Receiving Our Brother: An Investigation into the Importance of the Body in the Burial Office of the Episcopal Church

by

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Abstract

In claiming that it is a liturgical Church, the Episcopal Church proposes that the liturgy is the source material for its theological claims. While there may be other places to look for the theology, the liturgy is the primary source that other sources ought not contradict. When it comes to discussing the changing realities around full body burial, and even the idea that burial is proper to a religious community, the Book of Common Prayer has a voice in the discussion because of the privileged role it has in expressing Episcopal Church theology. This thesis asks what the role of the body is in the liturgy of the Burial Office and what theological claims can be made from that role. To that end it examines the role of liturgy in the Episcopal Church, the role of the body in the Burial Office, the role of the various choices in the liturgy and their theological implications, and finally concludes that the only way to advance a coherent theological statement in line with the liturgical understanding and expression in and of the Burial Office is to have the body present.
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Sed satis de hoc
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Chapter 1
Introduction

“Because of our Christian belief in Christ’s incarnation and the bodily resurrection of the
dead, it is most appropriate that the body (or cremated remains) be present during all rites for the
dead….”\(^1\) Put another way: “If our theology shapes our funeral practices, and vice versa, then a
change in our practice signals a commensurate shift in our theology. Our funerals are indeed
changing, and that means something about how we view death theologically is changing as
well.”\(^2\) The link between theology and liturgy is clear and long-recognized: because we hold a
certain theological position, we act, we do liturgy, in a certain way. The way we do liturgy then
in turn informs longtime members and newcomers alike, something about the theological
assumptions of the place and community. Many of these givens have become self-evident: the
pouring of water at a baptism, the signing of a cross on the newly baptized person’s forehead, the
funeral pall. All of these things and more show the gathered community something about the
theological meaning of each of those actions. This system fundamentally depends on continuity
and consistency. While some variation is accepted and even expected, to do a baptism with soda
for example, would not only confuse most of the people gathered, but it would miss the
theological boat by emptying the rite of deep meanings.

Much ink has been spilled, many thousands of printer sheets used to discuss the
relationship of liturgy and theology as it relates to baptism and to the Eucharist. There has been
some work done on marriage and confirmation, more done recently on orders, but very little has
been done on the burial office. This is unfortunate and surprising because, as the Standing
Commission on Liturgy and Music (SCLM) puts it, “…the burial liturgy rehearses Christ’s

\(^1\) Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music, 2006. Report to the 75th General Convention, 192
2017].

\(^2\) Thomas G. Long, Accompany Them With Singing: The Christian Funeral (Louisville, Kentucky:
saving work by which death was overcome for us” and continues by saying, “Through both the burial rite and the pastoral rituals surrounding death and burial, we acknowledge that the living are on this same journey toward the heart of the holy and undivided Trinity.” The theology that SCLM hopes underpins the burial office is a theology that has historically been present in the funeral rites of Christendom. However, with the revision of the Book of Common Prayer in 1979, with ongoing calls for reform and renewal in the liturgy, the staying power of these theological claims, and of the ceremonial details that underlie them, has been called into question. In the burial office itself, the place this has become most apparent is in the presence of the body, or lack thereof. This thesis will first examine the historical import of the body as it relates to the theology around death and dying, and then how that theology was expressed liturgically; it will look to the current trends in the Western world and how those trends are coming to bear on the liturgy of the Episcopal Church. It will then conclude by examining the impact that those changes will have on the theology of the Church.

1 The Problem

To the astute reader it should be apparent that there are really two questions at play in this thesis. First, is there really a need to have this discussion at all? Put differently, are things or have things changed so much in how we deal with the dead in church services that we need to have a whole thesis written on the subject? Second, is the supposed link between theology and liturgy a valid one in the context of the Episcopal Church, and if it is, how can the link prove helpful in redressing the potential problems with the current state of the funeral?

The Problem with(out) the body

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3 SCLM, Report to the 75th General Convention, 192.
4 SCLM, Report to the 75th General Convention, 192.
Thomas G. Long, a preacher and teacher in the Presbyterian Church (USA) has spent a great deal of time looking at the question of the importance of the body in the funeral services of the church. This thesis will rely heavily on his work, and the reasons for that dependence will become clear through the analysis of the question. To help frame the question, we turn to Long and his diagnosis of the problem.

First, we see him speaking broadly to Christianity, notably but not exclusively Protestant Christianity:

The earliest Christians could never have anticipated how thoroughly we contemporary Christians would be willing to trade our incarnational birthright for a bowl of warmed-over Neoplatonic porridge. Antipathy to the body now carries the day in many a Christian funeral, particularly among suburban, educated, white Protestants, where the frank acknowledgement of the pain of death and the firm hope in the resurrection of the body get nosed out by the sort of vague, body-denying, death-defying blather expressed in this popular anonymous funeral poem.

Do not stand at my grave and weep; I am not there, I do not sleep. I am a thousand winds that blow. I am the diamond glints on snow. I am the sunlight on ripened grain. I am the gentle autumn rain. When you awaken in the mornings hush I am the swift uplifting rush of quiet birds in circled flight. I am the soft stars that shine at night. Do not stand at my grave and cry; I am not there, I did not die.

‘I am a thousand winds that blow…I did not die’ is certainly a far cry from “Death has been swallowed up in victory...”…Somehow we have been lured into ‘I am not there’ sentimentality. Dead bodies, however, are definitely there…we have arrived at a place unprecedented in history: conducting Christian funerals without the presence of the dead.  

There has been a shift in thinking in the Western Protestant world. What we see in Long’s argument is that there is a definite link between the body and the pain of its death and the

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resurrection of the body. This link, however, is being lost, forgotten, and pushed aside by many in today’s world. The shift has caused many to attempt to deny the reality of death. Short of being able to actually avoid the unavoidable, Long argues that people are trying to disassociate the dead from the dead body. Bodies matter, the bodies of the dead need to be understood as just that: the dead, the people whom we loved and cared for in life and now need to care for again.

While Long at times speaks to Christianity in general, he does not hold back when it comes to speaking directly to American Christianity and attempts to diagnose the problem of why American Christians do not have bodies at funerals. He locates the issue first with confused ideas around death, but does not stop there. Because Americans have a confused idea of how to deal with death, the funeral suffers:

American Christians, along with the rest of American culture, have become increasingly confused and conflicted about healthy ways to commemorate death. Funeral practices are in a windstorm of change, and old customs are being abandoned right and left, but the new Christian funeral liturgies don’t seem to factor much into the equation.6

The state of things now seems to be one of confusion and perhaps consternation. There can be and have been a number of ways to account for this seeming confusion on what and why we do what we do with the dead. However, for the purposes of this thesis, it seems safe to say that for some reason, the old ways of doing things are going by the wayside and new ways are cropping up. These new ways are, often at least, seen to be in conflict with the old ways, thus leading to the confusion that Long speaks about.

The effect of this confusion, or perhaps a sign of it, is seen in the rise of memorial services where bodies are playing less and less of a part. According to the National Funeral Directors Association, the idea of a personalized funeral, one that is meaningful to the departed

and their family and friends, is on the rise. These memorial services, these “personalized funerals” are ones in which there is less formality, less ritual, and more “personalization,” in short, they are radically redefining what we do regarding rituals of the dead. While a body can clearly be present at a “personalized funeral,” it is not hard to see why the body might be relegated to the status of a secondary prop. As we will see, people in the United States are forgetting the importance of the body. Once that happens, it is not a far leap to say that a memorial or funeral service that is no longer done according to the rubrics of the church would also forget the body. Moreover and perhaps more to the point, these personalized services have already gone beyond the rites of the church and thus risk abandoning the theology that makes the body important.

Long argues that while it is impossible by its very nature to make totally accurate, generalized statements about this new trend, it does seem that there are few common elements that have come to light in the last 50 years. There is often now a memorial service, often held some considerable time after the death and often with the remains not present. The service is brief, simple, personalized and customized. It often has many speakers, as opposed to a member of the clergy leading in the rites of the Church that would be relatively standard regardless of who the departed was. There is almost a singular focus on the life of the deceased and an emphasis, almost to the exclusion of all else, on joy and that the “event” is a celebration of life “rather than an observance of the somber reality of death.” Finally, the disposition of the body often happens before the memorial service and is done with a strong preference for cremation.

When looking to see how best to sum up this trend, we need look no further than Long and Lynch when they argue that “For many bereaved Americans, the “celebration of life”

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involves a guest list open to everyone except the actual corpse, which is often dismissed, disappeared without rubric or witness, buried or burned, out of sight, out of mind..."¹⁰ This is of course the ultimate problem that this thesis wishes to examine. What happens when the dead, or at least their bodies, are no longer welcome at their own funerals? Are bodies important and is this shift, therefore, significant and meaningful? Put another way, what does it mean when bodies become forgotten and cast aside at the funeral?

Why might we be so confused when it comes to death and dead bodies? “...Direct experience with death and dying has disappeared for many members of society….” and because of that “…ordinary people’s direct experience with death and dying as human transitions has decreased, with the result that people have little opportunity to learn how to handle themselves in these situations.”¹¹ Further, this disappearance may have come with a cost:

Our society has forgotten what to do with the dead and has persuaded itself that this amnesia is a sign of health and freedom. But the truth is that a people who cannot care for the dead and accompany them to a place of farewell are a people with diminished ability to care for the living and to join with others in communities of trust and meaning. If we cannot walk with the dead in hope, it is because we have lost our bearings in life. We become afraid of death, smoothing over our wrinkles with creams and injecting our bodies with Botox to keep its reality at bay.¹²

There are two primary places that people learn to deal with death, at the side of a dying or dead person, and in the faith community. When either one of those things falls away, our understanding of death suffers and thus our understanding of life; unfortunately, in today’s

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society, both of those things are falling away. Not only that, but a fear of death that leads to an attempt to avoid it is actually not Christian. The fear that we are talking about here, spoken of by Long and Lynch, is one that ultimately will lead to a theology that denies the importance of the Incarnation. It does this by denying that people, when they age and die, have the same worth and value as a young, attractive, vital person. As we will see, a denial of the Incarnation, or at least the denial of its impact and import, can lead to a denial of the Resurrection of Christ and of each human person.

This avoidance of death flies in the face of Tradition. “The necessity of tending to dead bodies belongs, as theologians would remind us, to the order of creation.” In other words, caring for the dead is part of the natural order of things. Now, this link with the fundamental Christian belief in creation does not in and of itself prove or even advance the argument that bodies need or ought to be present at a funeral, nor does the absence of a body automatically point to an avoidance of death. However, this does go to show that the argument that opened this thesis might have some traction—bodies, even dead ones, matter because they are inextricably part of the creation by God of living beings. More than that, in the Christian tradition we say that God became embodied, became one of us, and therefore sanctified in some way the whole of the human bodily experience, even death. This of course has implications for ritual, for liturgy: “And that [the care of bodies belonging to the whole of creation] means that whatever rituals...
Christians develop around death, they are faithful only to the extent that they do not obscure the essential humanity of the experience.” 17 Long continues later by arguing that “Funerals should be ‘recognizably incarnate’ in that the funeral combines that which transcends this place with that which embodies this place.”18 Thus funerals need bodies, they keep the theology and liturgy honest; the Burial Office cannot ignore the body,--and not just because of the practical requirement that at death the body must be disposed of--because the body reminds the gathered faithful, the Church, what it is they are about when they gather for the rites of the dead. This is to say that reference to bodies reminds the Church of its basic theological claim: God became Incarnate and the Incarnation changed everything. Further, in the light of the Incarnation, there is a change in the meaning of death. The human person, Christ, was resurrected. That bodily resurrection is at the heart of the Christian theological claim and is at the heart of what the funeral is expressing theologically.19

It seems then that it should be incontestable: funerals should include the body of the deceased. Bodies are deemed good in the Christian tradition because God said material creation and humanity within it was and is good. That holds equally true for the body of the departed. However, “…they [the bodies of the dead] have become unfortunately an embarrassment to us, a vulgarity, so much so that we have arrived at a place unprecedented in history: conducting Christian funerals without the presence of the dead.”20 This is the problem; the dead cannot be vulgar in the Christian tradition. To say they are is a fundamental retreat from the theology of the Incarnation and the Resurrection. The impact of this clearly goes beyond just some lofty theology, the impact is one that goes to the heart of the Christian self-understanding as embodied children of God, made in His image and called good. The presence of the body at its funeral is

19 This link between Incarnation and Resurrection will be fully fleshed out in coming chapters.
the way in which the Christian community can do the work it is called to do. But more than that, it is how the community knows the person and cares for them:

The body is the way we have received God’s gift of life in this person…And now bearing the dead body of this saint is the way we experience and bear witness to the transition from this life to the next. So we need to wash this body once more and to anoint it, to treat it with reverence, to carry it to the place of farewell. To do so is more than a duty; to do so is a holy privilege and a joy.\(^{21}\)

To not have the body present as the rites for the dead are performed forces the Christian community to miss out on its calling to care for creation and to accompany the people of God. When a body is not present at its funeral, the community is not able to live out its mission. More than that however, it sends the message that this person, was not and is not worth the time and the effort. That clearly is a lie, and yet it is a lie that the liturgy allows us to tell: denial of creaturely embodiment and denial of the flesh that the Word took on in the Incarnation and retained in the Resurrection.

Long argues that the fix for everything that we have been discussing is quite simple, bring the dead back to the funeral:

One of the clearest and most needed reforms in the funeral practices of many Christian communities is the honoring of the bodies of the deceased. The Christian dead should be welcomed once again to their own funerals.\(^{22}\)

Lynch adds:

Perhaps if the dead are more welcomed in church, the full heft and flesh of their corpses afforded their sacred space at the foot of the altar and in holy ground, their burden carried from station to station by the large muscles of real grief and faith, maybe then the living will find more reasons to return.\(^{23}\)


According to this analysis, the dead belong at their funerals. The question still remains, how did this cease to be inevitable in the first place? That alone could be a thesis. One thing, however, needs to be made very clear: nothing, short of the Church allowing it, can or could take the bodies out of a church funeral: “If it was, in the first place, religion that prompted us to accompany our dead to the place of funeral, it is a shift in religion, at least of the civic variety, that allows us to leave the dead by the wayside.”

Long himself goes even further:

The truth, however, is that a guild of embalming technicians could never have become ‘directors’ of any sacred Christian ritual, could never have taken the funeral away, had not church and culture been more than ready to hand it over.

The blame, for Long, rests on and with the church who “lost…their vibrant faith in the afterlife, and we are their theological and liturgical heirs.” We will see in later points of this thesis that a truly Christian belief in the Resurrection of the Dead requires a body because our resurrected life in Christ is fundamentally embodied. When Long, therefore, makes the claim that we have lost our faith in the afterlife, he implies that we have lost our faith in the bodily resurrection and thus the importance of the body itself. Here then we see the solution to the problem, correct the liturgy and the theology.

2 The Answer is the Liturgy

There are a number of ways that the theological issues that we will address can be taken up and many people try to address them theologically head on. However, for this thesis the claim is that the authorized liturgy itself provides the theological grounding and corrective to problems we have highlighted.

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There are two liturgical questions that need to be addressed in this section. First, this thesis will make the claim that liturgy itself is a means of addressing the potential theological problems highlighted above. This will include an examination of the claims around the primacy of liturgy in the Church and its role as primary theology. It will also highlight some of the potential failings of this understanding of liturgy and look to provide a corrective. Here will also be a clarification of the methodology. Secondly, this section will examine if these claims have a place in the world of Episcopal liturgy and what that place, if there is in fact one, might look like.

2.1 General Liturgical Norms and Methodology

The very first question that must be asked is, “What do we mean when we say liturgy”? The answer is not quite as simple as some might hope. On the most basic level, “liturgy” means “the work of the people”. The word comes from a Greek word leitourgia with its roots being the words leos and ergon, “people” and “work”. In other words leitourgia was the people’s work, public work or service. In practice this meant work done for the public good, like road and bridge building. This same word in Greek was used in the translation of the Septuagint to refer to the sacrificial rites in the Temple.\footnote{Introduction to Medieval Christian Liturgy: “1 Introduction to the Liturgy” \url{http://www.yale.edu/adhoc/research_resources/liturgy/intro.html} [accessed October 1, 2014].} It is the word used for Zechariah’s priestly work in Luke 1:8.

Of note is the idea embedded in the word itself: liturgy is something that is done for the good of not just the person doing it, but rather for the greater good of the community, a public good.\footnote{This was and is also work that should be understood as public. In a Greco-Roman sense it was often work done with great fanfare and public knowledge. In the Church this carries over to mean that there are no private liturgies.}

Liturgy, then, is like a verb and a noun. It is a thing, but perhaps its definition is best understood as an activity, liturgy does something, it causes something. Liturgy is “a most intimate facet of the Christian assembly’s lived faith in Jesus Christ and a function of the presence of his life-giving Spirit…It is the fundamental way a church stands before the Father in
Christ, filled with his Spirit.”

At its core we can claim that “…liturgy is fundamentally orthodoxia prima, a theological event.” But what does this mean? There is first an important distinction to be made, one of liturgy and liturgical theology. Up to this point we have been examining the role of liturgy itself. We will close this discussion for the moment with a word on what it means to be the “first theology.” Kevin Irwin provides perhaps the clearest way to understand what this means: “Liturgy is orthodoxia prima in that it is first order doxological address to and about God. Understood in this way, the act of liturgy is primary theology in the sense that the experience of liturgy concerns direct address to God.”

Liturgy is the way the Church talks to and about God:

In essence, liturgy is an act of theology, an act whereby the believing Church addresses God, enters into a dialogue with God, makes statements about its belief in God and symbolizes this belief through a variety of means including creation, words, manufactured objections, ritual gestures and actions. The many and multifaceted components of liturgy include words (principally Scripture and euchology) symbols and gestures, all expressed within a rite whose intrinsic structure has an inherent logic.

Liturgy concerns itself with God talk, in the most basic understanding of the word, with theology. Liturgy then is the first theology because it provides the very groundwork, the very language and ability for us to talk to and about God, for us to do theology.

If liturgy itself is theologa prima, then it stands to reason that the study of liturgy would be theologa secunda, secondary theology. That secondary theology is what we call liturgical theology. Liturgical theology “is interested…in the meaning of liturgy.”

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30 Irwin, Context and Text, 44.
31 Irwin, Context and Text, 44-5.
32 Irwin, Context and Text, 44.
course, is what is the meaning of liturgy, or perhaps another way, what is the end of liturgy, what
goal is it striving to achieve? Quoting Edward Kilmartin, Tyler Sampson offers what might
prove a helpful definition, or at least “job description” for liturgical theology and liturgical
theologians. “A theology of liturgy merely attempts to show Christian worship, in all its forms,
should be understood as the self-communication of the Triune God.”34 He goes further to say,
“The liturgy must be revelatory and present the fully mystery of Christ; otherwise it is a vapid
exercise in self-aggrandizement.”35 A corollary of this principle is the principle that liturgy is to
be directed to God. Given that, it is clear that all liturgy must speak to God, what is equally as
important is the idea that it is through the liturgy that God speaks as well. It is important then to
provide a liturgy that allows for God to be both spoken to and to be heard.

Looking to and quoting Gerard Lukken, Irwin extrapolates on this idea of the definition
and purpose of both liturgy and liturgical theology:

Lukken maintains that the liturgy is quite properly the
first source and norm of faith from which correct teaching
is derived. Since the liturgy is the Church’s self-expression
through a complex ritual act of words and symbols, the
liturgical expression of faith is more immediate and direct
than an intellectual expression or justification of faith in
theological argument or dogmatic pronouncement. He
balances this view by acknowledging that theologia
secunda can and should stand as an important corrective to
the liturgy “without which the Spirit is always in danger of
being extinguished in the liturgy. A relationship of constant
dialogue between theologia and orthodoxia prima and
secunda is essential if we are to ensure that the liturgy does
not once again become isolated from the faith of the
Church.”36

34 Tyler Sampson, “Scripture, Tradition, and Ressourcement: Toward an Anglican Fundamental Liturgical
Theology”, Anglican Theological Review 96.2 (April, 2014), 306.
36 Gerald Lukken, “The Unique Expression of Faith in Liturgy”, Liturgical Expressions of Faith, Concilium
82, eds. H Schmidt and D. Power, and trans. David Smith (New York: Herder and Herder, 1973) 16 quoted in Irwin,
Context and Text, 45.
This idea that liturgical theology, functions almost as a guardian of the Spirit that should be at work in the liturgy, is of fundamental importance moving forward. Liturgical theology is what provides the check against being overly reliant on rubrics, on caring too much about the words and not the ethical implications of liturgy. Liturgical theology is what ensures that the liturgy is expressing the theology of the people gathered—i.e., the Church. Liturgical theology concerns the very heart of the Christian project, how we talk to and pay homage to the God of the Universe. This is going to be a fundamental principle when we discuss what can be a corrective to liturgy run amuck.

With all of this in mind we can turn our attention to the question of why we turn first to liturgy to understand theology.

To our [liturgists and sacramental theologians] way of thinking, liturgy has such a privileged role in prayer [as the prayer of the Church], the theology and the living of the Christian life because of all forms of prayer it is the most anthropologically and theologically ‘apt’. By its nature, liturgy has anthropological and theological ‘fittingness’. Liturgy is the most suitable means for human beings to pray because it respects and reflects their nature as *enfleshed* beings.37

This is a most telling and useful idea in our study of liturgies around bodies, because bodies are, in fact, the instruments of our enfleshment.

Irwin continues, “Liturgies is theoretically ‘apt’ in the sense that it incorporates and articulates a range of fundamental theological elements of Christianity.”38 He adds, “At its best, liturgical theology dialogues with systematics, ethics, ecclesiology, pastoral and ecumenical theology.”39 It is not enough for liturgical theologians to be concerned with just what happens on Sunday morning in the church building. It is not enough in the context of this paper just to be

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38 Irwin, *Context and Text*, 315.
concerned with making sure the correct words are said at the reception of the body, for example. Rather, the liturgical theologian needs to be aware that, because liturgy is the first theology, engagement with all other types of theology is not just a good idea, but a requirement. This engagement will be what allows the liturgy to speak most clearly to the people and for the theology that the theologians extract to be the most meaningful.

In this thesis we are clearly engaging in liturgical theology. That is the concern is fundamentally about theology, about how people express theological truths about God. In practice this means a few things. First, it means that liturgy is understood to be a communal event, it cannot be done or understood on its own. The implications for a funeral go far beyond the cares of the family and friends gathered, there is a corporate nature to the Church that transcends local family and friends. Second, the liturgy itself has a logic that can be understood and argued. It can also prove to be illogical and must, if that is the case, be corrected. Third, liturgy shows the truth of God, and fourth, liturgical theology is the way in which we come to understand that Truth. Finally, fifth, liturgy is enfleshed. It involves embodied people and their words and actions, and it involves the Incarnate God. To try and take the fleshiness out of the liturgy, to try and clean it up, to box it in, does damage to the liturgy and to our understanding of the divine.

2.2 Methodology

This thesis does acknowledge that when it comes to Prosper of Aquitaine, there are some contemporary scholars that do not hold that he is speaking just about the Liturgy. In his essay, “Liturgy and Theology”, Maxwell Johnson says the following: “…Prosper’s argument is a doctrinal one which uses liturgical evidence in addition to other factors because that liturgical evidence is consistent with those other sources.” James Maxwell, “Liturgy and Theology” in Liturgy in Dialogue ed. Paul Bradshaw and Bryan D. Sprinks (London, SPCK, 1993), 223. The fact is that what Prosper is arguing, in Maxwell’s argument, is based not just on an appeal to liturgy, but rather an appeal to the “sacred testimony of priestly intercessions” which have been “transmitted from the apostles themselves”. Only because of this can claims on the universality of liturgy be made. In other words, while we can draw conclusions based on the liturgy, the liturgy itself finds its grounding in these intercessions that dates to the time of the Apostles. Moreover, the argument goes, Prosper’s concern is not in defending the liturgy, but rather to defend the Church against heresy (Maxwell, “Liturgy and Theology”, 202).

However, many respected liturgical theologians still understand him as refereeing to and having influence on the liturgy and on liturgical theology. This is also seen in the Papal Encyclical Mediator Dei where Pius XII
The question is how do these norms work out in a method that will help explain what this thesis is setting out to do.

A phrase ascribed to Prosper of Aquitaine *ut legem credendi lex supplicandi* has become something of a theme statement of many contemporary authors concerned with liturgical theology, often preferring this original formulation to be shortened *lex orandi, lex credendi*.\(^1\)

For a further explanation, that requires no knowledge of Latin, Irwin, speaking regarding the time of Prosper, offers the following: “The way the Church enacted the liturgy clearly influenced how the Church articulated and described its belief.\(^2\) If we can allow some element of “framers intent” to remain, this idea of Prosper’s becomes an attractive one. Really, it doesn’t even matter if Prosper said it at all, but this idea that liturgy influences the Church’s theological teachings in some way has been around since the patristic era.

This all might make sense in a broad theological context, but it is important to remember that this thesis is concerned with the Episcopal Church. We see in Jeffery Lee’s writing that this phrase and understanding has in fact come into the Episcopal Church and that in fact, Anglicanism (and thus the Episcopal Church) is unique in its reliance on the liturgy. He argues that Anglicans are a ‘people of the book’, that “the words and forms of *The Book of Common Prayer* define our corporate identity perhaps to a degree not true of any other churches—even defines the term as “the law of prayer is the law of faith” thus enshrining, for at least a certain brand of liturgical theologians, the classical interpretation (allowing for translation) Therefore, this thesis will assume that people like Irwin and Lee are not completely wrong in their interpretation of Prosper but will also grant that there is scholarly debate on Prosper.

Further, even if one grants what Maxwell and others might argue, that does not actually undermine the claim made in this thesis. The methodical claim in this thesis is that liturgy can and should tell us about what it is a group believes. This seems to hold true even for how Maxwell is reading Prosper, he just adds a step behind it by way of explaining why this is the case. Moreover, even if Prosper did not care one bit about defending the actual liturgy, the fact that he turns to the liturgical expression of the Church as a way to defend her practice, can and does bolster any methodological claim this thesis could make.

\(^{1}\) Irwin, *Text and Context*, 3.
those with strong liturgical traditions”. He goes on to offer his own explanation of *lex orandi, lex credendi* in an Anglican context:

“A phrase attributed to the fifth-century theologian Prosper of Aquitaine is often quoted by Anglican liturgists: *lex orandi, lex credendi*, the law of prayer establishes the law of belief. The way we pray shapes what we believe. That principle is so important to Anglicanism that any revision of the prayer book causes deep concern and sometimes consternation for members of the church”.

The methodology then for this thesis is in two parts. First, we are to look at the liturgy, the text and the rubrics. From there we can see what it is the Episcopal Church believes. These will be the two steps that are followed throughout this thesis.

2.3 The Episcopal Church Context

Episcopalian are a liturgical church. Liturgy, as expressed in the *Book of Common Prayer*, has historically bound the church to a set liturgical understanding and expression. “The words and forms of *The Book of Common Prayer* define our corporate identity perhaps to a degree not true of any other churches - even those with strong liturgical traditions.” Tyler Sampson continues in this vein: “…Liturgy has a special authority in Anglicanism, especially in the *Book of Common Prayer*, that is not present in other traditions. The churches of the Anglican Communion have no magisterium or confession. What we do have is the *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP) as the document most expressive of Anglican theology and authority.”

Because Episcopalians have little else, they must be liturgical and that liturgy must encapsulate their theology, or so the argument goes. It is perhaps put the most clearly by James Griffiss in a reflection on how the prayer book, how liturgy, works in the Anglican context:

“This is how the *Book of Common Prayer* functions for Anglicans: we interpret and understand

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the Bible and the doctrinal and moral tradition of the Church through the way we worship and pray together as a community of the baptized.”\(^{47}\) In a context specific to the Episcopal Church, Leonel Mitchell agrees that Episcopalians are indeed a liturgical people: “In a real sense, then, we Episcopalians are liturgical theologians. We read our theology out of the Book of Common Prayer and the manner in which we celebrate its services.”\(^{48}\)

While Anglicans, and in turn Episcopalians, have long held to the “three legged stool” of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason, it seems that liturgy is the binding force not only for application but for understanding. In other words, “[T]he Prayer Book is not only a grammar for the church’s conversation with God, but an arbiter of doctrine and polity, a definer of corporate identity, a \textit{vade mecum} for the individual soul’s journey.”\(^{49}\) This is the reason that Griffiss refers the prayer book as “a hermeneutical key for Anglicanism.”\(^{50}\) When talking about liturgy and its link to theology there is often some other force at work, normally a church hierarchy and/or an elaborate confessional statement, which makes sure the theology that is expressed in the liturgy is sound. Episcopalians do not really have that.\(^{51}\)

2.4 Potential Problems and Objections

The first potential issue is one that is not unique to the Episcopal Church, but rather one that runs to the heart of the assumptions made in this sort of liturgical methodology. Liturgy

\(^{47}\) James E. Griffiss, \textit{The Anglican Vision} (Boston, Massachusetts: Cowley Publications, 1997) 109. This is also why we turn to liturgy even when there is scripture and tradition that also hold weight and value. Liturgy is the way by which Episcopalians comes to understand the role, important, and meaning of scripture and tradition. So, while the other two exist, in many ways they derive meaning and more importantly, context, from the liturgy.


\(^{50}\) Griffiss, \textit{The Anglican Vision}, 109.

\(^{51}\) Some might claim that this is the role of General Convention. However, General Convention rarely issues doctrinal statements. It does however authorize changes to the liturgy which, as we will see later, can prove to have huge consequences for the liturgy. Moreover, even if General Convention decided to authorize a massive change in doctrinal theology, the very fact that three years from then it could change its mind and go a whole different theological direction speaks to the unsuitability of Convention for the task of defining Doctrine and Dogma. Mind you, it could reverse its decisions on liturgy too.
includes not just spoken words, but rubrics as well, and it is often pointed out that not all rubrics
have the same force in the liturgy. This is of specific import in this thesis because it is
concerned with rubrics. While Kavanagh is correct that there are some rubrics that might have
less of an impact on the overall theological program of the liturgy, it is important to keep in mind
that “in the liturgical rites of the Book of Common Prayer, we find in certain texts or rubrics
indications of the rites’ underlying sense, which, if ignored, can contradict the theological or
ritual dimensions of the rite itself.” This particular issue will be seen to be resolved only at the
end of the thesis. To resolve it, the thesis will have to show that the requirement of a body at the
funeral is a rubric that is so fundamental to the self and theological understanding of the
Episcopal Church, that to ignore it would prove detrimental.

There is an objection that is based on something even more basic than this, however. While
Kavanagh argues that some rubrics are not as important as other rubrics, he is in no way trying to
say that any rubrics are not important, nor is he trying to say that they are not fruitful grounds of
theological inquiry. However, there are those who go a step further when it comes to warning
about being too attached to rubrics and to the liturgy itself. Famously, Romano Guardini warns
of what he, and others, call “rubricism”, which he defines as “the tendency to attribute to the
liturgy an importance which it does not possess.” Guardini is not the first nor will he be the last
to level this kind of critique on the project of liturgical theology. The claim is based on the
observation that people tend to view liturgy as the source of all theology, at the expense of other
modes and methods of looking at and for theology. It tends to be based on the idea that those

52 See Kavanagh, Elements of Rite, 8.
53 This, as we will see, is due in large part to the fact that most of what the BCP has when it comes to the
question of what to do with the body, is found in the rubrics themselves.
55 We will also see that although rubrics might be weighted differently, rubrics in the Episcopal Church
seem to have to hold a higher value than in other traditions, again because so little is actually written down.
56 Romano Guardini, “Some Dangers of the Liturgical Reform” in Unto the Altar: The Practice of Catholic
who look to the liturgy look primarily to the rubrics and fall into some form of legalism that does not, at the end of the day, allow God to speak. Ultimately, the concern is that the rubrics themselves become God. Remember what was already discussed about liturgical theology allowing space for the Spirit to check our liturgical understanding? This is the ultimate response to these sorts of claims. Do people get tunnel vision with the liturgy? Do they fall victim to legalism and forget that this is ultimately the work of God in the lives of people? Yes. It also means they did liturgy wrong.  

Those are the two main general objections to this sort of inquiry—downplaying of the importance of rubrics, and exaggeration of their bearing—and with them identified, we can look to more specifically Anglican/Episcopal objections and areas of concern. The first will be based very much on the same basic idea that we just looked at in considering the dangers of exaggeration, the idea that there might be better ways to express truth in theology than just liturgically. While granting that theology can be and is found in liturgy, John Rodgers argues that “the church has never been content to make the liturgy the sole bearer, or even the primary bearer, of its doctrinal teaching.”

Rodgers’ argument is based on a claim that gives the Thirty-Nine Articles more doctrinal authority than the liturgy. “While the Articles and The Book of Common Prayer agree theologically, the Articles provide a more precise interpretation of Christian doctrine than the less precisely worded liturgies and hymnody do.” It should be noted right from the outset that Rodgers is not saying that the liturgy is a place of incorrect theology, nor is he saying that correct theology cannot be gleaned from the liturgy. Rather, he is saying that the liturgy is messy and

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57 It is important to note the concern of Guardini and others that we do not go too far the other direction and abandon the rubrics, the catch is to ascribe proper place and import to them. The liturgy, including the rubrics, must work to serve and show God, not become gods themselves.


open to more breadth of interpretation; it is less precise than the clear dogmatic statements of the Articles. For Rodgers the liturgy toes the same theological line as the Thirty-Nine Articles, the Articles are just more “to the point”. Given that, the argument goes, one ought to prefer the clearer and more precise Articles when looking for the theology of the church.

The simple response to this is that he may have a point, but only when the Articles speak to a specific theology. The Articles do not by any means exhaust doctrinal matters for Episcopalians, although they do identify various regulative principles, such as the role of Scripture and tradition and therefore the liturgical expression of the Church cannot be contrary to what is expressed in the Articles. But try finding a theology about burials in the Thirty-Nine Articles, or marriages, or confirmation. The best the Articles can come up with is that those are not Sacraments of the Gospel. However, they are still important and still exist as theological expression and there is a liturgy for them in the Book of Common Prayer, which “rites and ceremonies” are left to the decision of the Church, although the Church cannot require something liturgically that is forbidden in scripture (Article 20 of the 39). The Articles do not provide any more guidance and so we would be forced to turn elsewhere. Further, the Articles do not tell us the whole story when it comes to a theology. They are a clear product and reflection of their time and place. That is not to say that they do not matter nor that they should not be an important guard for theology. It is to say that most people currently do not believe in the scriptural authority for the powers of kings (or queens), nor the need to punish dissenters with the sword.60 While Rodgers is correct in claiming that the Articles do embody some theology, it is not the be all and end all of the theological outlook of any Anglican Church. Quoting Massey Shepherd, Leonel Mitchell offers the following insight:

It should be born in mind that the Articles do not profess to be, anymore than the Creeds, a full and complete statement of the doctrine of Anglicanism, but like all such

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60 See Article 38.
standards they deal only with those points that were in
dispute at the time of formulation.\textsuperscript{61}

Further to this point, Mitchell, still quoting Shepherd, argues that while the 39 Articles
express a theology that is still at work, they must be viewed through the eyes of \textit{The Book of
Common Prayer} and this tells us as much about the prayer book as it does the place of the
Articles:

\begin{quote}
It is important to remember that the doctrine of the
Anglican communion [sic] is enshrined in the Prayer Book
as a whole. The Articles should be interpreted in the light
of the teaching of the entire Prayer Book. They are not a
norm by which the rest of the Prayer Book must of
necessity be judged and explained.\textsuperscript{62}
\end{quote}

The Articles can and do provide guidance when it comes to theological claims. Much like
the Creeds, theological statements cannot contradict them. However, they are not complete
theological statements and are thus limited. Therefore, the liturgy must be the check on our
theological claims, not the Articles.

However, the Articles do not make it quite that simple. Article 34 addresses the role of
what we would now call liturgy, and it is something that we must try to address in its specific
concern. The Article titled “Of The Traditions of the Church” opens with a discussion that
Traditions and Ceremonies of the Church should not be something that are understood to be
completely uniform across people and space; the Church should not violate the word of God, but
its traditions and ceremonies can take many forms. The Article also notes however that
established Traditions and Ceremonies must be respected if they are not repugnant to the word of
God. It ends with the following: “Every particular or national Church hath authority to ordain,

\begin{footnotes}
\item[61] Massey H. Shepherd, \textit{The Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary}, (New York: Oxford University
\item[62] Shepherd, \textit{The Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary}, 601, quoted in Mitchell, \textit{Praying Shapes
Believing}, 329.
\end{footnotes}
change, and abolish, Ceremonies or Rites of the Church ordained only by man's authority, so that all things be done to edifying. “The Rites of the Church are changeable. One of the claims that will be made in this thesis is an appeal to the historic way of doing things. However, if this article is to be observed, and on some level, it must be, then it is important to notice that history can only get us so far. For our discussion, however, there is something of more pressing note. The claim is that Ceremonies or Rites of the Church can be changed, but only those made by man’s authority. The concern here is that too much attention will be paid to what men want and not to doing the work of God. As this thesis has at its core a methodological assumption that says the funeral liturgy is a liturgy that expresses a fundamental Biblical truth, it stands to reason that while parts of the rite could be changed, fundamental elements like the inclusion of the body cannot be changed. If they are, it would be a denial of a central doctrine.

There is one final family of issues that could pose a potential problem for this sort of methodology. It is the problem of options. These objections are all based on the fact that in Anglicanism, and even in the Episcopal Church itself, there are choices in the liturgy, and that can throw complications into this thesis.

Andrew Burnham, formally an Anglican bishop, offers a unique view of the problems that can arise when Anglicans attempt to embrace this sort of methodology. He does grant at the outset that not only is the method attractive, it is possible to glean information and theology from it; he just carries a word of caution. He argues however that Anglicans are not confessional in the sense of Lutherans, for example. His point in this claim is much like what we have already made, it is hard for Anglicans to find some external theology to check the liturgy against, aside from Scripture itself. He further grants that one of the issues that arises in an Anglican context is

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63 BCP, 874.
65 Burnham, Heaven and Earth, 2.
that “the lex orandi will not give us much clarity about the lex credendi”.

This is because “to date there is not yet a binding covenant amongst Anglicans about what to believe and how to behave, still less a touchstone of doctrinal authority for the Church of England….” While he is expressly addressing the Church of England, the same basic claim can be made about the totality of the Anglican Communion, and for our purposes today, the Episcopal Church.

