a boy and regents ruled in his name. The 1570s were a tumultuous decade with regents killed and power shifts from one Protestant group to the other. It was also a decade in which the government battled the Kirk for supremacy in ecclesiastical matters. It was only when King James VI himself came to power in 1585 that things calmed down.\textsuperscript{231} He too struggled to curb the power of the Kirk and to increase the power of the Crown within the system through the bishops. Episcopal power was therefore deeply identified with princely meddling. However, he also allowed the growth of a nationwide structure of presbyteries. That gave the General Assembly of the Kirk a major place in Scottish life, alongside the Scottish parliament.\textsuperscript{232} In 1584 the Scottish parliament asserted authority over all matters, spiritual and temporal, and outlawed all jurisdictions and judgments not approved by parliament.\textsuperscript{233} This battle makes clear that the government was focussed on how to exercise power in the newly established religion. There was no misunderstanding about the new doctrine nor any inclination to uphold the old ways.

\section*{\textsuperscript{2} The Church: position in the Reformation - continuation of rituals or not}

Due to the instability in the 1570s and the lack of a strong, uniform government, the Kirk was able to develop its identity independently from the monarchy and it had therefore almost unlimited freedom in reforming medieval thought and practice\textsuperscript{234} which it thoroughly did, such as eliminating almost all burial rituals. In addition, the reformers changed the structure of the medieval church into a Reformed church order. On the local level there were the so-called Kirk sessions. The session included minister(s) and lay elders. Sessions met weekly in most parishes and four times a week in larger urban areas to deal with ecclesiastical matters and matters of moral discipline such as cases of sexual offence, drunkenness, quarrelling, doctrinal error and neglecting the Sunday sermon.\textsuperscript{235} Additionally, the session managed charity for the poor, education, baptism and funerals, declared fasts, feasts and Communion and the decoration and expansion of the Kirk and the kirkyard.\textsuperscript{236}

The session also required all the parishioners and the ministers to remember the new doctrine and subjected them to frequent re-examination. The session was in contact with higher church bodies such as the synods and the General Assembly, who acted as the supreme court of the

\textsuperscript{231} Kirk, \textit{Patterns of reform} 344-345; Heal, \textit{The Reformation in Britain and Ireland} 367-369, 372.

\textsuperscript{232} MacClloch, \textit{Reformation} 380.

\textsuperscript{233} Heal, \textit{The Reformation in Britain and Ireland} 371-372.

\textsuperscript{234} Ibidem 367-369, 372; Kirk, \textit{Patterns of reform} 338.

\textsuperscript{235} Even for the people from the islands, transport was being arranged by the Kirk so they could also attend the sermon weekly. Todd, \textit{The culture of Protestantism} 37.

\textsuperscript{236} Todd, \textit{The culture of Protestantism} 8-11, 31,34, 402-403; Kirk, \textit{Patterns of reform} 342-344; Goodare, ‘Scotland’, 102-105; Heal, \textit{The Reformation in Britain and Ireland} 369.
church at the national level. When someone did not appear at a session when summoned, pay penalties, or perform repentance when ordered, this was not ignored and resulted in suspension from the community or even ex-communication. This could not even be evaded by moving to another parish: the reformed parishes were closely and effectively connected. They communicated on a regular basis with each other, making it almost impossible for someone to escape the system. The Kirk was clearly embedded in, and a central element of Scottish culture. Therefore, it is all the more surprising that also in Scotland some of the rituals still continued. The Kirk, with all its power, tried to ban wakes, funeral processions, the tolling of the church bells and burial inside the Kirk, but it was all to no avail: the customs remained even though the Kirk favoured abolition.

§3 Actual practice of the laypeople - elite and ordinary - regarding the continuation of rituals during the Reformation

There are several reasons why certain rituals remained. One reason of course is that in some areas Catholic belief remained, together with all the 'old' rituals. In the Highlands there were numerous Catholic noblemen, encouraging and protecting Catholicism. Although little is known about the interaction between Calvinists and Catholics in Scotland, the proximity of these Catholic rituals to the Calvinistic communities must have had its effect and influence on the rituals of the Calvinists.

