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Baptism, Death, and Funeral Rites: Paul's Teaching on Baptism in Romans 6: 3-4 in Light of Contemporary Funereal Customs and Beliefs about Death

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Recent scholarship has tended to assume that Paul's imagery in Romans 6:3-4 is informed by burial of the dead in vertical shaft graves. Funeral customs in the ancient world varied considerably, and vertical shaft graves were relatively rare. Understanding the analogy of baptism with death and the disposal of the corpse therefore requires a wider appreciation of death, the funeral process, and the afterlife in the ancient world. Baptism symbolises not burial in the earth, but the descent of the deceased to the netherworld, from whence they will be raised to new life with Christ.

The vivid – or morbid – analogy of baptism and death in Romans 6 has become one of the defining metaphors of conversion and initiation into the Christian church.¹ It is surprising, therefore, that little attention seems to have been paid to the significance and meaning of death in the ancient world, and the accompanying ritual disposal of corpses, so central to Paul's imagery in Romans 6:3-4.² On the contrary,

¹ R. A. Campbell, "Dying with Christ: The Origin of a Metaphor", S. E. Porter & A. R. Cross (ed), *Baptism, the New Testament and the Church* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) 273-93; J. D. G. Dunn, "Baptized as Metaphor", S. E. Porter & A. R. Cross (ed), *Baptism, the New Testament and the Church* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) 298-310; cf. A. Oepke, βαπτω, βαπτίζω, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) 526-49; S. Sabou, *Between Horror and Hope: Paul's Metaphorical Language of 'Death' in Romans 6:1-11* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005); R. Schnackenburg, *Baptism in the Thought of St Paul* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1961) 30-45; A. J. M. Wedderburn, *Baptism and Resurrection* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1987) 391.

² Exceptions are N. R. Petersen, who argues that the Jewish custom of secondary burial, whereby the bones were gathered after the flesh had decayed, and deposited, often in an ossuary, in a family grave, "Pauline Baptism and 'Secondary Burial'", *Harvard Theological Review* 79 (1986) 217-26; R. E. de Maris, who argues that Paul's imagery is formed in response to the Corinthian Christian practice of baptism for the dead (1 Corinthians 15:29), "Corinthian Religion and Baptism for the Dead (1 Corinthians 15:29): Insights from Archaeology and Anthropology", *Journal of Biblical Literature* 114 (1995) 661-82; "Funerals and Baptism, Ordinary and Otherwise", *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 29 (1999) 23-34; and R. Jewett, who notes that the imagery is redolent

such inconvenient practicalities as funeral arrangements have been accorded so little attention that scholarship has almost unanimously assumed that Romans 6:3-4 presupposes burial in a vertical shaft grave, similar to those to which northern Europeans and North Americans are accustomed;³ a problem to which I have drawn attention elsewhere, in a study of issues of vocabulary and translation in this text.⁴ Here I wish to deal with the cultural background and its implications for exegesis of this passage. Emphasis on the metaphorical nature of death in baptism seems to have diverted attention from the experience, beliefs, and customs of the ancient world which gave that metaphor meaning. Analogies between submersion in water and burial in earth have accordingly been the key to interpreting these verses, and with them Paul's theology of baptism.

Descent into the baptismal waters is assumed to be analogous to burial in the ground, even by scholars who do not presuppose that submersion in a vessel or watercourse deep enough to contain an adult human body was the definitive form of

not of conventional, honourable, interment in Roman custom, but of the dishonourable disposal of the corpses of criminals and the destitute in rubbish pits, *Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007) 397-98.

³ C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991) 123; G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1962) 133; M. Black, *Romans* (London: Oliphant, 1973) 94; B. Byrne, *Romans* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1996) 190-96; C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1932) 87; J. A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (New York: Doubleday, 1993) 434; K. Haacker, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1999) 124-29; R. Jewett, *Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007) 398; M. J. Lagrange, *Saint Paul épître aux Romains* (Paris: Lecoffre, 1916) 142-46; F. J. Leenhardt, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London: Lutterworth, 1961) 151-61; A. Nygren, *Commentary on Romans* (London: SCM, 1952) 233; A. Sacchi, *Lettera ai Romani* (Rome: Città, 2004) 108-12; P. Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994) 90-101; U. Wilckens, *Die Briefe an die Römer* (Zürich: Neukirchener, 1978) 6-16; J. A. Ziesler, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (London: SCM, 1989) 157.

⁴ N. H. Taylor, "Dying with Christ in Baptism: Issues in the Translation and Interpretation of Rom 6:3-4", *The Bible Translator* 58 (2008) 38-49. For a more accessible treatment of these issues within a broader setting of Paul's teaching on baptism in its pastoral and missionary context, see my *Paul on Baptism: Theology, Mission and Ministry in Context* (London: SCM, 2016) 55-64.

early Christian baptism.⁵ Alone among recent commentators, Dunn notes that the imagery was not informed by the prevailing funereal customs in Rome, nor indeed in Palestine or elsewhere in the Mediterranean world of the time.⁶ This is not the only way in which western cultural presuppositions seem unduly to have influenced the interpretation of these verses. *θάπτειν* has a wider semantic range than “bury” in contemporary English usage, and the equivalent terms in other northern European languages, denoting the full sequence of death and funeral rites, or part thereof, and not exclusively deposition in a grave, still less any particular type of grave, and does not refer to covering the corpse with earth.⁷ It would seem also that modern western clinical and legal definitions of life and death may have diminished scholars’ appreciation of the connotations of the references to death in these verses.⁸

That there is no substantial information on where and how baptism was administered during the first decades of Christianity, is generally acknowledged.⁹ While there is little evidence to suggest that there was a normative mode of baptism,¹⁰ Paul may nonetheless have presupposed, in writing Romans, that baptism was generally administered in a watercourse deep enough, or a vessel large enough, to submerge an adult human body. Even so, the question remains whether such a ritual was at all analogous to prevailing funeral customs, in Rome or anywhere else, to illuminate Paul’s imagery in Romans 6: 3-4, and what the implications of any such analogy would have been. Paul may well have acquired the analogy between baptism and death from the Jesus tradition,¹¹ but he has nonetheless developed it to include

⁵ W. A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians* (New Haven: Yale, 1983) 154-55; Schnackenburg, *Baptism in the Thought of St Paul* 33; A. F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: the Apostasy and Apostolate of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven: Yale, 1990) 137.

⁶ J. D. G. Dunn, *Romans* (Waco: Word, 1988) 305-18.

⁷ See further Taylor, “Dying with Christ in Baptism”.

⁸ Taylor, “Dying with Christ in Baptism”; J. A. Trumbower, *Rescue for the Dead: The Posthumous Salvation of Non-Christians in Early Christianity* (Oxford: OUP, 2001) 1-6.

⁹ Cf. Meeks, *First Urban Christians* 151-57; Taylor, *Paul on Baptism* 102-107.

¹⁰ *Didache* 7:1-3 prescribes some variety of practice according to circumstances. Cf. A. Y. Collins, “The Origins of Christian Baptism”, M. E. Johnson (ed), *Living Water, Sealing Spirit* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1995) 35-57; B. D. Spinks, *Early and Medieval Rituals and Theologies of Baptism: From the New Testament to the Council of Trent* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006) 3-13.

¹¹ Cf. Mark 10:38-39; Luke 12:50; Dunn, “Baptized as Metaphor”; L. Hartman, *Into the Name of the Lord Jesus’: Baptism in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997) 88; G. P. Jeanes, “Baptism Portrayed as Martyrdom in the Early Church”, *Studia Liturgica* 23 (1993) 158-76; R. Scroggs & K. I. Goff, “Baptism in Mark: Dying and Rising with

the disposal of the corpse,¹² and these verses cannot be understood without taking into account the latter. It would have been death and funeral rites which gave the metaphor meaning, and illuminated the significance of baptism, and not the other way around. There is no evidence of a distinct or uniform Christian funeral rite by this period,¹³ which could conceivably be presupposed in the reading of this text. We therefore need to consider the broader Graeco-Roman context of the letter.