It is this claim that makes Burnham fundamentally different from others we have already examined, and is what provides the basis for his critique of the method. While others such as Lee and Sampson look at the Episcopal Church and see in The Book of Common Prayer the ability to “do” liturgical theology precisely because there is no other choice, Burnham argues that the lack of a choice makes the method difficult at best to pull off. Burnham, however, is operating with a different mindset than this paper hopes to adopt. He argues that because there is no method for defining orthodox theology, we will never know if we got the credendi right. This view of the credendi is one that advocates a “one way street” approach to liturgical theology. We do liturgy, we learn from liturgy, we grow in faith and have an encounter with God in the liturgy, but it is always guarded by the “correct” theology. It does not provide a way for the theology to be influenced by the liturgy or by the faith of the people. Dogmatic theology is the safeguard of the liturgy.

The method that this paper proposes is one that allows for a circle. Liturgy helps form theology and dogma, and theology and dogma in turn help form liturgy. Which came first, burial rituals or theology around death and dying? While on the one hand it is absurd to try and separate those two things in a Christian context, with some digging one will find that people have been

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active about the burial of the dead for longer than there has been articulated theology around that action. However, the theology, once it developed, influenced how the dead were buried.

Burnham gives another word of warning when it comes to the method, something that is often forgotten, or at least not paid enough attention: “Another danger is that the _lex orandi_ is sometimes honoured in the breach as much as the observance.”\textsuperscript{68} This is not so much a critique as a warning, one that any scholar of theology in general and of liturgy in particular has to be aware of; just because we have figured out the ‘rules’ doesn’t mean they will be followed. However, given the circular method of liturgy informing doctrine and dogma, and in turn doctrine and dogma informing liturgy, this problem may be less significant for us than it is for Burnham. This paper’s method allows for the needs of the people to have an impact on the liturgy and theology. However, it also serves to give caution regarding the needs of the people. While they need to be listened to, they also need to be tempered and the liturgy and the method allow for that.

The problem that could come of this idea, often called the sense of the faithful, is that this thesis is still making a claim that there is a right, a correct and normative way to do liturgy. Any change to that changes the theology. That change might ultimately prove for the better, but it still changes the theology, or at least has the potential to, which is problematic. The answer is simple but not easy. Liturgical texts serve to bind the expression that is allowed in a ritual, but, as we will see, the rubrics, the liturgy, allow for expression and adaptation that still falls within the prescribed liturgical praxis. This might include music choice, vestment colors, Eucharistic Prayer

\textsuperscript{68} Burnham, _Heaven and Earth_, 3.
choices, reading options, the list can go on. All those options and choices have the ability to fall within the bounds of the liturgy and allow for expression.\(^{69}\)

However, more to Burnham’s point, there is a fear that people will act outside of the norms and liturgy of the church, for example, using an open casket. That action does tell us something theologically, however it is not the theology that the Church wishes to be expressed. We see that the idea, that what people think will shape their theology and expression, is at work here just as it is when the liturgy is done “correctly”. However, it can and does lead to the confusion that we will examine later in this thesis. The way to avoid this pitfall is simple, do not act in contradiction to the prayer book and its rubrics.\(^{70}\)

This idea that there is variety is not without grounding however. *The Book of Common Prayer* itself embodies many differing theologies. This is most clearly seen in the Episcopal Church when there is a Rite One and Rite Two option\(^ {71}\). While many would like to claim that it is just an issue of language, there are times when there is more to it than that. However, this is not the only time it comes up. *The Book of Common Prayer 1979* includes many options. For the Burial Office itself there are three collects for the death of an adult and the option for one more when it is a child that has died. These collects all convey slightly different theologies, that when added with different choices for Eucharistic Prayers, options for the Prayers of the People and any number of other choices, different theologies can and do emerge (the most notable being, is

\(^{69}\) Further, and importantly, the Episcopal Church has a way to change the authorized liturgical texts of the church. It involves consultation and contribution from the faithful.

\(^{70}\) This does not mean that local customs cannot be in play, in fact, as we have seen and will see, because the rubrics and the liturgy of the prayer book are so lax in places, the priest and community must “fill in” the gaps. What this is saying is that those “gaps” cannot be filled by actions that contradict the liturgy. For example, no local custom will trump the rubric for a closed casket.

\(^{71}\) And now the addition of Enriching our Worship as a standard alternative to the *BCP*. 
the Eucharist and all the other prayers at the Funeral being offered for the departed, or is the point of the funeral solely to provide comfort to the living, or can it be both?).

The second difficulty that can arise stems from what we have just discussed, these differing theologies. If the liturgy is truly understood to express the theology of the Church, what can be concluded about the Episcopal Church is that there are multiple theologies and no overarching structure to provide a check on the theology. While many Episcopalians view this as a strength of the “Episcopal System”, it can prove to be problematic when looking to figure out a clear, or at least clearer, theology. Further, just because there is no “official” system in place to check the theology does not mean that people do not try and fill that gap. The theological landscape of the Episcopal Church is filled with people trying to define what the “correct” theology ought to be- and I suppose I am just adding to that pile. This makes the theology dependent on where one looks for answers. In other words, there is no standard set of theological answers readily available and so people tend to “make it up as they go along”.

Lest anyone think that this is a “Henny Penny the sky is falling” moment regarding prayer book choice, the Episcopal Church itself seems to value this sort of fluidity. The Standing Liturgical Commission’s report to the 72\textsuperscript{nd} General Convention in 1997 addressed this issue and showed itself to value the fluidity that can be found in the Episcopal Church. It argued that the 1979 prayer book must not be understood as “perfect and unchangeable”.\footnote{Standing Liturgical Commission, \textit{Report to the 72\textsuperscript{nd} General Convention}, 251. \url{https://www.episcopalarchives.org/e-archives/gc_reports/reports/1997/bb_1997-R021.pdf} [Accessed June 5, 2017]}

While this is something that almost every student of liturgy should take for granted, there is only one perfect liturgy and it is in heaven, the implications drawn from this statement by the commission prove a bit harder to swallow. The Gospel, the Commission argues, doesn’t change, but the world does, and worship is shaped by both. It must “change in order to remain the same”.\footnote{Standing Liturgical Commission, \textit{Report to the 72\textsuperscript{nd} General Convention}, 251-252.} Now things are
getting a bit problematic for the methodology, how much should liturgy change, how much should theology change, to conform to the world, and what is the sameness that change would preserve? The Commission argues that the Church’s self-understanding of itself and its worship is constantly changing. It addresses the idea of corporate prayer, of liturgical prayer, head on by saying: “Corporate liturgical prayer presumes that we can express our knowledge and experience of God. Yet the texts of worship must also acknowledge our limits, that is, that human knowledge of God is partial and finite, that God is hidden as well as revealed.”

The issue here is that SLC seems to be misunderstanding the role of liturgy. Good liturgical theology and methodology does not attempt to say that it fully encapsulates God and our understanding of Him. Liturgy, as we have discussed and will see again, has as a goal to give the people a way to talk about and understand God but also a way to hear and see God speaking back. Reform and adaptation is not a bad thing as our experience of God changes. However, there are some theological truths that can and should be expressed in the liturgy. While we may not know everything about the Resurrection of the Dead, we know some things about it, and those things should be expressed liturgically. Further, the idea that theology and its expression ought to be always changing is not a historically understood idea. Historically, while variation was allowed and welcomed, there were theological truths and that is what this thesis is advocating for. SLC then can and should at best serve as a safeguard from thinking that liturgy ought to be stagnant and that it represents the totality of our knowledge about God. That doesn’t mean however that liturgy ought to be always changing.

This leads us to one final problem that can arise with choice and that is what can be called the paradox of choice. This is what happens when so many choices are given for a liturgy and one of two things happen, both ultimately proving that choice in this case might be nothing more than

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74 Standing Liturgical Commission, Report to the 72nd General Convention, 257.
75 Which is the precursor to SCLM.
an illusion. The first possible problem is that most people don’t actually examine the implications of all their choices and so default to the comfortable. The second problem, which can be caused by the first, is that choice does not always reflect the theology we want it to. As we will see in the coming chapters, there are many options in the 1979 BCP, some of which, when placed together, do not tell a single coherent theological story. Thus, while many value the choices in the BCP, claiming it allows for greater pastoral sensitivity to the time, place, and needs of the community, often, even with the choices, those things are not really considered.

### 3 An Outline: Where are we going and how will we get there?

This thesis hopes to show that bodies matter in a funeral because they show us something fundamentally important about the theological assumptions of the Christian Church, specifically the Episcopal Church. To do this it will first examine this history of the funeral in a Pre-Christian and Christian context in Chapter Two. It will do this by looking at liturgical as well as theological developments. Both the theology and the liturgy matter for the development of the rites themselves. It will therefore allow the reader to see how there is in fact a clear link between theological claims and liturgical expression.

After an examination of the historical events leading up to the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer* the thesis will move to the heart of the matter. It will examine the 1979 prayer book’s funeral rite. There will be an explanation of why Rite Two is being preferred over Rite One, and then it will examine the liturgy itself. This thesis is concerned with the place of the body itself, beginning with the rubrics regarding the body. Chapter Three will look at the rubrics and their context to see what they might allow us to infer about the importance of the body. Next, it will examine the other prayers of the burial office that can have an effect on our understanding of the role of the body, in this world and in the next. Finally, having looked at both of those things, it will extrapolate a theology based on the role of the body. It is here that we can expect to see the
clearest link between a liturgical action, the presence of the body, and prayers and the belief of the Christian Community.

Moving on to Chapter Four, we will examine the implications of what has been gleaned in chapter three. It will look at potential insights that could prove useful going into prayer book revision. There will also be a brief discussion of the role of alternate service books and their burial offices. Ultimately the thesis will make some concluding theological statements on the role and import of the body and it will conclude by asking the basic question “where do we go from here?”
Chapter 2
History: Who we are and how we got here

To study the development of the liturgy of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer is to be
forced to look back not just 37 or 38 years, but more than 2,000 years. The liturgy itself finds its
earliest roots in early pagan Greek and Roman rites for the dead, as well as in Jewish rites from
around the 1st century A.D. The theology expressed in those rites can trace its origins back to the
time before Christ. The goal of this chapter is to provide a brief historical account of theological
and liturgical trends in the Church, starting with its roots in the Jewish and Greco-Roman world
and ending with a discussion on the American Prayer Book up until the current revision. This is
in no way meant to be understood as an exhaustive history or theological overview of the times
and people that will be examined. Rather, it is meant to highlight the liturgical and theological
developments that will be impacting the development of the current rite.

1  Jewish Context

Trying to come up with a “Jewish context” for death and the afterlife is a difficult task.
There was no monolithic understanding among Jews of what happened at death and even
questions of the importance of the body found very different answers.\(^\text{76}\) By the time of Jesus
there are at least three different schools of thought that try to answer the question “what happens
when I die?” They are the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes:

[The Pharisees] believed in the resurrection of the
dead and in an afterlife in which people would be rewarded
or punished according to their actions in this life—as
opposed to the Sadducees, who believed the soul perished
at death, and the Essenes, who believed only in the
immortality of the soul.\(^\text{77}\)

\(^{76}\) Frederick S. Paxton, Christianizing Death: The Creation of a Ritual Process in Early Medieval Europe
\(^{77}\) Michelle Lee-Barnewall, “Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes” in The World of the New Testament:
Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts, Ed. Joel B. Green and Lee Martin McDonald (Grand Rapids, Michigan:
Baker Academic, 2013), 221.
Liturgically, it is made even more difficult because Jewish prayers, which could provide some insight in trends of belief, including ones at the time of and after death, were oral prayers. We do not have early written source material from this time. However, it is clear that early Christian prayer texts were based strongly on what we can understand as Jewish themes.\(^{78}\)

We do have the Hebrew Bible as a source. Looking specifically at Jewish theology around death and the human person/body, as seen in the Hebrew Bible and its theology, the first thing of note is that the death of a person is viewed as a consequence of sin.\(^{79}\) While this seems to be a given throughout the Hebrew Bible, and indeed throughout a majority of Christian thought, much of Jewish thought around death and the body can be seen and understood as developing over time. What follows is a brief accounting.

The earliest theology in the Hebrew Bible is one that operates in a historical setting, not a “suprahistorical nor even an eschatological setting.”\(^{80}\) That is to say the concern was more with the observable here and now, the course of historical memory, and not some potential reality later. It also had the important effect of making the theology much more communal—it was concerned not so much with the history and salvation of a person, but rather with The People, that is the whole people and nation of Israel. In this world life after death was Sheol, “a condition in which there was little differentiation between just and unjust from which there was no escape.”\(^{81}\) As we will see, in many pagan worldviews, the soul and the body were viewed as separate and separable things, and the soul is what gave life/meaning/purpose to the body. However, in a Jewish context, the opposite was held to be true: the conviction was that “no true life was possible without the body, consequently, any existence of the soul separated from the

\(^{78}\) Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 22-23.


\(^{80}\) Dewart, *Death and Resurrection*, 16.

\(^{81}\) Dewart, *Death and Resurrection*, 16.
body (as existence in Sheol was envisioned to be) could be merely a pale shadow of life.\textsuperscript{82} This is why the early theology doesn’t think much about the afterlife; God’s interest in a person was not seen as extending to Sheol, and the person was viewed in many ways as being helpless and trapped. “It is thus imperative to be clear about the theology that underlies the belief in the individual’s return from the underworld in the Hebrew Bible. What these texts affirm is neither a belief in the immortality of the soul nor a doctrine of resurrection.”\textsuperscript{83} The early texts seem to be clear that the state of the person after death was one shadowy existence in Sheol. The soul on its own is not immortal, and any sort of immortality that can be given to an existence in Sheol is neutral in understanding, neither a reward nor a punishment.

The exile of the 6\textsuperscript{th} century B.C., however, led to an increased individualization in theology, a gradual movement away from the primary theological concern being that of the nation over and above each person. With this came the idea that God’s power was in fact able to reach Sheol\textsuperscript{84} and moreover, “gradually it came to be believed that…God would ‘ransom [the] soul from the power of Sheol.’”\textsuperscript{85} From here it is not hard to see a continuation of the soul and the resurrection of the body as being gifts from God in the developing theology.\textsuperscript{86}

On a practical level, we see that trying to pin down exact burial customs is nearly impossible due to the variety of practice and location and custom. However, we can make some basic claims on the importance of burial and what it might have looked like. Put simply, the idea around burial was to get the body in the ground as fast as possible while still being reverent.\textsuperscript{87} This idea that proper burial was a sacred duty, was found all over the Mediterranean world, but is

\textsuperscript{82} Dewart, \textit{Death and Resurrection}, 16.
\textsuperscript{84} Dewart, \textit{Death and Resurrection} 17.
\textsuperscript{85} Dewart, \textit{Death and Resurrection}, 17-18. See Psalm 49:15
\textsuperscript{86} Dewart, \textit{Death and Resurrection}, 24.
seen very clearly in the Jewish context of late antiquity.\textsuperscript{88} There is of course a biblical precedent for the care of the dead and for proper burial of the dead,\textsuperscript{89} care for the righteous, as well as the bodies of defeated foes.\textsuperscript{90} It is also important to note that in this context, even the bodies of executed criminals are due burial.\textsuperscript{91} This is because the first reason for providing proper burial in a Jewish context is that the dead are due a proper burial.

What that proper burial might look like has varied and proves impossible to pin down completely. However, by the time of Jesus in Roman Palestine, we have a clear outline of what a burial might have looked like.\textsuperscript{92} The goal was to bury the body as soon as possible, most often before sunset on the day of death,\textsuperscript{93} and so as soon as death was certain preparation began. Those preparations included closing the eyes of the dead, the washing of the body, the wrapping of the body and then carrying the body in procession to the place of interment.\textsuperscript{94} The immediate family of the deceased would place the dead in the tomb. Then there would often be eulogies and ritual displays of sympathy (what would also be going on in the procession to the tomb).\textsuperscript{95} After the ceremonies at the tomb, the family would still have ritual mourning rites that would last up to a year, at which point the bones of the deceased were collected for secondary burial.\textsuperscript{96} The other main reason for the burial of the dead is “to avoid defilement of the land of Israel.”\textsuperscript{97} This is illustrated in Deuteronomy 21:22-23, which speaks of not leaving the body of a criminal hanging

\textsuperscript{89} See, for example, the care of the burial of Sarah (Gen. 23:4-19)
\textsuperscript{90} See the burial of Saul and his sons, 1 Sam 31:12-13).
\textsuperscript{91} Evans, “Jewish Burial Traditions” 238. This is not unique to the Jewish Tradition, but what is worth keeping in mind from a Jewish and Christian perspective is that the burial of the dead, even the criminal dead, was a religious prescription.
\textsuperscript{92} Some of this will look familiar to practices now and some will look familiar to ancient Greek and Roman practices.
\textsuperscript{94} McCane, \textit{Roll Back the Stone}, 31-32.
\textsuperscript{95} McCane, \textit{Roll Back the Stone}, 37.
\textsuperscript{96} McCane, \textit{Roll Back the Stone}, 38-9.
\textsuperscript{97} Evans, “Jewish Burial Traditions”, 236.
for more than a day because “a hanged man is accursed by God: you shall not defile your land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance.” As further evidence, Craig Evans cites Ezekiel 39:14, 16, “They shall set apart men to pass through the land continually and bury those remaining upon the face of the land, so as to cleanse it…they shall cleanse the land.”

There are some basic themes we can see emerging that will play a role in the development of Christian thought. Death comes about because of sin; it is not, by and large, viewed as a wholly natural process. While death was assured, the afterlife was not. The theology around the afterlife was a developed theology, post-Exile. This doesn’t mean that burials were not happening. If anything, it shows that burial is not dependent on a theology of an afterlife. The body itself was what was important, and dealing with it was both a pious and an urgent matter. Unlike what we will see in the Greco-Roman context, in this Jewish context, the body is just as important for personhood as “breath” of life and therefore, care of it was of paramount importance.

2 Greco-Roman Context

Difficult as it is to pin down a “Jewish” belief about life after death and the importance of the body, it is perhaps even more difficult to pin down a single definitive Greco-Roman understanding of these things.

While making universal claims is problematic, there are a few seemingly normative structures to a Greek funeral: The women were tasked with preparing the body for viewing and burial. The body would be washed, the eyes closed and a coin placed between the teeth of the corpse as payment for Charon. The body was then placed on a bier that was made to look like a bed, with the feet of the body pointing toward the door. Up until this point, the mourning that

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was done was public, ritualized, and loud. Next, before dawn, in a quiet procession, the body would be taken from the home to the place of cremation and or burial.99

Roman funeral practices followed a basic pattern similar to the Greeks’, at least most of the time. In general, there was no ritual preparation for death, but once death occurred the body would be placed on the floor and the eyes and mouth of the corpse closed. The name of the dead was then shouted; this action, known as *conclamatio mortis*, was repeated often throughout the events leading up to final disposal of the dead, in an effort to ensure the dead were really dead. The corpse was then washed, anointed and laid out (often in a white toga or other clothing showing proper rank and/or with a funeral crown). The body was then placed on the couch, with the feet facing the door. Funeral lights were placed around the deceased and kept burning until burial. Grief was understood as a public show of status, and mourners and musicians were hired based on status. The body was then taken to be cremated. However, before cremation a small portion of the body was removed and buried.100

Many early, and modern, Christian practices around burial, look very similar to those outlined above. While Christians would take a very different approach to concepts of the cleanliness of the corpse, and even in its final disposition, when it came to preliminary, practical, concerns, it seems that the Greeks, Romans, and Early Christians, were on similar pages.101

When it comes to how anything that looks like a theology or philosophical framework gets defined on in the Greco-Roman world, we are again contending with a variety of world views, many of them contradictory, and almost all of them embraced by Christians to varying degrees and at varying points in time.

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One thing that does seem to remain constant is that how one dies is as important, if not more so, than what happens after one dies. The prevailing idea was something to the effect of: die well, die with honor, die in control of your body and you would be remembered. Control over one’s body, or at least the appearance of control, was key.

If any sort of summary statement can be made on the relationship of Christianity to Jewish and pagan practices, it seems the best we can do is the following: the early Christians were conscious of the religious tradition they adhered to, that is the say the Jewish tradition. The theological grounding for much of the Christian belief about the importance of the body is rooted in this tradition. However, the resurrection of Christ changed everything. Rather than just staying within the currents of Jewish thought, Christian thinkers and theologians had to use the tradition they were coming out of to help explain this new, world-changing event. Christians borrowed structure and language from the pagans. Much of the ritual around Christian burial is indebted, in some way or another, to the pagan world Christianity came in contact with in the Hellenistic diaspora. More than that however, gentile Christians, because they were forced to engage the pagan world they belonged to, often borrowed the language of the pagan philosophers to explain the Jewish and Christian tradition.

3 Paul, the Resurrection, and Spiritual Bodies
Perhaps nothing more clearly shapes Christian theology and thought around the idea of the resurrection of the body/dead than chapter 15 of the First Letter to the Corinthians. While this idea is taken up elsewhere in the New Testament, this text from Paul has been the normative reading in the Anglican Church until the most current Prayer Book revisions. Therefore, it stands in a unique and privileged place when it comes to lending biblical justification to liturgical praxis and theological expression.

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Paul makes it very clear that belief in the resurrection of the dead is not an optional bit of doctrinal understanding, declaring, “Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain.”\textsuperscript{103} He then goes on to argue that yes, in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead arguing that in Christ, all will be made alive. Paul then lays out the order of events: First Christ was raised, then, at Christ’s coming, those “who belong to Christ” will be raised; finally, kingdom is handed over to God the Father, after “he [Christ] has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power…the last enemy to be destroyed is death.”\textsuperscript{104} But what happens to the people who do not belong to Christ? Clearly for Paul, the ones who belong are raised before the end of the world. However, even what that looks like is unclear at best. Are there two resurrections, or one for each group of people that just happen at different times?

As we later examine some theologians we will see how they deal with this question. However, it is worth highlighting now that many Christian traditions would not and still may not provide a church burial for a person who is not a member of the church, or who at least isn’t baptized. This holds true in the Episcopal Church, which until the revisions of 1979 included a rubric in all the prayer books that said that a person must be baptized to be buried out of the church. That said, the question still remains, who is in Christ? Is baptism the marker of being in Christ? Or, perhaps, as the elimination of the rubric about baptism might imply, could we understand the whole of the human race as being in Christ?

Getting to the heart of the matter, at least for the purposes of this thesis, Paul takes up the question of the resurrection of the body in verse 35 to the end of the chapter. “But someone will ask, ‘How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?’ Fool! What you sow

\textsuperscript{103} 1 Corinthians 15:12-14.
\textsuperscript{104} 1 Corinthians 15: 20-26.
does not come to life unless it dies. And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to
be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain.”105 Here we begin to see that things
aren’t as simple as dying and having our current earthly body raised up to heaven on the last day. 
After a short discussion on how each seed has its own body and that not all flesh is alike, Paul 
adds, “There are both heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one 
thing, and that of the earthly is another.”106 This is important because, as Paul will argue, we are 
being raised to heavenly things. If that is true then our earthly bodies have no business in heaven, 
because they are not made for the glory of heaven. It could also mean, and this seems to be the 
line that is taken, that the body is the same but it is changed in some way.

To bring the theological point home, Paul offers a discourse that was heard at every 
Episcopalian funeral until the 1979 Prayer Book:

    So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised 
is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is 
raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a 
physical body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, “The first man, Adam, 
became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the 
spiritual that is first, but the physical, and then the spiritual. There first man was from the 
earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so are those 
who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as 
we have born the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of 
heaven.

    What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the 
kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I will tell you a 
mystery! We will not all die, but we will be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an 
eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised 
imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable body must put on 
imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When this perishable body 
puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is 
written will be fulfilled: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” “Where, O death, is 
your victory? What, O death, is your sting?”107

105 1 Corinthians 15: 35-37.  
106 1 Corinthians 15: 40.  
107 1 Corinthians 15: 42-55.
When reading though this section of Paul, it should come as no surprise that the whole of the Christian tradition seems to be a bit complicated when it comes to looking at and articulating a theology around the resurrection, one of the earliest Christian texts on the matter raises further metaphysical questions it does not answer. We see that the body/flesh is viewed as weak and the spirit as strong. While this in and of itself is not enough to say that the body is of less import, it starts to look that way when combined with the other text about the first man being dust (a body) and the new man being spirit, and the idea of a new, mystical/spiritual body waiting for us at the resurrection. Paul is very clear that our bodies will be changed, but they will survive. This is based on the fact that Jesus’ body was changed. Our mortal and perishable bodies will become immortal and imperishable. As important as all of these claims are, there are two that will have the most lasting impact because they are what everything else is based on. First, death is the enemy, but more than that, death is the conquered enemy. There will be debate on what happens when we die, when it happens, how it happens, and maybe even to whom it happens, but what is not up for debate is that Christ has conquered death. Christ was raised from the dead and because of that all Christians can hope in the future resurrection.

This leads us to point two, that there is going to be a resurrection and it will be bodily. As we have seen, this belief is not a given in the world in which Paul was operating. For Paul, it seems it is not the idea of a body per se that is bad, but rather, that our bodies here on earth need some sort of changing for they are “corruptible”, just as, in his comparison, a seed must die in its body to get its new body. It is important to remember that the resurrection Paul is envisioning is not one where the soul just flees the body, rather, it is a resurrection where the body is transformed.

It is easy to see how there has been confusion and ambiguity within the Christian Church on just what to do about or explain the resurrection. However, it is out of and perhaps because of
that confusion that the theology as expressed in the Prayer Book will come to be. However, before we get there, we need to see how it is we got there. This is in small part because of two reasons, first, the theology around death and dying and the resurrection of the body changes and develops rather quickly and so finding its early footing will prove helpful, and second, because the Episcopal Church is concerned with the early source material of its rites and theology and so that is what we are going to examine. This will allow us to then later see points of convergence and divergence.

4 The Fathers and the Resurrection

It is difficult, if not impossible, to pin down one theology or liturgical tradition of death and dying. However, as we come to look at the Church Fathers, there is a concern, starting from the Apostolic Fathers, around issues of the Resurrection of the Dead/Body/Flesh. What follows is a brief overview of some of the theological points raised by the Fathers, and then a slightly more detailed look at two of them.

In the Apostolic Fathers we see differing opinions on the scope of the resurrection. Will all be raised to be judged, as we see in people like Polycarp and 2 Clement? Or will judgement be first and then only the just be raised, as proposed by the Didache and Ignatius? Further, there were questions over what meaning “body” had. Did it mean a material element, an “organic principle of self-identity,” or did it mean a system of “fully personal life?” In general, however, there is a move in the Apostolic Fathers toward a clearly material understanding of the resurrection. This is often seen as the first in a long line of steps away from Saint Paul and any concept of a spiritualizing of the resurrection.

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108 Dewart, Death and Resurrection, 36-37.
109 Dewart, Death and Resurrection, 37.
110 Dewart, Death and Resurrection, 37.
111 What we are seeing is a move toward a Christian, gentile, unique but still varied, theology.
The Apologists moved beyond questions of basic definitions. Their main concern was to show Greco-Roman society the value and/or credibility of Christian doctrine. There was a concern embedded within this with the “fact and nature of the Christian eschatological hope.” Lest we think however that this was an age of agreement for the writers, they had differing theologies concerning the value of the material world, the relationship between body and soul, and the nature of the eschatological kingdom. Tied into all of these questions was the basic question concerning the nature and meaning of the resurrection.

Francois Boven argues that there is a great deal of diversity in the Early Church’s thoughts on the resurrection of the body and the nature of the soul. He claims that this is because philosophical questions are almost false questions -- they are not what the early church was concerned with, that is salvation and the afterlife. We will first spend some time looking at a 3rd century source in the works of Tertullian. We will then look briefly at a 4th century example in Augustine. This will be done not to give an exhaustive account of the theology of the whole period, or even of these men themselves, but rather to show that there are first trends in the theology that will be carried through (and that pre-date the writers and even Christianity) and that there is a development in the theology.

4.1 Tertullian

Two of the works of Tertullian, *De Resurrectione Carnis* and *De Anima* will provide the grounding for our examination of his theological claims. The two works outline some major objections and responses to claims about the resurrection and the nature of the soul. Further, they highlight a great deal of what will become normative theology in subsequent ages. What makes it

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112 Dewart, *Death and Resurrection*, 57.
113 Dewart, *Death and Resurrection*, 58.
114 Francois Bovan, “The Soul’s Comeback: Immortality and Resurrection in Early Christianity” *Harvard Theological Review* 103:4 (2010), 394. However, these two questions do seem to go together.
particularly enlightening though is that Tertullian goes to great pains to outline the argument, allowing us to see what he is arguing for, but also what he is arguing against.

Ernest Evans summarizes the argument made in *De Resurrectione Carnis*: The soul has a life after death. However, “final reconstitution of the body, with the restoration of the complete personality of body and soul at the end of the world, at Christ’s appearing” is the ultimate end of the soul and the body.\textsuperscript{115}

Tertullian was selective in whom he chose to respond to, but that selection shows us a wide range of current thoughts on the nature of the resurrection.\textsuperscript{116} He argues that as a rule, the general public is unsure and/or inconsistent with how it treats the dead. For example, he says that people show the dead honor by sacrificing to them, but dishonor by cremating them.\textsuperscript{117} We see already that cremation, though common for all ranks, is not a mark of honor. Rather, it is something that shows dishonor to the person by dishonoring of the body. This is important because it shows us that care for the body is of utmost importance.

By way of specific examples, Tertullian objects to three main philosophers or types of philosophy. These will ultimately provide the framework for the answers that he will give in the rest of the work. Epicurus, he argues, says that there is nothing after death. And Seneca the Stoic, according to Tertullian, says that after death all things, even death, will end.\textsuperscript{118} These two arguments rest on claims of nothingness. At some point, all things cease to be. On the other hand, Pythagoras, Empedocles and the Platonists,\textsuperscript{119} believe the soul to be immortal. Further,

\textsuperscript{116} Two other things of note. First, it doesn’t even matter if Tertullian is representing the arguments correctly, because what he is doing is showing how many people understood and still may understand those sorts of arguments. In short, perception of the argument is more important than the actual argument. Second, Tertullian does spend some time looking at Jewish objections and thoughts and teachings. We will not be spending any time looking at it because it has been addressed in other places in this thesis and because he basically ends up saying “they think the same sorts of things the pagans do anyway”.
\textsuperscript{117} Evans, *Tertullian’s Treatise*, xvii.
\textsuperscript{119} He groups them all together.
according to Tertullian, some of them even believe that the soul returns to a new body, a form of reincarnation.\footnote{120} These two basic objections then, either that death leads to nothing or nothingness or that the soul alone is immortal in some way, will form the background for Tertullian’s defense of the bodily resurrection.\footnote{121}

One of the first things that Tertullian is quick to point out is that when God made man, as Genesis 2 shows, man’s body was made even before his soul.\footnote{122} Further, without the flesh the soul cannot do anything. This shows us that the body and soul are so closely united that dividing them seems simply inconceivable. All of this goes to show that since the flesh has dignity by virtue of its creation, why would God, Tertullian asks, destroy it?\footnote{123} Given all of that Tertullian argues that what will be punished or rewarded at the resurrection will in fact be the acts of the body.\footnote{124} Therefore, the soul, because it is non-corporeal, needs the body for judgement, either for the good or for the evil done.\footnote{125} We can see that this has imbedded in it a response to the idea that nothingness is the ultimate end of the human person -- clearly, judgement means there will be something else.

From here Tertullian moves on to a scriptural defense of the resurrection of the dead and shows that the resurrection of the dead really means the resurrection of the body, as the phrase in the Apostles’ Creed will emphasize.\footnote{126} Then, in an effort to address arguments regarding the immortality of the soul, Tertullian argues that Christ testifies to the resurrection of man as body and soul. He does this by showing that man, as soul and body, sinned equally in the garden and

\footnote{120} Although he never uses that word.
\footnote{121} We see echoes of earlier Jewish thought here, the idea that there is no resurrection (think of the Sadducees) and the immortality of the soul (think the Essenes). This goes to show that while there are specific religious and cultural contexts to consider, many of the ideas about the body and soul that we will look at seem to have cross cultural and religious understandings. This is even true when it comes to ideas not just in theory but in practice regarding the care of the dead.
\footnote{122} Evans, Tertullian’s Treatise, xvii, Tertullian, On the Resurrection of the Flesh, chapter 5.
\footnote{123} Evans, Tertullian’s Treatise, xvii, Tertullian, On the Resurrection of the Flesh, chapters 7-9.
\footnote{124} Evans, Tertullian’s Treatise, xvii, Tertullian, On the Resurrection of the Flesh, chapter 15.
\footnote{125} Tertullian, On the Resurrection of the Flesh, chapter 17.
\footnote{126} Tertullian, On the Resurrection of the Flesh, chapter 18.
so it is not just the body that should be held to account. Looking to Luke 19:10, he argues the Christ came to save the lost, that is the whole of man, body and soul.\textsuperscript{127} Ten chapters later he will argue that Paul’s objections when it comes to the flesh, for example in 1 Corinthians 15, are not objections to the flesh as itself, but rather to the works of the flesh.\textsuperscript{128} He expounds on this idea in chapter 50 when he argues that flesh that is corruptible and mortal cannot inherent the Kingdom, but once it is changed, as Saint Paul says it will be, it can. The change, he argues, is not into pure spirit, but rather a bodily change.\textsuperscript{129}

In closing our discussion on this part of Tertullian, we look briefly at the conclusion where he states, “And so the flesh shall rise again, wholly in every man, in its own identity, in its absolute integrity”\textsuperscript{130} and if it is the same body we have now.\textsuperscript{131} For Tertullian, the flesh will be raised and it will be the flesh we have now. Also in this chapter Tertullian compares the union of body and soul to the two natures of Christ. While much can be made of this, for our purposes, all that needs to be said about it is that for Tertullian, even though it may seem at times like he privileges the soul over the body (especially in the next work we will look at), he ultimately holds that the two belong together, that they are what essentially make up man.

The second work of Tertullian that warrants some discussion is his work on the soul, \textit{De anima}.\textsuperscript{132} The soul is understood to “be sprung from the breath of God, immortal, possessing body, having form, simple in its substance, intelligent in its own nature, developing its power in various ways, free in its determinations, subject to be changes of accident, in its faculties

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{127} Tertullian, \textit{On the Resurrection of the Flesh}, chapter 34.
\item \textsuperscript{128} Tertullian, \textit{On the Resurrection of the Flesh}, chapter 46.
\item \textsuperscript{129} Tertullian, \textit{On the Resurrection of the Flesh}, chapter 50.
\item \textsuperscript{130} Tertullian, \textit{On the Resurrection of the Flesh}, \url{http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0316.htm} [accessed January 5, 2017], chapter 63.
\item \textsuperscript{131} Because it is possible to have a new body, different from the one we have on earth, that has its own identity and integrity.
\item \textsuperscript{132} The work itself addresses many specific arguments by specific philosophers. While we will not pay attention to the internal debates Tertullian is having, the underlying claims he makes about the soul are important and will be examined. While his first concern is not to define the soul, he does get to the definition and that shall be our starting point because, as it turns out, discussion of the definition leads to a discussion of the whole argument.
\end{enumerate}
mutable, rational, supreme, endued with an instinct of presentiment, evolved out of one (archetypal soul).” Of note in this definition: The soul came from God. Tertullian even opens the work with a discussion on how the information we have regarding the soul comes not from the philosophers (many of whom he will be arguing with throughout the work), but rather, from God. This also means that the soul was created, that had a beginning; the soul is not uncreated and eternal. The soul is corporeal as proven in the Biblical text of the rich man and Lazarus. Further, he argues that Christ’s descent into Hades, and the going down to free the souls of the Patriarchs, shows that the soul can indeed be touched and helped or not helped. It does seem here that a theology is being created that makes the soul more important than the body -- the body seems to belong to the soul. That means, as we will see again, that the body is important because the soul is housed in the body. This becomes an even stronger claim if we go with Tertullian’s argument that the argument comes from God.

While the soul is different from the body, and in some ways preferred over the body in Tertullian, it was not created first; both body and soul were created together, they go together. Death is understood as the separation, the unnatural separation, of the body from the soul. That separation is only remedied by God when he recalls all souls to their proper body at the resurrection.

Looking over the two works we can draw three important conclusions. First, the body and soul are both created by God. While Tertullian is unclear the order of that creation, --he says

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134 Tertullian, A Treatise on the Soul, chapter 3.
135 Tertullian, A Treatise on the Soul, chapter 1.
136 Tertullian, A Treatise on the Soul, chapter 4. An odd thing might be happening here as well, soul, while crated, does seem to become immortal. In Tertullian and later the idea seems to be that the soul is created but then can live without the body as it awaits the bodily resurrection and then, presumably, does not die.
137 Tertullian, A Treatise on the Soul, chapter 6.
138 Tertullian, A Treatise on the Soul, 27.
139 Tertullian, A Treatise on the Soul, 51.
140 Tertullian, A Treatise on the Soul, 57.
both that they were created at the same time and that the body was created before the soul -- the important thing is that neither the body nor the soul can exist as they are meant to without the other. Therefore, the creation of one seems to call for the creation of the other. It may even be argued that the body and soul were created for each other. The idea is that there aren’t souls waiting for bodies or bodies waiting for souls. There is a soul for a body and they are created to be together.\footnote{That isn’t the argument Tertullian is making, but it seems like a logical outgrowth.}

Second, man is both body and soul. There is no way to separate the soul from the body and to preserve man as he was intended. Therefore, while death is the separation of body and soul, it is not a permanent condition, because, thirdly, the soul and body will be reunited at the resurrection. Even then if we can in some way locate more importance in the soul-as sometimes it can be argued that he does-the soul still needs the body and thus the body is still of paramount importance.\footnote{It might now be worth noting that there seems to be two ways that the body is important. First, it seems that the body can be understood as important because it is the body and it has import all on its own. However, the second argument seems to hold that the body is important because of its relationship with the soul-it is in some way a holder for the soul, a means for the soul to do the work of the soul/person, in short, it could be seen as the shell that holds the soul. That does not mean however that we are going to go down a gnostic path. In this world to say that the body holds the soul is still to say that the body is important because it still has a role to play and, perhaps most importantly, as we will see again and again, because the body is still created good by God-this idea of the goodness of the body because of creation is what ultimately will prevent any real form of Gnosticism or other forms of dualism in this regard.}

These concerns will find further explanation and elucidation as history goes on. We will turn now to Augustine to see how these concerns are dealt with.