In the largest part of Scotland, though, Catholicism vanished to make room for Calvinism. In these regions, rituals continued because of tradition and the secular meaning they entailed, such as status. The corpses of the middle and upper class were treated carefully and with respect, while those of the poor received more casual treatment. Extended processions with many neighbours, friends, family and hired mourners publicly processing, strengthened the status of the deceased. This was also true for the elaborate tolling of the peals. Partly it was a confirmation of the spiritual benefits attached to the ringing, as it always had, but the duration of the bells also reinforced the status of the person who had just died: the longer the bells

---

239 Todd, *The culture of Protestantism* 402-403.
sounded, the higher the social status.243 Burial inside the Kirk was of social magnitude since it raised the status of a person, making the obliteration of the practice difficult.244

Apart from status, these rituals were of value for the identity of a person or group. Processions were also used as a tool to divide the ‘good’ Christians from the ‘bad’: the excommunicated or suicides were to be buried without any service or procession, and would be taken out of a hole in the wall of the house instead through the front door, as good Christians.245 This was also true for the funeral service and burial in holy ground. Sacredness of the ground remained significant and this was maintained by not burying the excommunicates and suicides there, because they should not be allowed to infect the group of the faithful deceased: ‘they must be no part of their company when they are dead any more than when they did while living.’246

One can also argue that the Reformation itself was a cause for maintaining certain rituals. The guilds were a chief group in Scotland but their activities were seriously hindered by Protestantism. Therefore, they were in need of activities to show their identity as a group. For example, they decorated their lofts with images of their occupation and angels who watched over them in order to define themselves in relation to the community. This was also true for their specific burial vaults inside the Kirk, and, lacking other ways to express their identity within Protestantism, the decoration of their tombstones became even more imperative.247

In the previous paragraph it became clear that the Kirk was very powerful in Early Modern Scotland, and that it was utterly against all these rituals. One might wonder how exactly then the laity was able to withstand the powerful Kirk. The answer is that regardless of the strength of the Kirk, the clerical power was limited by the laity. Firstly, the sessions decided a great many things and ministers were outnumbered by lay elders in the session.248 For example, although the General Assembly did not permit Kirk burial, the local session, with many lay elders in it, did.249 Secondly, the laity controlled the money of the Kirk and if a minister had offended

245 Houston, Punishing the dead? 212, 215. Spicer, ‘Rest of their bones: fear of death and reformed burial practices’, 178
246 Todd, The culture of Protestantism 333.
247 Ibidem 326.
someone, he would not be paid. Moreover, the doctrine of priesthood of all believers gave rise to lay-prayer meetings and exercises.\textsuperscript{250}

\textit{Chapter 9 France}

\textbf{§1 The government: position in the Reformation - continuation of rituals or not}

After the Edict of Nantes, the situation in France remained fragile and the French Crown manoeuvred between the ultra-Catholics and Huguenots in order to maintain peace in the country, while trying to strengthen the already powerful king.\textsuperscript{251} It was the king’s aim to keep France unified and for that reason, although ultra-Catholics and Jesuits wanted a Catholic or Counter-Reformation in the footsteps of the Tridentine decrees, this was resisted by Henri IV,\textsuperscript{252} giving space to the Gallican sentiment that was present among influential moderate Catholics.\textsuperscript{253} Therefore, the notion that the Pope had authority in all ecclesiastical matters, was not accepted in France and Trent was, despite unilateral declaration of reception in 1615 by the Assembly of the Clergy in France, never ratified by the monarch.\textsuperscript{254} As a result, the Catholic Reformation or the Counter-Reformation had a different character in France than anywhere else in Europe.\textsuperscript{255}

After the assassination of Henri IV in 1610, his wife Marie de’ Medici was regent for seven years, but politics were largely decided by minsters. Some decrees of Trent were partially introduced in 1615, but the monarchy would only recognize the doctrinal sessions, leaving the church’s own institutions to implement measures under its own authority.\textsuperscript{256} In these years, some power struggles and noble revolts occurred, but nobody of the nobility held such power that they could threaten the Crown.\textsuperscript{257} The personal commitment of Marie de’ Medici and of her son King Louis XIII to Catholicism led over time to greater pressure on the Huguenots, culminating in the royal declaration of 1617 that the Protestant area of Béarn had to allow the practice of Catholicism again. When the province resisted and a series of military confrontations led by the Protestants followed, Louis XIII forced them into line with military threat. The civil war ended in 1627, won by the king. Protestant worship was still allowed but Huguenot strongholds were demolished and Protestant areas were forced to allow Catholic worship.\textsuperscript{258}

\textsuperscript{250}Todd, \textit{The culture of Protestantism} 369-370.