Funeral Customs and Beliefs about the Dead in the Ancient World

Funerals are a cultural phenomenon, a rite of passage from terrestrial life to whatever form of existence is believed to follow.¹⁴ The separation of the deceased from their former living environment, and disposal of their corpses in graves, are generally accompanied by ritual expressions of grief, and acts which express and reflect the beliefs and hopes about death and afterlife of those who perform them, and on whose behalf they are conducted. However, rites may not always mutate with cultural changes. Archaic rites could therefore reflect ancestral beliefs more closely than the convictions of the participants.¹⁵ The significance of archaeological and literary evidence is not always obvious, but the cultural preconceptions are nonetheless essential to appreciating how death is conceived and understood by the living.

It is important to appreciate that, in the ancient world, the western post-Enlightenment understanding of death, defined by John Locke as “a ceasing to be, the

Christ”, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 92 (1973) 531-48; N. H. Taylor. “Paul and the Historical Jesus Quest”, *Neotestamentica* 37 (2003) 105-26.

¹² Cf. Mark 14: 8; Matthew 26: 12.

¹³ D. G. Rowell, *The Liturgy of Christian Burial: An Introductory Survey of the Historical Development of Christian Burial Rites* (London: SPCK, 1977); U. Volp, *Tod und Ritual in den christlichen Gemeinden der Antike* (Leiden: Brill, 2002) 96-155.

¹⁴ J. W. Bowker, *The Meanings of Death* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993); D. S. Chidester, *Patterns of Transcendence: Religion, Death, and Dying* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1990); De Maris, “Funerals and Baptism”; M. Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation* (New York: Harper, 1958) 118; A. van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960); R. L. Grimes, *Deeply into the Bone: Re-Inventing Rites of Passage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); V. W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1969) 96.

¹⁵ I. Morris, *Death-Ritual and Social Structure in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge: CUP, 1992); cf. D. J. Davies, *Death, Ritual and Belief* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017); T. W. Laqueur, *The Work of the Dead: A Cultural History of Mortal Remains* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

losing of all Actions of Life and Sense”,¹⁶ is simply not apposite. Death was not understood as a momentary event defined by the cessation of vital functions in the physical body, nor was a clear and rigid distinction between the living and the dead presupposed.¹⁷ The process of dying continued through and beyond the funeral rites, which were perceived to be essential to transition to the afterlife.¹⁸ Giving due expression to the honour of the deceased, at the time of death and on significant days thereafter, would have been important for ensuring his or her status and peace in the anticipated afterlife.¹⁹

In Rome, as in other societies, ancient and modern, funeral customs depended, in their material manifestation if not their essential form, on factors such as wealth and social status. By the first century BCE cremation was the normative mode for disposal of human remains.²⁰ Fire was understood to expedite the departure of the soul from the body to the afterlife. Honourable burial, for the eminent, wealthy, and powerful, entailed cremation, after which the ashes were drenched in wine, gathered into an urn, and deposited in a family monument, customarily erected, above ground level, along the major roads outside the city.²¹ Less prosperous members of society could, through membership of *collegia*,²² receive an honourable funeral and have

¹⁶ *The Reasonableness of Christianity as Delivered in the Scriptures* (London: J. Miller & al., 1764) 5.

¹⁷ A. E. Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell: Death and Retribution in the Ancient and Early Christian Worlds* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993) 98; R. S. J. Garland, *The Greek Way of Death* (London: Duckworth, 2001).

¹⁸ Cf. Herodotus, *Historiae* 5.92; Plato, *Phaedo* 117C; Cicero, *de Divinatione*; Pliny (Elder), *Naturalis Historia* 7.25.7; Pliny (Younger), *Epistulae* 7.27; Suetonius, *Gaius* 59. For discussion see Bernstein, *Formation of Hell* 84-94; Garland, *Greek Way of Death* 13; V. M. Hope, *Roman Death* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009); De Maris, “Corinthian Religion and Baptism for the Dead” 675-76. Cf. also Isaiah 14:11, 19.

¹⁹ De Maris, “Funerals and Baptism”; Trumbower, *Rescue for the Dead* 19-23. For the continuing importance of devotions to the dead in the early Church, see R. MacMullen, *The Second Church: Popular Christianity A.D. 200-400* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009).

²⁰ Morris, *Death-Ritual and Social Structure in Classical Antiquity* 31; Hope, *Roman Death*; J. M. C. Toynbee, *Death and Ritual in the Roman World* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1971); Volp, *Tod und Ritual* 76-77.

²¹ Morris, *Death-Ritual and Social Structure* 43; Toynbee, *Death and Ritual in the Roman World* 47-50.

²² M. K. Hopkins, *Death and Renewal* (Cambridge: CUP, 1983) 212-25; Morris, *Death-Ritual and Social Structure* 45-46; Meeks, *First Urban Christians* 77-80.

their remains placed in less prominent *columbaria*.²³ Whether in individual, family, or collective tombs, ashes were generally deposited above ground, which suggests that the form of entombment in honourable Roman funerals does not inform Paul's metaphor in these verses. The tendency away from cremation and towards inhumation, accompanied by the development of the catacombs, began in the latter part of the first century CE, under Greek rather than Jewish or Christian influence, and is not relevant to our understanding of Paul's imagery in Romans.²⁴

Romans without private means or patronage, and without the benefits of belonging to *collegia*, were interred in mass, pit graves.²⁵ Whether by inhumation or after cremation,²⁶ these were the Romans deposited, dishonourably, in the earth, in open *puticuli*,²⁷ which were likely to be the receptacles also of animal carcasses and general refuse, and also the remains of executed criminals. During the first century, mass cremation of the poor gradually replaced consignment of corpses to *puticuli*.²⁸ While *puticuli* entailed disposal in a hole in the ground, and such funerals could conceivably have informed Paul's metaphor,²⁹ in open pits the corpses would be covered not by earth but by subsequent deposits of further corpses and other detritus. This is nevertheless the closest analogy to baptism among known Roman funeral practices. If this is the model for Paul's imagery, it would imply that, in baptism, Christians underwent a dishonourable form of burial, such as executed criminals might have received.³⁰ Apposite though this may seem, it is far from certain that this would have been apparent to the original recipients of the letter.

While evidence of Roman funeral rites during the first Christian century indicates that deposition of corpses below the ground was not normative, there was widespread belief in an underworld to which the spirits of the departed repaired.³¹

²³ Hopkins, *Death and Renewal* 211-17; Morris, *Death-Ritual and Social Structure* 44.

²⁴ Morris, *Death-Ritual and Social Structure* 42-69; cf. P. Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians in Rome in the First Two Centuries* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003) 141.

²⁵ Hopkins, *Death and Renewal* 205-17.

²⁶ Toynbee, *Death and Ritual* 47-50.

²⁷ Horace, *Satirae* 1.8; Varro, *de Lingua latina* 5.25.

²⁸ Morris, *Death-Ritual and Social Structure* 42.

²⁹ Jewett, *Romans* 397-98.

³⁰ As argued by Jewett, *Romans* 397-98.

³¹ Cicero, *de Divinatione*; Plutarch, *Moralia* 7.44; Virgil, *Aeneis* 6. M. Bloch & J. Parry, *Death and the Regeneration of Life* (Cambridge: CUP, 1982); J. Kroll, *Gott und Hölle: Die Mythos vom Desdensuskampfen* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963).

This is reflected in the institution of the *mundus*, a pit located on the *pomerium* of the city, which served as a place of communication with ancestors in the underworld.³² The cosmology implicit in such institutions and observances is likely to be more relevant than are contemporary funeral customs to our understanding of Paul's imagery in Romans 6. However, we need to consider other possible influences, and customs and beliefs in other parts of the eastern Mediterranean world, before considering the cosmology further.