4.2 Augustine

Augustine, Boven suggests, gives two arguments for the survival of the person after death, a rational and an affective argument. The rational argues that God can and does join a soul to a body so He can, at the end of time, add a body to a soul.\footnote{Bovan, “The Soul’s Comeback,” 389.} Simply put, the body and the soul need each other because they were created for each other. Here we see again the primacy of God’s creation and the created order of things. Body and soul are joined together in man’s
lifetime and they are what make up the human being. At death, a separation takes place; however, the same God who joined man to his soul in the first place can clearly do it again in the afterlife. While we can see the clear beginnings of a preference for the goodness of the soul over the body, what is nevertheless clear is the idea that the body and the soul will be reunited. We also see clearly the idea that death is a disruption of the natural order of things, that it separates things which ought not to be separated. The resurrection then is not just a nice way for God to make us a person again, but it is a restoration of the natural, God- given order of things.

The affective argument is that Jesus’ resurrection was a physical one and because Christians believe that the resurrection of the dead is prefigured in the resurrection of Jesus, our resurrection too must be physical and bodily.144 This sort of argument can actually be seen to address the issue of how we know God brings us, body and soul, back together. There is something special about the union of our body and soul. Without that union, we are in some very fundamental way incomplete. The pattern of Jesus’ resurrection shows us that while we may observe that the body is in the ground, at some point there will be a rejoining of body and soul. In Augustine we see a development of what Tertullian laid out, but great care is also taken to show the primacy of God’s action. God acts in us to join our bodies and souls, and in the resurrection of Jesus, and in the pattern that Jesus’ resurrection becomes for us. Man is body and soul because that is how we were and are created to be and so, God, in response to the seemingly final act of separation at death, will rejoin the body and soul at the resurrection. What is becoming apparent is the importance of the soul and the theology around its immortality.

In The City of God, Augustine takes what could be viewed as a different view. Augustine takes up the question on the necessity of a burial. He situates the question by reminding his readers that “Further still, we are reminded that in such a carnage as then occurred, the bodies

144 Bovan, “The Soul’s Comeback.”, 389.
could not even be buried”. He is speaking of the specific circumstances when Christians are being martyred for their faith-while we can and will draw general conclusions from his claims, this context is important. He is not saying that what he is proposing ought to be a universal standard, in fact, his argument depends on acknowledging the importance of the body, rather, he is addressing a unique pastoral situation.

To address the question, Augustine reminds his reader that the faithful have been assured that “not a hair of their head shall perish, and that, therefore, though they even be devoured by beasts, their blessed resurrection will not herby by hindered.” He bases this claim on the words of Jesus in Luke, 12, “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul”. He argues that Christ would not have said that if the state of one’s soul was dependent on what happened to the body after death. In this context then, that was a real and present concern for Augustine and the Christians of his time, the burial of the body is not necessary for the salvation of the soul. “Nevertheless” Augustine continues, “the bodies of the dead are not on this account to be despised and left unburied; least of all the bodies of the righteous and faithful, which have been used by the Holy Ghost as His organs and instruments for all good works”. This is because “the body is not an extraneous organ or aid, but a part of man’s very nature”.

Augustine’s argument that if the body is not buried, the soul will not be harmed, can only come from a premise that bodies, on a whole, ought to be buried. In one set of circumstances, that is martyrdom, a body is unable to be buried and that is “okay”. However, Augustine himself is quick to point out that the burial of the body is still a good, and one that ought to be pursued. While it may seem that Augustine is saying that funerals do not need a body, or at least a soul doesn’t need a funeral, what he is actually saying is that martyrdom is such a unique

146 Augustine, The City of God, 16-17.
147 Augustine, The City of God, 18.
148 Augustine, The City of God, 18.
circumstance that God does not hold it against the dead. However, in general, for most people, most of the time, burial is something that ought to happen.

We see that there is still continuity in the theology of Augustine. To say that the body does not need to be buried, does not mean that God will not somehow resurrect the body at a later date and join it with the soul. In fact, what we see is Augustine holding to the idea that the body and soul do in fact separate and that God, at the final Resurrection, will “put it back together”. The theological claim of this thesis is not diminished—bodies and souls belong together and to act in a way that does not advance that theology is problematic. What Augustine gives us then is a way to take pastoral considerations into account. While he is only dealing with a very specific circumstance, he does show that God is bigger than our human failings, and that, when the body is not able to be present God can work it out.149

What we have seen in looking at these early theologians is that there is a clear development of the theology and of the theological concerns that they have. How then does development of theology actually work? We will turn in a moment to look at liturgical expressions of the theology and will examine this question again, but we have to ask first how development works in a theological system. If the claim really is to be believed that there are certain truths in the theological world about the nature of the Resurrection, both of the body and of Christ, then how can we advocate a developing theology? The answer is actually quite simple and one that we have already hinted at. Theology can develop, but development doesn’t always mean change. It means that new concerns arise and will be dealt with, but that the underlying true theological claims, remain the same. In other words, development can add to the theological

149 It is important to remember though that Augustine and this thesis are assuming that the body is absent because it has been destroyed, its presence is not optionally excluded, it is no longer possible.
understanding, but it cannot detract from it. Liturgy is the check on theology. It is what helps ensure that the theology is one that is held and expressed by the people but also that the theology is actually taught to the people.

5 The Old Roman Ordo Defunctorum

As this paper is firstly concerned with liturgical developments, we will examine a liturgy that is from this period, the Roman Order of the Dead. This is the first place that we start to see the theological claims being actually understood and expressed. That is not to say that they are consciously using the theologians we have already looked at, but that these theological trends are now being expressed liturgically and being understood as normative. The Order dates to the 4th and 5th centuries, although the manuscripts are younger. It is clearly not just Roman in origin, but it does correspond to what we know of the Roman Church and its burial practices. Frederick Paxton gives the rubrics for the ritual as follows:

1: As soon as they see him [the dying person] approaching death he is to be given communion even if he has eaten that day, because the communion will be his defender and advocate at the resurrection of the just. It will resuscitate him. After the reception of communion, the Gospel accounts of the passion of the Lord are to be read to the sick person by priests or deacons until his soul departs from his body.

2: Immediately after the soul has left the body, the response Subvenite sancti dei is said, followed by the verse Suscipient te Christus and a psalm (In exitu Israel [113] or Dilexi quoniam [114]) with the antiphon Chorus angelorum.

3: Afterward the body is washed and placed on a bier. After it has been placed on the bier and before it is taken from the house, the priest says the antiphon De terra formasti me and a psalm (Dominus regit me [22], Gaudete iusti [32], or Dominus regnavit [92]).

4: The body is carried to the church and placed therein to the accompaniment of psalms and antiphons (e.g., the antiphon Tu iussisti nasci me domine and Psalm 41, Quemadmodum).

5: And when it has been placed in the church everyone should pray for its soul without intermission until the body has been buried. They should chant psalms,

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150 This does not mean that other things do not just fall away and fall out of the tradition.
responses, and lessons from the book of Job. The vigil should be celebrated at the proper hour, but without Alleluia.

6: When the body is placed in the tomb they sing the antiphon *Aperite mihi portas iustitiae* and the psalm *Confitemini* [117].

We see in the rubrics a liturgical expression of much of what we have found in the theological authors and can ultimately help to show what the people might have actually believed. The *Ordo Defunctorum* comes from, as we have said already, a unique understanding of a Christian death. The person is a totality of soul and body that are on the verge of separation at death. Further, and perhaps more importantly when it comes to a discussion of the practical, both the body and soul are taken care of, are treated with respect and concern. So much concern in fact, that the state of both body and soul passing into the next world are given thought and care.

Looking over the rubrics we can see some clear theology developing and being articulated liturgically. We see old idea that the person should be cared for spiritually as they near death. The fact that rites for the dead start out as rites for the sick and the dying prefigure the need that comes to the forefront in the Middle Ages that good preparation for death is optimal. That is to say that the dying person, or even the person long before death, ought to be concerned with the state of their soul. The idea and the hope is not to die without the rites of the church because those rites were seen as vital for the state of the soul after death. We see the theology expressed at death, the soul leaves the body -- this separation is something that the philosophers and theologians spoke of, and now we see it expressed liturgically. However, with the soul’s departure, we also see the use of prayers and psalms that show that the soul needs help

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152 Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 44.
153 We see this idea clearly in the reception of Communion and in what will become more normative, death bed confessions.
making its way to the next world. This goes with the careful preparation that is seen as the person is getting ready to die.

While we aren’t getting a clear articulation of what happens to the soul after it leaves the body, we do learn some things about the soul. We learn that that is something that can be affected by the prayers of the people gathered around it, and maybe not even so close to it. Further, it is not a hard conclusion to draw that the soul can be affected by the life led by the body. This, as we have seen, is an idea that is found at least by the time of Tertullian, and is in the process of being liturgically codified.

All of that said, there is still a clear need to take care of the body. The body is washed in the home, before it is taken to the church. This custom predates Christianity and yet has found a home in the early church. The body then is not just viewed as a vessel of secondary importance, or even as a prison; rather, the body is viewed and treated as something that should be cared for. Worth, then, is ascribed to the body. Further, the presence of the body during the vigil and the prayers for the soul show us that there is still something important about the body -- it is not enough for the soul to be prayed for, the body must be cared for as well.

In summary, we see the same body and soul tensions in the liturgy as we do in the theological books. This should not surprise us. The claim of this thesis is that the theology and the liturgy ought to be reflecting the same things, and so when there is tension in one there ought to be a reflected tension in the other. This could also lead to a conclusion that the theology itself is not quite settled. That the uncertainty means that there are no clear answers on the role of the body and the soul; which is more important; what happens at the resurrection. That uncertainty will not disappear in the liturgy; in fact, it will be amplified. However, it goes to show that even when there is tension and possible uncertainty, basic theological claims around the importance of the body and the resurrection can still be made and understood. We see liturgically and
theological that both the body and soul matter, and that the body is still required. So, while there are still many unanswered questions, the basics seem to be covered.

6 The Middle Ages

The early and mid-12th century saw scholastic writing that “showed an underlying predilection for metaphors of reassembly and of immutability to describe the resurrected and glorified body”.\(^\text{154}\) That is not to say, however, that the seed image of 1 Corinthians and the second century argument that natural changes foreshadowed the resurrection go away. It is to say that the dominant thrust of the conversation had changed, at least for the majority of people.\(^\text{155}\) However, another interesting thing begins to happen in the 12th century and that is that some people begin to argue that the resurrection was not a natural thing at all.\(^\text{156}\) This goes to show that while we will ultimately come out with what is deemed “orthodox” theology, theology does develop and there have always been challenges to the theology.

When it comes to looking at theological trends in the 12th century scholastic accounting of the last things and how they relate to the body, Bynum proposes six things “worth underlining”:

1: The body is necessary for personhood. “A self is not a soul using a body but a psychosomatic entity, to which body is integral.”

2: The accounts assume that the body is flesh.

3: ”There was great anxiety to account for the identity of the original and resurrected body.” That is to say that all the bits of the body had to go back together in the same way and to the same place that they were before death. If not, the body was not the same and thus the person was not the same.

4: Death was understood as the fragmenting of the body into bits. Resurrection then was understood to be the reassembling of those bits.

5: “Organic processes, especially those, such as eating, in which one substance disappeared into another, were both mysterious and threatening.”


\(^{156}\) Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body*, 133-134.
6: “The resurrected body was structurally as well as materially identical with the body of earth.” However, all the defects of the body were repaired. That, however, does not include sex, size or scars of suffering.\textsuperscript{157}

In these six points we can summarize a great deal of early medieval thought on the resurrection of the body. It is worth noting how important the body really was. We have seen that throughout the development of the tradition there has been a tension between the soul and the body. This is not to say that in the Middle Ages that tension disappears -- in fact, it will be picked up in a very important fashion -- but it is to say that the role of the body, at least at this moment in the tradition is very important. This is perhaps most clearly seen and understood when it comes to a discussion on personhood and its necessity at the resurrection. Because a person is defined as body and soul, and because a person is what is resurrected and judged and welcomed into heaven (hopefully), a body is not just a nice addition, keeping the soul warm for its journey. It is an absolute requirement for the journey and judgement. These should also be seen as a continuation and development of the ideas of the Fathers that we have already explored: questions around personhood and a concern with the “realness” of the body, that is to say what it will look like at the resurrection both show a development of theology. To ask these sorts of questions requires a grounding that is provided by the theologians before you. If you are still defending the idea of resurrection, you are not so concerned with what the body looks like heaven. However, because questions like that are being asked, we can assume that the “basic” theological questions are answered and we are seeing the theology progress and develop.

6.1 Thomas Aquinas

Perhaps the best example of a theologian of this Medieval period is Thomas Aquinas. While he is clearly not the only writer of the long period, he does prove to be a great synthesizer

\textsuperscript{157} Bynum, \textit{The Resurrection of the Body}, 135-137.
of other works and thoughts. Further, his attempt to unify, or at least show that there is not an inherent contradiction between the old, Greek, ways of understanding, and the current Christian theological worldview, prove helpful in highlighting where there are points of continuity and discontinuity in the theology.

For our purposes, there are three questions that merit the most attention. First, Part III, Question 53, On the Resurrection of Christ does not, directly address the issues that are at the heart of this thesis. What it does do however is lay the groundwork for claims that will be made on the resurrection of the body. This is seen in Aquinas’ five reasons Christ’s resurrection was necessary, of which two matter for our discussion.

First (which is reason three in Aquinas’ counting), Christ was raised from the dead to “increase our hope.” Christ, simply put, was raised and so we can hope that we will “rise again.” It is common enough to understand Christ’s life as a pattern for how we ought to live, but what Aquinas is reminding the reader is that Christ’s death is a pattern for what happens when we die. While Aquinas himself does not spend much time developing this argument, we can clearly see Saint Paul’s thoughts reflected there. The Christian hope is that just as Christ’s body was raised; so too will our bodies be raised. While Thomas himself does not develop the argument this way, it also works the other way around, in that our belief in the bodily resurrection leads to and shows our belief in the resurrection of Christ. If we do not believe that our bodies will be resurrected, there would be no reason for Christ to be resurrected, so, doubting one calls into question the other.

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159 See Romans 8:10-11 and Romans 6:4.
This thought gets developed a bit more in the second argument (or reason four in Aquinas), Christ was raised from the dead “for instruction in the lives of the faithful.”160 Looking at Romans 6:4 Aquinas argues that we know that Christ was raised from the dead and will never die, and so we must also know we are dead to sin. That being the case, given the previous discussion about Christian hope, we know that if we are dead to sin we will be alive in Christ.

There are three main affirmations that come out of this section that are important to us. First is the idea that Christ did in fact have a bodily resurrection. While this is a given for Aquinas, historically it was not always and even when it was, it was not always the point of emphasis in the theology. That said, we can also see how this argument itself, that we hope in our resurrection because of Christ’s resurrection, is present in the arguments of Augustine. Nevertheless, even making a claim that the resurrection happened is an important first step. More than that however, Christ’s resurrection was a bodily resurrection. This claim will help protect against claims of dualism later. Christ’s very body was good enough to merit entrance into heaven, holes and all.161

Second is the idea that we can understand this bodily resurrection as a first of many, not a unique incident. Christ’s bodily resurrection is a pattern for what is to come for us. This idea of it being a pattern will bear much fruit in discussions of what the resurrected body actually looks like. We have already seen that questions such as the age and gender of the resurrected person have been around for almost the whole of the Christian tradition. Further, questions about what happens to a disabled or dismembered body are based around what it is to say that Christ’s bodily resurrection was and is a pattern for our own resurrection: will our bodies be perfected, what does that perfection look like, and other questions that have been around since the time of Saint Paul, are ultimately based on how one understands what it is to say that the resurrection of

160 Aquinas, Summa Theologiae III Treatise on the Incarnation “On Christ’s Resurrection (Four Articles”.
161 See John 20:26-27.
Christ is a pattern for us to follow. What is ultimately important for this thesis, however, is the claim that the body matters and is what is resurrected, based on the pattern of Christ. This leads to the third main idea we see in this section of Aquinas, that we hope that we will follow the pattern of Christ’s resurrection, whatever that pattern may actually be. It isn’t just that we know that some people may be resurrected, it is that we as Christians hope, and make claims on the hope, that we will be as well.

As a brief aside, these claims that we hope to be resurrected after the pattern of Christ, are taken up in Question 56, “On the Resurrection of Christ as Cause.” Here Aquinas lays out that “Christ’s resurrection is the cause of our own through the power of his union with the Word.” In other words, the resurrection of Christ is the “efficient and exemplar cause” of our resurrection.” It is clear therefore, that at least for Thomas, the bodily resurrection is a given.

Second, Question 75 takes up the issue of the nature of the soul. In sections one and two Aquinas lays out just what a soul is. The soul is the primary principle of life; it is not a body “but that which actuates a body.” Further, the soul is “…something incorporeal and subsisting.” Section four asks the question that matters perhaps the most to us, if the soul is the man. Here Aquinas lays out that “…man is no mere soul, but a compound of soul and body.” So, while the soul might be the thing that actuates, that, if one allows, animates, the body, the human being is more than just soul. There is something in the human person that

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164 Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae Supplement to III Treatise on the Resurrection* Question 75 “On The Resurrection Three Articles”.
165 Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae Supplement to III Treatise on the Resurrection* Question 75 “On The Resurrection Three Articles”.
166 Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae Supplement to III Treatise on the Resurrection* Question 75 “On The Resurrection Three Articles”.
167 Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae Supplement to III Treatise on the Resurrection* Question 75 “On The Resurrection Three Articles”.

requires both body and soul. To further clarify the point, Aquinas states plainly that “the soul has no materiality.”\textsuperscript{168} This is then taken with what he says at the end of the question, in section six, on whether the soul can pass away when he argues that “The human soul, which we regard as an intellective principle, must, of necessity, be held to be incorruptible.”\textsuperscript{169} Before unpacking these claims, we should turn for a moment to the last of the questions we will be taking up, question 76 of section one: “On the Union of Body and Soul.” It is here that Aquinas lays out the importance of the body to the soul. The soul, he argues, is “the formative principle of the body.” However, the soul/intellect is connected to the body.\textsuperscript{170} Lest there be any doubt of the importance of the body, Aquinas offers the following: “It belongs to the very essence of the soul to be united to a body….\textsuperscript{171}

From these two questions we can draw a few important conclusions. First, the soul is in fact the primary principle of life. While Aquinas does not develop this much more, it is not hard to see how theological claims can be made that give priority to the soul because it is the very thing that gives life to the body. Further, it seems to make it impossible to claim that the body and soul are equally essential in the human person. While the soul might need a body, life can only happen when the soul is brought into the picture. In short, we see a recalling here of earlier claims that the soul is what is judged, or at least the reason the body and soul together are judged.

The incorruptibility of the soul also lends itself to arguments that the soul is more important because it is the thing that does not pass away in death. More than that, however, is the

\textsuperscript{168} Aquinas, \textit{Summa Theologiae Supplement to III Treatise on the Resurrection }Question 75 “On The Resurrection Three Articles”.
\textsuperscript{169} Aquinas, \textit{Summa Theologiae Supplement to III Treatise on the Resurrection }Question 75 “On The Resurrection Three Articles”.
\textsuperscript{170} Aquinas, \textit{Summa Theologiae Supplement to III Treatise on the Resurrection }Question 75 “On The Resurrection Three Articles”.
\textsuperscript{171} Thomas Aquinas, \textit{Summa Theologiae I Treatise on Man }Question 76 “Of the Union of Body and Soul (Eight Articles)”, Trans. The Fathers of the English Dominican Province \url{http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/aquinas/summa/sum086.htm} [accessed December 6, 2016].
idea that comes about because the body and soul are viewed as separate. If the body decays and the soul does not, something must happen to the soul before the final judgement and bodily resurrection.

In all of this, we should not lose sight of the claim that Aquinas makes in question 76, the soul needs a body. No matter how much pride of place a theologian or person wants to give the soul, it is fundamentally designed to need a body, and its end can only be fulfilled by being joined to a body. The important claim on this for this thesis is that the bodily resurrection is a necessity because the soul is not meant to be floating around in heaven without a body.

England

We turn our attention now to the more specific context of the Middle Ages in England and how that context later helped shape the Book of Common Prayer. Before continuing on an examination of practice, it is important to note that the practices we have references and knowledge of are based on what is recorded and remembered. That tends to mean then that much of what we know is based on the reality of wealthy and noble burial practices or the practices of the clergy and religious. What this means in practice is that while we might be lucky and find an office book, or some other liturgical text, when we don’t and are dependent on commentaries, those commentaries may not represent what “normal people do”, although they may represent what the Church considered “normal” and “normative.”

This section will focus mainly on events leading up the Reformation, however to get there a few things must be said about the events that came before. As we have already mentioned, the liturgy and burial practices in Christendom, were based in a large part on Roman burial practices, and England was no exception. England itself became Christian in the 4th century with the arrival of Christian Roman troops on the island. Just as importantly though, when the Romans left Britain in 402, they left the Church with no formal and official connection
to Rome. The effect of this is that the Church continued to grow, but not in a way that would be immediately recognizable to Roman Christians. Two events, however, sealed the fate of England and its links back to Rome. The first was the sending of Augustine by Pope Gregory to England in 597. For almost 1,000 years, this event would prove to be the groundwork for a strong relationship between the church in England and the church in Rome. The second event was the Synod of Whitby, the effect of which saw the Latin church in Rome “triumphing” over the Celtic Church that had grown roots in England. However, this is not meant to imply that the Roman church and liturgy instantly or totally supplanted the Celtic; in fact, in true Roman fashion, the Roman liturgy just assimilated much of the Celtic church structure and liturgical elements, making something unique to England. This serves to remind us that while much of the English liturgy can be understood as Roman or Latin, much of it is unique to England itself.

Even within England, there were, as in many other places in the world, local variations and regional hubs of liturgy. In England there emerged three influential liturgical areas, York, Hereford, and Salisbury. Cranmer himself understood that the liturgical practice in England was diverse: “And where heretofore, there hath been great diversitie in saying and synging in churches within this realme: some folowyng Salsbury use, some Herford use, some the use of Bangor, some of Yorke, and some of Lincolne.” However, these rites are still, at their core, understood as variations of Roman or Latin practice.

Those Roman practices were further developed by the Franks between 750 and 850. The 11th and 12th centuries saw the spread of monasticism and thus a standardization of the burial liturgy -- in large part because lay people, wealthy and poor, wanted to be buried like the holy

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175 The Book of Common Prayer-1549: The Preface
men and women.\textsuperscript{176} However, there were changes taking place. By way of example we can look to the use of sack-cloth and ashes. In the early Medieval period the laity were laid down on sack-cloth and ashes in a clear embracing of a monastic tradition. However, by the 13\textsuperscript{th} century this practice was all but completely abandoned.\textsuperscript{177}

Not everything was changing, though, and as we will see, much of the practices going on in the 15\textsuperscript{th} and 16\textsuperscript{th} centuries in England would carry over after the Reformation. Christopher Daniell gives an outline of what a funeral and burial from this period might have looked like,\textsuperscript{178} and when we look over it, we can see that it looks remarkably similar in many ways to what came before it as practice. From Pre-Christian practices, to the Roman Order, while there is development, there is also clear continuity:

- The body of the departed would be brought to the church, in a coffin or shrouded.
- The body was then placed in a hearse (a funeral cart) which would normally be standing before the high altar in the chancel. The mourners did not normally see the shrouded body in the hearse. The hearse itself would have a pall on it which could be colored or decorated with pictures. It would also have lit candles on it.
- Then the office of the dead might be said. If it was used, it was the \textit{Placebo} -- the evensong the day before the funeral.
- During the night, a vigil might be said over the body, which would cost money. Sometimes, however, the wealthy would pay to have someone keep vigil over the poor.
- The \textit{Dirige} -- Matins and Lauds -- would be said in the morning. Sometimes the Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary or the Blessed Trinity would be said.
- After breakfast the Requiem Mass would be said.
- After the Mass the body was usually buried. This would normally be three days after death.

Daniell argues that it seems that with this pattern of events the burial itself was not nearly as important as the last rites and Mass.\textsuperscript{179} This does seem to follow if one looks at the outline above. Burial is a practical concern, to get the body in the ground before it rots and stinks.

\textsuperscript{177} Daniell, \textit{Death and Burial}, 31-2.
\textsuperscript{178} Daniell, \textit{Death and Burial}, 46-49 It is important to remember though that this list is actually an amalgamation of different locations in England. That said, it can be assumed that the basic pattern was followed across the country.
\textsuperscript{179} Daniell, \textit{Death and Burial}, 49.
However, concern for the soul was a much more immediate concern. Looking over the steps from death to burial, it becomes clear that the main concern is not the practical, worldly concern of getting the body into the ground, but the number of Masses and the office being said show that the concern is very otherworldly.

That is not to say, however, that the body was of no importance at all. While there was great concern paid to the soul and ensuring its safe passage into the afterlife, the body still mattered. Practically, the body was never left alone -- it was washed and dressed for burial with great care, and, perhaps most importantly, it was needed for the funeral Mass.

7 The Reformation

There is a great deal that could be said about the Reformation in England and in Europe. Much of the discussion is based on the political forces that lead up to the Reformation. Theological commentary is often based on Eucharistic theology or atonement theology or possibly ecclesiology. While it is true that all of these things can be are wrapped up in the burial office, with the exception of the issue of purgatory, and Eucharistic sacrifices for the dead (which really falls better into a Eucharistic theology discussion), not much was said about the funeral rite itself. In fact, by the time the Book of Common Prayer gets to the funeral rite, it looks like a streamlined version of the Roman Rite. This is because The Book of Common Prayer can be and is often understood as a “synthesis of Reformation and Catholic elements.”  

Given this reality, to understand the impact of the Reformation, it seems reasonable to just dive into the Prayer Books and see what we can see.

7.1 Reformation Prayer Books

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There are a few different ways that the texts can be compared. Because the goal of this section is to show developments and trends in the theology around the soul and the body, we will not be examining each prayer and rubric. This section will examine the theological trends found in each prayer book to show when and where those change and deviate from book to book. The concern will be especially those prayers and rubrics that deal with the body and/or show a developing theology around the body and the soul.

7.2 1549

This is the first prayer book that is written in England following the split from Rome. What is now called *The Ordre for the Buriall of The Dead* looks in many ways like a streamlined funeral from before the Reformation. The point is that, as far as reformations of the prayer book go, this one was not as radical as ones to come.

The very first rubric is one that would not have been a surprise to people before the Reformation, but it is an important one. It says the priest meets the body at the door or at the graveyard. From the very start the body is not optional. This rubric will stay in the books, but its import will become more complicated. However, for this prayer book it seems to hold that the body is a vital part of the burial office. It is also important to note that the welcoming of the body is the first thing that happens. This is a link back to baptism when the body is claimed by the church, it is yet again claiming the body of a member, preparing it again for a journey into new life, yet the name of the person is never uttered during the service.

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182 This is because funeral liturgies are normally conservative and slow to change.

183 The Book of Common Prayer-1549: The Ordre for the Buriall of the Dead

184 While this link is never stated outright, the fact that there are two places where this happens, baptism and funerals, means that we should take seriously that the writers of the liturgy intend a link.

185 This lack of naming can be accounted for by saying there was a strong desire to make sure the rite was not seen as being offered for the dead. However, it is not that hard to see a pattern developing that we will look at later, that the dead are supposed to be known to the church and so they do not need to be named in the same way a person seeking baptism might need to be.
The next rubric that is worth looking at directs the action at the grave. It says that “Corps is made readie to be layed into the earth…” and then gives directions for prayers to be sung. What is important is that the burial of the body in the earth is again not viewed as an option. Further, it is treated with great respect. While it is left unsaid what “made readie” might have been in practice, clearly what we are seeing is that the body is not just to be tossed into the ground and covered with dirt, care is to be taken to prepare it for burial.

As we move to the next few prayers we are going to see that there seems to be a slight tendency for dualism in them, as they treat the soul and body as two different and often opposed things, and in two different ways. This is actually a theology that will come up throughout the course of the prayer books. While the prayers will seem to show a preference for the soul over the body, the very fact that the body is treated with such care and concern shows that it is still of importance. This idea that the body is necessary, in part to correct the potential dualism found in the prayers, is an idea that will find its way all the way down to the 1979 prayer book.

The first prayer that we will look at that shows this dualism is the prayer that is said as the earth is being put on the body once it is placed in the ground. The prayer is a commendation of the soul to God and the body to the ground. It is here that we read the famous line about asking that through Christ, God will “change our vile body, that it may be lyke to his gloriouys body….” While this can and should be read at face value, showing that there is a preference for the soul, at least in some respect, what is actually being requested should be noted as well. This prayer is asking that the body of the departed to be transformed into a glorious and Christ-like body. We see that while the prayer understands that the body and soul are separate things that will be have to come back together at the General Resurrection, the body, while

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186 The Book of Common Prayer-1549: The Ordre for the Buriall of the Dead.
187 Although it is easy enough to read into this the older practices of washing and wrapping the body for burial.
188 The Book of Common Prayer-1549: The Ordre for the Buriall of the Dead.
“vile,” as a rotting and disintegrating corpse, is not all bad. We see here echoes of Paul and the idea that there is a need for transformation. However, as we will see, transformation does not have to make the body unidentifiable, it fact, the body that we receive will be ours, it will just be not gross anymore. It is still a necessary part of the equation. This idea is furthered in the prayer that comes almost immediately after the commendation. This prayer is another form of commendation and so we see this split between soul and body again. However, the prayer also includes a lengthy petition asking God to be merciful and to welcome the departed into the “kingdome prepared for you before the beginning of the worlde.”

We now turn to note now is that there is the option for communion in this liturgy. This means that the Communion Service, the successor to the Requiem Mass for the soul, is now optional, and will disappear from 1552 to 1662. What that means for our purposes is that there is a set of readings and a collect that go with the celebration of Communion. It starts by reminding the people that Jesus is the resurrection and the life and moves quickly to ask that the dead be raised to the life of righteousness. Next, it asks that “at the general resurrection in the laste daie, bothe we and this oure brother departed, receiving agayneoure bodies….” This prayer reminds us that there is a general resurrection and at it we will be reunited with our bodies. The “again” here is worth paying a great deal of attention to. The bodily resurrection, the reunion with our body guaranteed (assuming all other things necessary to get to heaven happen). Also of note is the idea that “our bodies” means that there is a body that belong to us but that doesn’t mean it is exactly the same as the body we have on earth now. This is part of the question about what sort of body we will have at the resurrection. What we can take away from this prayer is the idea that yes, we will have a body, and that somehow that body is ours, we are not handed a random body, but one that goes with us, however that may look.
Looking at the 1549 *Book of Common Prayer* we can draw a few conclusions about the importance of the body. First, we see that it is in no way optional. The body serves as a reminder for all gathered about the importance of the bodily resurrection. It is a real, tangible way to be reminded of the promise of new life that all the prayers speak of. Further, it is a way to ground the people. One of the shifts that does happen at the Reformation is that the prayers, as the reader may have noticed, shift for being just about the departed, to being about those gathered as well. The prayers asking for deliverance are directed at times equally to the living and to the dead. The presence of the body then serves to remind the people in the church what it is they are about -- this is still a burial of the dead, of that dead right there, right in front of you, right now, in the ground. Both the living and the dead are grounded in death.

7.3 1552/9

In these two books, we see that while some things have changed, much has also remained the same. These books present the same burial liturgy and so, for the purposes of this thesis, will be viewed as the same book. One of the things that should be noted from the start is that this is a shortened rite compared to what came before. Many of the psalms have been left out and there is no communion service. While these changes can be accounted for in a number of ways and reflect an overall change in the theological programing of the prayer book, the effect is that it looks much less Catholic. The psalms, which would have been reminiscent of the psalms said for the Office of the Dead in processions, have disappeared and now there is no hint that the Eucharist could be offered for the departed. That said, much has stayed the same when it comes to the importance of the body.

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189 The Book of Common Prayer-1559: The Order for the Buriall of the Dead
[http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/1559/Burial_1559.htm](http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/1559/Burial_1559.htm) [accessed December 6, 2016].
While the earth is being placed on the body we see again a prayer that looks like the one from the last prayer book. The difference is the older of the two, from 1549, is clear that the prayer is not one of commendation of the soul, whereas by 1552/9 we see the line “For asmuche as it hath pleased almightie God of his great mercy to take unto hym selfe the Soule of oure deare brother”\(^{190}\) opening the prayer. This is the prayer that will carry over into the 1662 prayer book. The shift to speaking directly about the soul is important because it shows a clear dualism; the prayer is clearly about recognizing that God has taken the care of the soul and commending the body to the earth. However, again we see the hope of Resurrection featured, again going some way to address the concern that the body does not matter. However, the line about vile bodies is still retained. This is why the body is so important. It contextualizes the idea of the vile body. If the body was totally unredeemable, then it would have no place in the church, yet there it is.

However, the basic idea that was discussed above, the separation of body and soul, the changing of the body, and the ultimate goal of the glorious body, all remain the same. The same thought holds with the inclusion of the only other new prayer. The thing to notice with this prayer is the final line that asks that the departed may find “perfect consummacion and blisse, both in bodye and soule, in thy eternal and everlastyng glory.”\(^{191}\) We see here an explicit and clear reference to the eventual union of body and soul. Perfect bliss in everlasting glory seems to demand that the body and soul are unified. So, while we have prayers that speak to the separation of the soul from our vile bodies, we can clearly see that after death something happens to those bodies and they become necessary yet again.

We see then that while there are some substantive changes to the book, the heart of the matter for this thesis remains the same. Bodies matter, and not just as a practical concern. Bodies

\(^{190}\) The Book of Common Prayer-1559: The Order for the Buriall of the Dead.

\(^{191}\) The Book of Common Prayer-1559: The Order for the Buriall of the Dead.
matter because they help show us and point us toward the resurrection. We see that there is still this historic split between body and soul, and yet we still see that body and its final glorification is the ultimate prayed for goal. Not only is it the prayed for goal, but it seems to be required -- the body needs a soul and the soul needs a body; the only way after death that those two join again is at the Resurrection.

7.4 1662

This final revision of the Church of England, and the prayer book that would be the first for the American colonists, sees some significant reorder and additions that will create a wholly new book. However, as seems to be the theme, much of what it comes down to with a theology around the body and its necessity hasn’t changed.

There is a notable change, however, that will continue long into the American prayer books. It is the provision that the unbaptized, those who are excommunicated, and those who have committed suicide cannot be buried out of the church. Considerable commentary has been given on the effects of this rubric. For this thesis, however, it seems to answer an unspoken question that is first brought out by Saint Paul himself: Who belongs to Christ? With this rubric, we see that only Christians do. This will fall out of favor later, but for the moment seems to stand as a reasonable reading of the rubric. It is also interesting to ponder if this was a rubric that codified what was already an established practice or if it really was establishing new practice.

We see that the order of the content is fairly similar to what came before. It does however add back in some psalmody, not as much as in the first prayer book, but more than what came

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194 As would have been in the case in the majority of the Roman Catholic world’s understanding.
directly before. As far as additions go, aside from the psalms, we see the addition of the Lord’s Prayer and the Grace at the end of the Burial Office itself so it seems very little actually changes.

### 7.5 General Comments and Trends

We have seen that over time, there have been changes and developments in the burial rite itself, around the Eucharist, the procession of the body (and the use of the psalms) and the language around the commendation, from a rite that looks very Catholic to one that finally has come into its own as a liturgy. One thing is clear, however: the body is important and it is not optional. There are questions of dualism at work in the liturgy, but as we have seen, the body tempers those issues. The overarching trend seems to be one that privileges the soul (or at least downplays the body) but also acknowledges the importance of the body at the resurrection of the dead.

### 8 Crossing the Pond: American History and Prayer Books

As with the Reformation much can and has been said about the history of the American prayer books and the Episcopal Church in the United States. While there are some cultural, social and geographical factors that will come into play that will dictate views around death and dying and the role of the body, little needs to be said about the actual development of the prayer book. Given that, we shall just dive into the changes in the prayer books themselves.

#### 8.1 1789

The 1789 prayer book is one that was shaped by the political climate around the American Revolution. There are changes that are made to the book but those changes do not carry over into the burial office. This should come as no surprise, as the Revolution was not fought over the

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importance of the dead, and so there was not a huge theological swing at this point in the burial office.

8.2 1892\textsuperscript{196}

The 1892 book starts out in a very similar fashion to 1798 (and so 1662). The first thing that is added is the Creed. It is worth noting that the Creed is optional,\textsuperscript{197}, but can be included. This is important because it is the in the Apostles’ Creed\textsuperscript{198} that we hear a direct reference to a belief in the resurrection of the body. It is here that we see in no uncertain terms what the faithful are professing to believe. It serves as a check on the liturgy and forces us to ask, “Is the liturgy showing this belief?” as well as “Is the liturgy helping me see that we do believe in the resurrection of the body?” It serves as a reminder about what the resurrection is. We are not talking about the resurrection of the dead person’s soul; we are talking about in a very practical way, the resurrection of the person’s body.

It is also important to remember that this Creed is the baptismal Creed of the Church. It will become very clear as we look at the 1979 prayer book, but the burial office is meant to be understood as the other side of baptism so it makes sense that the symbolism and the prayers mirror that understanding. Just like these promises were made for the departed at their baptism, the church again professes them on behalf of the departed and the community.

From there it follows the same order with some minor additions. At the end of the office some additional prayers are included. These prayers are principally for the whole church gathered. This has been alluded to in previous sections, that one of the things that happens in the prayer books is that the office stops being just about the dead and starts being for all those


\textsuperscript{197} In both the 1789 and the 1892 book it is included.

\textsuperscript{198} While it does not say the Apostles’ Creed is the one that is used in the Office, which is what the Burial of the Dead resembles in many ways, the Creed used is the Apostles’ Creed and so it makes sense that it is also the one that could be used.
gathered together. These prayers then serve as much, if not more, as prayers of petition for the living that they too might be found worthy.

There are two more additions that become important. The first one is a rubric at the end of the Office that allows for the service that should be at the grave to be said in the church. This rubric will carry over into the next two books. What it does is create the potential for the service and burial of the body to be two separate things. It separates what the church does and the burial of the body. It ultimately makes it so that what the church is about when it celebrates the burial office is not, in fact, burial. However, some might be quick to point out that this rubric, like the ones that come after it in later books, uses the word “sometimes” (in later renditions it is “may”). Further, it implies that it is an exception to the norm with the use of the phrase “allowed for weighty cause.” To that though, the argument still stands and perhaps is made even stronger, this is a troubling theology because, it seems to say that some people are “due” the “normal” way of doing things, but that there are options, moments, and people, who aren’t. It sets up two classes of people. Moreover, it causes people to wonder which is the “correct” and normative way to celebrate a funeral and burial. More than that, however, the liturgy is still done at this point with the assumption that there is a body present and that body will go to the grave and that the rites done at the grave are in fact done at the grave. The prayers and the rubrics are written in such a way to make sure that is the story being told. To take the body away from the grave, but to otherwise keep the liturgy the same, does violence to the liturgy and creates an incoherent theological statement. We will examine this claim and its implication in the 1979 prayer book, but keep in mind it is not new to the new book. On further examination, it will show that the body is not always able to be present. However, as will be discussed toward the end of this thesis, that might then show the need for a separate rite altogether and not just adapptions of the burial liturgy.
The second prayer that is added in this book is the one that allows for the burial of the dead at sea. It allows for the same office to be said but includes a new “Sentence of Committal.”. This rubric allows us, and revisers of the Prayer Book, the space to take circumstances into account and to not have a service that is completely unyielding to circumstance and without pastoral merit and consideration. This prayer can be used either when the body has never been recovered or, as has become more normative in later revisions, if the dead wanted to be buried at sea.