\textsuperscript{252}Henri IV was king of France from 1589-1610.

\textsuperscript{253}Collins, \textit{The state in Early Modern France} 24.


\textsuperscript{255}MacCulloch, \textit{Reformation} 474, 472.

\textsuperscript{256}MacCulloch, \textit{Reformation} 474, 472.

\textsuperscript{257}Briggs, \textit{Early Modern France} 86-87, 88-89; Collins, \textit{The state in Early Modern France} 26-29.

\textsuperscript{258}Collins, \textit{The state in Early Modern France} 26-29, 24, 45.
All of this shows unambiguously that the French Crown was very much in favour of the continuation of the old rituals. Even during the reign of Henri VI, who was at most a moderate Catholic, Catholicism and its traditions remained as they had been before the Catholic Reformation. When the ultra-Catholic Marie de’ Medici became regent of France and later, when her equally pious son Louis XIII ruled France, these rituals were intensified and reinforced.

§2 The Church: position in the Reformation - continuation of rituals or not

After the Edict of Nantes the Church of France was transformed. The monasteries were subjected to structural renewal under the supervision of a royal and papal commissioner. The hierarchy of the Church was strict. Bishops, abbots and cathedral canons represented all clergy at the various provincial estates and they dominated the Assembly of the Clergy, leaving not much space for the ideas of lower level clergy. These assemblies provided a setting to discuss doctrinal and political issues of interest to the clergy. Despite these assemblies and despite the fact that the Church was determined to implement the restored Catholic doctrine with all its rituals, the French Church lacked uniformity: there were violent disputes between the regular clergy and the secular clergy concerning matters of power. In addition, many different Catholic groups were present in France and tensions between these different Catholic parties, such as the ultra-Catholics, the moderates, the Jansenists and the Jesuits existed in all layers of society.

Still, all these religious groups adhered to Catholicism. The French Church wanted to make its presence felt in all aspects of human activity in order to ensure that the beliefs and rituals were as the Council of Trent had prescribed. This was one of the reasons why the parish clergy were being trained and educated to exceptional levels, something that did not happen in the sixteenth century. The parish clergy played an important role in daily parish life and encouraged laypeople to found confraternities and promoted Catholicism and its rituals, such as intercessory and commemorative services. Through them, the French Catholic Church played a large role in the lives of the people.

259 MacCulloch, Reformation 475.
261 Regular clergy refers to clergy in monasteries while secular clergy resided in the parishes.
262 Collins, The state in Early Modern France 37, 77; Phillips, Church and culture 15.
263 MacCulloch, Reformation 476; Phillips, Church and culture 9-11.
264 MacCulloch, Reformation 479.
265 Phillips, Church and culture 3-7.
After 1600, bishops were university graduates and ordained before exercising their post, while in the sixteenth century positions had been based solely on family connections. Catholic revival was achieved partly due to the merits of the bishops who took the lead in promoting Catholic instruction and also encouraged different forms of lay devotion and offered different approaches to spirituality – mystical, contemplative, practical and emotional - which were all designed to reinforce Catholicism. One way of intensifying Catholicism was through its rituals, and elaborate processions. The notion that many people had to be present at a burial service in order to achieve salvation grew stronger during the Reformation. These rituals asserted the Catholic, Counter-Reformation religious practices concerning burial and commemoration.

§3 Actual practice of the laypeople - elite and ordinary - regarding the continuation of rituals during the Reformation

In the early seventeenth century there was a sense of religious revival in France which was expressed in intense personal piety and rigorous morality. Many societies and confraternities were formed by laypeople, for example, the Devout party which was led by Marie de’ Medici, or its opponent, the Good Frenchmen, who supported the Gallican tradition of French Catholicism and was led by Cardinal Richelieu. There was also renewed respect of the laity for traditional monasticism. In Paris, the heart of the French Catholic devotional activity, increasing numbers of laypeople tried to provide for their burial in monastic churches and new religious houses were being built.