We cannot assume that Paul derived his metaphor in Romans 6:3-4 from the prevailing funeral customs of Rome. At the time of writing, he had probably never visited the city, nor indeed other parts of the western empire where cremation was the predominant mode of disposing of corpses. He would have acquired some familiarity with Roman customs during periods spent in Roman colonies in the eastern provinces of the empire, such as Lystra and Philippi.³³ Cremation and interment of ashes according to Roman custom is attested in Corinth in the first century,³⁴ and Paul appears to have been acquainted with a number of Roman Christians,³⁵ at least some of whom were supportive of his missionary exploits. It would not be rash speculation to assume that Paul took account of relevant Roman cultural observances while composing his letter to the Christians in Rome. Particularly if the funeral metaphor was developed specifically for this letter,³⁶ Paul would presumably have used such knowledge as he had of Roman customs, especially where they differed significantly from those to which he was accustomed. Jews did not practice cremation, but we have no information as to whether gentile Roman

³² Ovid, *Fasti* 4.820-24; Plutarch, *Romulus* 11.

³³ The Acts narrative mentions Paul's visits to these two Roman colonies, and explicitly identifies Philippi as such (16: 1, 12). There was also a substantial Roman presence in Corinth, and in several cities in the provinces of Asia, Galatia, and Cilicia, including Tarsus, identified in Acts as the place of Paul's birth (22:3).

³⁴ De Maris, "Corinthian Religion and Baptism for the Dead", 664-71; Morris, *Death-Ritual and Social Structure* 52-53.

³⁵ Cf. Rom 16:3-16. While the destination of the letter is disputed in scholarship, as is the integrity of ch. 16, e.g. T. W. Manson, "St. Paul's Letter to the Romans – and Others", *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 31 (1948) 224-40, the majority accept that this list reflects Paul's acquaintances in the Roman church, cf. Dunn, *Romans* 884; Fitzmyer, *Romans* 55-67; Jewett, *Romans* 8-9.

³⁶ H. D. Betz, "Transforming a Ritual: Paul's Interpretation of Baptism in Romans 6", T. Engberg-Pedersen (ed), *Paul in his Hellenistic Context* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994) 107; Byrne, *Romans* 190; Jewett, *Romans* 396; cf. De Maris, "Corinthian Religion and Baptism for the Dead"; Fitzmyer, *Romans* 430.

Christians had adopted Jewish practice, or even the more general trend towards inhumation noted above. Nevertheless, we cannot exclude entirely the possibility that Paul's metaphor was informed by more familiar Greek and Jewish, rather than Roman, funereal customs.

Greek custom was very much more varied than Roman, but the widespread custom of ritual washing during the *prothesis* on the day of death and three days later, before interment,³⁷ could have contributed to analogies being drawn between Christian baptism and funeral rites. During the first century inhumation was the predominant mode of disposal of corpses in the eastern Mediterranean world; cremation was prevalent in Roman colonies, alongside residual Greek customs.³⁸ Tomb architecture and construction varied considerably, with excavated chambers more common than shaft tombs, at least for the wealthy.³⁹ Whether, and to what extent, chamber tombs could have informed Paul's metaphor, needs to be considered with some care. Chamber tombs were not necessarily subterranean, and were not filled in with earth in a manner analogous to submersion in water. If, therefore, submersion is crucial to Paul's metaphor, this must presuppose a shaft tomb rather than a chamber tomb. As in the case of Rome, though perhaps less decisively, if Paul was informed by prevailing Greek funereal customs, it would have been disposal of the bodies of the poor and outcasts which most closely approximated baptism by submersion.

In Greek mythology, popular and literary, conceptions, names, and locations of the netherworld varied, as did the measures of judgement implied in the names Hades, Tartaros, or Erebos.⁴⁰ However, the subterranean location of the netherworld would seem to have predominated in most mythical and speculative cosmologies. Family reunion in Hades was anticipated,⁴¹ and interment in family graves was

³⁷ Euripides, *Alcestis* 158-60; Plato, *Phaedo* 118A; Sophocles, *Oedipus* 1586-88. For discussion see Garland, *Greek Way of Death* 11-16, 24; D. C. Kurtz & J. Boardman, *Greek Burial Customs* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1971) 143-61; cf. M. Alexiou, D. Yatramanolatris & P. Roilos, *The Ritual Lament in the Greek Tradition* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002); D. J. Ochs, *Consolatory Rhetoric: Grief, Symbol, and Ritual in the Greco-Roman Era* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993).

³⁸ Kurtz & Boardman, *Greek Burial Customs* 163; Morris, *Death-Ritual and Social Structure* 42-55; Volp, *Tod und Ritual* 47-68.

³⁹ De Maris, "Corinthian Religion and Baptism for the Dead", 664-71.

⁴⁰ Homer, *Ilias* 23.51; *Odyssea* 10.560; 11.65; 24.10; Hesiod, *Theogonia* 767. Bernstein, *Formation of Hell* 21-61; C. Sourvinou-Inwood, 'Reading' *Greek Death: To the End of the Classical Period* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995); Garland, *Greek Way of Death* 48.

⁴¹ Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*.

understood to facilitate this.⁴² Fellowship between living and deceased family members was perpetuated through visits to the tombs, accompanied by rites which could include symbolic feeding of the dead and offerings on their behalf.⁴³

Chamber tombs were the prevailing custom in Judaism, as is reflected in the gospel accounts of the Gadarene demoniac,⁴⁴ the raising of Lazarus,⁴⁵ and the burial of Jesus.⁴⁶ Shaft burials are also attested, generally for the poor, and with tiles or similar materials used to create a barrier between the body and the infill, in effect forming a cavity at the base of the shaft.⁴⁷ That Jews abhorred cremation of the dead was widely known,⁴⁸ irrespective of whether or not they anticipated resurrection. The custom of secondary burial is suggestive of the conviction that dying was a process which continued beyond what moderns would call physical death, as well as facilitating family solidarity where individuals died away from their ancestral homes; once the flesh had decomposed, the bones could be gathered and transported more easily from the place of death to the family tomb.⁴⁹ The funerary customs of the Jews of Palestine are attested also among those of the eastern and western Mediterranean diaspora.⁵⁰ It is unlikely, therefore, that the Jewish process of entombment influenced Paul's metaphor of baptism as death with Christ in Romans, if the submersion is essential to this. Jewish beliefs about the dead, and their abode, on the other hand, may form a neglected and important aspect of this image.

⁴² Garland, *Greek Way of Death* 66-68; Volp, *Tod und Ritual* 64-65.

⁴³ Garland, *Greek Way of Death* 105-15; Volp, *Tod und Ritual* 60-64. For the continuation of this practice in early Christianity, see MacMullen, *Second Church*.

⁴⁴ Matthew 8:28; Mark 5:2-3; Luke 8:27.

⁴⁵ John 11:38.

⁴⁶ Matthew 27:57-61; Mark 15: 42-47; Luke 23:50-56; John 19:38-42; *Gospel of Peter* 6.21-24; 6.32. For discussion, J. D. Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998) 527-73; B. R. McCane, *Roll Back the Stone: Death and Burial in the World of Jesus* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2003).

⁴⁷ E. Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices and Beliefs about the Dead* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992); J. D. Crossan & J. L. Reed, *Excavating Jesus: Beneath the Stones, Behind the Texts* (San Francisco: Harper, 2002); McCane, *Roll Back the Stone* 27-56; Volp, *Tod und Ritual* 36-38.

⁴⁸ Tacitus, *Historiae* 5.5.

⁴⁹ Cf. Crossan & Reed, *Excavating Jesus*; McCane, *Roll Back the Stone* 32-44; Petersen, "Pauline Baptism and 'Secondary Burial'".

⁵⁰ Toynbee, *Death and Burial* 49; Volp, *Tod und Ritual* 36-39.