8.3 1928

The 1928 book is one that sees some significant changes and reordering, but not at the cost of the theology of the dead. What seems to happen, as an overall trend, is what was alluded to in the 1892 book. There are more prayers for the mourners, for the community, but it is not at the expense of the prayers for the departed. In other words, on a whole it adds but it does not detract.

The rubric about who can be buried from the church has moved to the end of the office and has changed a bit. It no longer provides a list of who may not be buried, but rather says it is for “the faithful departed in Christ”. It also allows for the discretion of the minister to use parts of the office for those who do not fit the bill as a “faithful departed in Christ.” We see here the tension that exists in talking about burial rites -- who is allowed to be buried out of the church. If we actually believe the theology that the liturgy exemplifies, it can be difficult to deny that to people. Further, there is a pastoral reality that not everyone is married to or has family who may be considered “the faithful departed in Christ.” By that understanding, then, the burial office

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199 This is not the only place where this can be seen of course, we see the use of words such as “may”, and “should” both of which allow for variation. What makes this section unique is that it allows for the reality that sometimes the body cannot be buried in the ground. Sometimes bodies are lost or destroyed and this rubric is the start of the realization that there are pastoral considerations when it comes to the body.

becomes perhaps more for the living, a source of comfort for them more than a prayer that tells us something about what the Christian believes about life after death. However, it can also be understood to say that the Christian community doesn’t just affirm that these things that we profess are only for those who believe in them. So, what is the point of the burial office? Is it to display one last time what the dead believed and to pray for them and their loved ones; or, is to display what the community believes to be true for all people, regardless of their belief? Or perhaps it really just is for the mourning to provide them comfort. The fact that there are three different (at least!) possibilities to be read from one rubric that seems to be supported by choices within the book itself, speaks to what will come to fruition in the 1979 book, the problem with choice. When given options, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to maintain a single coherent theological understanding. More than that, it becomes impossible to maintain what this thesis contends is the correct and normative theological understanding.

That said, in 1928 we see that there are still many things in place from prayer books past. The first difference is the inclusion of psalms to be used after the minister and the body have come into the church. The psalms themselves are reminiscent of the processional and office psalms form the old Catholic Masses for the dead. The next significant change comes in the additional options for readings. We will examine these choices in more detail in looking at the 1978 prayer book.

The next changes that warrant a current discussion are the prayers that follow the readings. The first prayer is one that asks God to remember the departed and to welcome the departed into the heavenly kingdom. We don’t see any reference to a body or soul, but rather to the “servant.” This isn’t to say that there are no other prayers that make this distinction, but for

\[\text{\footnote{This also seems to make sense given the rise of the prayers for the living mourners.}}\]
this prayer, we are looking at the whole person. The next prayer is a prayer for those who are mourning.

At the grave we see another set of new prayers that have the potential to change some theological understandings. The first prayer option at the grave, as the body is being prepared, is the prayer that has continued through all the American prayer books (and thus 1662 as well). There is now a second prayer available. It offers a rather explicit reference to the General Resurrection and its link to the Resurrection of Christ. It also shows the spirit/body split that we have seen before. Here we see an example of a new option but one that is not out of line with the theology that the book has been expressing.

As the earth is put on the body at the grave, the prayer that is said is new, but still in the same vein as what has come before. We see here a commendation of the soul, furthering the idea of a soul/body split with the spirit/soul going to God and the body going to the ground. The soul and body are commended to their respective places because of the hope in the Resurrection. We see no reference to vile bodies, but they are called “corruptible”. Of note is not so much the slight change in words, but rather that this is the same prayer that will be used for the burial of dead at sea (with the retraction of the line about committing the body to the ground, “earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust”). This is a clear way to ensure that what is done at sea is not liturgically different from what is done on earth, although the circumstances are different.

The 1928 book also allows for an office for the burial of a child. This is the first book that includes such a thing, and 1979 will follow suit. It is out of the scope of this thesis to look at that liturgy in particular; however, it does seem to show a shift to a burial office that is more geared to those who are mourning. By having an option tailored to children, the liturgy says that they are not required to be treated the same as adults. What this means in liturgical practice is there are now categories of people and the liturgy may serve to sow division, not show unity.
The goal of this chapter was to begin to situate the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer* in a theological and liturgical context. It should be clear by now that liturgy itself changes in many ways, but that, at least regarding the funeral liturgies of the Church, much stays the same. This of course makes it even more important to note and examine changes. Related to this though is the idea that there never was one clear theological understanding of anything regarding death and burial in the Christian tradition. The traditions the Church inherits and builds on are varied, and that has a clear impact on the theological understanding and liturgical expressions of the Church. The next chapter will take us into an examination of the 1979 book itself. It will look at the theological claims being made in the liturgy and recall the groundwork that has been laid in this chapter.
Chapter 3
Here We Are: The Current Book of Common Prayer Liturgy
Limiting Our Scope: Some Context

Before we dive into the Prayer Book burial, it would be prudent to contextualize and limit the scope of some things so that they can help us frame our discussion.

While it is true that we have looked at the historical development of the burial rite, and while that development can and does provide some context for claims made in the funeral liturgy and its theology, it is important to remember that what this thesis is concerned with is how the rite is now. That is to say that while historical development and context is a useful tool, the fundamental claim is that the liturgy, as it is now, is both necessary and sufficient to the understanding of the theology of the Episcopal Church. What this looks like in the practice of this thesis is that while we will look at historical trends and developments, our concern will be with the Prayer Book as it has been received by the Episcopal Church.

That claim, “as it has been received by the Episcopal Church” is almost as problematic though when it comes to this thesis. As will be discussed at the end of the thesis, one of the problems that arises with the streamlining of the Prayer Book is that much is left unsaid and assumed. For example, questions on what vestments are worn during the burial of the dead (or even at different parts of it), the color of the liturgy for the burial, and the role of things such as incense and holy water (to name a few), are all left unsaid. While some of these are more standard in their use (white as the color of the day, and the near guarantee for the presence of holy water), the point is that none of these things, and many others, are prescribed in the rite itself. More than that, each of those things carries theological meaning that can either contribute to or stand in opposition and contrast to the rest of the theology of the rite. What this shows is

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202 But black is still a standard deviation in some places as is purple.
203 If funerals and baptism aren’t linked, what is the point of the white pall or the holy water? If the person is already in heaven and their body doesn’t matter much, what is the point of the holy water? If a funeral is understood as being related to the paschal mystery what happens when the casket it covered in black or purple?
how much is allowed, or possible at least, in the rite itself and that there is no governing customary or ceremonial for the Episcopal Church, just traditions and customs. However, because this thesis cannot take into account every local variation of custom, it will have to depend on what the prayer book says. This is actually not as limiting as it may sound because the prayer book itself is the normative theology of the church and so anything that looks like custom, anything not in the book, is not meant to change the theology in any way.

A word needs to be said about the question of rites in the Burial Office. *The Book of Common Prayer* gives two rites, Rite One and Rite Two. Often the difference is played to be that Rite One uses traditional language and Rite Two uses modern. That is an oversimplification that this thesis does not have the time to address. However, it is important to understand that thesis will be looking only at Rite Two, the burial of an adult. This thesis takes up only Rite Two in the Prayer Book because while there are alternative service books, the *Book of Common Prayer* is the authorized text for the Episcopal Church, and secondly, the language found in Rite Two is the trend in the Episcopal Church.

A few extra words need to be said about the role of rubrics. While this has been discussed before, it needs some repeating in this context. The rubrics in the prayer book, because there are so few of them, are viewed as normative for the theology and thus important. They take on the same weight in this thesis as the rest of the words of the liturgy. Many times, as we will see, they are actually essential in providing theological framing for the book and its prayers and liturgy.

The final brief area of concern that must be mentioned is the issue of pastoral considerations. At the risk of sounding harsh, this thesis does not care about pastoral concerns independent of the liturgy and will always prefer the liturgy over extra pastoral considerations. The fact that the liturgy itself does not allow for many pastoral exceptions is potentially an issue

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204 It is worth remembering and will be shown when this comes up, that the liturgy itself allows for pastoral considerations and variations, for example, burial at sea.
and it will be examined later in the thesis. However, when looking at the liturgy, the thesis comes out in favor of doing the liturgy as it is written and to deviate from that, even if there is a pastoral concern at play, will ultimately harm the theology.

1 Some Background

Following the 1928 revisions to its *Book of Common Prayer*, the Episcopal Church set up the Standing Liturgical Commission (SLC), the idea was that change and reform was going to be an ongoing process that would require a commission to “stay on top of” liturgical scholarship\(^{205}\) and to propose changes relevant to those bits of scholarship. Given that, it seems that the place to look for the reasons for reform and the logic of the book would be the SLC.

In *Prayer Book Studies XV: The Problem and Method of Prayer Book Revision*, SLC argued that liturgies develop and should be responsive to the needs of worshiping congregations. “The recognition of this fact [this idea of responsiveness with an understanding that some law and continuity is a good thing] was a significant factor in the modern revisions of our Prayer book in their ideals of ‘enrichment and flexibility’ that modify in some degree the principle of rigid uniformity.”\(^{206}\) The idea is that the world was and is changing and that the liturgy ought to be responsive to those changes. The question then becomes are these changes really representative of the theology? Or perhaps put a different way, are these changes representative of a new theology and is that new theology really an improvement?

It is important to remember that while the liturgical theology that is held in *Prayer Book Studies* can be and is seen as containing the theological justification for much of the revisions, they do not include the whole of the 1979 book. As an example, *Prayer Book Studies 24*, in its

\(^{205}\) This was in recognition of the changing landscape of the scholarship and of the impact that that scholarship could, would, and did have on the needs to of the church.

publication of the Burial Office, only has one collect (and a second for the death of a child).\textsuperscript{207} There are also differences in the readings that are given for the funeral. It should be noted though that what makes up the final book includes additions, but not subtractions. This allows the claim that theology is still sound, it just could be and is expressed in more ways.\textsuperscript{208} The More Things Change: What is the Point of the Funeral?

This is perhaps \textit{the} question that underpins the whole of this chapter if not the whole of the thesis. Historically, we have seen that the answer is quite simple, the point of the funeral is to get the body in the ground and to commend the departed person to God (and possibly console the mourners). According to the Church of England’s “Introduction to the Second Series of Alternative Services,” a funeral is supposed to do five things. First, it is to reverently dispose of the corpse, second, to commend the departed to God, third, to proclaim “the glory of our risen life in Christ here and hereafter,” fourth, it is to remind us of our own death and judgement, and finally, fifth, it is “to make plain the eternal unity of Christian people, living and departed, in the risen and ascended Christ.”\textsuperscript{209} Paul Sheppy notes that the commission thought about adding something about the role of the funeral to be about consoling the mourners but then thought that that issue could be addressed in the other five points. There are three things of note here that apply across not just the Anglican Communion, but the whole of the Tradition, is that the first concern is dealing with the body, at the end of the day the body needs to be disposed of.\textsuperscript{210} Second is the tension in answering the question of who the funeral is for.\textsuperscript{211} Third is the idea that we are talking about theology and the role of liturgy and that we must not forget that in a funeral,

\textsuperscript{208} In other words, the methodological and theological claims drawn from \textit{Prayer Book Studies}, can and do stand.
\textsuperscript{209} Paul Sheppy, \textit{A Pastoral and Liturgical Theology}, Vol 1 of \textit{Death, Liturgy, and Ritual} (Burlington, VT: Ashgate), 10.
\textsuperscript{210} This is the primary concern of the funeral and one that it has been and is being lost.
\textsuperscript{211} It commends the departed to God, it teaches the living, it consoles the mourning.
even though there are many pastoral considerations, the theological and liturgical proclamations of the church are essential.

This tension is not without a home in the Episcopal Church’s burial liturgy. The Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music in its Report to the 75th General Convention notes that “the service for the Burial of the Dead focuses on the bereaved offering a public gathering in which to lament.”\textsuperscript{212} However, it also notes that “many cultures practice ancient customs like the visitation, or ‘wake’, in which friends of the deceased call on those closest to her or him, praying in the presence of the body and offering consolation…In contrast, the burial liturgy rehearses Christ’s saving work by which death was overcome for us.”\textsuperscript{213} Things get a bit more explicit when it comes to what SLC said in\textit{Prayer Book Studies XIII}. Speaking about the then proposed liturgy, they offer “We have tried to follow the principle that the Office should be designed for the comfort of the living rather than for the benefit of the dead.”\textsuperscript{214} As we will see, however, one of the issues that arises when reading the justification for the rite in\textit{Prayer Book Studies} is that the actual liturgy and the understanding of it did change. One of the things that happened, as we will see, is that the liturgy is not just something for the living, it is also clearly (in places) for the dead. What it seems to envision, and what this thesis argues is the case, is that comfort for the mourning actually happens best when the proper theology of the church is expressed. The question, then, is how does the liturgy do that, and is that all it should do? Put another way, does the theology actually provide comfort, and should that be its primary concern?\textsuperscript{215}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{212} Standing Commission of Liturgy and Music, \textit{Report to the 75th General Convention}, 173.
\item \textsuperscript{213} Standing Commission of Liturgy and Music, \textit{Report to the 75th General Convention}, 192.
\item \textsuperscript{214} The Standing Liturgical Commission of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, \textit{Prayer Book Studies XIII: The Order For The Burial Of The Dead} (New York: The Church Pension Fund, 1959), 4. While it is important to note that this was published before the 1979 Book, and that all it is doing is proposing a new liturgy, that proposal is what became standard, with a few changes. Therefore, it makes sense and follows that the internal logic and reasoning for the proposed liturgy, because it made it into the 1979 Book, is the reasoning, at least in part, for what is now in the Prayer Book.
\item It should also be noted that “comfort” allows for a breadth of understanding. This thesis will argue that comfort can and does come in the form of the liturgical proclamation of the hope and promise of the resurrection.
\item \textsuperscript{215} In other words, did SLC get/create a liturgy to match its theology?
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Office seems then to be understood as something for the living. How the living are understood varies, it can mean just the mourners gathered or it could also be understood to be the whole of the church. But what is “the comfort of the living”? Is the point of a funeral to just provide comforting words to those who need comfort, or is there something more to comforting the mourning? Is it speaking the truth about the theology of the church and the hope in the resurrection? The answer to that question ultimately rests in how the liturgy is understood and what the theology it is expressing is seen to be.

We can answer this question by determining the point of the funeral in a Christian context and finally in a uniquely Episcopalian context “The funeral then is not just a collection of inspiring words said on the occasion of someone’s death. It is, rather, a dramatic event in which the church acts out what it believes to be happening from the perspective of faith.” This is the answer to the question that was asked, indirectly, by *Prayer Book Studies*; this is how the funeral provides comfort to the mourning. It does this by teaching the faith and providing context and meaning. So the question is, what does the church think is happening from the perspective of faith? The answer to this question lies in the book itself; it lies in the liturgy. Therefore, it now makes the most sense to turn to the liturgy itself.

2 At the Time of Death

While it may seem odd in a thesis devoted to talking about what happens when a person has already died to start at the time of death, it is here that we see the first concerns that the Church has for the body of the departed. The 1979 prayer book follows the 1928 book by including a commendation prayer, and adding another. The first is a prayer to be said as the

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217 In other words, the *orandi* leads to the *credendi* which leads to the comfort of the mourning. Right liturgy leads to right theology which leads to comfort.
218 To anticipate the answer though it seems to hold that the mourning are understood to be comforted by given the hope that is promised in and by the Resurrection.
person is dying; the prayer is noted in the 1979 book as *A Commendation at the Time of Death*. This prayer has ancient roots and in its present form is a shortened version of the Sarum commendation prayer.\(^{219}\) The prayer’s opening and closing lines are of interest: “Depart, O Christian soul…may your rest be this day in peace, and your dwelling place in the Paradise of God.”\(^{220}\) What we see is a clear example of the issue dating all the way back to Saint Paul and the early church. The soul of the person is to depart and once it does it, that is the soul, will enter into paradise (or so the hope is). The body plays no role here. The first prayer that the Church offers for the dying is one that is only concerned with the soul. There is no ritual action prescribed by the rubrics to take place around the body, so this prayer, and thus the church at this moment, is solely concerned with the soul.

The next prayer, which is also new in 1928 and continued in the same vein in 1979, is what is called *A Commendatory Prayer*. The prayer itself is also used at the commendation. The prayer was first used in the Sarum rite as a prayer for the soul’s commendation and as the dismissal after the grave side service.\(^{221}\) The first prayer “Into your hands, O merciful Savior…”\(^{222}\) makes no reference to body or soul. It does, however, talk about the departed in very physical terms, “A sheep of your own fold, a lamb of your own flock, a sinner of your own redeeming”. It could be using those terms metaphorically but it wouldn’t seem totally out of line to understand them as talking about the physical person; the root of the first two metaphors is physical. What seems to be the case then is that at best there is uncertainty.\(^{223}\) However, the prayer does ask that God “Receive him into the arms of your mercy, into the blessed rest of everlasting peace, and into the glorious company of the saints in light.”\(^{224}\) This could be read to


\(^{220}\) *The Book of Common Prayer 1979*, 464.

\(^{221}\) Hatchett, *Commentary on the American Prayer Book*, 475.

\(^{222}\) *BCP*, 465.

\(^{223}\) *BCP*, 465.

\(^{224}\) *BCP*, 465.
mean in a physical sense, but it could also just be speaking of the soul. Or perhaps the ambiguity allows a both/and reading. However it is read it is important to note that the body is present though these prayers. So while it may sound like the body is not the concern, the body is unavoidable.

If the question here is one of timing, does the person (either body and soul or just soul) go straight to company of saints or is there some sort of wait time? Is this an immediate resurrection of the soul or is it a prayer that asks for something that will be accomplished later or does it cleverly avoid a decision on those questions. The importance of this for this thesis is that the order of things matters. If there is a split, dual “resurrection” it seems that the soul matters a bit more than the body and that personhood can exist in a fragmented state, as many have supposed. The second prayer that is added for the first time in the 1979 book is the prayer “May his soul, and the souls of all the departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.” Here we see the historic attention to the soul. The “issue” with this prayer is that it stands with the other part of the commendatory prayer and seems to be furthering a theology that only cares about the state of the soul after death.

There is included for the first time, in the Episcopal Church, the option of a Vigil. As we have seen, this idea of the Vigil was normative in pre-Reformation theology and liturgy and it fell away in the books post the Reformation. What is interesting about the Vigil is that it is not required to be a bedside vigil, it can happen completely separate from the dying person. While then physical proximity might be avoided (or might not be), we still see a theology expressed that can prove helpful. We see again references to the departed, not to his/her soul or body. The

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225 It seems it would have to just be of the soul if it were immediate because, while the idea of grandma flying out of the grave might be comical, it is not the best pastoral or theological image.
226 BCP, 465.
227 If we are being chartable, it does seem we could also be talking about bodily resurrection but clearly the soul resurrects first.
228 Hatchett, Commentary on the American Prayer Book, 475.
opening prayer of the Vigil however, seems to make it at least a bit clearer that we are talking in some way about the physical body.\textsuperscript{229} There are references made to physical labor and resting in God’s “Sabbath rest.”\textsuperscript{230} The petitions themselves make reference to washing, hearing, and gazing.\textsuperscript{231} The concluding prayer, however, seems to remove all doubt. “Let his heart and soul now ring out in joy to you…”\textsuperscript{232} While it could be read to have some physicality, this prayer is very much about the soul. That being said, there is a very important note to be made of the closing line of the prayer: “O Lord, the living God, and the God of those live.”\textsuperscript{233} Here we see the very important claim that God is the God of the living. This is, as we have seen, an idea that is found in the Old Testament. However, what has changed is that the soul of the departed is now understood to be alive as well. This Biblical phrase is also important because it helps to couch the discussion of the body. If God is still the God of this person who is now seen as dead, but God can only be the God of the living, then in a fundamental way, this body also has to be living, or have the promise of new life. This is the first inkling of what it means to say that Christ has trampled down and conquered death. This idea is actually a continuation of the start of this concluding prayer “Almighty God, our Father in heaven, before whom live all who die in the Lord…”\textsuperscript{234} This is important because it has the potential to change how we look at dead if we understand them as not dead at all but alive in Christ.\textsuperscript{235}

The final section that we will look at before the actual burial office itself is in fact that last thing that happens to the body before the burial office is said, that is the \textit{Reception of the}
Body. This is a new rite in the 1979 book but clearly is an old idea\textsuperscript{236}, although the fact that it is rubrically prescribed is something that would not be out of place in the pre-Reformation church. It is here that we see the first rubric that deals expressly with the body of the departed: “The following form may be used at whatever time the body is brought to the church.”\textsuperscript{237} This is one of those places where it is interesting to look at the use of the word \textit{may}. As we have seen, so often reference to the body has become optional. However, the rubrics from the outset say it is not. The form is optional, the time the body is brought to the church is optional, but the fact that the body is at some point, in some manner, brought to the church is not. Up until this point we weren’t sure what the role or import of the body is, but here we see for the first time that the body matters or at the very least is a required guest at its own funeral.

There are two prayers at reception, but before they are said the celebrant welcomes the body into the church. As we will see, the funeral liturgy is meant to be understood as both paschal and baptismal. Up until the 1979 prayer book, those looking to be baptized were met at the baptismal font, in practicality, at the entrance of the church. The reception of the body at the door of the church is meant very clearly to harken back to that same action.\textsuperscript{238} The welcoming sentences remind us what it is the church believes: “With faith in Jesus Christ, we receive the body of our brother (sister) \textit{N.} for burial. Let us pray with confidence to God, the Giver of life, that he will raise \textit{him} to perfection in the company of the saints.”\textsuperscript{239} Again we see the idea that God gives life, even to those we think are dead. We also see from the outset a clear idea that the

\textsuperscript{236} There is the idea in the rubrics before that the minister meets the body at the church, what is new is the whole ritual around this being laid out in the book.
\textsuperscript{237} \textit{BCP}, 466.
\textsuperscript{238} The unfortunate fact is that most people now will not understand that link because the 1979 book changed the baptismal liturgy to such an extent as to render it almost unrecognizable to the “old way” in parts of the liturgy.
\textsuperscript{239} \textit{BCP}, 466.
body itself will be raised to “perfection in the company of the saints”. And this clearly suggests a future bodily resurrection. Human personhood is embodied personhood.

The two prayers that are prayed at this point serve to speak to the dual nature of the burial office, there is a prayer for the departed and there is a prayer for the mourners. The first prayer, which is a prayer for the departed, is the same as the final prayer in the litany at the time of death. In fact, it comes right before the commendation prayers that we already looked at. The prayer itself is relatively standard, asking God to deliver the departed from evil and to welcome him/her into eternal life. The prayer for the mourners is a completely new addition to the prayer book, but is based on earlier prayers going back to 1662 and prayers for the sick.²⁴⁰

There is a final set of rubrics before the burial office itself, and with the practicalities of the body in the church:

If the Burial service is not to follow immediately, the body is then brought into the church, during which time a suitable psalm or anthem may be sung or said. Appropriate devotions, such as those appointed for the Vigil on page 465, may follow.

When the order for the Burial of the Dead follows immediately, the service continues on page 469 or 491.

A member of the congregation bearing the lighted Paschal Candle may lead the procession into the church.²⁴¹

Here we see that the body is important and is not optional. The idea is not that the body is brought to the church if it is convenient. The body is brought to the church and then the people

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²⁴⁰ Hatchett, Commentary on the American Prayer Book, 476. This is also why it seems like the claim that the rite is all for and about mourners is not quite correct. Yes, the mourners matter a great deal and this thesis will work out in part how care for the dead is actually caring for the mourning as well, but we see prayers for the living and the dead, at least showing that from early one of the concerns was the dead.

²⁴¹ BCP, 467.
have to figure out what to do with it. There is an idea that goes back before the Reformation that
devotions are offered while sitting with the body. While this is no longer required, the idea still is
present in an optional form. It is also of some note that the body can be brought to the church
before the burial office is to take place. In other words, while there used to be a clear order of
procession, here we can have the body almost take a pit stop in the church before continuing on
its journey. The last rubric discusses the Paschal Candle, and even though we see the word
“may” again, what is clear is that there is some paschal and baptismal link that we are called on
to make in the funeral.242

Throughout the course of this chapter, as we examine sections of the liturgy, we will be
asking three fundamental questions of each section of liturgy, who is the funeral for in this part
of the liturgy? What is the precise theology of resurrection being articulated? And finally, what
does this section say about the body? These three questions will ultimately help shape the
theology we will examine at the end of this chapter.

2.1 Who is the funeral for?

While we haven’t actually gotten to the funeral, the opening rites we have seen are clearly
rites for the dying and the dead. While there are prayers that talk about comforting mourners, the
focus is clearly on the departed, or soon to be departed. More than that in this context for the
most part they seem to be for the soul of the dying. There are sections that can be read as dealing
with the body243 but for the most part the concern here seems to be for the soul of the dying.

2.2 What is the theology of Resurrection?

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242 The body can be seen as participating in its final liturgy- baptism welcomed the new Christian, the
funeral sends them to the next life. Both of these liturgies need the body.
243 For example, the words at the reception of the body.
Here we start to see the confusion and ambiguity that will plague the funeral itself. We clearly see a care taken for the soul. The soul is going to participate in the Resurrection. There is, however, a question of timing. We see though that the body can also be raised.\textsuperscript{244} Fundamental though is the idea that resurrection is the promised hope, it might just be promised to the soul, but it is promised none the less.

2.3 What does this section say about the body?

As we have seen there is a great deal of emphasis put on the soul. However, looking at the Vigil and the Reception of the Body, we can see that the body clearly does matter in this section. More than that, the body is \textit{required}, for the rites of the church. So, while it may not play into a theology of resurrection, at least now, there is something fundamental about the body. We also see an idea that the body is not just the body of a dead person, but rather, the body is still a member of the Body of Christ and thus the Church. That somehow, personhood is located (at least in part) in the body.

3 The Burial Office

3.1 Concerning the Service

Rite Two in the 1979 Prayer Book opens with 9 rubrics that will help frame the action which is to come.\textsuperscript{245} We will examine the ones that have relevance to the discussions around the place of the body in the rite.

The first rubric is one of practicality: “The death of a member of the Church should be reported as soon as possible to, and arrangements for the funeral should be made in consultation with...”

\textsuperscript{244} Seen especially in the words at reception, \textit{BCP}, 466.
\textsuperscript{245} \textit{BCP}, 490.
with, the Minister of the Congregation”. What is important for our study is the idea that the Church still has a role to play in death of a member of the Church. Although people like Lynch and Long (and many others) might argue that the Church has given up her right to be involved in the death of her members, it seems, at least according to the rubrics, that is not the case. This of course makes it all the more difficult when the Church does in fact give those rights up. Nevertheless, the church is saying that there is something unique and important about what the church does in a funeral that needs to be done there, by the Church. If the members of the church give up that right, it is not because the church told them to.

This is further advanced by the second rubric that makes it clear that baptized Christians are “properly buried from the church”. More than that however it also adds that “the service should be held at a time when the congregation has opportunity to be present.” There is something about the Christian person that warrants the Church gathering to burying them. On top of that, it is not just enough to bury them, but the Church is called to participate in that action. What this means is that burial is not just about the dead person. It is not, crassly, about putting them in ground, saying a few prayers for their soul, and moving on to tea and cake. Rather, there is something that is good for the whole people of God to witness. The burial office instructs, the liturgy is a tool, is the primary tool of catechesis.

For that to work and hold true though,

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246 BCP, 490. While there are seemingly contradictory parts of the liturgy when it comes to questions of the importance of membership (are we all members of the body of Christ? Can only church members be buried out of the church? Who are members of the church?) What we see here is the importance of the person to the church. The church wants to have some say and does seem to have stake in what happens to her members and this is a rubric that shows that concern and that stake.
247 Word use here is also interesting to note. A member of the “Church” who has died is reported to the minister of the “Congregation”. It doesn’t take much to see that there is a difference in the understanding of local church building/gathering (the Congregation) and the whole of the Body of Christ. There is no requirement that the departed be a member of the Congregation, at least in this reading. The job of the minister then is to bury to dead, as long as they are part of the Church. This idea actually continues in the second Rubric that talks about Baptized Christians, not just Episcopalians.
248 BCP, 490. We have removed the requirement for baptism but it seems that baptism requires a funeral.
249 BCP, 490.
250 This thesis makes this claim based on claims by people such as Irwin when he argues that liturgy requires engagement with other areas of theology. In doing so, when we participate in liturgy, we are “forced” to
people must be around to be catechized, people must be participating in the liturgy. More that all that however, for our discussion, is it is important to notice that the phrase is “Baptized Christians are properly buried from the church.” Here we see the first reference (other than in the title) to what it is the church is actually setting about to do. It is not saying that the church just say some prayers and get on with it. Rather, it is saying that the role of the Church, which is properly the Church’s, is to bury a person. More than that, it is proper that a Christian person be buried. Something about burial is fundamental not just to the work of the Church, but to the Christian person.

The next rubric is the one that deals specifically with the coffin and its role, at least in part, in the Burial Office: “The coffin is to be closed before the service, and it remains closed thereafter. It is appropriate that it be covered with a pall or other suitable covering.” The rubric that the casket be closed during the service is an ancient tradition that lives on in the 1979 book. First, we again see that the body is supposed to be present at the funeral and may be visible before the service begins. This is not an “if there is casket” sort of rubric, it assumes that the casket is there, it assumes that the body is present at the funeral. The closing of the casket shows a shift in focus. SLC argued that the closed casket and the covering it with something (preferably a pall), “is designed to diminish a curious or morbid or sentimental concern with the body. The use of a pall is also designed to prevent the use of flowers or other inappropriate covering.” We will examine the use of the pall in the following paragraph, but what is important to notice here is that, per the people who wrote the rubric, the casket is closed not for

\[\text{learn from and about other forms of theological expressions. In that way it teaches us about God and basic theological truths that we might not otherwise have access to.}\]

\[\text{251 Emphasis is mine.}\]

\[\text{252 } BCP, \text{ 490.}\]

\[\text{253 Hatchett,} \text{ Commentary on the American Prayer Book,} \text{ 483.}\]

\[\text{254 The Standing Liturgical Commission of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America,} \text{ Prayer Book Studies XIII,} \text{ 4.}\]
any grand theological reason, but for a practical concern of turning inappropriate attention away from the body. More importantly though it is not turning the attention away from the body because it does not matter, but it is worried about a “curious or morbid or sentimental” concern with the body. Simply put, the casket is closed to avoid gawkers. While this could be viewed, and surely is viewed by some as a statement that the body is not as important as this thesis would make it out to be, the question remains then why have the body present at all? With this there can also be a reading that allows for the body to be present – however, closing of the casket signals a shift in emphasis that says the funeral is now no longer about the singular dead person, but rather about some grander theological claims. There is also a potential reading that says the closing of the casket shows a shift of emphasis that now allows for the dead to be viewed as “normal” members of the church. That they are not to be viewed, in this understanding, as the dead over there, in the casket, but rather just as any other person in the church. This reading helps to avoid the gawking at the dead that might happen otherwise. It does not remove them from the church, but it allows them to take their place as members. While this thesis cannot go into depth on ways to read and properly understand the closing of the casket, it does take as true the idea that the closing of the casket is not meant to devalue the body. The body is important and the theological claims the church’s liturgy make depend on having the body. However, there is clearly a shift of emphasis here.

The inclusion of the rubric about the pall is new to the American books, but goes back to a custom that was in the Anglican Church until the mid-19th century. The pall can be understood to show a link to the baptismal garment worn by the newly baptized. In this light we can also see it as an equalizer: coffins can be adorned with many things, or with nothing. They can be made with expensive or inexpensive wood or other materials. The white pall is the physical reminder

of the truth of the theology, that all are equal in the eyes of God and in the Church of the baptized, it is a practical way to avoid status symbols and is theologically a way to recall baptism. As we have seen, it is also practical, allowing “flowers or other inappropriate covering[s]” on the casket\textsuperscript{256} to be avoided.

The final rubric that deals expressly with our concerns is: “It is customary that the celebrant meet the body and go before into the church or towards the grave.”\textsuperscript{257} Of course, we want to know why the custom is important, but what is the custom in the first place? Is it the celebrant meeting the body; the meeting the body at the door; the celebrant leading the body; or the fact that there is a body at all? The contention of this thesis is that whatever the custom is, it cannot be the presence of the body -- the body is required and not just out of custom. This claim is made based on the fact that we have a rubric in the rites for the dying that makes the body’s presence required.\textsuperscript{258} Therefore, while the question of custom still remains unanswered, it is clear that the custom is not about the presence of the body. It is also of note that it seems the church building itself is optional. The rite allows for the service to be graveside, but even with those two options, church or at the grave, what is not optional or for discussion is the body.

3.2 Who is the funeral for?

The funeral, as outlined in the rubrics, is for the living. The question is who is the living? SLC makes it clear that they understand the living to be the mourners. However, as we have explored, there is a clear idea that the funeral is for the whole church, the whole of the people of

\textsuperscript{256} As is the case in many things however, the practical and the theological are linked. The ultimate goal seems to be the ensure visible equality.
\textsuperscript{257} BCP, 490.
\textsuperscript{258} BCP, 467. This is also why the rites for the dying are so important. They help to liturgically situate the dead and help us to see that the space between living and dying, life and death, is not as large as we would like to think. The liturgical importance of that is clear when we see the directives for the dead, the very rubric that will help ground our whole discussion, first finds articulation in the rites of the dying.
There is the idea that funeral is the work the living do, that it doesn’t have much to do with the dead themselves. That idea is seen clearly here. The funeral then is for the living and the dead seem to just be invited to the show.

This claim that the funeral is for the living and the dead is supported by the work of SCL itself. In *Prayer Book Studies* 24, on the Pastoral Offices, it reaffirms the claims made in *Prayer Book Studies* XIII that rites for the departed must glorify God with the Christian faith in eternal life, commend the departed to God, comfort the bereaved, and bear witness “for the benefit of the living to the faith of a Christian community.” This makes sense in light of what we have said about the role of the liturgy. The funeral is for the departed because the prayers commend the departed to God, it is for the living because it provides comfort, and it is for the community because it is instructive.

What does this section say about the body?

While the funeral might not be for the dead, their presence is required, at least according to the rubrics at this point. The body is not an optional part of the funeral, there are rituals that must occur and prayers that must be said. It seems then that the body is important because the body is a member of the body of Christ. If the funeral is not seen to be *for* the dead, it should be understood to be *about* the dead. That said, there is a tension, as seen in SLC’s concern that the body not be gawked at. This highlights what will become a reoccurring uncertainty of what to do

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259 Perhaps, in one theological world view, they, the whole church, are the mourners.
260 The question we will have to answer then is why do the living do it at all?
261 The Standing Commission of the Episcopal Church, *Pastoral Offices: Prayer Book Studies* 24,16
262 We see here a clear, if unintentional, defense on the part of the Episcopal Church, of the claim that liturgy is actually a tool to teach and inform the community. In other words, we see here that the liturgy is understood as having a catechetical element.
with the body in the liturgy. It is important, it needs to be there, but what we are to do with it remains a question.

4 The Burial of the Dead

4.1 The Anthems

The burial office itself opens with the option of saying or singing one of two anthems (or other suitable piece of sung music). The first anthem is one that contains a great deal of familiar imagery. It speaks of Jesus being Resurrection and Life and that there is a promise of eternal life for all those who believe in Him. It speaks of the knowledge that the Redeemer lives that “after my awaking, he will raise me up; and in my body I shall see God.” What we see in the first anthem is a theology that is assured of the Resurrection of Jesus and its effects on the dead, or at least the dead who believe in him. There is then a very clear statement about the dead being raised in their bodies and seeing God. Clearly the resurrection is not meant to be understood merely in some disembodied spiritual way, but rather a very bodily, way. This does force us to ask if there is a problem when the body is not present. Is the theology lessened when the body is not in the room as well?

The second anthem is in many ways simpler and to the point. We see an anthem that is less about the physical body. It is a petition asking God for mercy on the departed. It asks that the dead be spared from the “bitterness of eternal death.” This phrase is rather important in that it implies that God can spare us from eternal death and that death is something we would want to be spared from. So the question is, what is eternal death? There is no answer in the text, but it stands to reason that its opposite is life, or at least sweet eternal death. Either way, it seems

\[263\] BCP, 491.
\[264\] BCP, 492.
to mean that we ask God to help us avoid separation from him because that separation is bitter. Further, it could mean that in that union with God we are not dead, but alive which makes sense in light of claims that God is the God of the living not the dead.

4.2 Who is the funeral for?

It is quite clear in both anthems that the funeral is for the dead. The anthems are both promises and petitions made in the voice of the departed speaking of the assurance of the Resurrection of both Jesus and the dead. This can be seen as providing comfort for the mourners as well by giving hope in the resurrection.

4.3 What is the theology of the Resurrection?

The first anthem is very clear that the resurrection is assured. It speaks first about how Jesus is the Resurrection, of course that means that he was resurrected. It also highlights that the resurrection of the dead, which seems to follow from Jesus’ resurrection, is a bodily resurrection, as his was, though perhaps with a transformed body, as the prayers suggest, not only that, it seems that the resurrection of the body does not fundamentally change the body, this is because of the reference to my body. Now, this could just mean that we have a body in heaven, but it could also be read to mean that we have the body we have now in heaven or it could mean something more in the middle, that we have a transformed body but that it is similar in some way(s) to our current body. Nevertheless, in whatever form it is, the resurrection involves a body.

The second anthem is much less concerned with the idea of resurrection. It does have the possible reading that shows that there is something other than death to look forward to, or to at least ask God to provide, however it does not go much further than that. That being said, the fact that it can be read to ask God to save us from eternal death is still a form of asking for union with
God, which in some form is a resurrection. It is important to note that resurrection, or just salvation from eternal death, does not seem to be assured, it is something that must be petitioned for. This is in stark contrast to the assumption of resurrection made in the first anthem. It seems then that both anthems are talking about or assuming a resurrection. The first anthem is very clear that it will be bodily, the second anthem just seems clear that it is something given by God, not necessarily assured. On some level then it seems to be an issue of style, but there is a different theological trend in the two. They have the same basic conclusions, but anthem one assumes it as a given, while anthem two is a petition requesting or begging for it.