Outside the scope of the renewed piety of laity in urban areas, rituals and beliefs remained the same in rural areas out of tradition. Thus, births, weddings, burials, and festivities and celebrations continued as they always had. This is also the reason why Protestants insisted on being buried near their forefathers in Catholic parish cemeteries, and why Protestant nobility continued to use the tombs of their Catholic ancestors: family and traditional associations were very strong. Moreover, we must not forget that for most people in France, the doctrine of Christianity had not changed. There was still the need for the last sacraments, the usefulness and

266 MacCulloch, Reformation 476; Phillips, Church and culture 9-11.
267 MacCulloch 464-484; MacCulloch, Reformation 476; Phillips, Church and culture 9-11.
269 Collins, The state in Early Modern France 37; MacCulloch, Reformation 478.
270 Phillips, Church and culture 20.
271 Collins, The state in Early Modern France 36.
272 MacCulloch, Reformation 475-476.
273 Phillips, Church and culture 30-31.
necessity of intercession, the power of the saints, the spirituality attached to the ringing of the peals and the sanctity of certain locations for burial.\textsuperscript{274}

In addition to religion and tradition, in France too status played a role in the continuation of rituals. The size and splendour of the procession was a mark of the status of the deceased and of the respect paid to the dead. The tolling of the church bells determined the social impact of the funeral: the tone, the number of bells ringing and the duration showed the status of the person for whose benefit the bells were rung; the number of people attending one’s funeral showed the importance of this person. Furthermore, there was also a relationship between social prominence and the burial location: the churchyard or church, porch or cloister, in the public area of the church or in a chapel or vault, in a marked grave or tomb or in the open space in the church and churchyard all marked someone’s position in society.\textsuperscript{275}

\textsuperscript{274} Harding, ‘Who’s body? A study of attitudes towards the dead body in early modern France’, 184; Harding, \textit{The dead and the living} 77; Luria, \textit{Sacred boundaries} 107, 108-109, 111.

\textsuperscript{275} Harding, \textit{The dead and the living} 46, 80, 203, 248, 245.
### Conclusion

Table 2. Boolean table in order to determine the causes for continuity/discontinuity. In favour of discontinuity has been appointed with a ‘0’. In favour of continuity has been appointed with a ‘1’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>The position of the government (A)</th>
<th>The position of the church (B)</th>
<th>Actual practice of the laypeople (C)</th>
<th>Continuation of burial rituals (O)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Lutheran Reformation in Germany</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Anglican Reformation in England</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Scottish Reformation in Scotland</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Catholic Reformation in France</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A = The government: position in the Reformation - favouring continuation of rituals or not -
B = The Church: position in the Reformation - favouring continuation of rituals or not -
C = Actual practice of the laypeople - elite and ordinary - regarding the continuation of rituals during the Reformation
O = Continuity

When looking at this Boolean table for determining the cause(s) for continuity of burial rituals, an interesting outcome can be observed. With one quick glance, it can be established that the necessary and sufficient cause for the continuation of burial rituals was the actual practice of the laypeople. This means that in the investigated countries the laypeople were the force behind the continuation of burial rituals. As has been revealed in the previous chapters, this had mostly to do with displaying status at funerals, showing social stratification, distinguishing between honourable and dishonourable people - the good and the bad - as well as a means for identification, comforting the surviving friends and relatives, adhering to (familial) tradition, while concern for the demands of orthodox religion was secondary at best. These social aspects were so strong that even though the government and church tried on occasion, it proved almost impossible for them to wipe out these rituals. This outcome therefore reveals that regardless of the opinion or power of the government or church and despite their notions concerning theology and how this should be expressed, laypeople had their own ideas about this and, more importantly, were able to uphold these ideas. Either by being able to exercise power in the

---

276 While a cause is necessary if it has to be present in order for a certain outcome to occur; it is capable of producing an outcome in combination with other causes and it has to be present in all possible combinations and a cause is sufficient when it can by itself be enough to produce a certain outcome -this does not mean however, that it is the only cause capable of producing that outcome, a cause is both necessary and sufficient, if it means that it is the only cause that produces an outcome: Ragin, *The comparative method* 85-102.
church as was the case in Scotland, or through the religious division that split up the English government and enabled many English people to uphold their customs or just by the fact that some areas were too remote for the reformers to reach.