The importance of family is crucial to understanding ancient Jewish burial customs.⁵¹ This is reflected particularly in two phrases which evidently gave expression to the continuing significance of the family beyond the grave, over a considerable period. Frequently in the Old Testament the dead are described as having been gathered to their kin **נֶעֱסַף אֶל עַמּוּיָם**.⁵² While the custom of interment in a family tomb undoubtedly gives cultic expression to this notion, that it is not essential is clear insofar as the expression is applied to Abraham, Aaron, and Moses, who were not buried in the tombs of their forebears.⁵³ The superficially related phrase, **שָׁכַב עִם אֲבֹתָיו**, describing the dead as sleeping with their fathers, refers specifically to the natural as opposed to the violent death, particularly, if not almost exclusively, of kings.⁵⁴ While the king is undoubtedly viewed as a representative person, it should also be noted that few natural deaths are recorded in the Old Testament, apart from those of kings. It should therefore not be concluded that the expression was used only of kings. There remains therefore the notion that family bonds endure beyond death, however the abode of the dead and their state of being may have been conceptualised, and quite apart from any expectation of resurrection.

The predominant, but not the only, designation of the place of the dead in Judaism was **שְׁאוֹל**, generally conceived as a subterranean domain to which different

⁵¹ Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices*; P. S. Johnston, *Shades of Sheol: Death and Afterlife in the Old Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002).

⁵² Genesis 25:8, 17; 35: 29; 49:29, 33; Numbers 20:24, 26; 27:13; 31:2; Deuteronomy 32:50; Judges 2:10; 8:32; 16:31; 2 Samuel 2:32; 3:32; 17:23; 19:37-38; 21:14; 2 Kings 22:20; 2 Chronicles 34:28; Jeremiah 8:2; 25:33. Cf. Johnston, *Shades of Sheol* 33; K. Koch & H.-J. Fabry, **קבר**, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 12 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) 492-98; K. Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife in Ancient Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 1986); N. J. Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Netherworld in the Old Testament* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969) 168.

⁵³ Abraham is buried in the tomb he had acquired for the burial of his wife, Genesis 23: 17-20. Aaron and Moses' deaths are recounted at Mount Hor (Numbers 20:22-29) and Mount Nebo (Deuteronomy 34: 1-8) respectively; the details of their burial are a mystery, but the wilderness location, towards the end of the narrative of Israel's wandering, exclude any possibility of an ancestral grave. For discussion of the custom, Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife* 240-41; Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death* 169.

⁵⁴ Deuteronomy 31: 16; 2 Samuel 7: 12; 1 Kings 1: 21; 2:10; 11:21, 43; 14:20, 31; 15: 8, 24; 16:6, 28; 22: 40, 50; 2 Kings 8:24; 10:35; 13:9, 13; 14:16, 22, 29; 15:7, 22, 38; 16:20; 20:21; 21:18; 24:6; 2 Chronicles 9:31; 12:16; 14:1; 16:13; 21:1; 26:2, 23; 27: 9; 28:27; 32:33; 33:20. Cf. Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife* 240; Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death* 169-71.

images, beliefs, and values were variously attached over the centuries.⁵⁵ תהום, the chaotic and threatening primordial ocean, was also associated with the world of the dead.⁵⁶ Death was also personified as מות.⁵⁷ It has been argued that a collective location of the dead in an underworld is a product of monarchical centralisation of cultic activities, and suppression of family cults at the graves of forebears.⁵⁸ שאול is located “at the opposite theological extreme to Yahweh”, and is conceived primarily in terms of separation from God.⁵⁹ It has also been argued that שאול was conceived as the gathering place of the violently killed awaiting judgement, rather than the abode of ancestors and the honourable dead.⁶⁰ Sheol is not associated with the peaceful and timely rest of the righteous.⁶¹ שאול is almost invariably rendered ἄδης in the LXX,⁶² the few exceptions using θάνατος. The use of the name of a Greek underworld deity may or may not have been conscious, but the identification with the location and nature of the territory of that deity is surely more significant. In common with other ancient societies, ancient Israel conceived שאול as an underworld, entered by the רפאים, the spirits or shades of those who have died.⁶³ Descent beneath the earth, often to a considerable depth, is emphasised by the frequent use of דרך to describe the journey, and this is presupposed in much early Christian literature also.⁶⁴ By the first century, שאול had come to be distinguished from גי-הנמ,⁶⁵ a place of destruction which derived its name from a site outside

⁵⁵ Johnston, *Shades of Sheol* 70-83; Trumbower, *Rescue for the Dead* 91; L. Wächter, שאול, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 14 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004) 239-48; cf. Bernstein, *Formation of Hell* 138-96.

⁵⁶ Johnston, *Shades of Sheol* 119-24; Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death* 59-60. Cf. 2 Samuel 18:17; Lamentations 3; Jonah 4:6.

⁵⁷ Job 5: 20; 18: 13; 28:22;33:22; Psalm 49:14; Isaiah 28:15, 18. For discussion see Johnston, *Shades of Sheol* 127; cf. Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death* 99.

⁵⁸ Bernstein, *Formation of Hell* 138-42; Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death* 140, 168.

⁵⁹ Johnston, *Shades of Sheol* 75.

⁶⁰ J. Davies, *Death, Burial and Rebirth in the Religions of Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1999) 93-94.

⁶¹ Johnston, *Shades of Sheol* 81-83.

⁶² J. Jeremias, ‘adhv, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) 146-49.

⁶³ Cf. Job 10:29; 26:5; Psalm 88:7, 10, 13; Proverbs 2:18; 8:18; (21:16); Isaiah 14:9; 26:14, 19. For discussion, Johnston, *Shades of Sheol* 128-30.

⁶⁴ Job 17: 16; 21: 13; Isaiah 57: 9; cf. Psalm 86: 13; Proverbs 9: 18; Amos 9: 12. Cf. Matthew 11: 23; 12: 40; Luke 10: 15; Revelation 10: 7; 20: 7.

⁶⁵ Aramaic גי-הנמ; Greek γέεωα.

Jerusalem associated with pagan child sacrifices, from which the notion of hell evolved.⁶⁶ At the same time, the separation of the righteous from the unrighteous within Sheol was also maintained,⁶⁷ dependent at least in part on the conviction that God could rescue the living, and later also the dead, from Sheol.⁶⁸ Josephus attributes belief in Sheol during the first century CE to the Pharisees and to the Sicarius Eleazar.⁶⁹

Not all Jewish thought located the abode of the dead beneath the earth. During the Persian period, under Zoroastrian influence,⁷⁰ evolved not only the notions of resurrection and judgement, but also that of a terrestrial or celestial abode of the dead, known in Hebrew as פֶּרֶדֶס, in Aramaic as פֶּרְדֵּיסָא, and in Greek as παράδεισος.⁷¹ Originally an horticultural expression in Old Persian, the term is used of Eden in Genesis 2:8-10 LXX,⁷² and came to express expectations of eschatological restoration on earth.⁷³ Paradise came to be understood as hidden in the present, pending eschatological revelation, generally in a celestial location,⁷⁴ but sometimes in a remote terrestrial location.⁷⁵ Expectation of immortality among diaspora Jews,⁷⁶ combined with these developments, created the notion of a heavenly or remote earthly abode of the dead, replicating the Garden of Eden and/or the Holy of Holies in the temple, where they awaited or anticipated eschatological judgement.⁷⁷ Josephus expresses such an expectation,⁷⁸ and it may be reflected also in the passion

⁶⁶ 1 Enoch 7:36; 2 Baruch 59:10; 85:13; *Sibylline Oracles* 1:103; 2:291; 4:186.

⁶⁷ Luke 16: 23, 26; 1 Enoch 18; 22. Cf. Josephus, *de Bello Iudaico* 2.163; *Antiquitates Iudaeorum* 18.14 (referring specifically to the Pharisees).