5 The Opening Collects

There are three options for an opening Collect in the 1979 book. The first collect is new to the 1979 Prayer Book, and is also used as the Collect for the Tuesday of Easter. It is a revision of a collect published in Parish Prayers in 1967. While Joe Pewsetter might not make the connection to the collect for the Tuesday in Easter Week, the fact that it is tells us something important about the connection between the Burial Office and Easter, and between Easter and burial of the body. Even if you could not pick out that this is a prayer said elsewhere, the theme is unmistakable. The prayer highlights the benefits of Christ’s resurrection, the presence of Christ with us, and more to the point, the hope of the resurrection that all Christians can hold to. In the context of the burial office itself, this collect reminds the people gathered that the resurrection, in some sort, is assured. That does not mean it is without issue. “Grant” the Collect says, “that your servant, N., being raised with him [Christ], may know the strength of his presence, and rejoice in his eternal glory…” The problem, if there is one, is in the word

265 Hatchett, Commentary on the American Prayer Book, 180.
266 Hatchett, Commentary on the American Prayer Book, 180.
267 BCP, 493.
“being.” That could imply that the raising has already happened. If that were the case, again we are talking about only a spiritual and thus non bodily resurrection, at least at first.268

The second collect first came into the American books in 1928 but is much older. It was the collect in the requiem Mass for a priest, finding a home in the Sarum Missal and in the Gelasian Sacramentary.269 Given that context, the prayer itself makes sense. It is a prayer that is concerned with the forgiveness of the sins of the departed and assumes that those prayers can affect, in some way, the location of the departed in the afterlife. There is talk about the person entering the “land of light and joy”270 and it never mentions the soul or the body, but it also never explicitly references the resurrection, bodily or otherwise. What we are left with then is another collect that can be read either way.271

The final option for the collect is new to the book as well, and new to the Tradition.272 It is the only prayer of the three that references in any real way those who are left behind. In fact, the whole prayer is not about the dead person, but rather about those who are left. In its conclusion, it makes passing reference to what could be understood as a theology of resurrection “Give us faith to see in death the gate of eternal life, so that in quite confidence we may continue our course on earth, until, by your call, we are reunited with those who have gone before…”273 However, the link here is still very weak, we are left not knowing if that means a bodily resurrection or not. This collect in particular is one that is not particular to the funeral. It could easily be read at a memorial service or any time the Church wants to pray for those who mourn

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268 This, of course, is not the only way to read this prayer. It could be read to imply a future but assured rising and that could mean a bodily resurrection. However, the very fact that this collect leaves at least two avenues of theological interpretation, that are in fact very different, speaks to the underlying theological problem with choices and loose theological claims.
270 BCP, 493.
271 However, because of its dating we can assume that it means the soul because that was the primary concern at the time. Nevertheless, the reading allows for either way.
273 BCP, 493.
the departed. Further, the very nature of this prayer calls into question the question “who is the funeral for”. Perhaps this really is the first clear example of writing the dead out of their own funerals.\textsuperscript{274}

After the collects, there is an option for an additional prayer.\textsuperscript{275} This prayer is new to the 1979 Prayer Book and is based on a prayer that was in Services for Trial Use.\textsuperscript{276} This prayer is specifically for those who mourn.\textsuperscript{277} While the idea of a prayer for mourners is lovely and theologically appropriate, we see here an issue around choices. If this prayer was included along with the third collect, it could easily be understood that the burial office is not about the dead at all, but rather about the living and providing them comfort, and this becomes even more of a possibility when the body is no longer present in the funeral at all. Now, one might say that the presence of the body with these prayers would ground it and make the service about the dead as well. This is true but with exceptions. The body, as we will see time and time again in this thesis, does help to ground the theology in a very important way. However, when the words spoken at liturgy do nothing to help that along, the liturgy, the people become confused. The words and actions need to work together and these prayers with a body could lead to confusion. This is because the role of the body would be unclear. The point of the prayers is comfort for the mourning and so the body would have to play a role in that as well, perhaps by providing physiological comfort to the living.

One of the claims made in this thesis is that there is not one, but many, distinct theologies that exist in the 1979 Book of Common Prayer. While choice is sometimes a good thing, many times those choices can and do lead to conflicting and incompatible theological accounts. There

\textsuperscript{274} If what we have seen and will see about the trends in funerals is correct, this should come as no surprise, it is the newest choice and therefore it makes sense that it reflects the time in which it was written.
\textsuperscript{275} \textit{BCP}, 494.
\textsuperscript{276} Hatchett, \textit{Commentary on the American Prayer Book}, 483.
\textsuperscript{277} Again, this should not surprise us, it is new.
are three fundamental questions that we ask after each chunk of the Prayer Book to help us better understand what the theological assumptions it is working with are and what the theological conclusions that could be drawn out are.

5.1 Who is the Funeral for?

By examining the collects, we discovered that there are actually three answers to the question “who is the funeral for”. In the first collect we see that the funeral for the departed. It is asking that God raise the person and that the departed may come to know “eternal glory.” In the second collect, the oldest of the three, we again see this idea that the funeral is for the departed. It is the third collect where we see a change in emphasis that could prove problematic as we continue. The third collect carries with it the idea that funeral is for those who mourn. This is an important shift because it is ultimately a change of focus. The important thing, in the eyes of this collect, is not to take care of the body and/or soul of the departed, but rather to deal gently with those left behind. That is not to say that collects one and two provide no hope and comfort for the living, they just do it in a different way. It can be argued they do it by providing hope in the resurrection and that hope can provide comfort for the living. The question then becomes is collect three providing a strong enough theology to carry the theological needs to the rite?

What we are seeing at this point is that multiple theological understandings are possible. The potential problem is huge. What we see are not necessarily compatible theologies. The question about who the funeral is for can include many people, but once it is limited, as the

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278 Rather than the whole of the church. This is seen in the references to those praying as the person’s family and friends as people that know and love the departed. These references seem to make it clear that the funeral is not in any way a way for the church corporate to mourn, but rather just for those who personally knew the departed. However, it is also possible to see it as meaning that whole church is the family of the departed. This can be seen if one understands the acclimation made at baptism, of the whole community, that acclaims that the people receive the baptized into the household of God (BCP, 308). That could be used to understand that, by virtue of baptism, we are all family in Christ and therefore the whole community/church mourns the departed as family. The fundamental assumption is that the person was baptized, which is not always the case however.
collects are, it becomes possible to have one funeral that reflects one theological understanding, and another that reflects another totally different one.\footnote{Keep in mind that we are now looking at one very important thing going forward, we are looking at selections of the liturgy. It is possible to miss the forest through the trees; one can get so bogged down in looking at small examples that we forget there is a larger story arc at work. While it is important to note the theology at work in each of the sections we look at, we also must keep in mind the greater picture of the whole of the burial office. While it seems like the liturgy might tip one way or the other, we will have to wait and see what theology comes out of the project on a whole, because choices can change everything.}

5.2 What is the Theology of Resurrection?

This is one of places where the three collects seem to be in agreement, or at least not in direct disagreement. They all speak to a resurrection and hold it as an assurance. Further, they all seem ambiguous at best on the concept of a bodily resurrection.\footnote{However, each of the three get there is slightly different ways. In the first collect we see a theology of resurrection that is clearly based on the primacy of the Resurrection of Christ. The dead are raised because Christ was first raised and destroyed death. Any hope of a resurrection is predicated on that fact. It is possible to imply then that the bodily resurrection is a given because Christ’s resurrection is viewed as the pattern by which all other resurrections will be constructed. However, the text itself only speaks to the idea of being raised with Christ. It is unclear if it refers to just the soul or if it is both the soul and body.}

\footnote{Part of the question of “who is the funeral for” can also be answered with the optional prayer that the celebrant can say, following the collects. That prayer is specifically for the mourners. Two things are of note however, first, it is optional so it is possible to not mention the mourners at all, or second, because there is a collect that only mentions mourners, if this prayer gets attached to it, it is still only talking about the mourners.}

\footnote{The accounting for this ambiguity could just be that the liturgy is not wedded to a particular theology, in fact that claim could be made about almost every bit of liturgical ambiguity, that does not, however, do anything to lessen the claim being made (and it may in fact strengthen it) that that ambiguity, whatever its reasons, will cause theological problems later on.}
body and soul. What is clear, however, is that the body and the soul are not raised together. The text speaks of resurrection as something that has already happened “Grant that your servant, N., being raised with him…”\textsuperscript{281} We see that while resurrection is a given, its manner and form are still up for questioning.

The second collect asks for “entrance into the land of light and joy…”\textsuperscript{282} for the departed. Once again we aren’t given insight into how that may occur. We do not know if it is bodily or just the soul when it comes time to be resurrected, if in fact the resurrection has not already happened. The third collect is just as light on the details. It does ask that the living, when they die, be “reunited with those who have gone before.”\textsuperscript{283} Again we see the promise and hope of resurrection, but just what is resurrected is unclear.

In all three collects, we see that there is a lack of clarity on if the resurrection is bodily or just concerns the soul. The concern with this confusion is that they (the collects) set the tone for the rest of the liturgy, they can be understood as providing the introductory theology for the whole the rite. It is easy to see then why the collects need to be clear, and should not be at odds with any of the other theology going forward. The other potential point of confusion comes when a collect is selected that does not reflect the theology that is expressed in the prayers that follow. In other words, the confusion becomes problematic because collects are understood as summative and it becomes possible that that summative statement is not actually summative.

5.3 What do they say about the body?

\textsuperscript{281} BCP, 493. Even that reading however might be giving too much credence to the English language and the force of the word. So, at best, we are left with a possible, but not an absolute, reading.
\textsuperscript{282} BCP, 493.
\textsuperscript{283} BCP, 493.
All three collects, as we have already seen, do not speak to the body in any specific manner. However, they also do not seem to prefer a theology that privileges the soul so as it stands with the three collects, they say nothing about the body. Perhaps here we see the importance of the physical body. While the collects may not speak about the body directly, it is in an unavoidable fact (if the rubrics are being followed), that the body is present when the collect is prayed. Therefore, the collect must be understood in the context of having the body in the church. The body is important because it (the body) will either be resurrected or it provides comfort for the mourning.

5.4 The Readings

Next follows the Liturgy of the Word and specifically the readings. While much can be said on the choice of the readings and the theology they choose to advance, that must be left for another day.\textsuperscript{284} What follows is the potential for a homily. However, the rubric tells us something important. The rubric reads: “Here there may be a homily by the Celebrant, or a member of the family, or a friend.”\textsuperscript{285} At first glance this seems to have nothing to do with the body. However, what is important to notice is who is allowed to give the homily. While having the celebrant give the homily in no way assures that it will not become a personal eulogy, having family or friends give it all but ensures that it will be. The “problem” with the eulogy is that it makes the funeral, at least at that moment, about the departed in a very personal way. This allows a shift from the focus of the funeral being the story of Christian hope for everyone, to a more personalized sort of thing that fails to link itself with the theology that the liturgy is trying to uphold.

\textsuperscript{284} We do in the current prayer book more choices than before. The effect of this is the imagery in the prayers might be lost because it does not connect to a reading or the readings could provide differing theology (which is not always a bad thing, but it needs the liturgy to help put it in context). Of course it could also do none of those things, but again we see the problem of choice.

\textsuperscript{285} BCP 495.
After the homily is the Apostles’ Creed. The rubrics again explain why this Creed is said: “In the assurance of eternal life given at Baptism, let us proclaim our faith and say…”286 The Apostles’ Creed was used historically because the burial office was done in the context of the Office and that Apostles’ Creed was the Creed used then.287 1892 and 1928 in their revisions made the use explicitly permitted until now when it is prescribed.288 Hatchett, and the Prayer Book itself, situate the importance of this Creed in the fact that it is baptismal and paschal in nature.289 However, this is a very important claim made in the Apostles’ Creed, “I believe…the resurrection of the body”290, a core belief embedded in the baptismal creed thus the body is rooted in the funeral and the funeral in baptism. Also, and perhaps most importantly, what we see is that the idea of the resurrection of the body is an article of faith—to deny it is to deny the Christian confession.

There is now an option built into the rite; it can either end with the Lord’s Prayer or it can continue to Communion. The thesis assumes the whole of the Burial Rite will be done because that has become normative. Eucharist celebrations, however, have not always been normative in the Funeral Rite itself and while the history of its inclusion is a thesis unto itself, it is worth remembering that this normative Eucharist is a development in the history of the rite.

6 Prayers of the People

The introduction to the prayer reminds everyone that they are praying to Jesus, who “said “I am the Resurrection and I am Life.”291 The prayer starts out in the context of the Resurrection

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286 BCP, 496.
287 Hatchett, Commentary on the American Prayer Book, 488.
288 Or as prescribed as anything in the 1979 Book is, it still given the introductory rubric that “The Apostle’s Creed may then be said…”
290 BCP, 496.
291 BCP, 497.
of Jesus, serving as a reminder that we all hoping for our own resurrection. It is also worth a side note that the prayer is opened by saying “For our brother (sister) N., let us pray…” At least in theory then all the prayers are for the departed. But as the prayer develops its intent expands. The next two prayers are for mourners, recalling the consolation of Martha and Mary and the weeping at the grave of Lazarus.

The third and fourth petitions potentially get to the meat of the theological question: “You raised the dead to life; give to our brother (sister) eternal life.” And “You promised paradise to the thief who repented; bring our brother (sister) to the joys of heaven.” Here we see that there is a hope in the promise of a resurrection. More than that, the hope of eternal life is directly related to the resurrection of Jesus. This is further supported with the claim made in the next petition, reminding everyone, even Jesus, that paradise, presumably some sort of resurrection, was promised to the thief. In other words, Jesus can make these sorts of promises, he has done it before and we hope he will do it again.

The next two petitions are optional as they focus on Baptism and the reception of Communion, both of which are sacraments that the departed may not have received. The interesting thing is that both these petitions ask for things that are described with language that refers to physical realities. The first, dealing with baptism, asks that the departed be granted “fellowship with all your saints” and the second, which addresses frequent communion asks that

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292 BCP, 497.
293 BCP, 497.
294 Interestingly though the petition is not to ask for the resurrection of the departed, but rather that they be granted eternal life.
295 There is a reading that is not out of the realm of possibilities that say heaven is promised as a guarantee not just as a hope.
296 This may undermine the link to baptism that we have been speaking about because it is not required here. However, after looking at other rubrics we know that the baptized Christian is properly buried from the Church and so the link is still able to be made. If anything what this does is call into question the ability of a non-baptized person to be buried out of the Church because it seems like the liturgy so strongly wants the person to be baptized.
the departed be given “a place at the table in your heavenly kingdom.” While it is easy enough to say that these are meant to be metaphors or analogies, it is also easy enough to read them as speaking to the truth of a physical resurrection. It also leaves open a question of what this means for people who are not baptized or communicants. What is the state of their resurrection? The final petition is again one of comfort for mourners, although it ends with the phrase “let our faith be our consolation, and eternal life our hope.” Again we see the idea that if the faith of a Christian is in the resurrection of Christ and in the promise that we too are assured that resurrection, then this prayer too is showing that resurrection is an important tenet of the burial office.

6.1 Who is the Funeral for?

When looking at the prayers of the people it seems that we can say that ultimately the funeral is for both the mourners and the departed. There are prayers that are for the dead and they speak to the hope of the resurrection, but there are also required prayers that speak solely about consoling the mourners. There is also a question within the prayers of the people on the importance of baptism, whether or not it is required and if it should be referenced. So, if those references are included it seems that the baptism of the person is important.

6.2 What is the theology of Resurrection?

The prayers are opened, as we have seen, by recalling that Jesus said he is the Resurrection and the Life. From the opening then the theology of resurrection in the prayers of the people is rooted in the theology, expression, and full faith in, the resurrection of Jesus. We further see that

\[\text{\textsuperscript{297} BCP, 497.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{298} BCP, 497.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{299} Of the five required petitions, three deal with mourners and two deal with the departed.}\]
while not every petition makes reference to the resurrection, it is a reoccurring theme that, at the very least, opens and closes the petitions.

That being said, there is no clear claim made on the type of resurrection. While, as we have said, there is the potential to read the two optional prayers as promising or at least hoping for a physical resurrection, the fact of the matter is that is not clearly said. More than that, there is some potential to read the reference to the repentant thief as a promise of the soul’s resurrection and maybe not the body’s. At the end of the prayers we are left with the assurance of a theology of resurrection, that the departed will rise with Christ (who has also been raised), the manner in which that happens however is unspecified.

6.3 What do the prayers of the people say about the body?

The answer here gets a bit complicated. The prayers themselves and rubrics make no reference to the body of the departed. However, in all of the petitions there are references made to physical actions, either of Jesus or of the departed; we are to understand the person as embodied, and new life in Christ as embodied. That can be read to show that while the body of the departed is not referenced, the idea of the body is itself not bad. In fact, in the prayers it seems to show that a physical action might be the cause of eternal life. It is not done in a way to ask for forgiveness of the physical action, but rather seems to be embracing the body as an instrument for eternal life.

While the prayers of the people don’t say much about the body, we do see that the departed plays a role in the funeral. Further, we see that the bodily resurrection of Christ plays a framing

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300 “Our bother was washed in Baptism and anointed with the Holy Spirit; give him fellowship with your saints.” “He was nourished with your Body and Blood; grant him a place at the table in your heavenly kingdom.” The person did X physical thing (was washed, was nourished) and because of that physical action the gathered people now ask that eternal life be granted to him.
role in the hope of salvation. All of this leads us to see that finally, the body, while not directly mentioned, is viewed as a good. It seems like it is something that leads to salvation, or at least helps participate in it, but its role in the funeral is not clearly defined.

7 Concluding Prayer

Following the prayers of the people are two options for a concluding prayer. The first option is meant to recall the baptismal nature of the funeral and as such seems to assume baptism on the part of the departed: “Lord Jesus Christ, we commend to you our brother (sister) N., who was reborn by water and the Spirit in Holy Baptism…” This is also a reference to John 3:1-21 and the story of Nicodemus when Christ tells him that no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the spirit. The importance of this allusion is two-fold. First, it talks about the being reborn in the spirit, the change then would only be spiritual, not physical. This makes sense in the context of baptism, but the reference gets a bit murky when it comes to the resurrection, is the only thing that changes and resurrects the spirit because it is the only thing that has been reborn? Should it be understood as it is in Paul’s interpretation, as a transformation? The second thing to notice is what Jesus says to Nicodemus after He explains being born of water and the spirit. It is here we see the claim that the Son of Man will be lifted up and all who believe in Him will have eternal life. Here we see a clear link to the idea of being born again in the spirit and participating with Christ in eternal life. The prayer continues by asking that the person’s death may “recall to us your victory over death…” We see here a common theme, that Christ, by his death, destroyed death forever. Again we are seeing that the fundamental claim is one of the primacy of the resurrection of Christ. We also see a very clear

302 *BCP*, 498.
304 *BCP*, 498.
idea that the dead are viewed as instructive. This is not to say that they should be viewed as
objects, but rather that death itself and how we view and talk about death in a theological and
liturgical context tells us something very important—Christ conquered death.\textsuperscript{305}

The second option for a concluding collect is one that is a bit more general in its theology.
It starts as the opening from the Scottish revision of 1929 and then concludes with words that
become common throughout the funeral, “May his soul and the souls of all the departed, through
the mercy of God, rest in peace.”\textsuperscript{306} There is very little about the resurrection, however, it does
show a concern with just the state of the soul of the departed, nothing more, nothing less.

7.1 Who is the funeral for?

Both collects actually name the departed, so in a very particular way this part of the funeral
at least is for them. The first prayer is, again in a very particular way, for the living mourners and
for the departed. The first collect asks that the death of the departed recall “for us your victory
over death, and be an occasion for us to renew our trust in your Father’s love. Give us, we pray,
the faith to follow where you have led the way…”. In other words, while the first prayer prays
for the departed, it also prays that their death might be a means of grace and salvation for the
living. This could also be easily understood to be a way that the prayers give comfort for the
living and the mourning; what, in a theological sense, is more comforting than the promise of the
resurrection? The second collect is not just for the person the funeral is being said for, but it is
not for the mourners. It is also a prayer for all the departed. So, both prayers are not limited to
the departed, it is just a question of who the other party being prayed for is.

7.2 What is the Theology of Resurrection?

\textsuperscript{305} In other words the liturgy and methodology seem to agree.
The first of the collects is the more unclear of the two. While it can be read to be speaking about a spiritual resurrection, it is more than clear in framing the discussion in light of the resurrection, body and all, of Christ. Further, the biblical allusion it is making speaks of being reborn of spirit but also seeing the Son of Man lifted up, presumably bodily for physical sight. The resurrection then seems dependent on Christ’s resurrection but what that resurrection looks like is a bit unclear. The second prayer makes no reference at all to the resurrection.

7.3 What do they say about the body?

Neither prayer makes reference to the body of the departed. However, the first prayer, in its likening the resurrection of Christ to our resurrection, at least tells us that bodily resurrection is possible and even seemingly probable. It balances this with the idea that there is something spiritual at work as well. Perhaps this really can be viewed as the first prayer that offers a ‘both/and’ view of the bodily resurrection: the body and soul are resurrected. However, for this question the key thing to note is that the body is important and even good by virtue of Christ’s resurrection. However, it is also worth noting that rebirth may primarily be a spiritual process. So, the body could be viewed as taking a back seat to the soul. The second option however removes all doubt; the body takes second place to the soul. There is no need to pray about hope in the resurrection because all we need to do is pray for the eternal rest of the soul. In this prayer the body itself seems to be of no matter, all that matters is the soul.

When looking at these two concluding collects we can see two very different theologies emerge. One allows for a theology that privileges Christ’s resurrection from the dead but uses it as a potential pattern. The other just reminds us that the souls of the departed should be prayed

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307 The inverse could also be held as true too, the idea that body itself did not sin (or didn’t sin on its own) so that the cleansing and the rebirth must be of the thing that caused sin, that is the soul. However, ultimate this view still privileges the soul, albeit in a negative sort of way.
for. The question now becomes are these actually useful concluding prayers for the prayers of the people? What happens when each one is attached? Do they actually serve the goal of collecting all the prayers?

If the first collect is added to the end of the prayers of the people it almost serves as a corrective to some of the potential problems. It highlights the importance of the departed, it further addresses the idea that Christ’s resurrection is the reason for all other resurrections, and provides the baptismal context that the prayers of the people seems to be setting up and desiring.

The addition of the second concluding collect has the potential to be a bit more problematic. It does ensure that the focus returns to the dead person and not just the mourners. However, it shifts the focus away from the possible bodily implications that were drawn out in the prayers of the people and just concerns itself with the spiritual. In other words, it doesn’t seem to follow as well and the theology seems a bit more forced than with the first.

What we see clearly in these two options is the problem with choice. While each of the collects in its own way draws attention back to the departed, they do so in different ways that express a different theological bent and potentially different theological understanding. This becomes more problematic when we remember where these collects are found. They come after the prayers of the people and are intended to function as a summative statement. When there are two different choices then we see that there is a potential for more than just a shift or change of emphasis.

8 Communion
By the 1979 Prayer Book, Communion, while not required, seems more of a given.\textsuperscript{308} The Eucharist itself is the same as any other Eucharist. However, it does have a Proper Preface that proves helpful for our discussion: “Through Jesus Christ our Lord; who rose victorious from the dead, and comforts us with the blessed hope of everlasting life. For to your faithful people, O Lord, life is changed, not ended; and when our mortal body lies in death, there is prepared for us a dwelling place eternal in the heavens.”\textsuperscript{309}

8.1 Who is the Funeral For?

This prayer is not so concerned with this question, but the focus seems to be on the living and providing comfort for them. While it expresses very clearly a theology around death, and even speaks about what happens to the dead, it is concerned with showing how that theology “comforts us [the living] with the blessed hope of everlasting life.”

8.2 What is the Theology of Resurrection?

The Proper Preface gives assurance of Resurrection. That assurance is based on the understanding that Jesus died and rose. The question is what kind? With words such as “when our mortal body lies in death”, it seems that the Resurrection is not necessarily a bodily one. Further, it is not unreasonable to read the line before “…life is changed not ended” as an expression that the next life is nothing like the one here on earth.\textsuperscript{310} There seems to be a clear tension between the earthly reality and the heavenly. The earthly body is dead, something else

\textsuperscript{308} This can be concluded by looking to how the Eucharist is introduced. The rubric gives the option for not having it, as opposed to having it. While it may seem like a subtle shift, it is a shift none the less.

\textsuperscript{309} BCP, 382

\textsuperscript{310} To be fair to the text however, it can be read with equal reasonability to be a reference to the glorious body, which in fact means that there will be a bodily resurrection, so on its own, that part of the prayer seems to be dependent on how the rest of the prayer is read.
will be given eternal life. So it seems that the Resurrection is assured, and “us” are given a place in heaven, the question is just does that “us” include a body?\footnote{311}

8.3 What does it say about the Body?

Very simply it says that body is in the ground. There is a division strongly implied between the body in the ground and whatever changed part of us goes to heaven. The body can, it seems, be viewed as neutral, it is not something to be avoided, it is not the “bad” half of a dualist equation. Neither though it is it something that is required for resurrection. Rather, this prayer just speaks to the reality that all gathered would know, the body, while dead, is still very much physically a reality on this earth.

This is a prayer that sums up the majority of the theological claims being made. It is through Christ and his rising from death that we are transformed. Life, we are assured, is not over at death, but rather is changed. It also hints at the tension between the reality that is the body in front of us, dead, and the eternal nature of heaven. The theology that is stressed then is not one of the physical resurrection, but rather that Christ’s death and resurrection will be for us a pattern.

9 The Commendation

After the Eucharist there is a rubric that is very important for us: “If the body is not present, the service continues with the [blessing and] dismissal.”\footnote{312} This is important because even though the rubrics at the start of the service assume a body is present, it doesn’t actually need to be for the Eucharist. This does two things. First, it clearly undermines the importance of

\footnote{311} It is also important to remember that this in no way means that there will not be a later rejoining of the body and whatever part is in heaven, it just seems that there are two resurrections and not one.  
\footnote{312} BCP, 499. Brackets are original to the text.
the body by making it optional. Second, it leads to and furthers confusion among those who are planning and celebrating funerals over what the expectation is. It makes it so that the funeral, even with its theologies of resurrection of the importance of the person, can just become a memorial service. What seems to have happened is a blending together of two services: there is the idea that there can be a funeral service, which may or may not have the Eucharist but should clearly have the body, and the idea that there can be some sort of memorial Eucharist that must have the Eucharist but not the body.

The second rubric before the Commendation is equally good at causing confusion. “Unless the Committal follows immediately in the church, the following Commendation is used.” The Committal and Commendation prayers are not the same, as we will see, they serve two different functions. However, there seems to be an idea that if there is no extra liturgical movement, then the Committal is not necessary. This may be because the Commendation is actually an addition to the current book. The rubric may have been added to address the reality that not everyone who attends the church service can or will attend the graveside Committal. Having this service in the church provides a way of allowing those people to still participate in ways that they would have historically been unable to. This is still a problem of course because even if the Commendation has allowed for some greater participation, not everyone makes it to the Committal. However, the assumption is still clearly that the Committal follow the Commendation and as we will see, the two seem to need each other and at the very least the

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313 This also undermines claims that can be made about the importance of rubrics because even the rubrics themselves seem to be full of contradictions.
314 If one dug a bit I would gather this is a holdover from the idea of requiem Masses, but that world still assumed a funeral Mass, with a body, as well.
315 BCP, 499.
316 Hatchett, Commentary on the American Prayer Book, 491.
317 This could be because of personal choice or it could be because the committal is able to happen divorced from these other rites of the church thus creating the idea, or at least allowing for (it is not a totally new idea) for private disposition of the body.
theology still assumes that both will happen in order, with the people present. With that in mind we can now turn to look at the Commendation itself.

“The Celebrant and other ministers take their places at the body.” The body is required by rubrics to be present at the start and at the end of the service. The body is of fundamental importance throughout the whole of the liturgy, it is worth noticing that the only places the rubrics require action is at the start and at the end, other than at those two moments it seems that the body can just be forgotten. The question then becomes why here? Why now? Why do we turn again to see and address the body? Having the our attention again called to the body allows the focus to once again turn toward this departed person. The funeral liturgy up until this point can be viewed as a theological statement about the nature of things, at this point we have shifted to the very particular, to this body, this one right here, the one we are now standing around. The rubrics tell us nothing about what the Celebrant and other minsters are supposed to do around the body. Traditionally holy water and incense are used to show that the body is holy and blessed. Those however are traditional additions and not in the basic rubrics. The silence actually speaks volumes. It shows the prayer book’s uncertainty about what to do with the body. It knows it is important, but how to show that seems to confound the book.

Once the people are around the body, an anthem or hymn may be sung or said. The one in the text is from the Byzantine rite and is attributed to Thesphanes (842). The anthem itself

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318 BCP, 499.
319 It is again worth noting that something odd happens with the rubrics. Here we see the body is again required, but remember it isn’t for the Eucharist.
320 It is here we see a grounding of the theology back to the person, back to the departed. Much of the attention up to this point can be viewed as being on both the living and the dead or even just on the living. However, at this moment it becomes clear that the departed are what the service is about. Something about the dead matters a great deal and at this moment we are called to remember that.
321 Or at the very least those writing the book. This is also potentially a clear example of Hatchett’s claim around rubrics and the Prayer Book noting wanting to put too much into the book itself. We see here an example of how and why that is problematic.
322 Hatchett, Commentary on the American Prayer Book, 491.
brings up two points that are important in our discussion. First is the promise of eternal life, “Give rest, O Christ, to your servant(s) with your saints, where sorrow and pain are no more, neither sighing, but life everlasting.” However, within this promise of everlasting life is the reminder “For so did you [Christ] when you created me, saying ‘You are dust, and to dust you shall return.’ All of us go down to the dust; yet even at the grave we make our song: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.” Here we are hit with the reality that the body is returned to the ground, and not even just to the ground, but to dust. It seems that there is no hope of personal continuity for the body. However, the anthem continues that at the grave we make our song of praise to God, Alleluia. Something good has and is happening at this moment. It seems to be clear that the joy is not in the body turning to dust, but rather in the promise of eternal life. The attention to the body as it goes to burial shows that the body is inextricably associated with the dead person, and cherishing it, rather than disposing it in some efficient manner, is important. What we ultimately see and can conclude theologically is that there is the reality of death but that reality is also in light of the fact that Christ makes good on his promises (dust to dust is a true statement but so then is the promise of the resurrection).

The prayer of commendation itself is a shortened form of the “Commendatory Prayer when the Soul is Departed” found in the litany for the dying, which was new in the 1928 book. It has its origin in a prayer by John Cosin, published in 1627. The prayer itself is also still in use as the commendation prayer in the rites for the dying in the 1979 book. The difference between the 1979 and 1928 book is the subtraction of a word, but that word is important. In the rites for the dying in the 1928 book the prayer starts with “Into thy hands, O merciful Savior, we

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323 BCP, 499.
324 BCP, 499.
325 Hatchett, Commentary on the American Prayer Book, 491
commend the soul of thy servant...”326. The 1979 prayer at both the time of death and at the commendation in the burial omits the word soul so it reads “Into your hands, O merciful Savior, we commend your servant N,...”327. While few, if any, people would notice the shift while sitting in a funeral, the fact that the 1979 book moves away from commending just the soul allows for a reading that the whole of the person is being commended to God.

More interesting however is that this is the same prayer that is used at the time of death and now, after death. While it could be said that not many people receive the rites for the dying, the fact that the prayer is the same deserves some attention. The inclusion here also raises the possible reading that the soul has not yet left the body at the time of the funeral.328 The question is what or who exactly is being commended. The prayer answers that, at least in part. The departed is called “a sheep of your own fold, a lamb of your own flock, a sinner of your own redeeming.”329 The departed is spoken of as a concrete physical being. There is an important rubric that warrants mentioning. The rubric given before this prayer is said instructs the celebrant to face the body.330 It becomes much clearer then that this prayer is meant to highlight the physical aspects of things...This person is a sinner of your own redeeming, a sheep of your own fold, a lamb of your own flock. The presence of the body, and in fact that the celebrant must look at it, makes it impossible to over spiritualize this part of the prayer.

The question is still however what to make of this prayer also being used as a person is dying. Yes, this prayer is about a real person, the one in front of the person praying the prayer. The fact that this prayer can be used at and after death seems to indicate that the important thing is not the commendation of the soul, as may have been the case in the older understandings, but

327 BCP, 465, 499.
328 Perhaps the idea of soul sleep?
329 BCP, 499.
330 BCP, 499.
rather the commendation of the whole person to God. If that is how the prayer is being read, then it makes sense to do it twice. Those gathered at the death bed can commend the person and those who gather to prepare for burial can also commend the person to God, nothing is lost by doing it twice. This reading also makes the body very important because it prevents the over spiritualization of the commendation and checks against the idea that we are just talking about and caring for the soul of the departed.  

After the Prayer of Commendation there is a dismissal and the body is led out of the church. While that is happening there is the possibility for a hymn or one or more of the given anthems to be sung (or said). There are five anthems that are actually printed, four of them prepared by Rev. Dr. Thomas J. Talley as a unit. That means that perhaps they should be viewed as a unit. We will look at each option individually and then those four together.

The first anthem, “Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and giving life to those in the tomb” is Byzantine in origin. In its Byzantine context it is used as the text that starts the celebration of Easter and is sung as the body is brought to the grave for burial if a funeral happens during the Easter season. We can easily see the Paschal influence and it is clearly appropriate. The important theological insight for our purposes is the claim that this trampling down death by death gave and gives life to the dead.

The next two anthems are both based on the Benedictus Dominus Deus: “The Sun of Righteousness is gloriously risen, giving light to those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death.”

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331 Even if one doesn’t buy the argument that the prayer is about the whole of the person, body and soul, the double reading allows a claim to be made that we are not just commending the dead, but rather the living soul as well. This is important when taken with claims that the dead are not really dead in Christ.  
332 Hatchett, Commentary on the American Prayer Book, 491.  
333 BCP, 500.  
334 Hatchett, Commentary on the American Prayer Book, 491.  
335 This is the groundwork for the argument that God is the God of the living, not the dead and so to make any claim at all over Christ’s working in the life of the “dead” we have to understand them as alive. It also shows quite clearly a theology of Christ’s victory over death.  
336 Hatchett, Commentary on the American Prayer Book, 491.
death.” And “The Lord will guide our feet into the way of peace, having taken away the sin of the world.” The second option speaks to what the resurrection did and continues to do. It does not speak to the promise of our resurrection, but it does speak to the hope that we will not be in darkness. The third option highlights that sins have been taken away because of Christ: “The Lord will guide our feet into the way of peace, having taken away the sin of the world.” Option four was written by Talley himself and is based on Matthew 25:34: “Christ will open the kingdom of heaven to all who believe in his Name, saying, Come, O blessed of my Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you.” Here, we see the idea that faith in Christ is what is required for salvation. We also see the idea that heaven is for all who adhere to Christ in faith. There is again a possibility to read this as speaking to a resurrection, but it is unclear if it is literally a bodily resurrection or not. Taken as a total unit, these four options together clearly speak to a promise of an effectual resurrection. In other words, while there is the possibility of separating them, it seems to do liturgical harm to try. That is to say, Christ’s resurrection did something and what it did was promise a hope of resurrection for us.

The fifth option is one that is based most likely on a Gallican prayer that dates to at least the early 10th century. In the Medieval rites it was what was sung as the people and body processed either to the church or the grave. “Into paradise may the angels lead you. At your coming may the martyrs receive you, and bring you into the holy city Jerusalem.” We see here

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337 BCP, 500.
338 BCP, 500.
339 Hatchett, Commentary on the American Prayer Book, 491.
340 While this may seem like a given, given that it is a church funeral, the requirements to be a Christian to be buried from the church have been left in this book, and the references to baptism and the Eucharist have become optional.
341 That promise comes because of two things we know to be true. First, Christ is the Lord of the Living not the dead so all must be alive in Christ. Second, we know that Christ is the pattern for us and that includes his Death and Resurrection.
342 Hatchett, Commentary on the American Prayer Book, 491.
343 In all truth it is the antiphon attached to a psalm, but this is all that is preserved in the American Book.
344 BCP, 500.
again the idea of heaven as a place we can inhabit physically. However, the question still remains, because this is sung when the body is still right there can this Anthem be about the body, or should it just be viewed as asking for the soul to reach heaven?

There is also the option for one of three Canticles. The first option is the Benedictus, the second, the Nunc dimittis and the third, Pascha nostrum. The Benedictus serves to remind us that the person is saved by God’s saving and mighty acts, including the resurrection. It was also standard at medieval burial rites. The Nunc dimittis is perhaps a bit literal and was also common in many Lutheran orders. It does speak to the idea that departed can now “depart” in peace and that they have seen salvation, a comforting thought. The final option, the Pascha nostrum has paschal overtones, and was in the first Book of Common Prayer used at Morning Prayer at Easter. It clearly picks up those paschal themes of Christ’s resurrection being effectual for us as well. It also references 1 Corinthians 15 which has been a standard funeral text.

The commendation now is over and The Committal follows. Before getting there however we need to ask the three questions of the Commendation.

9.1 Who is the funeral for?

Perhaps for the first time we see that the funeral is unquestionably for the departed. This is most likely due to the fact for the first time we are seeing a ritual the requires a body and once the body is there, as we have seen, the focus cannot shift elsewhere. The funeral then, at this moment, is for the dead, but it also serves as a reminder to the living. We see lines that remind the living of their mortality and lines that remind us of the work that Christ has in fact been

345 Hatchett, *Commentary on the American Prayer Book*, 491, and as standard as anything in the Middle Ages can be seen.  
accomplished. The Commendation is the last “required” part of the funeral. This is because the committal is not actually a guarantee. It makes sense then that on some level it carries with it the summative theology of the church. We see that the funeral is for the dead and at the Commendation we see that in the final care taken for the dead, both body and soul. The commendation serves in some way as the church affirming that the person really is dead and now they are fully in God’s hands. The funeral is also for the mourning and we see that here in the Church providing hope grounded in the theology that is being expressed. Death is not seen as final; God is seen as loving and merciful; and the Resurrection is bodily and patterned after Christ.