This outcome completes my findings in the conclusion of the first part of this thesis. There, I made the observation that rituals that most explicitly gave expression to Catholic doctrine, such as intercession for the dead and deathbed ministrations did change in some countries. In Lutheran Germany intercession was completely abolished and vanished rather quickly from the lives of the people. Instead there was the promise of resurrection on Judgment Day as a consequence of salvation through faith alone. In Scotland both rituals were no longer in practice after the Reformation. In England intercession continued, not because doctrine prescribed it, but because the reformers were forced into a compromise between the old and the new way.

Moreover, in England intercession and commemorative services of the dead were redirected by the authorities: it became common practice to give alms to the poor in return for remembering the deceased. Charity became the focal point here, and not the condition of the soul after one had passed away. The ritual was slowly modified to their doctrine. This was not the only case and often the theology behind a ritual would be adapted in order to serve the new religion: Requiem Masses were exchanged for funeral sermons, commemorative services were not concerned with intercession any longer, but with remembrance and charity and Protestants even used the crowded burial services to spread the new Word through sermons in the church or at the grave. One can wonder if the changed meaning the reformers gave to these rituals were picked up by the ordinary folk at all. In the first conclusion I state that the other, more social, rituals continued. I refer to them as social rituals because they entailed more social than religious functions. The duration of the tolling of the church bells showed status. The location of someone’s grave showed someone’s position in the community: inside the city walls or outside, inside the church or outside in the churchyard. The grandeur of a procession and the burial services also showed status while at the same time it gave the relatives and friends an opportunity to pay their last respects to the deceased and to gave him or her a proper goodbye. These social aspects explain the discrepancy between the changing theology on the one hand while at the same time burial rituals continued.

The outcome of this investigation is interesting for various reasons. In the introduction I wrote that there were on the one hand historians who claimed burial rituals as the most transformed ritual of the traditional church, while on the other hand historians asserted it to be the most obstinate ritual that continued throughout the Reformation. This discrepancy seems strange at first sight, but can also be explained by the findings of my thesis. The historians who supposed
the burial rituals as altered because of the Reformation, based their notions primarily on the doctrine of the reformers. As a result, the consequences for burial rituals could have been enormous, because the whole idea of salvation through the rituals that were to shorten one's time in purgatory, such as a priest absolving the sins of a person on his or her deathbed, praying for the dead, tolling the church bells, accompanying the corpse to the church in a procession, conducting a funeral Mass and speaking the last rites at one's grave at the consecrated churchyard, was nonsense to Protestants. There was no purgatory because all men and women were predestined to go to heaven or hell. Moreover, there was no community of the living and the dead and so the dead could not benefit from meritorious acts of the living. Therefore, if it would be only up to doctrine, burial rituals would have changed dramatically. Practice, however, shows that this was not the case. The attention recently paid to documents revealing what actually happened in the parishes, which is also the basis of this thesis, shows how people can resist the decisions made by the Crown or Protestant Church and that the performance and the appearance of the ritual remained the same. Lastly, the conclusion of this thesis raises the most intriguing question of all: if people were able to uphold their burial rituals, what else were they capable of? When we see that these burial rituals, which were supposed to be the most affected rituals by the Reformation, were still intact, what does this mean for the general lives of people? Were there other rituals and customs that people upheld even though the doctrine of the reformed countries went against this? We then come to the question to what extent the Reformation changed the lives of the ordinary people, but that is a topic for another study.
Bibliography

Books, articles and volumes


- Gittings, Clare, Death, burial and the individual in Early Modern England (London and Sydney 1984).


- Houston, R. A., Punishing the dead? Suicide, lordship and community in Britain, 1500-1830 (Oxford 2010).


- Moore, Cornelia N., Patterned lives. The Lutheran funeral biography in Early Modern Germany (Wiesbaden 2006).

*Websites*

- Front page plate: The funeral of Sir Philip Sidney, 1586
  [http://www.enotes.com/topic/Philip_Sidney](http://www.enotes.com/topic/Philip_Sidney)
- Plate 2: Ars moriendi
  [http://www.rowane.de/html/ars_moriendi.htm](http://www.rowane.de/html/ars_moriendi.htm)
- Plate 3: Funeral Elizabeth I
- Plate 4: Cemétieres de France et d'ailleurs
- Plate 5: The trial of Martin Luther
  http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/luther/europelutheran1560.jpg