⁶⁸ Deuteronomy 32:22; Job 26:6; Psalm 139:8; Proverbs 11:15; Isaiah 26:19; Amos 9:2; Daniel 12:1-3; cf. the *Hodayot* scroll from Qumran, 1QH 3:16-19; 8:28; 9:4; 10:34.

⁶⁹ *Antiquitates Iudaeorum* 18.14,23; *de Bello Iudaico* 7.343-46.

⁷⁰ E. P. Sanders, *Judaism, Practice and Belief, 63 B.C.E.-135 C.E.* (London: SCM, 1992) 298-301; R. C. Zaehner, *The Teachings of the Magi: A Compendium of Zoroastrian Beliefs* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1956) 56-61.

⁷¹ In classical Greek from Xenophon, *Anabasis* 1.2.7; 2.4.14; *Cyropaedia* 1.3.14.

⁷² Cf. also Genesis 13:10; Ezekiel 28:13; 31:8 LXX.

⁷³ Isaiah 51:3; Ezekiel 36:35.

⁷⁴ 4 Ezra 4:7-8; *Testament of Abraham* [Recension B] 10: 1-2; *Apocalypse of Moses* 37:5; 40:2 (cf. 38: 5); 2 Enoch 8: 1 (cf. 42: 3); *Life of Adam* 25: 3.

⁷⁵ *Apocalypse of Moses* 38:5; specifically to the east, 1 Enoch 32:2-3; 2 Enoch 42:3-4; to the north, 1 Enoch 77:3-4; to the west, Josephus, *de Bello Iudaico* 2.155-56.

⁷⁶ Jeremias, ἀδης 147.

⁷⁷ 1 Enoch 37-70; 2 Enoch 10; *Apocalypse of Abraham* 21.

⁷⁸ *De Bello Iudaico* 3.374-75.

narrative in Luke 23:43.⁷⁹ Jesus' promise to the dying, penitent, criminal does not, however, imply that deliverance to Paradise would circumvent descent into Sheol, but rather that he would be rescued from the latter place and any associated posthumous punishment for his crimes.

This brief survey has indicated considerable diversity of both belief and practice regarding the fate of the dead and the disposal of their remains in the world in which Romans was written. The analogy between burial in the ground and baptism by submersion in water, for so long taken for granted in northern European and North American exegesis, is, at the very least, far from obvious in a Graeco-Roman context. Funeral rites were too varied to provide a clear analogy on the basis of which baptism could be understood, and prevailing custom would not support the line of interpretation of the metaphor favoured in recent scholarship. I wish to argue, therefore, that it is not the disposal of the physical remains of the dead, but their descent to Sheol / Hades, which informs Paul's imagery. How this relates baptism to the death and resurrection of Jesus in Romans 6:3-4 remains to be explored.

Paul and Death

A comprehensive treatment of Paul's conceptualisation of death would not be necessary, as there is no particular reason to believe that his beliefs differed markedly from those of other Pharisaic Jews in the Hellenistic world of the period, either before his conversion to Christ or subsequently. We do need to consider, however, whether Paul had a clear and consistent understanding of the state of being of the dead, and their location, which would have informed his metaphor connecting baptism with death.

Paul's reference to παράδεισος in 2 Corinthians 12:4 needs to be considered with some care. With the majority in scholarship we can assume that the experience recounted in 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 is Paul's own, and that the carefully dated ascent εἰς τρίτου οὐρανοῦ in 2 Corinthians 12:2 is to be identified with that εἰς τὸν παράδεισον.⁸⁰ In other words, Paul locates παράδεισος in the third heaven; whether the third of three

⁷⁹ J. Jeremias, παράδεισος, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 5 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967) 765-73.

⁸⁰ J. M. Scott, *2 Corinthians* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1998) 222-23; M. E. Thrall, *II Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000) 788-91; cf. Jeremias, παράδεισον 769; A. F. Segal, *Life after Death: A History of the Afterlife in Western Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 2004) 407; N. H. Taylor, *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem: A Study in Relationships and Authority in Earliest Christianity* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992) 91-93; "Caligula, the Church of Antioch, and the Gentile Mission", *Religion and Theology* 7 (2000) 1-23.

or more is not relevant to our present purpose, though the former may be more likely in a context of competitive boasting.⁸¹ Given Paul's declared uncertainty as to the involvement of his body in this experience, which modern anthropologists and psychologists might describe as an altered state of consciousness,⁸² the possibility needs to be considered that he understood himself to have entered the abode of the (righteous) dead.⁸³ However, clearly this is an extraordinary experience, not only in that Paul returned to earth and commenced his terrestrial life, but, more significantly, in the revelations disclosed to him during the course of this apocalyptic journey. If Paul understood himself to have entered a celestial abode of the dead, or even of a select category thereof, such as martyrs, and this were his consistent location of their abode, it might suggest an immediate rather than an eschatological resurrection, at least for the elite. If immediate resurrection to a celestial location was understood to be the destiny of all Christians, then submersion in baptism would provide no analogy either to the funeral rite or to the migration of the dead to the afterlife. However, other passages suggest that Paul conceptualised the abode of the dead otherwise.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 would seem to imply the location of the dead in an earthly or subterranean abode.⁸⁴ Christ, descending ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ is met εἰς ἄερα by the living and the risen together, which would seem to indicate that the dead would rise to the surface of the earth before continuing their heavenward journey in the company of the living. Even if Paul is here citing traditional material,⁸⁵ resurrection is clearly conceptualised as eschatological, and the abode of the dead is located on or, more likely, beneath the surface of the earth. This suggests a rather different cosmology to any which may be reflected in 2 Corinthians 12, which might locate at

⁸¹ C. E. Hill, *Regnum Caelorum: Patterns of Future Hope in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992) 156; Scott, *2 Corinthians* 224; Segal, *Life after Death* 407; Thrall, *II Corinthians* 788-91.

⁸² E. Bourguignon, *Religion, Altered States of Consciousness, and Social Change* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1973); cf. W. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature. Being the Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion Delivered at Edinburgh in 1901-1902* (London: Longman, Green & Co, 1902).

⁸³ Cf. his expectation of being τρὸς τὸν κύριον in 2 Corinthians 5:8 (cf. σὺν Χριστῷ, Philippians 1: 23).

⁸⁴ Cf. U. Schnelle, *Apostle Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) 79.

⁸⁵ E. Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (London: Black, 1972) 180-200; A. J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (New York: Doubleday, 2007) 267-86; E. J. Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1995) 226-28; Taylor, "Paul and the Historical Jesus Quest"; C. A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) 164-66.

least some of the dead in a celestial Paradise. Paul's frequent use, in common with other early Christian writers, of ἐγείρω to describe the resurrection process⁸⁶ could apply to either scenario, but to Paradise only if resurrection were understood to follow immediately upon death. Modern western notions of logical consistency may not be entirely relevant to this issue, and Paul and the recipients of his letters would not necessarily have perceived any inconsistency in his depicting subterranean and celestial abodes of the dead in different contexts. We therefore cannot assume that Paul presupposed any particular conceptualisation of death, and specifically the location of the dead, in his treatment of baptism in Romans 6.

Baptism and the Death and Resurrection of Jesus in Romans 6

In Romans 6:3 Paul describes Christians as having been ἐβαπτίσθημεν εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν. The fact of Christians having been baptised is in itself uncontentious, and in a sense here merely a premise to Paul's assertion that they had been εἰς τὸν θάνατον [Χριστοῦ] ἐβαπτίσθημεν. Baptism εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν has been understood in broadly two ways: in terms of a mystical union or identification with Christ,⁸⁷ or as an abbreviation for εἰς τὸ ὄνομα Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ.⁸⁸ The language of transfer of allegiance, and of ownership,⁸⁹ reflects the change of status and identity inherent to the initiation process.⁹⁰ These interpretations may in fact not be entirely incompatible,

⁸⁶ Romans 4:24, 25; 6:4, 9; 7:4; 8:11; 10:9; 1 Corinthians 6:14-17, 35, 42-44, 52; 2 Corinthians 1:9; 4:14; Galatians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; (Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 2:12; 1 Timothy 2:8).