9.2 What is the Theology of Resurrection?

Here we see a bit of confusion, as always. The Commendation is quite clear that Christ’s resurrection leads to our resurrection but again we are left wondering if that is bodily or not. However, as we have seen, the presence of the body makes it a bit harder to say that the body has nothing to do with the resurrection. It is clear that there is a very strong understanding that the resurrection of Christ gives life to the dead. The dead are properly understood as embodied and thus the resurrection must be understood as embodied. This becomes even more clear when we follow the argument that Christ’s resurrection is a pattern for ours and that Christ’s resurrection was bodily.

9.3 What does it say about the body?

It is important to remember that this a rite that deals with the body, if there is no body then there is no Commendation. In other words, for this moment, the body is of fundamental importance. The question that we must examine is if the Commendation is itself an important part of the funeral rite. The Commendation is an important part of the funeral rite because it is what grounds the theology of the Church. It has already been shown that the Commendation is
clear in showing the resurrection of Christ leads to our resurrection. The presence of the body then is what answers the question that was left unanswered before. That resurrection is bodily. It must be because the prayers we say and the theology we teach are in reference to \textit{this body, right here, the one about to go into the ground.}

10 The Committal

This is where the practical concerns of getting the body in the ground are dealt with. Like other aspects of the funeral, the Committal also opens with an Anthem. The Anthem that is given\textsuperscript{348} was first included in the 1928 book,\textsuperscript{349} and opens with the idea that no one who believes in God will be turned away.\textsuperscript{350} The middle though is the most insightful for our reading: “He who raised Jesus Christ from the dead will also give new life to our mortal bodies through his indwelling Spirit.”\textsuperscript{351} We see a direct reference to the idea that life will be given to our mortal bodies, to \textit{this body that we are about to put in the ground}. Almost everything up until this point has been ambiguous, this is not, we understand clearly that the body will be given new life. This provides context for when the rest of the anthem speaks about God showing the path of life and it contextualizes the idea of the person throughout the whole Committal, so that, at least for this rite, the person being given new life both body and soul.

What comes next in the order of things is the actual committal of the body to the ground. The prayer has changed so much it is functionally a new prayer in the 1979 book. The prayer is said while dirt is put on the coffin. The words themselves speak to the hope of resurrection: “In sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ, we commend to Almighty God our brother N., and we commit his body to the ground*; earth to

\textsuperscript{348} There are other options with their page numbers given, but like before we are not going to examine them.
\textsuperscript{349} Hatchett, \textit{Commentary on the American Prayer Book}, 492.
\textsuperscript{350} \textit{BCP}, 501.
\textsuperscript{351} \textit{BCP}, 501.
earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. The Lord bless him and keep him, the Lord make his face to
shine upon him and be gracious to him, the Lord lift up his countenance upon him and give him
peace. Amen.” It also reminds us that the body is in fact going in the ground. However, as we
have already seen, the overarching idea in the Committal is that the body will be resurrected and
given new life. So, while the body returns to earth and ashes, there is an underlying hope of
future bodily resurrection.

An interesting thing of note is in the line “we commit his body to the ground*”; the note
that goes with that line indicates that “ground” “the deep” or “the elements” or “its resting place”
can all be used. Hatchett highlights that the potential for the “deep” is allowing for the
provision made in 1662 for burial at sea and that the “its resting place” is meant to be used for
burial in a crypt or mausoleum. The potential place of issue comes with Hatchett’s reading of
the “the elements” option. For Hatchett “the elements” means cremation; this highlights how this
is the first time provision has been made for cremation. The problem of course is that isn’t
what it says. It is easy enough to connect “the deep” with burial at sea and “resting place” can
mean any number of places (and I’m sure it has been used to reference backyard trees) but
clearly something like a crypt or mausoleum makes sense. The question is what logical
disposition follows from “the elements?” It doesn’t actually say “we commend the body to the
fire”, but rather the ambiguous “elements.” That could be that because when the book was
written in the 1970s, cremation was still not fully accepted and this provided an allowance

352 BCP, 501.
353 BCP, 501.
354 Hatchett, Commentary on the American Prayer Book, 493. However it is also important to notice that
the current prayer book does not have a separate prayer, it is just changing the words a small bit to make it fit the
circumstances.
without having to say it explicitly. Nevertheless and whatever the reason, that is what it says, so that while it is clear that it can allow for cremation, it is not actually a provision for it.\textsuperscript{356}

This little tangent aside, these words are clearly concerned with the body and its final disposition. This is the last time the body is mentioned, and that makes some sense because now it is in the ground and there is a real finality about that. The Committal ends with the Lord’s Prayer, which has been a requirement for the grave side rites in every book from 1552\textsuperscript{357} and what Hatchett calls the “Concluding Preces”: “Rest eternal grant to him, O Lord; And let light perpetual shine upon him. May his soul, and the souls of all the departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.”\textsuperscript{358} The first sentence can be traced back to a supplement to the Gregorian sacramentary and its use as an antiphon for the burial psalms.\textsuperscript{359} In sixteenth century Sarum texts, this prayer appears often, from prayers at death with the dying up through the committal.\textsuperscript{360} The second sentence is from Sarum and was used at the commendation of the soul and at the dismissal after the committal.\textsuperscript{361} Neither one of these prayers is making its first appearance in the burial office so all that needs to be said is a reminder that what we are now dealing with is concern for the deceased person’s subjective continuity, not for the continuity of the physical body.

The dismissal then follows. There are two options, the first is the standard Easter opening acclamation and dismissal put together. It speaks to the assurance that Christ is risen.\textsuperscript{362} This makes sense given the paschal context of the funeral liturgy. The second option is from the 1928

\textsuperscript{356} Any more than it is a provision for blasting someone’s body into space, which is not prohibited but clearly not what the allowance envisions.
\textsuperscript{357} Hatchett, \textit{Commentary on the American Prayer Book}, 493.
\textsuperscript{358} \textit{BCP}, 502.
\textsuperscript{359} Hatchett, \textit{Commentary on the American Prayer Book}, 494.
\textsuperscript{360} Hatchett, \textit{Commentary on the American Prayer Book}, 494.
\textsuperscript{361} Hatchett, \textit{Commentary on the American Prayer Book}, 494.
\textsuperscript{362} \textit{BCP}, 502.
book and is Hebrews 13:20-21. While it does reference the Resurrection of Christ, it does not seem to really flow from anything that has happened before it.

10.1 Who is the Funeral for?

Much like with the Commendation we see that this is really a time for the dead. We see the real care and concern that is given to making sure the body is placed in ground in the most reverent way possible. It is the final act the Church does with this body in whatever form and place it takes. This is the primary and primal obligation of the Church, this is the actual burial of the dead.

10.2 What is its Theology of Resurrection?

The resurrection is a “sure and certain hope” and that is because Christ is risen from the dead and that resurrection gives life to the dead and that resurrection and life is bodily.

10.3 What does it say about the body?

As the rite starts there is clearly an importance placed on the body, after all this is the rite that is concerned with proper disposition. However, there is a shift that has been noted, once the body is in the ground the prayers move back to prayers for the soul of the departed, yet there is some assumption about a continuity.

11 The Rite Theology: The Theology of the Prayer Book

Perhaps here we get to the point of it all, what is it that the 1979 Prayer Book actually says about the role of the body at its funeral? The same basic three questions will be asked and we will now explore what the answers mean in light of what we looked at in the beginning of this chapter, that is what the people in “authority” have said about this rite. This will all be done

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363 Hatchett, Commentary on the American Prayer Book, 494.
with the goal determining what the presence or absence of a body tells us theologically, and what the Episcopal Church actually teaches on this issue.

11.1 Who is the funeral for?

We started by asking who is the funeral for because it helps to shape the importance of who is in attendance and who the focus is on. This in turn helps us develop a theology around the funeral. As we have seen there are three possible answers to this question, the living, the dead, and both the living and the dead. More than that, we have seen that within the answer “the living” we can break it down further to say those who mourn and the whole of the church (which may or may not be included in the idea of those who mourn). Each of these answers has a theological implication that we now will try and draw out.

If the funeral is for the living, meaning just those who mourn, there is no theological reason to have the body present. The body becomes just what SLC feared it might, a distraction, a morbid curiosity, anything but the proper object of a funeral. To make a funeral just about those who mourn, in the narrowest of senses, means that the funeral can happen any time and as many times as necessary. It means all that we are asking God to do is to heal our grief and despair at the death of the person. This can mean that if a person lived in one city but grew up in another there may be two funerals, because in each place there are mourners.

12 Theological and Catechetical Concerns

By defining mourners in the narrowest sense, we are, in fact, denying the person their proper place in the church catholic. We fail to acknowledge that their death, while immediately impactful for family and friends, also impacts the whole of Church and that the Church then should be allowed to mourn. Perhaps more than that, it also splits up the Church. To say that only those who are closely connected to the dead should mourn, means that there is a part of the Church that can section itself off and choose not to be impacted by the rest of the Church. To
allow for that sort of theology is to limit our ecclesial understanding. It is to say that we are not as connected as we are told, in this life or in the next. This limited ecclesial understanding is what gives rise to the second theological problem, the denial of the role of the communion of saints.

The dead are still part of the family of the Church, the prayers that are included in the burial office itself tell us that. More than that, they are a part of the family that we pray for and with. To say the funeral is not for the dead at all seems to remove the agency that they are given as members of the church. It is to simply say that they do not matter. In effect it is to say that once you are dead you’re dead and nothing else will come of it. To make a funeral all about the mourners is to fundamentally deny a belief that the dead will be resurrected. This is because if the dead are resurrected, and the prayers of the church are to be believed, the dead in heaven can and do participate in the mourning of those of us here on earth.

The final problem in this context is that if the funeral is just understood as for the mourning, the catechetical function of the liturgy and the church fails. The liturgy is tasked with teaching correct theology, with helping us pray and express and understand the theological truths of the faith, and in this case, if the funeral is understood as just being for the mourners, if fails in that task. This is because, as we have seen, there are huge theological issues when it comes to ecclesiology and the role of and membership in the Church. A proper theological understanding is one in which the whole of the body of Christ is seen to be both the living and the dead, and that the dead matter, just as the living do. Further, a proper theology of the church is one in which mourning the dead is not seen just as the task of a few who may have known the dead in life, but rather, the task of the Body of Christ to mourn with those who are still alive, and

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364 This is not unique to the funeral liturgy. See for example, the Collects Of a Saint (BCP, 250) and the Sanctus (BCP, 361).
acknowledge, that no matter how far removed we may be personally from the dead, their death matters.

Now, there is another way to understand what it is to say that the funeral is about the mourners. There are places where the prayers express the idea that the Church is mourning. When this is the case we have at least answered the first objection above and possibly corrected a terrible ecclesiology. However, the second problem remains, the Church is made up of the living and the dead. Many of the prayers throughout not just the funeral liturgy, but many of the liturgies of the church, make this very clear and very personal—the dead do not stop being part of the Church, the Body of Christ, just because they have died. We have, by not making the funeral about the dead, removed half the ecclesial equation.

The final problem is what happens if there is in fact a body at the funeral? What happens if all the prayers are in fact geared toward the mourners, however those are understood, and then there is a casket in the room. This is perhaps the fear of SLC that the funeral becomes too focused on the body. The problem is that ultimately, if one wants to be true to the rubrics, the body is required. That means that one can ignore it and make the funeral about everyone but the dead. However, it becomes the elephant in the room. It means that the requirement for the body makes some sense and it becomes a distraction, an uninvited guest at its funeral.

To have a funeral that is just for the living introduces a theology that can compromise the catholic nature of the Church. It denies that the dead have a place in the church. It could further deny that the church is made up of anyone past its four walls. There are, as we have seen, some prayers in the liturgy that only speak to the funeral being for mourners. However, it seems that to make it the focus of the funeral means one of two things would have to happen. First, one can still have the body present and cause confusion. This is because there is no reference to why the body is there or why it matters, after all, the funeral is not about the dead. The way around that
would be option two, to not have the body. However, to willingly exclude the body violates the rubrics. While that might not seem all that important, as we will examine in more depth, the rubrics themselves express theology that we shouldn’t ignore. However, there are many that also speak about the funeral being for the dead.

To say that the funeral is for the dead is an interesting theological claim in the Episcopal Church. None of the documents that express theology want to say this is true. They all want to say the funeral is for the living and the dead or “just” for the living. The fact remains though, that there are prayers that seem to show that the thing we are about when we do a funeral is primarily the care of dead. The first question that comes up is the question of “who is the dead”? That is to say are we talking about the body, the soul, or both together? Having a body present grounds the answer, there is this person here, they must have something to do with what we are doing.

To say the funeral is just for the dead however creates its own set of problems. First, it actually creates the same problem outlined above, just the other direction. It assumes that the only people who matter at a funeral are dead, but the real, lived reality is that the church is made up of more than just the dead. More than that, there is the real truth that the church/the living/the family and friends are mourning and that the church should be doing something about that. It also seems to fly in the face of the expressed purpose of the rite as expressed by the people who wrote it. This is a problem if the liturgy does in fact give the option of saying that the funeral is for the dead, which it does. The question is what happens when the text actually seems to fly in the face of what those who wrote it set out to do? Put another way, does ‘author’s intent’ really matter and if it does, how much should it matter? This will be discussed more in chapter five.

365 See the comments on the SLC.
When looking at the prayers and seeing what sort of ones really are shown to be for the
dead, it is actually not all that surprising. They are the prayers that are said around the body, so
most of the prayers of committal and commendation in fact are geared toward the body. This
shouldn’t surprise us. However, the issue arises if we view the dead as the sole person the funeral
is for. The fact is that the funeral is done for the dead, so that they might be the person to whom
all the action is directed, but it depends on the people gathered to have this fully expressed and
understood. To say the funeral then has nothing to do with them seems to say that they (that is
the living) are nothing more than servants of the dead.

The biggest issue with saying that the funeral is for the living or the dead however is one
word “or”, the liturgy seems to say that the funeral is for both the living and the dead. The liturgy
itself seems to want to say that the funeral is for the living and the dead, together. What we see as
we look through the prayer book is that there are prayers that are more geared toward the living
mourners and there are those prayers and moments where the things are geared more to the dead.
This makes sense given that each section of the funeral liturgy serves a slightly different purpose.

If there is a problem with reading the funeral liturgy this way however it comes in the
opening collect. The reason is because the argument made above assumes one very important
thing that the frame of the funeral liturgy is that it is for both the living and the dead. If the
liturgy is not framed that way, if it is not understood that way from the outset, the whole idea
begins to fall apart. The place that can happen is in the collect. As we have seen there are three
choices in collects. The first two collects, as we have argued already, show a theology that says
the funeral is for the departed. The third collect though, while it mentions the name of the
departed, and even thanks God for them, is clearly a collect for the mourning. The problem is
that collects are those prayers that shape our understanding of what is going on at that moment in
the liturgy. Because these are opening collects, they are to be understood as shaping the whole
liturgical program and now we can see that there are at least two different ways to shape the liturgy. If the collect truly is the summary statement for the whole of the liturgy, it seems to follow that the liturgy cannot go outside the bounds that the collect sets up. If the collect says that the funeral is all about the dead, then the funeral is all about the dead, if it is all about the mourners then it is all about the mourners. The question then is what do we do from here?

There seem to be three possible outcomes, all of which will have an impact on this thesis. The first option is to remember that there is an optional prayer that follows the collect. This is important to note because the prayer is about the mourners. Therefore, it could be coupled with the first two collects and frame the funeral as being for both the living and the dead. That would then allow for the rest of the funeral to show that to be the case. It could be attached to the third collect but it only would serve to further the internal claim that the funeral is for those who mourn.

The next possible outcome is to understand the third collect option as having enough to do with the dead that it won’t confuse things later on, this is seen in opening lines of the third collect “O God of grace and glory, we remember before you this day our brother (sister) N.”366 This seems like the most valid option. It respects the integrity of the liturgy and allows the liturgy to be framed in a way that says the funeral is for the living and the dead. Of course it is not perfect and if this collect were to be paired with the optional prayer, it would not be hard to understand the funeral as being primarily for the mourning, for the living.

The final possible outcome is the one that I would assume happens the most often and that is that this whole problem is ignored and a collect is selected and the liturgy moves on. This is an issue of course because it fails to try and use the liturgy to express a theology. The liturgy ends up telling more than one story and that causes confusion for the people participating. We

366 BCP, 493.
will examine this idea of confusion later in the thesis, but it is the ultimate problem with the funeral liturgy in the Episcopal Church.\footnote{And perhaps with all the liturgies of ECUSA, but that is a thesis for another day.}

What does this matter for the ultimate question for this thesis, the importance of the body? If the funeral is not about the dead at all then they do not need to be at the funeral. However, we’ve seen that the funeral is understood, at least liturgically, as being for both the living and the dead. What impact does that have on the body? To answer that we need to ask another question, one that has grown out of this discussion on who the funeral is for. That is, we need to ask who is the funeral about?\footnote{Up until this point, we have been using “for” and “about” as synonyms- this has the potential to lead to confusion, as we have perhaps already seen. What follows then is at attempt to clarify.}

12.1 Who is the funeral about?

This question differs from the previous question of “who is the funeral for” because it allows the funeral to be about the dead while still being for the living and mourning. This difference is seen when we look back at what SLC said its goal was for the funeral revisions: “We tried to follow the principle that the Office should be designed for the comfort of the living rather than for the benefit of the dead.”\footnote{The Standing Liturgical Commission of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, \textit{Prayer Book Studies XIII: The Order For The Burial Of The Dead} (New York: The Church Pension Fund, 1959), 4.} The idea is not that the dead not be at their funeral\footnote{The Standing Liturgical Commission of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, \textit{Prayer Book Studies XIII: The Order For The Burial Of The Dead} (New York: The Church Pension Fund, 1959), 10. The meeting of the body at the church as required shows that the attempt was not to write the body out of the funeral itself. Given that it now forces us to ask how we hold the idea that the funeral is not for the dead with the fact that the body is still required.} but rather that the funeral is not \textit{for} the dead but it is \textit{about} them.

How does that all work out? It becomes a question of placement and understanding. If the end goal of a funeral is, as it is for SLC, to provide comfort for the living, then that can be assured by having prayers that speak to the mourners. This would make collect three make sense, or collects one and two with the optional prayer good framing prayers as well. It also then allows
for what we see in the prayers of the people, a large set of petitions for the living mourners but also some acknowledgement of the dead. That acknowledgement of the dead becomes the clearest in places that are directly related to the dead body - the commendation and the committal. The other two places where we see the most emphasis on the dead also make sense. First, we see them in the rites for the dying and in the welcoming of the body to the church. We also see it in the opening anthems for the funeral, the anthems themselves being in the voice of the dead. The question though is what are these places trying to teach the community? Why are they focused on the dead? Why are those liturgical moments for the dead?

The answer seems to be because they are the places that deal with the dead in the most specific way. More than that however, they seem to be part of a larger point; they are the moments where the attention of the people gathered is on the body, they are the places where the references to the resurrection are the strongest. They are the places where the theological truths and understandings about the bodily resurrection are laid out for all to see and understand. The liturgy teaches through the body; it uses the body to show a deep theological truth. It follows then that these moments, even though they are for the dead in a practical way, concern themselves with the living as well. This is ultimately why bodies are important at funerals, their presence tells the living something about the theology of the church. Put another way, these moments that are for the dead are that way because they are ultimately directed toward them. However, they are about the living and the dead. They are about what it is to be a Christian and to believe in the Resurrection. The prayers, both the ones for the dead and for the mourning all tell the people gathered some theological truth.

As we move on to the next two questions it is important to close this section with the idea that the question who is the funeral for is important. It tells us who matters. In the case of the prayer book the living and the dead matter because they are both part of the community.
However, because the prayers can shift focus, it is important to ask not just who is it for, but who is it about. To ask this question does two things, first it allows us to work within the expressed ideals of those who wrote the liturgy and second, it allows the tension in the prayers, of prayers for the living and the dead to be held together; it makes us see that the bigger liturgical story is that the funeral is about both the living and the dead. Secondly, it allows for the “liturgical confusion” not really to be confusion at all. The presence of the body shows the Church that the liturgy is about the dead and the prayers allow us to pray for both the living and the dead. What we see then is that the question “who is the funeral about” is one that is answered with a simple, the living and the dead. However, in the asking we see that there is an inherent tension that the liturgy itself allows the Church to sit with and embrace without violating any theological truisms.

12.2 What is the Theology of Resurrection?

There are two ways that we can look back over the Prayer Book that create a different way of answering this question. First, we can just look at the words of the liturgy or second, we can look at the words and the rubrics around those words.

If all we do is look at the words we come up with a rather confused answer to the question. Looking just at the words it is clear that the soul is resurrected. It is also made very clear that Christ’s resurrection is of fundamental importance. Christ was raised and so we all we will be as well. It is seen as both reason and pattern for us. That of course leads to the bit of confusion. Christ’s resurrection was bodily and the liturgy makes that clear. If it is also clear that we will be raised like and with Christ, it also stands to reason that we will be resurrected in our bodies. This idea is seen most clearly liturgically in the Anthems and the commendation and committal.

The places where the bodily resurrection is mentioned though present their own set of potential problems. In the Committal we see a clear promise of new life for our bodies and the
Anthems can stress that on the last day, at the resurrection my body will see God. The potential problem or area of misunderstanding is that these two ideas don’t always line up. We are promised new bodies but we don’t know what that means or looks like. But we are also told that our bodies will be our bodies, that they will be, at least in some form, like what they are now\textsuperscript{371}. We will examine the idea of what kind of bodies will we have at the resurrection in the following question, but for the moment the pause is with the idea that if the body has to change then it can’t be resurrected right now because we know it hasn’t’ changed. So, while it seems that the liturgy has allowed space to say that the body and soul are resurrected, the question then becomes one of timing and the implication of that timing.

If the body is resurrected, we know it is not an immediate resurrection. However, the liturgy seems to imply that the soul is already with God, or will be after the prayers are said. The order then seems to be that the soul is resurrected first and then the body. Is the soul in heaven or someplace else? Put another way, can the soul find the perfect rest that is promised at the resurrection without the body? Does the soul need the body?

Here is where the reading with the rubrics is essential. “The following form may be used at whatever time the body is brought to the church. The Celebrant meets the body at the door of the church and says…”\textsuperscript{372} While we have looked at this rubric before, for this discussion what is key to notice is that this is the first death rubric; it is the one that leads into the funeral and thus helps shape everything that happens liturgically. The body is present for the whole of the funeral. This clearly indicates that the body has some relevance, and we will dig into that further. However, it does help to ground a theology of a bodily resurrection. This follows because most

\textsuperscript{371} That is not to say that they are not transformed, but it is to say that we do not die and get a whole new body, something about this body now on earth might change, but it is a changed body in heaven, not a new one.

\textsuperscript{372} \textit{BCP}, 466.
of the prayers in the liturgy are talking about the person being welcomed into heaven.\textsuperscript{373} So what or who is a person? Is a person the soul trapped in a body; is the person a body and soul as we look and exist now; or is a person a body and soul but with a transformed body? The presence of the body at the funeral helps to answer this question. It shows that the body is important, and not just as window dressing. The body is acknowledged as the person: The “Celebrant, facing the body, says Into your hands, O merciful Savior, we commend your servant N…”\textsuperscript{374} The body is the person, the person is the body, the dead body is still the person. Therefore, when the prayers talk about the resurrection of the person, they cannot just mean the soul.

What kind of body will we have at the resurrection? On this the liturgy doesn’t take much of a stand, but when it does it seems to be less than clear. The line from the opening Anthem, “After my awaking, he will raise me up; and in my body I shall see God.”\textsuperscript{375} While this could be read to just mean any body, it can and should also be read/heard to mean the one that is in the casket at this moment (as if the dead is the one speaking). Adding to this is the idea that the anthem is optional. Again then we are left wondering what it means that the body is present. It seems to mean that even if there is a change to the glorified body that Paul speaks about, it is not that the body becomes unrecognizable. If the body were totally different, then something about our personhood would have to fundamentally change, because, the liturgy (and theology) view the body as linked to the person.

What then is the Prayer Book’s theology of the resurrection? Christ’s resurrection is the pattern and promise for us. The soul seems to be the first to rise, but the ultimate idea that it is the person who is finally resurrected, at the end of time, to be with God, indicates that, resurrection must be bodily as well.

\textsuperscript{373} There are a few instances as we have seen that speak of the soul of the departed, but they are actually few. \textit{BCP}, 498.  
\textsuperscript{374} \textit{BCP}, 499.  
\textsuperscript{375} \textit{BCP}, 491.
There is of course a counter argument to be made. SLC, while talking about the prayer at committal argues that “…the phrase in the committal prayer ‘the earth and the sea shall give up their dead’ is omitted since to some it implies the resurrection of the earthly body.” What are we to make of that? This is one of those times where it doesn’t seem to matter what the authors’ intent was in the prayers. Yes, that committal prayer does seem to draw a distinction between body and soul or at least the body and the person, however, I would argue that the opening line is what allows the conclusion that the body and soul are both resurrected, just at different times: “In sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life…”

13 What does the Prayer Book say about the Body?

The body is, as we have seen, a required part of the funeral liturgy. So how does the prayer book treat the body, is it just window dressing or is it viewed as something fundamentally important?

There are two ways to look at the importance of the body, the first is in line with the second question we asked, about the resurrection. In short, the presence of the body was fundamental to the articulation of the theology of and around resurrection. The prayer book then, at least on a theological level says the body is important because it grounds our theological claims. It is what keeps the Church’s theology true and helps avoid error.

More than that however, we see the body is not just treated as a theological prop, it is treated as a member of the Body of Christ. This is seen if we look at the link that is between baptism and the funeral. We’ve seen already how the funeral rite is rooted in a baptismal theology, and we will reexamine that link in a moment. The Prayer Book explains the role of

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377 See *BCP*, 501 where the “brother” is commended to God and the body is commended to the ground.
378 *BCP*, 501.
baptism in the following: “Holy Baptism is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ's Body the Church. The bond which God establishes in Baptism is indissoluble.” 379 Once a person has been baptized, they are forever to be viewed as a member of Christ’s body. As we have seen, the funeral liturgy makes it clear that the body is still the person and so, by virtue of their baptism, that person has been changed fundamentally.

This of course depends on the link between baptism and funerals. We’ve seen the pall and how that is a link to baptism and the equality of all by virtue of each person’s baptism. The use of the paschal candle at once draws our attention the paschal nature of the funeral, but it should also remind us of the baptismal nature, as the paschal candle is also proper to that liturgy. The prayers of the people make reference to baptism and there are many references in the prayers to being made new in Christ which is a fundamental image of baptism-the claim that if we die with him we will rise with him is both baptismal and funeral in its themes and is thus not out of place in either liturgy. The proper preface for baptism makes a claim that is further promised at the funeral: “Because in Jesus Christ our Lord you have received us as your sons and daughters, made us citizens of your kingdom…” 380 That eternal kingdom is the promise that is constantly being reaffirmed in the funeral rite. It is clear then that there is a link between the two rites, the question still stands though, what does this have to do with the body?

The body then, by virtue of its baptism, is joined to Christ. There are a few ways this can be read. The body can either be viewed as a temple and thus holy or it can be viewed as the person in its totality and thus holy. As we have seen, the theology of resurrection in the prayer book seems to indicate that the dead body somehow contains personhood, that the body is somehow the person.

379 BCP, 298.
380 BCP, 381.
The body can be understood as important because it is a container, because it holds the soul. It says that the body is important because the soul is sanctified. It follows that if the soul is what is blessed, through baptism, and through the saving work of Christ, then the body, which holds the soul has to be important. We have seen historically how this idea can come around and stay around, it is fundamentally trying to correct the notion that the soul is all that matters, it is at least claiming that the body has worth and value. The problem with this line of reasoning is that it is not in line with what the Prayer Book seems to say. In fact, it seems to fly in the face of what we have already looked at. As we have seen, the liturgy refers to the body by name, it views the body as fundamental to the human person, if all that ultimately mattered was the soul, and the body’s worth was based on the work of the soul, then this liturgical naming makes no sense. It, the viewing the body as a holder, doesn’t fix the dualistic problem it tries to address. It ultimately still privileges the soul over the body. The second option for the importance of the body seems to go to the other extreme. It holds that the body is required for human personhood and is the locus of that personhood. The problem with this is the same as if we privilege the soul over the body. It is not the liturgical expression of the church and actually denies the theology expressed in the liturgy.

The final option is the one that this thesis supports. The liturgy clearly says that the dead body is a part of the human person; however it is also clear that the soul is a fundamentally important part of the human person, if it wasn’t then why bother praying for it. So, it seems to follow that a person is both body and soul. What does the prayer book say about the body? It says that the body is one of two essential dimensions of a human person. It says that through baptism the person is joined to Christ. Therefore, the body of the dead is part of the body of Christ, is ultimately then joined to Christ.

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381 The question of what is a soul is not something we have dealt with in this thesis, but the liturgy does seem to provide some answers for it if a person would want to go looking.
The big question of this thesis is why does the body matter in a funeral? Put another way, what happens when the body is not present at the funeral? The answer is quite simply that we violate our own liturgical and theological expressions. Looking deeper it becomes clear that we, if we eliminate or relegate the body, we lose the ability to ground our theological claims of the importance of the Resurrection and we lose the ability to make claims on human personhood, because they are linked so closely in the funeral liturgy. The next chapter will move to examine why this would be catastrophic to the Episcopal Church and why the only way to take seriously both our theology and liturgy is to make sure the body is present at a funeral.
Chapter 4
Why We Should Listen to the Prayer Book

We have looked at the liturgy and seen that the body matters because it grounds the theology of the Church. We have seen how that theology is expressed in the Prayer Book. Now we will look to build on those theological claims found in the Prayer Book. When it comes to asking, and answering, the question “why does the body matter,” we see that there are three areas that are impacted by the body’s presence or absence. In order, we will examine the theological, the ecclesial/social and the liturgical importance of the body. This will be done by looking at the issue in the negative. That is to say, we will look and see what happens in each of these areas when we do not have a body present.

1 The Incarnation and Resurrection

There are two main areas of theological import when it comes to the body, and they are both, as often is the case, connected: the Incarnation and the Resurrection. When we eliminate bodies from the funeral liturgy, we impact both a theology of the Incarnation and a theology of the Resurrection, both Christ’s and our own. In fact, the claim can be made that a proper theology around the Incarnation is necessary for the grounding of the theology of the Resurrection. That is not to say that we cannot derive a theology around the resurrection without looking at the Incarnation, it will always in some very important ways, assume the Incarnation.

1.1 The Incarnation

The number of places a person could look to find a theology of the Incarnation are legion. What we are concerned with for this thesis though is how a theology of the Incarnation impacts the theology of the Resurrection. We see this link clearly in Athanasius:

The Word perceived that corruption could not be got rid of otherwise than through death; yet He Himself, as the Word, being immortal and the Father's Son, was such as
could not die. For this reason, therefore, He assumed a body capable of death, in order that it, through belonging to the Word Who is above all, might become in dying a sufficient exchange for all, and, itself remaining incorruptible through His indwelling, might thereafter put an end to corruption for all others as well, by the grace of the resurrection.\(^{382}\)

The Word, that is Jesus, needed to become Incarnate so that the Resurrection would “work” for human beings. This idea is also found clearly in the sermons of Leo the Great. Leo argues in Sermon 28 that Christ had to be Incarnate, He had to be a person because if He were just divine “…there would be no reason for hope in resurrection, nor would Christ be ‘the first born from the dead’, for no one should have been raised if there was no one who could be killed.”\(^{383}\) In Leo’s sermons 64 and 66 we see the link again that Christ’s Passion and Resurrection needs the truth of the Incarnation, these things, Resurrection and Incarnation, are theologically and practically linked for Leo.\(^{384}\)

The Incarnation is what gives meaning to the Resurrection; the Resurrection of Christ ultimately hinges on a question of the importance of Christ’s personhood, and the Incarnation is what provides the humanity of Christ. The Incarnation is also fundamental in that it shows that creation, that humanity is worth redeeming. Christ becoming human showed and shows the treasured place humanity has in the eyes of God.

1.2 Why does the body matter for proper Incarnational Theology?

The body matters because it grounds our theology of the Incarnation. The Incarnation is the first step in a claim that humanity is redeemed by God. This redemption will ultimately be fulfilled not just in Christ’s Resurrection but in ours as well. If a body is treated poorly, if it is

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\(^{384}\) Freeland and Conway, *St. Leo the Great*, 277-278.
treated as an uninvited guest at its own funeral, then the link to the Incarnation grows weak. This is because the Incarnation hinges on the worth and value of even the most worthless and least valuable; to discard or disrespect or not welcome a body at a funeral is to say that some body, some person, is not worth the Incarnation.\textsuperscript{385}

1.3 Are we actually denying the impact of the Incarnation?

By not having a body at a funeral we are denying any belief in the bodily resurrection. It stands to reason then that we should ask the same question of the Incarnation. Is the body so central to the Incarnation that to not have a body at a funeral would call into question the whole of our affirmation of the theology? Here things get a bit less black and white. While this thesis does not want to claim that a lack of a body at a funeral means that we do not believe in the Incarnation, it holds that the theology is diminished. It is impossible to take seriously claims about the goodness of the human person if we have decided that a central part of human personhood, physical death is disgusting and unwelcome.\textsuperscript{386}

2 The Resurrection

We can now turn to look at the implications for a theology of Resurrection. This is to show that even if we grant that we have an acceptable theology of the Incarnation, we are still doing harm to the ultimate theology of the Resurrection.

It remains obvious then that if Jesus is not raised from the dead, one can no longer argue from the present to the future. If Jesus is not raised, I know nothing about resurrection at the end of the world. The hope of resurrection, the idea of a world to come, remains theological speculation, with no firm foundation in human experience. History has no meaning, no goal, no purpose. As a human race, we are going nowhere.\textsuperscript{387}

\textsuperscript{385} Once that happens Christ’s resurrection cannot be viewed as a pattern for our own and thus we are lead to a denial of the resurrection and we make God a liar.

\textsuperscript{386} The impact of this is clearly felt in other areas of theology. To deny the value of the human person calls into question, for example, claims the Church can make on social justice.

“For Paul the resurrection of Jesus Christ is not merely the cause and basis, but the exemplar too of our resurrection”. 388 “…the mystery of human death is a participation in Christ’s death and resurrection”. 389 The Resurrection of Christ gives meaning to the whole of humanity. It is the reason for our own resurrection. In short, in our own death we participate in the Resurrection of Christ. When we look at the ultimate impact of bodies in the funeral, we will conclude that bodies matter at funerals because without them we end up calling into question our belief in the Resurrection, not just of all of us, but of Christ himself. If Christ’s resurrection is a pattern for us to follow, as Paul and the liturgy indicate, denying the bodily Resurrection undermines and may ultimately deny any claim we can make on or about Christ’s Resurrection. 390

That is a hefty claim, that misunderstanding or doing the funeral liturgy incorrectly and negligently leads ultimately to a denial of a core tenant of the Christian faith. To understand how the claim works in light of what was discussed in the previous chapter (that the body matters because it is what grounds claims on human personhood and because the body is a temple for the soul/spirit), we will first look at why the Resurrection matters and how the idea and theology behind the resurrection encompasses the concerns already expressed. After that, we will look to see how the resurrection is denied without a body present. Finally we will move to answer the all-important question of why this matters in a theological and pastoral sense.

2.1 Why does the Resurrection Matter?


380 It seems important and prudent to note at this point that this denial is rarely intentional. That is to say that a Christian, that an Episcopalian, will not get up and say “Today I think that the bodily resurrection is a farce” however, to say that the lack of intentionality is all that matters is to do a grave injustice to the liturgy and the people of God. The very fact that this can happen without the intent speaks to the gravity of the claim. One should not be able to unintentionally slip into proclaiming or praying things that have the potential to call into question core points of Christian belief.
The importance of the resurrection is ultimately the claim made in the opening, that it is the groundwork for any thoughts on human personhood and worth and it is what will fundamentally ground any other theological claims around death. The resurrection matters because it is a core belief that is the chief meaning of the Christian funeral. There are two reasons that the resurrection matters in this context, first because it shows the redemption of our bodies and second, because it makes the promise given to us true.

Christ’s Resurrection is the second half of the story that begun at the Incarnation, and our resurrection is the second half of a story that began at our baptism. Both the Incarnation and our baptism tell the story of a person (or humanity in the case of Jesus) being redeemed. They remind us that we are made in the image and likeness of God and that our bodies are good. More than that though, “Our body is not only the handiwork of God, fashioned into the image and likeness of God-that is of Christ, who is to come, but also the ‘pledge’ of God that this indeed shall come to pass”. When we look back over the burial liturgy we recall that one of the themes was that the person, that is the dead person in the coffin over there, the one we are about to bury was created good and in the image of God and that is why they can expect with hope and joy the resurrection. Our redemption happens/ed because God chooses to redeem us because we are ultimately His people. Bodies matter then because they are created and redeemed by God. But the question is still, what does this have to do with the Resurrection?

There are two overarching reasons that the redemption of our bodies matter for the resurrection and a few other sub reasons. We will look first at the larger reasons: First, it shows that our bodies are in fact worth redeeming. This is one of those historic points of confusion and consternation. Recalling what has been said in pervious chapters, we can remember that there has

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been much discussion on the character of the soul and the body. “If one recognizes that death and eternal life in the New Testament are bound up with the Christ-event, then it becomes clear that for the first Christians the soul is not intrinsically immortal, but rather became so only through the resurrection Jesus Christ, and through faith in him.” The idea that the human being is both body and soul, while not the only patristic thought-pattern and theology, is the one that ultimately carries the theological day. For that statement to be true however, the body must be worthy of heaven, or at least judgement and that can only happen with a resurrected body. Cullmann furthers this line of reasoning by arguing “For Christian (and Jewish) thinking, the death of the body is also destruction of God-created life…Resurrection is a positive assertion: the whole man, who has really died, is recalled to life by a new act of creation by God”. The whole of the human person, body and soul, is recreated by God, is made new in the Resurrection. This represents a supreme value placed on the human person. The Resurrection can and should be seen then as the ultimate power and triumph of God and by that power and triumph we are worth redeeming.

We have already begun to address the second reason our bodies being made in God’s image matters for our theology of the resurrection; it shows that our bodies and souls, while they may be separated for a time, are meant to be brought back together. As we’ve seen this plays out in modern theology with claims that at death the soul and body separate and the body goes to the ground and the soul goes to heaven/to God/some other place and at the last day the body and soul

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394 As seen in people such as Justin Martyr, see We Believe in One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church ed. Angelo DiBerardino ed. Ancient Christian Doctrine Vol 5, ed Thomas C. Oden, (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 153.


396 Cullman, “The Immortality of the Soul,” 19. Here it is also worth remembering that the resurrection of the Soul is because of Christ’s bodily resurrection.
are reunited for the final judgement.\textsuperscript{397} “The concept of death and resurrection is anchored in the Christ-event…and hence is incompatible with the Greek belief in immortality…”\textsuperscript{398} We can hold that the body and soul separate but the ultimate Christian claim is that the body and soul must reunite at the end of time for judgement because even if the soul exists without a body, a \textit{person} is understood to exist only with a body.\textsuperscript{399}

These two claims encapsulate other claims about the redemption of our bodies and its importance at the resurrection. These are the claims made in the chapter pervious to this about why bodies are important. We will now work to ask and answer those questions considering the resurrection and its importance. The body, as we have seen in chapter three, is the person who is a member of the body of Christ through baptism. The \textit{person} is made a member of the body of Christ, they are claimed, body and soul, together. It shows that fundamentally a person needs their body because it is a fundamental part of their personness. The link between baptism and funeral is clear and has been shown already. Bodies matter because without them we are not people and thus are not redeemable and able to be resurrected. Bodies are people and people, through baptism, are made members of Christ’s body and wait in the hope of the resurrection. In other words, baptism provides the “who” for the resurrection.

We next get a thesis from the liturgy that the body is important because it is a temple of the soul/spirit. This of course needs to be tempered because if we are not careful it can and does go down the road of saying the body only matters because it houses the soul; it is of secondary importance.\textsuperscript{400} The final “little” thing is that the body is important because it shows us that Jesus

\begin{footnotes}
\item[397] Long, \textit{Accompany Them With Singing}, 47.
\item[398] Cullmann, “The Immorality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead”, 9.
\item[400] However, it also makes it clear that because of this the body needs to be taken care of.
\end{footnotes}
is the pattern for the rest of us. This leads us to the second reason that the resurrection is important, that makes the promise given by Jesus true.

In a discussion of 1 Corinthians 15:23, Kremer is speaking about the “first fruits” language in Paul, that “Jesus, therefore, did not rise from dead for himself alone. Just as the first-fruits are only the first part of the harvest and not the whole, so too it is with his resurrection. It is not an isolated event…” Gregory Lockwood explains it in the following way: “For Paul, Christ’s resurrection is inseparably connected to the future resurrection of Christians; they are two sides of the same coin. Through Baptism Christians have become members of Christ’s own body (1 Cor 12:13). Consequently, the bodily resurrection of Jesus guarantees the resurrection of the believers’ body”—a “resurrection body”. In other words, Christ’s resurrection is the pattern of our own bodily resurrection. This is the second reason that the Resurrection matters, it makes the promise true. The promise is that just as Christ, so too us. In other words, Christ’s resurrection, in matter and form, is a foretaste, a promise and pledge of what is to come for those on earth. More than that, it is the promise that we, through Christ’s death, also participate in his death and resurrection: “…the mystery of human death is a participation in Christ’s death and Resurrection”.

This is the promise that is made first in baptism, “We thank you, Father, for the water of Baptism. In it we are buried with Christ in his death. By it we share in his resurrection.” And is made good at the funeral liturgy, as seen liturgically in the links to baptism with the funeral pall, the paschal candle, the petition in the prayers of the people, “Our brother (sister) was

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402 Gregory J. Lockwood, 1 Corinthians, Concordia Commentary, (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2000), 564.
403 What that body actually looks like is almost of no matter. However, it seems to follow from Christ’s own pattern that we will have a recognizable body cf Luke 24. Christ is embodied but not immediately recognizable all the time. He still holds the scars of His Passion so everything from His life on earth is not “done away with” or something like that.
404 Prokes, Toward a Theology of the Body, 159.
405 BCP, 306.
washed in Baptism and anointed with the Holy Spirit; give him fellowship with all your saints”\textsuperscript{406} and “Lord Jesus Christ, we commend to you our brother (sister) N., who was reborn by water and the Spirit in Holy Baptism. Grant that his death may recall to us your victory over death, and be an occasion for us to renew our trust in your Father’s love. Give us, we pray, the faith to follow where you have led the way; and where you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, to the ages of ages.”\textsuperscript{407} Baptism gives the promise of new life in Christ and the funeral promises its fulfillment. Baptism is the making of a Christian and the funeral is the completion of a Christian journey and is the final expression, in this world, of Christian hope. This is what Irion was driving at when he said that the meaning of the Christian funeral is the hope for the resurrection,\textsuperscript{408} it is not just that Christians have some pie in the sky hope of a future resurrection, but rather, that hope is firmly rooted in the promises made at baptism and are enacted one last time at the funeral.\textsuperscript{409}

The resurrection matters because Christ is revealed as the first, not the only, fruit. Christians have been promised a resurrection like Christ’s and Christ’s resurrection was bodily. In fact, as Lockwood argues from Paul, Christ can only be raised from the dead if, in fact, there is a resurrection of the dead.\textsuperscript{410} In short, if we believe Christ was raised from the dead, it means that the resurrection of the dead must be possible, and that possibility becomes a pattern for us to follow in Christ.\textsuperscript{411}

The Resurrection matters because it makes plain the promise of the goodness of our bodies and therefore of their redemption and it makes good on the promise that Christ is the first fruits,
the pattern, for us all after death. Denial of the resurrection then ultimately makes our bodies not worthy of redemption and makes God a liar.

2.2 How are we denying the Resurrection?

If, as we have seen, the claim on the theology of the Resurrection, rests in the presence the body at the funeral, to not have the body can and does fundamentally call into question that theology. As we have seen the growing trend is to not have a body or even cremated remains present at the funeral.\footnote{Long, *Accompany Them With Signing*, 57-58.} This must be viewed with what was discussed in the previous chapter regarding the body being the thing that ensures the Episcopal Church’s funeral liturgy still acknowledges the bodily resurrection. It follows then that if the body is no longer present then it becomes very difficult, if not impossible, for the funeral liturgy to, in everything but verbal proclamation, preach the bodily resurrection.\footnote{While this might seem like an important distinction, we don’t say we deny the bodily resurrection and so therefore we still believe it, the premise that this thesis works from, that the liturgy itself is the primary way in which the church speaks theology, to have a liturgy that “says” something, in this case, that there is no bodily resurrection, does more damage than if it was preached in the pulpit.} We then further deny not just our resurrection, but Christ’s.\footnote{See again Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, 563.} If Christ’s resurrection is the pattern of our own, to deny the bodily resurrection of us on earth, undermines/denies the claims we make about Christ’s Resurrection.

2.3 Why does this matter?

We’ve seen why denying Christ’s resurrection could be problematic, but that does not necessarily mean that the bodily resurrection of the rest of us is something so fundamentally important.\footnote{Although we have seen the circular and interrelatedness of these two events so is it even possible to say that one is not important?} We have seen that the Resurrection matters because it shows that our bodies matter, now we will look to see why that claim itself is so fundamentally important -- why does it matter that our bodies were and are redeemed? We will then more to see what the implications are when we talk about God and His promise. Once those basic theological questions are examined we will
look to see why the bodily resurrection is important from a more practical standpoint, concluding with a look at the confusion that is caused when the liturgy seems to say one thing and the Church says another.

The first and perhaps farthest reaching reason why the Resurrection of the body matters is because it is tied up so closely in how we understand personhood. The link between baptism and the funeral depends, in large part, on this understanding. A person must be more than just a body and more than just a soul. At baptism, the whole person is claimed for Christ and the Church. Through baptism then we see that the person is clearly linked to the body, and any attempt to devalue the body ultimately devalues the human person. This becomes important in our discussion because as we have seen, a theology that just advances the idea of a resurrection of the soul is one that ultimately separates the body and soul. That separation of body and soul leads to a devaluing of the body which ultimately leads to a devaluing of the human person.

The devaluing of the human person is a huge issue because of what it ultimately says about God. Perhaps most importantly, it makes God a liar. We’ve already seen how this can and does work out in practice. We have seen liturgically and theologically how the person, body and soul, is created good by God. To devalue the human person is to ultimately devalue the Incarnation of Christ and the salvation that we are promised because of it (and His Resurrection). If the human person were not of value one of two things must hold true. Either, we are not worth saving at all and thus there is no point in saving work of God through Christ. That seems to say then that humanity could be body and soul but somehow, some part of that human package is not worth salvation. We know that is not the case; we have seen the liturgical and theological proclamations of the church through Baptism, Easter, and the Funeral liturgies. The other option suggests that humanity might be worth saving but only part of us. This would hold that humanity

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is worth saving if the body, the material part, is cast aside. In other words, the material is devalued. This means in practice that God could choose to save our souls but would also mean that the Incarnation makes no sense because if matter is bad and not worth redeeming, why become man, why become matter at all? This again we know is not the case, God came, as a human person, to redeem the whole of humanity, our bodies and our souls. So then, to deny the value of the whole human person ultimately makes God into something that he has shown he is not.

To devalue the human person then also calls into question all our other theological propositions and claims. That is because when the basic premise that man was and is created good by God, is undermined and devalued there is nothing left that Christianity can claim. It also calls into question the basic claims around the personhood of God and thus the Trinity; the potential implications here are too vast to detail but should be apparent to the reader.

The second reason why the resurrection of the body is of such importance is because it is tied up in how we understand God. Here though we will look at four specific ways that our understanding of God is tied up in the importance of the resurrection of the body. First, we understand God as good and as a creator who creates people and things in His image, thus, He creates people and things to be seen and understood as good. To deny that some part of the created order is not good, in this case the body, is to in some way deny God’s goodness. In other words, if the body is not viewed as good, then God cannot be all good or at least God cannot have His goodness transmit to a part of His created order. How does this matter for the

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417 Which is the core of the first issue already discussed.
418 The question can be raised of the nature and importance of the Fall and of sin. Did the Fall and sin cause something to change about the goodness of the human person? For the purposes of this thesis the answer is found simply in two places. First, the Incarnation shows us that even if we are sinful humans, we are still good and redeemed by God becoming one of us. Second is the idea and importance of baptism. Baptism understood as washing away original sin addresses this argument. Further, the claim that baptism allows for rebirth in the kingdom of God—even if that is not understood in relation to sin—seems to indicate that some change has happened and our relationship to sin, God, and the created order is different than it would have been otherwise.
419 Or will not, we will address this claim in a further point.
bodily resurrection? God, in His goodness, and because of ours, has promised us eternal life, eternal, embodied life.

This claim is the basis for the second and third ways we understand God in relation to the bodily resurrection: God keeps His promises and God wants to be in relationship with humanity. We have seen already that the resurrection is promised in the person of Christ. Christ’s resurrection is to be viewed as the pattern and promise of our own. If we understand God as being a God who keeps promises then it stands to reason that the bodily resurrection is a given and is important. To deny the goodness of the body and the bodily resurrection then creates a God who does not keep promises. This leads us to the third way we understand God and that is we understand God as wanting to have a relationship with humanity.

That God wants to be in relationship with us is often viewed as an argument for the Incarnation. That is most assuredly true, but there is another way to look at it and that is the relationship that is achieved because of the Resurrection. The Incarnation shows us that God wants to be in relationship with us on a human level, and the resurrection shows and promises us that that relationship does not end at death. If the Incarnation shows us that God wants to know us as embodied, it stands to reason that that reality and relationship should continue after death. God chooses to know us, at least in part, in our embodied, physical selves. Why would that change at death? Further, we are told that Christ is in heaven as an embodied person (and will return as an embodied person); if our death and resurrection is patterned after Christ, it stands to reason that we will hopefully be in heaven as Christ is. We understand God to keep his

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420 We’ve also already made the connection between that promise and the goodness of God. However, to reiterate, the resurrection of Christ happened because of the need for God to redeem His good creation and God did it because creation was and is Good. Moreover, it happened by means of Christ becoming man because of the goodness of the human person and our material form.

421 We’ve already mentioned and will again this idea of God as a liar and how it is problematic.


423 This is why the reference to the ascension as opposed to the Resurrection. It is one thing to say that Jesus appeared on earth again as a man, but quite another to say that he reigns in heaven as an embodied person.
promises, and one of those promises is that He has a relationship with humanity. The bodily resurrection is one of those promises that is made in part because of God’s desire for relationship. To deny the bodily resurrection or to say it does not matter then calls into question God’s promise of relationship.

The final aspect we will examine now is the fact that we understand God not to be, if one allows, a jerk. This is somewhat of a summative statement regarding the four reasons we have looked at. We understand God to be a God who really does keep promises, who really does value the human person, who really does want relationships. This goes beyond the idea that God is not a liar because it says that God would not create a system where He would have to lie. In other words, it seems that everything else we have said has to hold true because if it didn’t God would, quite simply, be a jerk.

3 Pastoral Implications

To try and separate out the pastoral from the theological and liturgical is a complicated endeavor at best.\textsuperscript{424} The first issue that must be addressed is one of function and definition; what is the role of the funeral and what role does the body play in it?

The body is necessary at a funeral because a funeral is concerned with the dead. This becomes even more clear when we see and understand what the funeral is called in the Episcopal Church: The Burial of The Dead. How does one bury the dead if the dead aren’t there to be buried? Put simply, “A funeral is by definition, what we do with the body. It is about the weight of the body, its gravitas, and the bearing of the weight by others as they carry the dead to the place of disposition. It is not a sing-a-long, a prayer meeting, a therapy session, or a memory

\textsuperscript{424} The reader who has been paying attention might recall a line in the opening part of this thesis saying that the pastoral was not the concern of it. That is still true. However, it was also said that sometimes the pastoral and the theological are so linked that they cannot be separated. That is the case here.
exercise.”

This reality of course impacts the living, but the point of it all is to deal with the dead body. That is what makes the funeral unique.

With this is the long-standing idea that we are a people who need to deal with death by dealing with the body, to deny that is to deny something fundamental about the human project. Ours is a species that deals with death (the idea, the concept, the human condition) by dealing with the dead (the thing itself, in the flesh, the corpse). Whatever our responses to death might be-intellectual, philosophical, religious, ritual, social, emotional, cultural, artistic, and so forth-they are firstly and undeniably connected to the embodied remnant of the person who was. And conjured by symbol and metaphor, photo and recording, our allegiance and our primary obligations ought to be the to the real rather than the virtual dead. Inasmuch as a death in the family is primarily occasioned by the presence of a corpse, the emergent, immediate, collective, and purposeful response to that emergency is what a funeral is. In short, a funeral responds to the signature human concern, to wit, what to do about a dead human.

Thus, the presence of the dead is an essential, definitive element of a funeral. Funerals differ from all other commemorative events in that the presence of the dead and their subsequent disposition are primary concerns.

The basic claim here is that we have misunderstood what the point of a funeral is. As we learned in the opening chapter of this thesis, the word “funeral” has become a bit of a catch all and now actually means in practice what should be called a memorial service. This is problematic because it means that we are ascribing function to the wrong liturgy. A memorial service serves to memorialize a person and that can be done in any number of ways. The problem comes when a funeral is used just to memorialize; that is not its function. It becomes worse when we take the burial office even at face value. How do you bury a person who is not there? There have been movements to create liturgies for memorial services in the Episcopal Church, but the

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fact remains that the official service to deal with a death in the Episcopal Church is the Burial of The Dead. The point of the Burial of the Dead, as we have seen, is to put the dead in the ground. If we call a funeral a funeral and we have no body, then we aren’t doing the burial of the dead, we are doing something else. That is not to say that the something else is bad or less than. There are wonderful ways to memorialize a person, but that is not what the Church is seeking to do in the burial rite.

This is more than just a bit linguistic gymnastics though. As we have observed in the discussion on the importance of the liturgy, words matter. What we call things and how they are categorized matters a great deal. The Episcopal Church might want to one day reject the claims made by those like Long and Lynch, but as long as the ritual actions, by their very title and content, still assume a body for burial, we must take claims made about the importance of the body very seriously.

For Long and Lynch the implication is clear, to be human is to deal with death in an embodied way. We can try our hardest to ignore that a person has died, but that doesn’t change the fact that even denial must be rooted in the truth of embodied death. They go a step further when they attempt to articulate implications for this view of the funeral: “What happens, or doesn’t happen, to the bodies of the dead tells us much about what we believe about life and death, what we think of ourselves as a society”.428

This is the clear link back to the theological claims we have been making. How we treat the dead body tells us something fundamental about how we view the living. Long and Lynch continue:

Our society has forgotten what to do with the dead and persuaded itself that this amnesia is a sign of health and freedom. But the truth is that a people who cannot care for the dead and accompany them to a place of farewell are a

427 As a means of talking about the burial of the dead.
people with diminished ability to care for the living and to join with others in communities of trust and meaning. If we cannot walk with the dead in hope, it is because we have lost our bearings in life. We become afraid of death, smoothing over our wrinkles with creams and injecting our bodies with Botox to keep its reality at bay.  

The bodies of the dead are important at funerals because they ground the claims we make not just on individual personhood, but on the whole of the goodness of the created order and its progress in life and death. It ultimately impacts the claims we make on the goodness of God. If we are created good by God, that means the natural progression of things, as God has allowed them to be, must be good as well and any attempt to deny that progress ultimately denies the goodness of God in the created order—a gnostic departure with its ultimate conclusion being that bodies, that people, are inconvenient and do not matter.

Having the body at a funeral is the one final act that the church can do, not for the person in some spiritual sense, but in a very practical way. The rites of the church around the body relate, as we have seen, to two theological truths, the Incarnation and the Resurrection. Both claims are based on the idea of the goodness of the human person. Having a body at the funeral then is a way to ground those claims. Not just liturgically and theologically, but in a real, practical, pastoral sense. In a sense that demands the church look its members in the eye once more; it demands that the church understand that as uncomfortable as the dead might make us, they are a fundamental part of the Body of Christ.

4 Liturgical Implications

If at this point you have agreed with the methodological program of this thesis, the placement of this implication might seem a bit unusual. The overarching claim, made even pages before this, has been that liturgy is the guiding force of what happens in the church, both

theologically and practically. Why then has it come after both the theology and the practical considerations and implications? The answer is simple; it is to further prove the point. We have already seen to some extent the impact the liturgy has the other implications. It also helps to frame the greater discussion if we know the parameters going in.

There are three main liturgical reasons, in addition to the original practical need to deal decently with the body, to have a body present at a funeral, all three arguments are based on claims that have been made throughout this thesis on the nature and import of the liturgy. While we will attempt to separate each reason to discuss individually, we must be aware that they can often all blend together.

First, without the body there is confusion, or at least the potential for confusion. There are two places where I want to draw out that confusion. The first is simply based on title. The name of the liturgy that deals with the dead in the Episcopal Church is the “Burial of the Dead.” While it is true that many churches seem to be going away from the Prayer Book and instead have leaflets that lay out the whole of the event, it nevertheless holds that if someone were to open the Book of Common Prayer they would see that the Church still thinks the normative way to deal with a dead person is to bury them. This is important to keep in mind. Titles help frame conversations, to have a title, a name, for something that does not match up with what is done in the rite serves to sow confusion.

The second issue of confusion is the liturgy itself; it assumes that there is a body. The rubrics titled “Concerning the Service” even tell us that us that this liturgy is about burying the dead. There is another very interesting place this comes up. In the section titled “An Order for

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430 As a rather significant side note, the standard alternative service book, Enriching Our Worship, also still calls this rite “Burial”.

431 BCP, 490. Baptized Christians are properly buried from the church” and “It is customary that the celebrant meet the body and go before it into the church or towards the grave.” While these doesn’t actually say “We bury bodies from the Church” they strongly indicate that the goal of what is about to happen is to put a body in the ground.
Burial” we read the following introduction and first rubric: “When, for pastoral considerations, neither of the burial rites in this Book is deemed appropriate, the following form is used. 1. The body is received. The celebrant may meet the body and conduct it into the church or chapel, or it may be in place before the congregation assembles.” What this tells us is that while the words might be up for discussion, while even questions on coverings for the casket might be debatable, the body is required. We see this idea is just furthering what we have already discussed; issues of the rubrics around meeting the body, covering the body, walking in front of the body and even some of the prayer texts themselves. The confusion here would be quite simple, anyone could read those rubrics and if the body is not there, wonder why not.

The fact is that while very little is actually done to the body at the Burial of the Dead, the body still matters. It still has a place in the liturgical practice of the Burial of the Dead. What is significant about that claim is that it is saying that the body doesn’t just come into place and importance at the end of the funeral, at the commendation or committal; rather, it is given importance from the beginning. Practically what this also means is that even if you are not going to bury the body right away, you still need to have it.

The confusion then could stem from the fact that having the body present leaves these rubrics and prayers empty and meaningless. Now, again a person might be able to say that the rubrics can be ignored and perhaps not even published. However, there is another presenting issue. The problem with some people ignoring rubrics is that other people don’t. It is then

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432 BCP, 506.
433 For examples incense and holy water which are standard and required at Catholic Funerals, are not in the Episcopal Church.
434 You could claim that the body only matters in the beginning because it has to get out the door at the end, but that doesn’t seem to work because if that were true the rubrics could just allow for not having the body until it is ready to go into the ground at the cemetery. In other words, the ritual could completely ignore the body, but it doesn’t.
435 Which as we have seen is possible but the rite still prefers in many ways to have the body buried immediately.
436 It is here we get questions on the order of things, for example, if cremation is allowed and practiced, should it happen after the rites of the church so that the body itself can be present?
possible that a person go to one funeral where the rubrics are ignored and another where they aren’t. This can easily create confusion over which is “correct” because, as we have seen, saying both work is not something that is compatible with the theologies as presented in the book.

The question then is why is this confusion fundamentally a bad thing? There is a twofold answer that will become more clear in the next two sections when we look at liturgy as pedagogy and liturgy as foundational to the Episcopal Church. Confusion is damaging because the liturgy is pedagogical, it teaches people things. In our case for this thesis, it teaches about the theology of the resurrection. Theology can be a confusing area for people to understanding; the liturgy, in part, is tasked with making it something that Mary Jo Pewsitter can understand and participate in. The issue should be clear then, if the liturgy cannot speak clearly, then it cannot articulate a clear theology. Thus, it has failed in its teaching function, which also ultimately means it fails pastorally as well.

This becomes more problematic when we look at the second answer. Liturgy is not just pedagogical in an abstract way, it is theological pedagogy and more than that, it is the only way Episcopalians can have any claim to a theological teaching. If the liturgy is confused, we teach bad theology. Confused liturgy leads to confused theology, and that leads to confused Christians. If Episcopalians truly believe the claims they make in the Burial of the Dead -- that the resurrection is a pattern that we will all hope to participate in -- then it is paramount that that theology is articulated properly. The only way Episcopalians can articulate theology is through the liturgy. Therefore, when the liturgy is confused, the theology becomes confused and confusion leads to bad theology.

We can now turn to the second liturgical reason having a body present is important. This is the idea that we’ve already hinted at: the liturgy is first theology. For this particular example, we must look at how this plays out considering the theological implications we have covered. We
are not concerned here so much with the confusion we have already looked at, but rather, what happens if we grant all the theology and its implications that have discussed. We’ve seen how liturgy is the means by which we express and articulate theology. Therefore, if the Episcopal Church actually holds to a theology of the Resurrection and human personhood that has been articulated in this thesis, then it stands to reason that it must have the liturgy to express that as well. The body matters for the liturgy because the body grounds the theological expression in a unique and unavoidable way. Without it, the liturgy fails at articulating sound and engaging theology.

The final liturgical reason is one we have hinted at but not stressed in regards to how fundamental and important the claim is. Liturgy truly is all that Episcopalians have. We have already argued in chapter one why this is the case, but the implication here is important. We have seen that there are conflicting theological statements coming from all corners of the Episcopal Church. As we have seen, all Episcopalians have in common is the Prayer Book, is the liturgy. Therefore, while the Church can pontificate and promulgate, when there is confusion it is to the Prayer Book that Episcopalians turn. This can and does create confusion, but it need not. The confusion stems from statements being made and theology being expressed that does not follow our methodology, which is the only one that ensures some amount of continuity and stability in the theology. Liturgy then provides the check on theology.

As we look to determine why a body matters at a funeral, we see that the answer is a liturgical one with deep theological implications. The body present at the funeral tells us that the person matters to the ecclesial community. The liturgical dealings with the body are ones of respect and reverence. That is the case because of the theological truth the liturgy is expressing:

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437 We’ve been down this road before in this chapter and before in the thesis, the idea that liturgy is the expression of the theological truths. What we are doing here is somewhat of a back engineering of the idea.
438 And we have not even looked every place they could be found!
439 We will have to discuss what happens when the liturgy itself seems to contradict itself.
the body is good because it is patterned on Christ, in both his birth and his resurrection. Christ’s body and his resurrection are patterns for us.
Chapter 5
Conclusion: Did we prove it?

One of the clearest and most needed reforms in the funeral practices of many Christian communities is the honoring of the bodies of the deceased. The Christian dead should be welcomed once again to their own funerals.\textsuperscript{440}

We bury for the sake of both the living and the dead. For the sake of the living, lest their eyes by revolted by the disfigurement of the corpse, and their bodies be infected by the stench, and this as regards the body. But it profits the living also spiritually in so far as our belief in the resurrection is affirmed thereby. It profits the dead in so far as one bears the dead in mind and prays for them through looking on their burial place.\textsuperscript{441}

The dead belong at their funeral. The body of the departed is more than just a funeral prop. It is more than just quaint, and possibly creepy, tradition. It is more than just a means of catharsis for those who are mourning. Rather, it is the reflection of the reason, of the whole Christian message, that Christ was born, died, and rose and that His Resurrection is the pattern and promise for all of humanity.\textsuperscript{442}

This thesis worked to show that the body is of paramount importance in the Episcopal Church’s funeral liturgy. It went so far to say that without it, the church and her members have the potential to, albeit unintentionally in most cases, to deny fundamental claims of Christian theology around the Resurrection. This was done by providing a link between theology and liturgical expression, arguing that liturgy is in fact the highest form of theology, and thus embodies the theological truths of the tradition. Therefore, this thesis concluded that the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{440} Long, \textit{Accompany Them With Singing}, 35
\item \textsuperscript{442} Or possibly just all the humanity that chooses to believe in Him, we will have to leave that debate for another day.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
liturgical requirement for a body to be present is expressing and informing the theological truth of the Resurrection, both of Christ and of humanity. However, it has been impossible to take up all the questions that might arise from this course of investigation. Nevertheless, it seems prudent to take up a few questions that may have gone unanswered or assumptions that have gone unchallenged until this point.

1. **“All Plays Need Stage Directions” or the importance of rubrics**

   The first consideration we will take up is one that shaped the whole liturgical and theological program of the thesis --- that is the importance of rubrics. While we looked at this briefly to say that the rubrics are good things and we should follow them, we left hanging the idea that not all rubrics have the same authority. If you recall, one of the rubrics that this thesis hangs its theological hat on is the one that is found at the end of the rites for the dying: “The following form may be used at whatever time the body is brought to the church. The Celebrant meets the body at the door of the church and says…” If one grants the theological work done in this thesis, it is not hard to see that it all in some way hinges on this claim, that the body itself must be in the church. Then, if some rubrics are more important than other rubrics, this one seems fundamental.

   Marion Hatchett argues for the importance of rubrics by arguing that the meaning of a rite is clarified in the rubrics themselves. If one wants to know what the rite is getting at then it is important to give the rubrics as much attention (and perhaps more) than the prayer texts.

   The final authority is the BCP [For what Episcopalians believe]. This means primarily the texts of the rites, but the meaning of the texts is often elucidated or clarified by the rubrics. Many of the rubrics are instructive rather than, or as well as, being directive... The church’s teaching about the meaning of Christian burial is most

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443 *BCP*, 466.
clearly set forth in the final rubric or note at the end of the rites.\footnote{Marion J. Hatchett, “What is a Rubric?” Sewanee Theological Review 51:4 (Michaelmas, 2008), 376.}

The rubrics Hatchett’s argument can be applied first to are found in the “Concerning the Service” section of the Burial of The Dead\footnote{This section is on page 490 in the Prayer Book. The question might arise what about the “Notes” on page 509 in “The Order for Burial”, are those not equally rubrics that this passage could be applied to? The short answer is yes, they serve the function of Rubrics and their themes, the Paschal nature of the funeral, the promise of Christ, and the role of grief, are addressed to varying degrees in this thesis. However, two things are worth noting. First, they are not the first set of rubrics for the funeral liturgy, they practically come after the service. This is seen in the fact that the set of rubrics directly addressed here are titled “Concerning the Service” which leads one to conclude that they are the ones that are directly concerned with practical questions on how to conduct the funeral. Second, is the content of the “Notes” themselves. They are concerned with the overarching theology of the rite, which, as we have seen and are still examining, is also taken up in an examination of the other rubrics. In other words, the “notes” seem to be a summative statement of the theology, which, if we have done our reading correctly and fairly, we have already discovered and concluded.} and while we have discussed these rubrics before, it bears repeating that there are three rubrics that show quite clearly that the body is not an optional bit of decoration at the funeral. The first is the rubric that says the coffin must be closed.\footnote{It has also been used to apply to urns/boxes with cremains so this rubric on its own might not be enough to prove the point. Although, it is worth remembering that a casket is only a casket if it is for a body.} This simply indicates that there must be a coffin and coffins hold bodies.

It also shows quite clearly that while the texts of the rite provide theological understanding, the rubrics do as well. That means that when we look to make theological statements about the Prayer Book and Episcopal belief, we cannot look just at the prayers, we must also look just as closely, if not more so, at the rubrics themselves. It is not then that some rubrics are more important than others, but rather, that all rubrics are fundamental in understanding the theological claims made in the Prayer Book.\footnote{BCP, 490.} The other two rubrics of note deal directly and explicitly with the body: “It is customary that the celebrant meet the body and go before it into the church or towards the grave.” And “The anthems at the beginning of the service are sung or said as the body is borne into the church, or during the entrance of the ministers, or by the celebrant standing in the accustomed place.”\footnote{BCP, 490.} As we have discussed, there are many optional
parts in each of these rubrics, but the body is not optional. If we then follow what Hatchett says, that these rubrics include the clearest teaching of the Church we can conclude two things. First, the body belongs to the rites of the Church. It is not just that the church provides a space for the body, but that the body has a role to play in the rites of the church. The body has something to do with what happens in the rites and theology of the church. When we ask what the Church teaches about burial, we see that Christian burial is an embodied act, it involves the totality of the human person-body and soul.

If one follows Hatchett, it becomes clear then not just that the body is a good thing to have at the funeral, or even that it matters in some vague sense, but rather that the claim made in this thesis is true, that the body matters in the burial of the dead because it is essential to the church’s teaching about burial and understanding of the human person before God. Hatchett attempts to explain the importance of rubrics for the church, “For American Episcopalians the Prayer Book is not a smorgasbord or cafeteria offering from which to pick and choose but a medical plan or a diet that one is to follow for one’s soul’s health and for the unity and health of the congregation and of the whole church.” The Prayer Book contains an all-or-nothing sort of liturgy. It is not something that can be cherry picked, because the liturgy, it its totality, tells a cohesive theological story; if a page is removed from that story, then the whole theological program suffers. If liturgy is understood through its rubrics, it becomes clear that changing the liturgy, or not following its precepts, could be hugely problematic: "Liturgy expresses what Christians believe. To change the liturgy therefore runs the risk of changing doctrine—or at least those

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449 And, as should be very clear by now, a lot more too, Resurrection and Incarnation not the least of those things.
450 Hatchett, “What is a Rubric?”, 376.
doctrines which worshippers regularly hear and absorb and which become part of their Christian identity."

If there was any doubt that this thesis was overstating the importance of the rubrics that should be put to rest. Rubrics are of fundamental importance because they shape the theology of the liturgy just as much as the texts of the prayers themselves. Furthermore, to not adhere to the rubrics damages the theology, the doctrine of the Church. This becomes hugely problematic when the theological question is a central one of the Resurrection, and the importance of the Incarnation.

2 The role of society

The next area that has some unexplored assumptions is the role of society. There are two questions to explore here. The first is if there is actually a change going on in society, a preference away from funerals with the body present and the second is if such a change is impacting the liturgical expression of the Episcopal Church; a subsection of that question is if that impact is actually a “bad” thing.

Lynch and Long have been referenced throughout this thesis to show that there does seem to be some societal shift away from church funerals with the body present. The claim is that we are ultimately in a culture that denies death. “The denial of death is evident in our language. We speak about people as having “passed on” or “expired.” Death is denied medically and with technological expertise; it is a problem to be solved, not something natural to be approached.”

The question though is not is there a denial of death in society, but rather, is this in any way a shift from what has been in the past? While most people don’t actively seek death, it true that for

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most of history we dealt with it in a different way than we do now? Long argues that there is a clear shift that is going on:

American Christians, along with the rest of American culture, have become increasingly confused and conflicted about healthy ways to commemorate death. Funeral practices are in a windstorm of change, and old customs are being abandoned right and left, but the new Christian funeral liturgies don’t seem to factor much into the equation.453

We’ve already looked at Long’s account of what the last 50 years of memorializing the dead looks like—a shift to the individual and away from the communal, culminating of course in questions about the importance of the body. He then posits that maybe this shift is happening because people no longer think and understand that “funerals are about the embodied person who has died”.454 Whatever the actual reasoning for it is, it seems to hold that in Western Society we are in the business of avoiding death, in part because “direct experience with death and dying has disappeared for many members of society…” and because of that “…ordinary people’s direct experience with death and dying as human transitions has decreased, with the result that people have little opportunity to learn how to handle themselves in these situations”.455

The Church then occupies an interesting spot. The goal of the liturgy is to express theological truths, even if those truths seem to fly in the face of what society is advocating. Aidan Kavanagh addresses this issue when he argues “The liturgy of the assembly is always a local act but is never particularized as the sole possession of the local group…Adapting liturgy to culture invariably results in liturgy’s demise. Adapting culture to liturgy is thus the only

Society and culture are ultimately local in their understanding and the church and her liturgy are called to be above the particular localities of culture.

The role of the Burial Office then occupies an important place when it comes to the Church’s role in being counter-cultural. The Burial Office requires that the living come face to face with the dead. The dead are seen in their full physicality. When liturgy is done correctly, it is impossible for the body to be avoided and disregarded. Pastorally, the liturgy allows a space for people to learn to deal with death. If the claim is true that Western people do not know how to behave around death because they are not afforded the opportunity and then avoid it when they are, the Burial Office provides space to be uncomfortable with death. As we have seen looking over the prayers, there are many prayers for the mourning that allow the Church to meet the living in the midst of grief, sadness, and uncertainty. However, those prayers and that reality is always tempered with the theological hope of the Resurrection that is preached by the liturgy.

Kavanagh raises the idea that allowing culture to shape the liturgy to any great effect, will lead to the demise of the liturgy. This is a rather hefty claim, made more so when coupled with the claim of this thesis that the liturgy itself is the primary mode of theological instruction for the people. If the liturgy then suffers because it is too influenced by current and local culture, then ultimately the teaching of the Church suffers.

The assumption of this thesis has been that the church ought not to embrace these cultural shifts and changes and in doing so will cause, in Kavanagh’s words “liturgy’s demise.” The question is then is that assumption correct? And more than that is it correct in two ways, is it correct that it ought not to and is it correct that the lack of a body at a funeral is actually an embracing of these cultural norms?

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458 Kavanagh, Elements of Rite, 98 and 108.
The answer to the first question is one that has already been made clear through the thesis. The Church ought not to embrace this cultural shift or understanding because it harms the liturgy of the church and thus harms its theology. More than that however, as we have seen, the Church is called to be counter-cultural in this respect. The bigger question and on-going assumption is if the presence of the body really matters as much as this thesis claims it does. Put another way, if you grant everything that has been said thus far, is the presence of the body really the way to fix or prevent the problem?

The answer to this question has been addressed in part, but warrants perhaps more depth. The body is what grounds the theological understanding in the funeral, we need look no further than Marion Hatchett’s own claims in this chapter. Therefore, a body is fundamental and any deviation from that can only be seen as giving in to outside forces. However, there is perhaps more to it than that. We have looked at the link between the Incarnation and the body, basing it on the idea that the body is created and stays good even at its lowest, ugliest point in death. The problem, as we have seen, is that the culture we live in is one that is ultimately trying not to look at death, trying to not engage it. However, the Incarnation and the Resurrection both demand that we look at the death of each person and treat them with the care and respect due a member of the Body of Christ and that is properly reflective of our theology. In this way the body’s presence at the funeral provides a corrective to modern cultural death avoidance, it demands that the body be treated with respect, that it be welcomed again into the community that sent it out in baptism, that it be honored for who it is. To do that means we cannot avoid the fact they are dead, to do that requires that the dead be welcomed, not as guests, but as full members of the community.

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457 It cannot be stressed enough however that we are talking about the choice to not have a body at a funeral. As we have seen, there are pastoral options the Church has for the body not being present and those should be used when there is no choice but to not have the body (if it is lost at sea, in an explosion, or something of that sort).
The negative part of the answer is where things might get a bit more complicated. In the options for the funeral liturgy, where we have seen that some interesting theology can live, theology that does not support the theological understanding we are advocating for. Further, as noted, not everyone follows the rubrics, if they did this would not be a discussion. The problem is the body can actually have no part in the funeral, a committal is not required and burial is not always the logical next step in the burial office. The body alone does not fix these issues, although it does mitigate them. The solution to this problem will be examined toward the end of the conclusion, but is one that is rooted in a memorial service, not a funeral.

A logical outgrowth of this question is another assumption that hasn’t been dealt with at all. The reason the body is not present at a funeral is a matter of choice. For most people this is clearly the case. However, it is not always a matter of choice: The Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, September 11, 2001, the Malaysian Airlines disappearance in 2014, and other disasters, or just disappearances of people, make it at times impossible for loved ones to have a body to bury. If the theological claims of this thesis are correct then they ought not to have a funeral because to have one would invite all the theological implications already outlined. The answer to this pastoral issue is actually what will lead us into the next section of this chapter and an examination of questions and areas for further research.

3 Further Questions

3.1 What If There Is No Body?

This is perhaps the question. As has already been said, this thesis assumes that the body is an option, that there is actually a body to bring to the funeral. However, there are issues of practicality that must be looked at. People are not living close to home and it stands to reason pastorally and theologically that there might be a reason and a desire to bury the body in one
place and to have something, some sort of service, for the person in another place. As it stands right now, the only option in the *Book of Common Prayer* is the Burial Office.