⁸⁷ G. Bornkamm, *Paul* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1969) 75; Nygren, *Romans* 232-33; W. Sanday & A. C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1908) 156; Schnackenburg, *Baptism in the Thought of St Paul* 30-45; R. C. Tannehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ* (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1967) 22-26.

⁸⁸ Barrett, *Romans* 114; Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* 128-29; C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Commentary on Romans* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1965) 301; H. Frankemölle, *Das Taufverständnis des Paulus: Tod und Auferstehung nach Röm 6* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1973) 41-44; Hartman, 'Into the Name of the Lord Jesus' 70; Tannehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ* 22; Wilckens, *Brief an der Römer* 11.

⁸⁹ J. W. Aageson, "'Control' in Pauline Language and Culture: A Study of Rom 6", *New Testament Studies* 42 (1996) 75-89; Fitzmyer, *Romans* 433; Sabou, *Between Horror and Hope* 95; E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (London: SCM, 1977) 467-68.

⁹⁰ E. J. Christiansen, *The Covenant in Judaism and Paul: A Study of Ritual Boundaries as Identity Markers* (Leiden: Brill, 1995) 311-18; H. J. Mol, *Identity and the Sacred* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1976).

particularly where a corporate dimension to Christ's and Christian identity is recognised,⁹¹ but this question cannot be addressed until the link between baptism and death in these verses has been established. The common experience of baptism εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν is the premise of Paul's assertion that "we" had been εἰς τὸν θάνατον [Χριστοῦ] ἐβαπτίσθημεν. Whether this is brought about by mystical identification or union, or by a quasi-legal transaction, or a combination of these, the issue we need to consider is the significance of Christ's death to the process. The ethical point which Paul's exposition of baptism illustrates, is that a fundamental change is effected in and through the rite. This goes beyond ethics and the continuing power of sin, as the "full and final separation from the old life"⁹² presupposed by modern scholarship does not fit with ancient notions of continuity through death to the afterlife. The transformation in dying and rising is essential to the ethical connotations of baptism.

Βαπτίζω has a considerable semantic range in ancient Greek, but in the biblical tradition is used all but exclusively in a ritual sense.⁹³ There are therefore no grounds for doubting that the Christian initiatory ritual is here in view. Nevertheless the connotations of destruction and drowning cannot be insignificant in a text which draws an explicit link between baptism and death⁹⁴ or, specifically, martyrdom,⁹⁵ a connection attested also in the Jesus tradition, from which it may derive.⁹⁶ While some may argue that the link and the symbolism of dying and rising in baptism are

⁹¹ Cf. Black, *Romans* 93; Byrne, *Romans* 195; Dodd, *Romans* 86; Sabou, *Between Horror and Hope* 91-92; Schnackenburg, *Baptism in the Thought of St Paul*; Spinks, *Early and Medieval Rituals and Theologies of Baptism* 6; Tannehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ* 24.

⁹² Tannehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ* 34.

⁹³ Cf. Dunn, "Baptized as Metaphor"; Frankemölle, *Taufverständnis des Paulus* 48-50; F. Godet, *Commentary on St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1898) 384-90; M. F. Hull, *Baptism on Account of the Dead (1 Cor 15:29): An Act of Faith in the Resurrection* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005) 95-98; I. H. Marshall, "The Meaning of the Verb 'Baptize'", S. E. Porter & A. R. Cross (ed), *Dimensions of Baptism: Biblical and theological Studies* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 8-24; Oepke, βαπτω, βαπτίζω; N. H. Taylor, "Baptism for the Dead (1 Cor 15:29)?", *Neotestamentica* 36 (2002) 111-20.

⁹⁴ Pace, Sabou, *Between Horror and Hope* 96-98; cf. J. Murphy-O'Connor, "Baptized for the Dead (I Cor., XV, 29): A Corinthian Slogan?", *Revue Biblique* 88 (1981) 532-43; Oepke, βαπτω, βαπτίζω; Schnackenburg, *Baptism in the thought of St Paul* 22.

⁹⁵ Jeanes, "Baptism Portrayed as Martyrdom", 160.

⁹⁶ Mk 10:38-39; Lk 12:50; cf. Dunn, "Baptized as Metaphor"; Fitzmyer, *Romans* 431; Taylor, "Paul and the Historical Jesus Quest".

“fiction”, and that baptism is merely a purificatory rite,⁹⁷ this is unlikely given the force with which Paul connects baptism and death in these verses. It is far more likely that the association of baptism with death was widespread in early Christianity, and that Paul employs a symbolism already known.⁹⁸

That death by drowning and by crucifixion are graphically different is undoubtedly true, but is far from being valid grounds for denying such a link or its symbolic significance,⁹⁹ any more than it would require the institution of a sado-masochistic Christian initiation rite involving timber and ironmongery. “Descent into the water obviously did not mime Jesus’ death”,¹⁰⁰ but was nevertheless understood to constitute a significant link between the person baptised and Jesus in his death. Attention has been drawn to the widespread custom of washing corpses before interment,¹⁰¹ a ritual understood to prepare the deceased for transition to the afterlife by removing the impurities of the terrestrial life which had ended. Executed criminals were not normally accorded this ablution, and were deemed to enter the afterlife polluted by the evidence of their crimes and the consequences thereof. This, as much as the apparent difference in mode of death, would distinguish the symbolic death of the Christian in baptism from the crucifixion and entombment of Jesus.

The emphasis on death itself is reinforced in 6:4, where Paul informs the Roman Christians that they had been συνετάφημεν ... αὐτῷ διὰ τοῦ βαπτίσματος εἰς τὸν θάνατον. Θάπτω / θάπτομαι denotes the performance of or participation in funeral rites.¹⁰² The semantic range covers a considerable diversity of funereal practices, from processions to cremation¹⁰³ and embalming,¹⁰⁴ as well as interment. In the LXX, θάπτω renders רָבַק, with the exception of Genesis 50:26 where ἔθαψαν renders טָחַן, relating Joseph’s embalming, but quite explicitly excludes deposition in a grave. Θάπτω and its derivatives are never used of digging holes in the ground and covering over an

⁹⁷ H. N. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (London: SPCK, 1979) 401-402.

⁹⁸ Hartman, *Into the Name of the Lord Jesus* 88-93; Spinks, *Early and Medieval Rituals and Theologies of Baptism* 3; cf. J. Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990) 109-39.

⁹⁹ Sabou, *Between Horror and Hope* 98-99; cf. Tannehill, *Dying and rising with Christ* 34.

¹⁰⁰ Meeks, *First Urban Christians* 155.

¹⁰¹ Garland, *Greek Way of Death* 14-16; A. Kavanagh, *The Shape of Baptism: The rite of Christian Initiation* (New York: Pueblo, 1978) 28-29; Kurtz & Boardman, *Greek Burial Customs* 143-44, 149-61; McCane, *Roll back the Stone* 31-32.

¹⁰² H. G. Liddell & R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1940) 784.

¹⁰³ Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historica* 3.55; Appian, *Historia romana* 7.35.