Nevertheless, the question of what to do when there is no body is partially answered in the Burial of the Dead itself. The committal prayer is one that seems to acknowledge that bodies might not always be present:

> In sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ, we commend to Almighty God our *brother N.*, and we commit *his* body to the ground;* earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. The Lord bless *him* and keep *him*, the Lord make his face to shine upon *him* and be gracious to *him*, the Lord lift up his countenance upon *him* and give *him* peace. *Amen.*

* Or the deep, or the elements, or its resting place.458

While this clearly can mean that the body is actually ashes and is being scattered or buried at sea, it is easy to see how it can be and has been applied to situations where there is no body at all.459

So, there is liturgical space, the problem is that liturgical space rests in a liturgy that is telling a theological story about the Resurrection and Incarnation. A body is necessary to tell that story. The problem seems to be that the Episcopal Church’s funeral liturgy, what it calls the Burial of The Dead, is trying to be all things to all people. There seems to be a need for a differentiation: funerals, the burial of the dead, for those people who are to be buried, and a memorial service that serves to do just that, memorialize the departed in some way. The church clearly has a role to play in both of these areas, and some Christian traditions already separate the two things. If the Episcopal Church were to say that the ideal is a funeral but also recognize that sometimes a body is just not a possibility, and then allow for a different rite, the theological

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458 *BCP*, 501.
459 The 19287 Book of Common Prayer has a committal prayer that is specific for use for a burial at sea.
objections in this thesis would be avoided. We will turn then to a brief discussion on what a Memorial Service in the Episcopal Church might look like.

3.2 Memorial Service

The question now arises what might a memorial service look like and what kind of theology might it express. While it is not the place of this thesis to prescribe in any detail the finer points of what an Episcopal Church Memorial Service might look like, there are a few things we can glean from other liturgical sources and a few theological conclusions we can draw.

While we will discuss the status of alternative service books later in this chapter, they do provide some guidance when looking to see what a memorial service could look like. In the Burial Rite for Adults found in the alternative service book, *Enriching Our Worship*, we see a rubric that might provide some guidance. The service follows that same outline as the *Book of Common Prayer* but after the Sermon, in the Prayers section is the following rubric: “In memorial services, with no remains present, the Officiant ends the service with selections from Additional Prayers (pp. 70-78) or other sources, and a final blessing.”  

We see here a possible way to outline a memorial service: Opening Prayers/Collects that address the dead and the need for mourning, readings from Scripture, a homily and final prayers. Liturgically the prayers would have to focus on the mourning of the Church and the promise of heaven and the work of salvation done by Christ. In other words, it would be best to shift the focus, but in shifting it could still proclaim the Gospel.

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461 Enriching our Worship actually has its own set of problems if this is how it is used, but assuming for a moment that the theology is not one of bodily resurrection, this order could work. It is also worth a note that this way of doing things precludes the Eucharist, as do most other forms of “prayers of remembrance”.

462 The prayers would have to make some reference at some point to the bodily resurrection or just leave out the idea of resurrection all together, because to not reference it internally would create the problem we have already seen, the need for a body to ground the theology properly.
Another potentially fruitful place to look for ways to do a memorial service without a body is “A Rite for Mourning the Loss of a Pregnancy”. While this particular liturgy is for a very particular context, what it does show us is that it is possible to have a liturgy that acknowledges loss and death without a body being present. The goal of the liturgy is to allow for mourning. To that end it includes scripture readings and a litany of remembrance. What is also interesting is that there is a commendation prayer that is unique to this liturgy. What we see in this sort of liturgy is the idea that a memorial service should not just a be a funeral with a few bits changed around. It can and should be a standalone liturgy that addresses the situation the people gathered find themselves in. It is not a burial that is lacking a body, it is a wholly different service and should be treated as such.

There is also the Book of Common Prayer way, which allows for the changing of the words at the Committal, but otherwise keeps the liturgy the same as it is for every other burial office liturgy. The problem with this method has already been made clear, it is trying to do something the liturgy is not set up to do and in doing so creates an incomplete and messy theological statement.

There is also a liturgy that can be used for burial of a non-Baptized person and many people say to look there for alternative ways to have a burial service. This is absolutely the case,

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it still assumes burial and as such we will hold off looking at it until we examine other liturgical options for burial in the Episcopal Church.\footnote{This is not found in the Prayer Book itself, but as we have seen, the theology of the Church is one that links baptism and the burial of the dead. While this liturgy does not assume baptism, it still does assume the unbaptized person is getting buried. There is a great deal of interesting work that could be done here.}

When looking then at the idea of a memorial service there are few claims we can make about what it should be. First, it should be unique. That is to say that it should not be the burial office without a body. To try and do that would put us back in the same predicament that we have already looked at, the burial office needs a body, a memorial service does not. Further, a memorial service should be able to express and address the idea that it is lacking in some way. That does not mean that it needs to get up and publicly say that it is less than, but it is to say that it needs to express a theology that is incomplete and it needs to acknowledge that. More than that, from a pastoral perspective, it should acknowledge that the lack of a body, the lack of something to bury, has an impact of the life of the people gathered.\footnote{That is not to say however that it is impossible for the prayers to reflect the reality of a hope in the bodily resurrection, but we have also seen throughout this thesis why it is so important theologically to have a body to ground our Incarnational Theology.} This means liturgically we can see a place for prayers for the dead and the mourning, but without the body to ground them, it is not the same as the burial of the dead. The question might also arise here on what happens if there is both a funeral and a memorial service, would that change some of the thrust of the uniqueness? The answer, as far as this thesis will go, is maybe. It is worth noting that there are now services for remembrance that could be used as a sort of memorial service after the funeral. What we are mainly talking about here is the idea of a memorial service in place of a funeral.

4 Role of Liturgy

While people like Lee, Hatchett, and this thesis all agree that the grounding theological claims of the Church are expressed liturgically, there is still a great deal of work that needs to be done to see how that works “in the real world”. The question finds itself again first (but not
solely) rooted in the question of choice, is there too much of it for our liturgical methodology to work? Or, if it can work does it only work because we have selected a set of choices? Or perhaps even more simply, ought we be paying attention the choices at all? After examining the questions around choices we will look to a bigger methodological question—simply if our method is valid and works.

4.1 Choices

There are two areas where we see the idea of choices at work. The first is in the choices that the prayer book itself offers. When looking at these choices we will be examining questions about the overarching theological structure of the Burial Office. We will look to see if the choices help or hinder a quest for a theologically coherent understanding. We will then briefly look at the idea of choices as they exist in alternative service books and question what role, if any, they should play in the Burial Office.

4.2 The Book of Common Prayer

As we have seen as we looked over the Book of Common Prayer, there are choices when it comes to things such as Anthems, Collects, Readings, prayers in the Prayers of the People, prayers at the graveside, the list can and does go on. We have already seen how those choices can and do allow variants in the theological expression of the Burial Office itself. But is this variance something that is admirable? The answer, as one might be able to surmise from the work already done, is no. The problem with choices is not choices per se. The problem with choices is when the choices present a radically different theological understanding when done one way versus another. For a practical example, recall the discussion of the three choices of the opening collect: there at least two different theological claims made in those three collects. The fact that that can happen is problematic because it fragments any theological cohesion that the liturgy could have.
This does not, as has been said, mean choices themselves are not a worthy theological and liturgical pursuit. Issues of wording and emphasis can all be important pastoral considerations. The solution seems to be creating and offering choices that express the same theological truth perhaps just in different ways.

There is however also a thought that says choice is never a good idea liturgically. This way of thinking claims that uniformity is the best way to express a theological truth. It further argues that uniformity itself speaks a theological truth that cannot be found in a plurality of choices. The lack of choice, the uniformity of the liturgy expresses, in this view, the idea that all people are worth and due the same liturgy. It further expresses an idea that we are equal in the Church and in the eyes of God and that uniformity helps ensure that that theological truth is expressed. This becomes very apparent when we look at funerals. Perhaps the funeral is best served theologically and liturgically when there are no options.

While this thesis will not make a claim as to whether choice is preferable to no choice in a liturgical world, it does understand that choices that do not reflect the same theological understanding, that allow for many and varied theological readings of the liturgy, are usually to be avoided. The final question in this section then is what is a practitioner of the BCP to do? As we have seen there are at least three different theologies in the prayer book, not of all of which line up with what this thesis says is the goal of the funeral liturgy-to preach the Resurrection of the Dead. The answer is at once both simple and complex, choose options that express that theological truth. That of course does require a fair bit of work on the part of the priest and anyone else who is helping to plan the liturgy. Nevertheless, it is of paramount importance, as we have seen, for the liturgy to express the theological truth of the Resurrection.

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468 There is an offshoot of this idea that allows for choice in places, such as readings, but demands uniformity in other places, such as in the collects—at times this can seem random in what it adheres to.
4.3 Alternative Service Books

Having looked at the issue of choice in the prayer book itself, the role of alternative service books needs to be examined. While the rise of alternative services clearly gives us more choices and thus the potential for new and different theology, it also presents a problem for the methodology on a whole and that is what needs to be examined in more detail. The claim in this thesis is that the Book of Common Prayer contains the authoritative and potentially normative, liturgical understanding of the church. We have, while looking at possible guides for a memorial service, looked to alternative service books and liturgies. The question is what role ought these books and liturgies have considering our discussion on choice in particular and the theological project on a whole? The answer might prove unsatisfactory. They simply are not truly the concern of this thesis. That is because, regardless of how many alternative services there are, the authoritative book for the Episcopal Church is the 1979 Book of Common Prayer. That means, to derive any authoritative claims about the liturgy and the theology of the church, we only need to look at the Prayer Book.

While it is a true statement that the Book of Common Prayer is authoritative in the truest sense of the word, it is not always normative and that distinction can matter. If a church has decided to use, for example, Enriching Our Worship as their normative prayer book, the question becomes has EOW become the standard expression of the theology of that place and if it has, what happens if and when that theology is not totally in line with the BCP? For the purposes of this thesis the answer is easy, for the most part the Burial Office is not a liturgy that is changed in any significant way. The one possible exception to this is something that we have already looked at, the idea of a memorial service. The “problem” with the allowance is that the EOW burial liturgy is very like the BCP liturgy, it is mainly an issue of language, not of substantive theology.
That said, when the body is allowed by rubric to not be present in EOW, all the potential issues we have already seen that arise when there is no body at the funeral. The problem there though is not the alternative service book itself, but that it allows for something that we have seen steps out of the theology of the church.469

What then are we to make of alternative service books and liturgies? While it is not in the scope of this thesis to examine the theological claims made by each book and liturgy, it is enough to remember that they are alternative books and thus the theology of the church is still found in the Book of Common Prayer. That is not to say that one day an alternative service book might not become the new prayer book or that some of the liturgies, such as the memorial service option, might become standard and authorized as authoritative. However, for the purposes of this thesis and its scope, while there are a plethora of choices in the alternative service book world, if they are used at all, they must conform to the theology of the prayer book.470

5 Methodological Questions

5.1 Latin Translation Questions

This thesis opened with a discussion of the Latin maxim, Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi. There is an interesting thing that happens with the English translation of the Latin and that is the “is” verses “shapes” question. Is the maxim best rendered in English, “The law of prayer is the law of belief” or “the law of prayer shapes the law of belief”? While there may be a translation answer,471 the actual question that we asking here is which is the better English equivalent?

469 It is important to remember that this claim comes because the memorial service option in EOW is that it just stops the normal burial office at the homily—it doesn’t actually change the liturgy up until that point and that is the issue.
470 And if they do, then in theory the alternative service falls into the same category as the choices in the BCP which we have already discussed.
471 I would argue that it is an implied “est” in the Latin and therefore properly should be translated is “is” however, that still does not address the fact that this is so often rendered into English as “shapes”.
To render the maxim in the traditional way, “the law of prayer is the law of belief” we see that prayer and belief are viewed as equal, how we pray is how we believe. This means that liturgy and theology really are meant to be understood as mirror images of each other. To change one then necessitates changing the other. It is still able to be read in the circular way that this thesis says it ought to be, it just says that no matter which way you start, the conclusion is that X is Y. The implication for the liturgy is clear, to say that these two statements are mirrors of each other means that we can draw clear theological and liturgical implications from each side. For example, the liturgy demands that the coffin not be covered with flowers or other shows of status. From that we can understand that the coffin is mean to not be a place to show the earthly status of the person because, it follows (especially if there is a white pall), the funeral is about the person and their status as a child of God. This sort of claim can only be made because we know that X (that is the coffin and its coverings) directly relates to and tell us about Y (that all are equal in the eyes of God).

If however, we understand the maxim to say that “the law of prayer shapes the law of belief” we can render a whole different idea and theological methodology. To say that the law of prayer, that is the liturgy “shapes” the law of belief, we create a maxim and method that is less absolute. To shape something means that the thing being shaped is not wholly dependent on the thing shaping it. Other forces could be at work as well; the maxim would not be saying that the law of prayer is the sole shaping factor of the law of belief.

Using our example of the funeral pall we can see that if the liturgical action only shapes the theology that all are equal in the eyes of God, other things could be working on that claim as well. The readings, the prayers, the sermon, the songs, all could go to show our equality before
The concern here is that all of those things acting on the one theological claim can actually contradict. There are plenty of prayers that speak to the uniqueness of the individual and sermons can run away with that very idea. If that happens, we see clearly, that the liturgical action(s) do not shape one belief, but potentially many. X does not have to equal Y and V, W, and X together may or may not equal Y.

The impact on the liturgy and on our methodology is clear and striking. It is impossible to draw a conclusion based on either belief or liturgy when there could be many other forces that would help shape that conclusion. In other words, the liturgy is functionally neutered in its ability to tell us anything and the theology loses all ecclesial grounding. We will also see in the next issue that the “is” understanding helps overcome another issue with the Latin. All of this goes to show that, as often has been the case, the traditional rendering “the law of prayer IS the law of belief” is the one that ought to be used.

Another interesting thing happens with the Latin language is that it does not have definite articles. That means it is ultimately up to the translator to decided which one ought to be applied. Given time, many times, consensus develops over the use of “a” or “the” over the other. However, in English, there is an important distinction between “a” and “the”. Take for example our liturgical maxim, *Lex Orandi, [est] Lex Credendi*. Normally, as we have seen, this is translated as “the law of prayer is/shapes the law of belief”. It is treated as universal given and this is how this thesis has taken it to be. However, what happens if it is translated and understood not as the, but as a, so as to read “a law of prayer is/shapes a law of belief”? While this does not change the methodology, we can still look to the liturgy to see what a group believes, it does change quite strongly the application of the conclusion.

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472 This is not to say that in the other reading those things do not happen, but it is to say that each of them is viewed as separate liturgical actions that all have the same impact. This reading allows for all of those to be working at once and thus potentially complicating things.
To read the maxim with an “a” is to say that there is no universality to the claim, there is no universally understood liturgical standard and thus there can be no universally understood theological conclusions. That claim alone will ultimately undermine the maxim because of the implied “is”. The statement is set up to read that the law of prayer (X) is the law of belief (X). If one reads it as an “a” then it becomes the law of prayer (X) is the law of belief (Y) and that makes no sense. Ultimately then while the Latin might allow for a change in the definite article, to read the maxim as anything other than “the law of prayer [is] the law of belief” will see the maxim fail.

6 Value of the Project and Method as seen in reception

There is still an overarching assumption in this thesis that the methodology is not only sound and valid but that it is the most valuable and best way to achieve a theological understanding of the Episcopal Church’s theology. While we have already examined the theological grounding for these claims, what we have not actually spent much time on is the claim around pedagogy. If any of this matters to the people in the pews, if they actually get anything out of the liturgy of the church and if they would notice any changes made to it. While it is out of the scope of this thesis to do any in depth analysis of what the people in the pews actually think and take in when it comes to liturgy, there are a few general claims that can be made and make the argument for this thesis:

1: People are not stupid.

While this sounds a bit crass, it is the overarching reason why I contend that the methodology in this thesis is not only sound but preferable. This claim says that people understand and people can and do learn from what is going on around them. To assume that

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473 This stays a problem if we look back to the original saying “ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi (“that the law of praying establishes the law of believing”) because we still have to attach an article.
people do not pay attention and internalize what is happening at the liturgy is to assume that they are mindless cogs in the liturgical machinery of the Church, and that is clearly not the case or the theology.\footnote{474}

2: Liturgy is at once a rote and non-rote action

The next three points go some way to help explain and build on the first. This first of the three claims is the idea that liturgy is rote and not rote at the same time. As we have alluded to already, the idea of a similar liturgy time after time is one that allows people to not have to think about the words and actions they are doing, to make sure they say “amen” at the correct place for example, but rather, allows the people gathered to move into a more contemplative spot within the liturgy. If you are not worried about singing the correct words to a prayer, then you can focus on the prayer itself and the space that is created, not just on getting the words and actions correct. The prayers and actions can take a back seat in our brains and we can focus more on being in the place that the prayers and actions create. It is in that space that the theology can be expressed and taught. In short, when people don’t have to think too hard about the words they say, they can think about why they say them.

Liturgy then is often rote, but it is also not rote. This becomes especially true for the services that are not done every week, of which the funeral is one. Liturgies the people often go to or have some familiarity with, such as Eucharist or even the Office, are often much more rote, or close to rote, than liturgies like the Burial Office. That does not mean that there is not a familiar pattern of how prayers feel and are said and even how the structure of the liturgy\footnote{475} feels familiar, even if the words are not. What this allows for then is the jarring that happens when things are not quite as expected. Because the funeral liturgy feels, in large part, familiar, when it

\footnote{474} We’ve already seen this idea that liturgy can and does impact people and is absorbed by them when we made claims on the value and import of liturgy. Therefore, it does not need to be said again. 

\footnote{475} Opening Hymn (or anthem), collects, readings, homily, prayers of the people, Eucharist if there is one, and only then does the funeral begin to take on a unique shape.
is not, or when something is different, it calls attention to it. For example, the Commendation that takes place at the end of an otherwise familiar liturgy, calls the people to pay attention, it is different, it is not rote. This also is clear when we look at the prayers of the people, while the form is familiar, it is also different than ones used on “normal” Sunday Eucharist. Again, this calls the faithful to notice the difference and to pay attention.

The question then is when is rote valuable and when is this non-rote disruption of value when it comes to teaching theological truths liturgically? Liturgy must be, at least in part, familiar and rote. If the funeral liturgy did not feel familiar at all then the people gathered would have to spend the whole time getting acclimated to the liturgy. However, its non-familiar, non-rote moments are those places that allow us to pause and wonder what is going on. In short, because it is just slightly “off” from what we expect, it allows the liturgy to speak in a way that it might not otherwise have been able and lead us forward. People know enough of the liturgy to know and notice when it changes and that change, while it can be disruptive if the liturgy is not careful, can and does call attention to theological truths.

3: People notice change

Change is not something that passes people by. People respond to change when it happens liturgically. That response can be by not participating if the change is too great or confusing, but it can also be a positive response, welcoming a change and embracing it for what it is. As has been discussed, the issue at hand when it comes to liturgy and change is to not change so much that it feels unfamiliar, but rather to allow for some changes, some subtle and some not so subtle, to highlight the change and difference in this liturgy over the others. For example, the use of the Apostles’ Creed, rather than the Nicene Creed, is a change from the normal Sunday “routine”. The change is noticeable, and there is even a reason given for it: the celebrant says “In the

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476 The assumption here though is worth noting: that people come to church enough to be familiar with the familiar bits.
assurance of eternal life given at Baptism, let us proclaim our faith and say,“ but it is not something that is so unusual that it is completely new and strange-this is the Creed used at Baptisms and at the Office. What we see then is an example of a change that allows people to notice something different is going on, given a reason for it, but it is not so different that people will be confused and lost. In short, people will notice, but it will not cause them, as a rule, to tune out. This allows then the theological truth that is trying to be imparted (in this case the link to baptism and the resurrection of the body) to speak and be heard.

4: People don’t notice they’re learning

People should not feel that they are being patronized, like in a school lecture hall. The sort of learning that the liturgy allows is one of immersion and experience. People internalize the theology they are being taught. Therefore, it is so important for the liturgy to speak the theological truths of the Church, because so often people do not realize it is happening. This is not in contradiction to the first claim, that people aren’t stupid. Rather, it is saying that people, as they participate and take in the liturgy, they are learning more than they thought they were.

The idea with all of these points is to highlight that more often than not we need to just get out of the way of liturgy and to allow it to teach the people in the pews. The liturgy teaches the faith but it also provides an important place for the faithful to then express their belief in that faith. This is what makes liturgy such an important tool for catechesis, it does not just tell the faith, but it gives the faithful a place to express that faith back to God.478

477 BCP, 496.
478 “Lex orandi, lex credendi expresses concisely the relationship between the celebration of the liturgy in worship and the formation (catechesis) of the faithful. On the one hand, the liturgy proclaims, not only in word but in sign and symbol, the Word of God. The faithful, in celebrating the liturgy, profess their faith. Those responsible for catechesis, therefore, can use the experience of worship as a starting point for mystagogy, as the National Directory for Catechesis explains: “[catechesis] stems from the Liturgy insofar as it helps people to worship God and to reflect on their experience of the words, signs, rituals, and symbols expressed in the Liturgy; to discern the implications of their participation in the Liturgy; and to respond to its missionary summons to bear witness and offer service” (NDC, § 33). On the other hand, in order for liturgy to be effective as a source of formation, the faithful must be prepared to encounter Christ in the mysteries and to deepen their own understanding of that faith”, Fr. Rick Hilgartner, “Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi: The Word of God in the Celebration of the Sacraments”, The United States
7  The Role of Hope

This chapter opened by diving right into questions of the importance of rubrics and the liturgy, however, in doing so it neglected a few other “big picture” questions and assumptions. As this chapter and thesis moves toward an end, we will spend some time looking at questions and assumptions about the role of hope. There are a number of ways this could be examined, but because this is a liturgy thesis it makes some degree of sense to examine it in a liturgical context, using the liturgical methodology already in place for this thesis479.

The role and importance of hope is one that has its finger prints all over of the Book of Common Prayer, however, because we are specifically looking to the Burial of the Dead, we will confine our liturgical exploration to that liturgy. Hope is only mentioned five times in the whole of the Burial of the Dead, but those times give us a fairly clear understanding of what Hope is and how it functions in the Burial of the Dead. The first place it is mentioned is at the end of the Prayers of the People. The final petition, which is required, prays “Comfort us in our sorrows at the death of our brother (sister); let our faith be our consolation, and eternal life our hope.”480 It is very clear here what the hope of the Christian is, it is the hope of eternal life. This is a fundamental proclamation, the Christian is to hope for and in eternal life because, as we have seen throughout this thesis, Christ was incarnate and resurrected for humanity. It also means that when the liturgy speaks of eternal life, we can also read in an understanding that that is the hoped-for promise of Christ.

The second time hope is specifically mentioned is in the Committal, in the optional opening Anthem:


479 Also known as the “don’t change the horse mid-stream” method.

480 BCP, 497.
 Everyone the Father gives to me will come to me; I will never turn away anyone who believes in me. He who raised Jesus Christ from the dead will also give new life to our mortal bodies through his indwelling Spirit. My heart, therefore, is glad, and my spirit rejoices; my body also shall rest in hope. You will show me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy, and in your right hand are pleasures for evermore.\textsuperscript{481}

The idea here, is that the body rests in hope that is based on the idea that the Father, through Christ, will welcome all who believe in Christ. It goes further to state a clear belief in the resurrection of Christ and of the dead. It is after those statements that we see an affirmation of the body resting in hope (and the heart being glad and spirit rejoicing, both of which are also good things). Hope then is based on the idea not just of eternal life, but eternal life because of Christ’s resurrection.

The Committal also sees the third time hope is mentioned and this time it is not in an optional anthem, it is the required casting earth on the coffin when the celebrant says the following:

\begin{quote}
In sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ, we commend to Almighty God our brother N., and we commit his body to the ground; *earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. The Lord bless him and keep him, the Lord make his face to shine upon him and be gracious to him, the Lord lift up his countenance upon him and give him peace. \textit{Amen}.\textsuperscript{482}
\end{quote}

Here we see one of the phrases that is perhaps most connected to the idea of hope and resurrection, “In sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life…” Here we see what the hope of Christians is, no surprise, it is “resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ” but what we also see here is a very clear example of what that hope compels us to do. Hope in

\textsuperscript{481} \textit{BCP}, 501.  
\textsuperscript{482} \textit{BCP}, 501.
eternal life causes us to commit the dead to the ground.\textsuperscript{483} Hope in eternal life causes Christians to do a very strange thing, we bury the dead, we return them to the ground. We do this because we have hope in the promise that the earth does not win, that death and dust are not the final word. However, before that victory is seen in its entirety, we hope and in that hope we commend the dead to God and commit their body to the ground.\textsuperscript{484}

The final two places we see a direct reference to hope are in two optional prayers. While this thesis has not spent much time looking over the optional prayers, we will look over these two and see what we might glean about hope.

O God, whose days are without end, and whose mercies cannot be numbered: Make us, we pray, deeply aware of the shortness and uncertainty of human life; and let your Holy Spirit lead us in holiness and righteousness all our days; that, when we shall have served you in our generation, we may be gathered to our ancestors, having the testimony of a good conscience, in the communion of the Catholic Church, in the confidence of a certain faith, in the comfort of a religious and holy hope, in favor with you, our God, and in perfect charity with the world. All this we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. \textit{Amen}.\textsuperscript{485}

And

Grant, O Lord, to all who are bereaved the spirit of faith and courage, that they may have strength to meet the days to come with steadfastness and patience; not sorrowing as those without hope, but in thankful remembrance of your great goodness, and in the joyful expectation of eternal life with those they love. And this we ask in the Name of Jesus Christ our Savior. \textit{Amen}.\textsuperscript{486}

\textsuperscript{483} Or the deep, the elements or resting place, as outlined in the \textit{BCP} itself.
\textsuperscript{484} This is not to say that Christians are the only ones who bury the dead, clearly that is not the case. What it is to say is Christians bury the dead with a unique understanding and hope of eternal life. It is further to say that Christians understand that we are from the earth and are charged by God to return to it, but that Christ’s resurrection changed everything and so we have this hope of eternal life, even while the body is in the ground returning to dust.
\textsuperscript{485} \textit{BCP}, 504.
\textsuperscript{486} \textit{BCP}, 505.
Looking at the first prayer, we see this idea of “holy hope” that is what allows us to hope that “we may be gathered to our ancestors”. This is all established after making sure the people are aware of the shortness and uncertainty of life. What we see again here is the idea that even in the uncertainty of life, we can hope that we will not be left in the dust, that we will be gathered with our ancestors, a clear allusion to heaven.

The second prayer and final direct reference to hope we see is the idea expressed in the negative. It is a prayer for those who are mourning, asking God to given them strength and patience to meet the days to come, but also reminding everyone that Christian sorrow is not like the sorrow of those “without hope”. Rather, Christians should be thankful in the “remembrance of your [God’s] great goodness” and be joyful with anticipation “of eternal life with those they love”. What we see here is something very important. Hope does not mean that we do not have to be bereaved, we are allowed to be sad at death and separation. However, hope casts a new light on bereavement. While we can mourn the dead, we also need to do it as people with hope in the promise of eternal life.

We can now ask and answer the question “what is the Christian hope?” It is that Christ was died and was raised and in Him we shall be too. Christian hope is rooted then in faith in Jesus and in His rising from the dead. What this means in practice is that even though the word “hope” is only mentioned five times in the liturgy, we can read hope into many other places. For example, when the body is met at the Church door and the celebrant says “With faith in Jesus Christ, we receive the body of our brother (sister) N. for burial. Let us pray with confidence to God, the Giver of life, that he will raise him to perfection in the company of the saints”\(^{487}\) we can and should read into the prayer the theology of Christian hope. This holds true when we see references to the dead being made alive again Christ, the dead being raised, the promise of

\(^{487}\) *BCP*, 466.
heaven being opened\textsuperscript{488}. We are meant to read and understand these references with the idea of Christian hope in the back of our minds, for it is out of that hope and in knowledge of that hope that we can read and hear those promises. In short, any reference to the assurance of resurrection and eternal life is a proclamation of Christian hope. Hope then becomes the guiding theological virtue that underpins the theological proclamation of the bodily resurrection.

8 “Let Us Go Forth in the Name of Christ”

While the pastoral implications of the funeral liturgy are not the primary concern of this thesis, it would be remiss of me to not address at least a little the greater pastoral and theological implications for the funeral liturgy and its theology as laid out in this thesis. The liturgy, as we have alluded to, is not meant to be an insular thing, nor is the theology meant to be selfishly guarded and never allowed to see the light of day. It is mean to be taken out into the world, the good news is meant to be proclaimed.

The liturgy itself is the first place that we see this idea. After the Eucharistic Prayer, there is a rubric that discusses what to do next: “If the body is not present, the service continues with the [blessing and] dismissal.”\textsuperscript{489} While this thesis has already addressed the fact that there should be a body and there should be an immediate commendation, if we follow this rubric we can see that a dismissal needs to be said. There are no choices given at this point of the book so it stands to reason that any of the dismissal options of the Eucharist are available. There are four choices and all end with the people saying “Thanks Be to God.”: “Let us go forth in the name of Christ.”, “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.”, “Let us go forth into the world, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.” And “Let us bless the Lord”.\textsuperscript{490} It is also important to remember that a deacon is the one to properly give the dismissal. This tells us something fundamental about how the

\textsuperscript{488} See \textit{BCP}, 491, 493, 499, 500.  
\textsuperscript{489} \textit{BCP}, 497.  
\textsuperscript{490} \textit{BCP}, 366.
Church views the dismissal. Without having to go into too great a depth of diaconal theology, the
deacon is the minister of the church who takes the Church into the world. That means when the
deacon is the one giving the dismissal, the Church is, by the very nature of the minister saying
that the action ought to be outward facing.

If the Commendation follows the service in the church the following rubric applies (which
is after the Commendation prayer): “The Celebrant, or the Bishop if present, may then bless the
people, and a Deacon or other Minister may dismiss them, saying ‘Let us go forth in the name of
Christ.’”\footnote{BCP, 500.} The response is again “Thanks be to God”. Note the use of the word “may” in the
instructions, this is present because the Committal could follow the Commendation and just like
having a dismissal right before the Commendation makes no sense, having one before the
Committal does not either. The Committal then has its own two dismissal options. The first looks
similar to what has come before: The celebrant (note the change) says “Alleluia. Christ is risen”
and the people respond “The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia”. The celebrant then continues “Let
us go forth in the name of Christ” and the people respond “Thanks be to God.”\footnote{BCP, 502.} The second
option is even more strange, it is not a dismissal as such, but rather a blessing: “The God of
peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the sheep,
through the blood of the eternal covenant: Make you perfect in every good work to do his will,
working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight; through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory
for ever and ever. Amen”\footnote{BCP, 503.}

We will examine more closely the whole theology around the dismissal in a moment but
here we should pause and look at why the Committal has such different options. In the first
option, the words used clearly link back up to Easter.\footnote{See BCP, 294.} We see here the strongest link between
Easter, that is the Resurrection, and the funeral liturgy itself, more specifically the Committal. Here the liturgy is making our theological point for us, the burial and the Resurrection belong together as a theological set. It makes a great deal of sense then that the final act of the people gathered is to proclaim that truth.

There is however that second option for a dismissal, the blessing-like dismissal. Hatchett traces its inclusion to the 1928 Prayer Book, noting that it is the biblical passage from Hebrews 13:20-21. This was to replace what is in the 1662 book (2 Corinthians 13:14). It is also worth looking to see that Hatchett points out that the first option that we looked at for the dismissal at the Committal is the newest addition and is an alternative form. While much can be made about this, for the purposes of this thesis we will just look at the words and the function of them regarding our claims on the dismissal. While at first glance it seems like this is not a prayer that sends people out into the world, we can and should read it as something that is asking God to equip the people of God to go out into the world, asking that God “Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight…” The goal here is still that the people gathered at the grave go out and do the work that is pleasing to God. In the line before that we see that this God is deeply connected to the resurrection of Christ, “The God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ”. We see here then a clear, but different link. God is the God who brings the dead to life and we are charged now to go out into the world to do His will.

Looking at the other dismissals we see that they are all start with a charge to go out into the world and the people respond with thanks to God for the ability to do that. For this thesis then the dismissal serves to call the people gathered to go out and proclaim the Good News. In the

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495 We only need to look back at the words and prayers around the Committal to see how the idea of Christ’s resurrection is so clearly in the forefront.

context of the funeral that Good News is the theology that the liturgy is acting out—the Incarnation and Resurrection of Christ and the pattern of that in and for our lives. This is the answer, at least in part, to the pastoral question that this thesis avoids. The faithful, the Church, are not called to be insular, rather, the liturgy itself calls the people of God and the Church out into the world. That then is why it is so important to do it right.

9 Areas of Further Research

Clearly this thesis cannot cover every possible area and question that could be asked about the Burial Office or the theology around the Resurrection. The major areas for further research all seem to be based on the liturgical and theological implications of this thesis, namely around the importance of the Resurrection and the Incarnation. The clearest place for this can be located in the area of pastoral praxis, as this thesis did not take up questions of primary pastoral concerns. Questions around pastoral considerations of what the resurrection might look like for people who do not feel they have a perfect, working, godly body for example. There are questions of the impact of claims around the Incarnation when burial itself is often understood as a bio-hazard.

There are also practical liturgical questions that have been all but ignored in this thesis: the role of the homily/sermon, if there should be a eulogy, what readings to choose, hymn selection, even questions on the role of the funeral director at the Church. All of these have important theological and pastoral dimensions that are worth further study.

There are also some lingering questions on other places the role of the body could be seen. A great deal more work could be done on the link between baptism and the funeral. While we have examined it to show the liturgical continuation of the two services, there is clearly work to be done on the relationship of the physical body in each service and even more work could and should be done on the liturgical and historic links between the two services. More than that
though, there are other liturgical days that might prove fruitful ground for studying. For example, Ascension Day, The Annunciation, The Transfiguration, and perhaps even Holy Cross Day all might prove fruitful in examining the role of the Christ, His Incarnation, Resurrection and the pattern it creates for humanity.

10 Conclusion

This thesis opened with looking at Thomas Long and his thoughts on the issues around funerals and the burial of the dead. It seems fitting then that as we look to conclude the thesis we turn again to Long. At the end of Accompany Them With Singing he offers “The Eight Purposes of A Good Funeral Sermon”. It turns out that those eight purposes can also be seen as the eight purposes of a funeral in general:

1) He suggests that a good funeral sermon is kerygmatic: “Of all the purposes of a funeral sermon, the need to proclaim the gospel, the kerygma, is possibly the only one that constitutes a genuine sine qua non.” The same holds true for the liturgy on a whole, its mission is to preach the Gospel, the Good News of Christ. “It is a great privilege” Long continues “of the funeral preacher to shake a fist in the face of Death, to proclaim again the vow of baptism and the cry of Easter Triumph…” If the liturgy creates a space where the preacher can preach this truth to his/her people, when the liturgy itself becomes the preacher of this Good News, everything else will fall into place.

2) A good funeral sermon is oblational: A good funeral liturgy will also help us see the dead no longer belong to us, if they ever did. The liturgy serves to remind the people gathered that yes of course we are sad the dead die, but that we are also returning them to God, the source

497 Not to mention Christmas and more work on Easter.
498 Long, Accompany Them With Singing, 188.
499 Long, Accompany Them With Singing, 188.
500 Long, Accompany Them With Singing, 188.
of their life and being. The highest offering a person can give is themselves and a funeral allows us to do just that, to allow the dead to give themselves back to God.

3) A good funeral sermon is ecclesial.\footnote{Long, \textit{Accompany Them With Singing}, 190.} “…A Christian funeral is a visible enactment of the Gospel claim that death cannot finally sever the ties that bind, that the feeling of isolation and abandonment that death brings is, in the deepest sense, an illusion.”\footnote{Long, \textit{Accompany Them With Singing}, 190.} As we have seen the funeral liturgy is tasked with reminding the faithful of several important facts about the Church. The Church is not solely a local place, that the Church transcends church walls. That means the church on earth suffers when a member locally dies. Further this also means that when the dead die, they are still part of the Church.

4) A good funeral sermon is therapeutic.\footnote{Long, \textit{Accompany Them With Singing}, 191.} While this thesis did not spend much time on this, it did note that prayers for the mourning are an important liturgical fact. This also means the comfort that should occur happens when the correct theology is preached and enacted, when the kerygma is understood properly. Liturgy then cannot be about preaching and showing things that are contrary to the Good News, but must also show that the Good News itself is ultimately comforting.

5) A good funeral sermon is Eucharistic.\footnote{Long, \textit{Accompany Them With Singing}, 192.} “Every human life, no matter how short of long, complicated or simple, sorrowful or joyful, is nevertheless a text that can be read in the light God’s image and grace.”\footnote{Long, \textit{Accompany Them With Singing}, 192.} This is the simple truth of the liturgy when it comes to why people are important, because of being made in God’s image and through God’s grace, we all have worth.
6) A good funeral sermon is missional: The theme of mission...signals that today is not the end of meaningful life, that tomorrow there will be a world to serve and that the labors of our hands will be needed. This idea finds its liturgical point in the issues we have discussed around the dismissal and the idea that funeral liturgies propel the faithful back out into the world.

7) A good funeral sermon is commemorative: “The funeral liturgy, and with it the funeral sermon, refuses to cut us off from the dead. As we walk to the cemetery with the one who has died, we remember and tell stories of this person. We tell them because Christians believe that death changes, but does not destroy, the communion with the saints”. As much as this thesis might seem like it wants to take the memorialization of the dead away from the funeral, it is an important part of the liturgy. It is concerned with this person, this one right here that we’re putting in the ground. More than that however, the liturgy allows us a proper way to commemorate the dead because it allows us to see the place they held and hold, not just for the people gathered at the burial, but for the whole of the Church.

8) A good funeral sermon is educational: If this thesis has done its job this should seem a ‘no brainer’. The liturgy is the first way the Church teaches and so of course a funeral liturgy ought to teach.

This thesis concludes with a theological and liturgical claim that might make some uncomfortable. It acknowledges that, and embraces it. The methodology is almost universally agreeable, the conclusions are the author’s and are perhaps not as agreeable. Nevertheless, it is the hope of the author that meaningful discussion can be had based on the theological and liturgical conclusions drawn here.

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In closing, it seems prudent to return to the Burial Office of the Episcopal Church and its theology. A funeral, the Burial Office, is immediately practical and immediately transcendent. It concerns the things of this world, putting the body in the ground, comforting the mourners, educating the faithful, proclaiming the Good News. Yet it also deals with the transcendent truth of God and of Christ’s Resurrection. It is when those two realities are brought together in the liturgy, properly done and understood, that we can understand and pray the anthem at the Commendation:

You only are immortal, the creator and maker of mankind; and we are mortal, formed of the earth, and to earth shall we return. For so did you ordain when you created me, saying, "You are dust, and to dust you shall return." All of us go down to the dust; yet even at the grave we make our song: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.\footnote{BCP, 499.}
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