¹⁰⁴ Genesis 50:26.

object other than a human corpse. The much less widely attested *συνθάπτω* / *συνθάπτομαι* also has some diversity of meaning, including participation in the funeral rites¹⁰⁵ as well as indicating simultaneity or co-location of entombment.¹⁰⁶ Later Christian usage is almost invariably dependent on Romans 6:4 and/or Colossians 2:12,¹⁰⁷ but there are a small number of classical Greek texts, and one Jewish, where the term is used. Herodotus records a Crestonaeon (Thracian) custom whereby the deceased man's favourite wife is killed over his tomb and *συνθάπτεται τῷ ἀνδρὶ*,¹⁰⁸ a coveted honour we are assured. More figuratively, Lycurgus declares that the freedom of all the Greeks *συνετάφη γὰρ τοῖς τουτῶν σώμασιν* of those slain on the battlefield at Chaeronea.¹⁰⁹ Demades uses the expression similarly.¹¹⁰ Josephus reports that, after his assassination, Ammon king of Judah *τῷ πατρὶ συνθάπτουσι*.¹¹¹ This clearly implies that his remains were deposited in the grave of his father, reflecting the Hebrew notion of gathering to the ancestors in a family chamber tomb.¹¹²

In view of the above, *συνετάφηεν* [Χριστῷ] needs to be understood rather more broadly than in terms of sand being shovelled into a hole over a corpse.¹¹³ *Συν-* with the passive form of the verb implies that Christians have undergone funeral rites together with Christ, the whole symbolic, ritual, process of transition from one mode of being to another, as well as interment in the same tomb. They are separated from their preceding identity and relationships, experience the liminality, chaos, and ambivalence, or complete lack of identity, of the transition process, and emerge to a new order and identity, somehow continuous with that which they have left.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁵ Sophocles, *Ajax* 1378; Euripides, *Helen* 1545; Aeschylus, *Septem contra Thebas* 1033; Plato, *de Legibus* 10. 909C

¹⁰⁶ *Papyrus Elephantinus* 2.12; cf. *Inscriptiones Graecae* 14.943.

¹⁰⁷ Clement, *Protrepticus* 2; Origen, *Homiliae in Ieremiam* 19:4; *In Iohannem* 10.20:12; *Constitutiones Apostolorum* 7.22.6; 43.5.

¹⁰⁸ *Historiae* 5.5.

¹⁰⁹ Lycurgus, *Contra Leocratem* 50.

¹¹⁰ *De Annis Duodecim* 13.

¹¹¹ *Antiquitates Iudaeorum* 10.4.1; cf. 2 Kings 22:1; 2 Chronicles 34:1.

¹¹² **קוּל**. Genesis 15:15; 47: 30; 1 Samuel 21:13; 2 Samuel 7:12; 1 Kings 1:21; 2:10; 11: 21, 43; 14:20, 31; 15:8, 24; 2 Kings 22:20; 2 Chronicles 34: 28; Job 34:14; Psalms 26: 9, etc. Cf. Acts 13:36. For discussion of the development of funeral customs and beliefs in Israel see Bernstein, *Formation of Hell* 138-42; Chidester, *Patterns of Transcendence* 182-94; McCane, *Roll back the Stone*; Spronk, *beatific Afterlife in Ancient Israel*; Tromp, *Primitive conceptions of Death*; Volp, *Tod und Ritual* 29-46.

¹¹³ Cf. Petersen, "Pauline Baptism and 'Secondary Burial'".

¹¹⁴ Cf. Mol, *Identity and the Sacred*; Turner, *Ritual Process*; Van Gennep, *Rites of Passage*.

Identification with Christ in his death implies assuming the dishonourable and degrading associations of crucifixion,¹¹⁵ as τῷ ὁμοιώματι τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ in 6:5 emphasises, even if Paul interprets this martyrologically and honour is perceived as having been vindicated by endurance of unjust suffering.¹¹⁶ As noted above, it would have been dishonourable burial in *puticuli* which would most closely have approximated the submersion image which has so strongly influenced the interpretation of this verse.

A further aspect to the wider semantic range of συνθάπτειν and its social and cultural significance is the importance of the family tomb to honourable burial, especially but by no means only in Judaism. Those symbolically entombed with Christ are identified as belonging to the family of Christ, and therefore as being gathered to God's family.¹¹⁷ However, burial in a family tomb entailed the disposal of the corpse alongside those of forebears and other members of the family to which the deceased was already related, whether by birth, adoption, or marriage, or indeed on occasion by purchase as a slave. Funerary rites do not entail joining a family, and therefore do not confer identity as baptism does. The analogy to baptism as joining the family of Christ is therefore not entirely apposite. It could perhaps be argued that baptism confirms an identity previously conferred, but this would be a modern western rationalisation, and one which ignores the distinction between a rite of passage and a conversion-initiation ritual.¹¹⁸ A rite of passage, such as a funeral, represents a continuum in a culturally established life-cycle, whereas a conversion-initiation rite represents a radical disjunction in identity. Paul understands baptism as a conversion-initiation ritual, and while the motif of adoption into the family of God through baptism is undoubtedly present, the funeral is not the rite of passage most apposite to such acquisition of new identity. It is therefore unlikely that this is where the force of the metaphor lies. Nevertheless, the aspect of being gathered is important,

¹¹⁵ Cf. Jewett, *Romans* 397.

¹¹⁶ Cf. 1 Corinthians 1: 22-25; Philippians 2:5-11. For discussion see Campbell, "Dying with Christ", 275-76; S. A. Cummins, *Paul and the Crucified Christ in Antioch: Maccabean Martyrdom and Galatians 1 and 2* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001) 19-90; A. J. Droge & J. D. Tabor, *A Noble Death: Suicide and Martyrdom among Christians and Jews in Antiquity* (San Francisco: Harper, 1992); D. Seeley, *The Noble Death: Graeco-Roman Martyrology and Paul's Concept of Salvation* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990); S. K. Williams, *Jesus' Death as Saving Event: The Background and Origin of a Concept* (Missoula: Scholars, 1975).

¹¹⁷ Sabou, *Between Horror and Hope* 90-92.

¹¹⁸ Christiansen, *Covenant in Judaism and Paul* 141; Taylor, *Paul, Antioch and Jerusalem* 100; *Paul on Baptism* 10-12, 150-51.

in that it acknowledges and emphasises the importance of the transition effected by the funeral, and the significance of the world beyond the grave.

The reversal in the logical progression from death to burial in *συνετάφημεν ... εἰς τὸν θάνατον* has generally been explained in terms of “burial” emphasising the completeness and finality of death,¹¹⁹ “death” being understood broadly in terms of the renunciation of moral evil, connected in some way to the crucifixion of Jesus. In other words, the sense Paul is wishing to convey is understood to explain the inversion in the logic of the image he employs. That it is precisely at this point in the interpretation that scholarship has been unable to reach any consensus,¹²⁰ suggests that an alternative approach, which does justice to the vocabulary and grammar, and to the logic and sense of the imagery, is needed. As indicated above, I wish to argue that closer attention to the connotations of *θάνατος*, especially when it occurs without any qualifier, as in Romans 6:4, would lead to a more satisfactory interpretation of the text.

The phrase *εἰς τὸν θάνατον* is generally rendered “into death”, with too little consideration of exactly what is meant by “death”.¹²¹ It is also generally assumed that the two occurrences of the phrase in v. 3 and v. 4 are identical in meaning. Whereas the former clearly refers to the death of Jesus, the latter is not explicitly linked to Jesus, and the logic of the sentence requires a different meaning. Whatever connection there may be between this text and the tradition behind 1 Corinthians 15:3-4,¹²² the distinction between the historical and specific death of Jesus and the general state of death entered on expiry of terrestrial life needs to be recognised. It is the link between

¹¹⁹ M. Barth, *Die Taufe ein Sakrament* (Zürich: Evangelische, 1951) 268-82; Bornkamm, *Paul* 74; C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975) 304; Dunn, *Romans* 329; Sabou, *Between Horror and Hope* 90-91; Tannehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ* 34; Wedderburn, *Baptism and Resurrection* 370.

¹²⁰ Cf. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* 130-32; Sabou, *Between Horror and Hope*; Schnackenburg, *Baptism in the Thought of St Paul* 34; Tannehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ*, and the commentaries.

¹²¹ Cf. R. Penna, *Paul the Apostle. I. Jew and Greek Alike* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1996) 128-29.

¹²² Dunn, *Romans* 314; Frankemölle, *Taufverständnis des Paulus* 56-57; P. Lundberg, *La Typologie baptismale dans l'Ancienne Eglise* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1942) 249; Schnackenburg, *Baptism in the Thought of St Paul* 34; cf. Betz, “Transforming a Ritual”, 107-12.

these two senses of θάνατος which baptism establishes.¹²³ Death, understood as the cessation of the vital functions of the physical human body, precedes funeral rites in all human societies, except in very specific circumstances. Live burials and other funeral rites which induce death are attested in some cultures,¹²⁴ but it is inconceivable that such could have informed Paul's thought. Even where it is understood that the process of dying continues beyond entombment,¹²⁵ funeral rites follow the cessation of bodily functions. The "death" entered through baptism therefore cannot be equated, metaphorically or otherwise, with the "death" which precedes funeral rites.

The implications of θάνατος as the destination reached through baptism have not been adequately explored. This of course precludes understanding θάνατος here as the personification or deification of death, as is attested in Greek mythology.¹²⁶ While there is undoubtedly a literary parallelism between εἰς τὸν θάνατον in v. 3 and v.4, the latter occurrence is not qualified by Χριστοῦ or any equivalent expression. I would suggest that, whereas θάνατος in v. 3 clearly refers to Jesus, that in v. 4 is to be understood as describing the state of continuing existence of the נַפְשׁוֹ (νεκροί)¹²⁷ in the netherworld,¹²⁸ and by extension the netherworld itself. In the LXX θάνατος renders נַפְשׁוֹ in the three texts where ἄδης is not used.¹²⁹ Its use of the abode of the

¹²³ Frankemölle, *Taufverständnis des Paulus* 86-93, 122; cf. Wedderburn, *Baptism and Resurrection* 343-45, who notes that *m Pes* 10.5 proselyte baptism as symbolic participation in the Exodus, cf. 1 Cor 10:1-4.

¹²⁴ Widows consigned to death with their deceased husbands seem the most frequent recipients of such rites, their funerals being a subsidiary aspect of their husbands'. Cf. Chidester, *Patterns of Transcendence*. For an ancient Mediterranean example, Herodotus 5.5.

¹²⁵ Cf. Garland, *Greek Way of Death* 13; Petersen, "Pauline Baptism and 'Secondary Burial'".

¹²⁶ Cf. Homer, *Ilias* 14.231; Sophocles, *Ajax* 854; *Philoctetes* 797; *Trachiniae* 834; Euclid, *Alcestitis*. Garland, *Greek Way of Death* 56. Pace, Tannehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ* 85.

¹²⁷ נַפְשׁוֹ is also rendered γίγαντες in the LXX (Proverbs 21:16; Isaiah 14:9, etc) but refers here to superhuman creatures rather than to deceased human beings. Νεκροί is used in Psalm 88:10; Isaiah 26: 14, 19, but circumlocutory phrases are more common, cf. Daniel 12:2.

¹²⁸ Cf. R. K. Bultmann, θάνατος, κτλ., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967) 7-25; A. Schlatter, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1935).

¹²⁹ 1 Kings 22:5; Proverbs 23:14; Isaiah 28:15.

dead is therefore attested in Jewish usage of the late second temple period. Θάνατος in Romans 6:4 can therefore quite plausibly be understood as referring to ᾅδης. This, I would argue, is the most satisfactory possible interpretation of the verse, taking account both of the semantics of the text and the cosmology of its cultural context.

To recapitulate, the “death” entered through funeral rites cannot be identified with that which precedes these rites, even if it represents the completion thereof. Death as conversion and repentance would precede baptism,¹³⁰ and not be the consequence or sequel to the rite. This is not to deny that, for many initiated into the early Church, baptism and conformity would have been imposed by the *paterfamilias*, and the adoption of Christian values been the consequence of the patron’s conversion.¹³¹ However, there can be no doubt that Paul regards voluntary conversion as normative, and presupposes this in passages in which he uses baptism to illustrate or reinforce a theological or ethical principle. Εἰς τὸν θάνατον in Romans 6:4 refers not to the antecedent physical condition which necessitates disposal of the corpse, but to the state entered through baptism, analogous to that entered through funeral rituals.¹³² This line of interpretation would fit with the description of Jesus being raised ἐκ νεκρῶν, from among the dead, i.e. deceased human beings, in the following clause.¹³³ Ἐκ νεκρῶν refers not to the state of death, which would be denoted with a singular noun, or, possibly, adjective, but, in the plural, to those gathered in the abode of the dead.

For Paul as a Pharisaic Jew it would have been axiomatic of Jesus’ death that he thereby entered the world of the dead.¹³⁴ As we have noted, Paul may elsewhere envisage this as παράδεισος,¹³⁵ a destination to which a submersion ritual would furnish no obvious analogy. However, ΛΑΩΣ / ᾅδης as the destination of the dead would be more consistent with

¹³⁰ Jewett, *Romans* 397.

¹³¹ Cf. N. H. Taylor, *Paul on Baptism* 4-10, 118-23; “The Social Nature of Conversion in the Early Christian World”, P. F. Esler (ed), *Modelling Early Christianity* (London: Routledge, 1995) 128-36.

¹³² Cf. E. Stommel, “Begraben mit Christus’ (Röm vi:4) und die Taufritus”, *Römische Quartalschrift* 49 (1954) 1-20.

¹³³ Cf. A. T. Hanson, *New Testament Interpretation of Scripture* (London: SPCK, 1980); Lundberg, *Typologie baptismale* 209-13; J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (London: Longman, 1980) 380; Taylor, “Dying with Christ in Baptism”.

¹³⁴ Cf. Lundberg, *Typologie baptismale* 64-72. Cf. Hill, *Regum Caelorum* 159.

¹³⁵ 2 Corinthians 5:8; 12:2-4; Philippians 1:23.

the imagery suggested by the baptism rite, and in at least one other passage would be more consistent with the cosmology presupposed.¹³⁶ This would also seem closer to the predominant position in Judaism¹³⁷ and the wider Graeco-Roman world.¹³⁸ The associations of Sheol with the grave and with the primordial ocean would also suggest that this conceptualisation of death and entombment lies behind the imagery of these verses. Modern western conceptions of death,¹³⁹ as lifelessness or annihilation, have perhaps led to a neglect of the expression ἐκ νεκρῶν in Romans 6:4, and consequently of the umbral state of the dead which Jesus would have been understood to have assumed, or, perhaps more accurately, to which he would have been reduced. It would have been as one of the מַיְמַר (νεκροί) that Jesus entered the netherworld at his death, and from among them, ἐκ νεκρῶν [ἀνθρῶτων], that he was raised by God.¹⁴⁰

In using the plural form of the noun or adjective, Paul is referring not to death as a concept or process in the singular, for which θάνατος or νέκρωσις¹⁴¹ would have been available, but to dead entities in the plural.¹⁴² The interpretation of ἐκ νεκρῶν as “formulaic”,¹⁴³ if by “formulaic” is meant “circumlocutory for death”, must therefore be regarded as unlikely, if not misleading. In the LXX, νεκροί renders מַיְמַר, the

¹³⁶ 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18.

¹³⁷ Johnston, *Shades of Sheol*.

¹³⁸ Bernstein, *Formation of Hell*; Garland, *Greek Way of Death*.

¹³⁹ Bloch & Parry, *Death and the Regeneration of Life*; Davies, *Death, Burial and Rebirth in the Religions of Antiquity*.

¹⁴⁰ Fitzmyer, *Romans* 434.

¹⁴¹ Cf. 2 Corinthians 4:10.

¹⁴² Cf. W. F. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, & F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Cambridge: CUP, 1957) 534-35; R. K. Bultmann, νεκρος, νεκρωω, νεκρωσις, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 4 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967) 892-95; C. L. W. Grimm & J. H. Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1930) 423-24; Liddell & Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon* 527; J. H. Moulton & G. Milligan, *A Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1930) 423-24.

¹⁴³ F. Blass, A. Debrunner, & R. W. Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge: CUP, 1961) 133; Dunn, *Romans* 315; Fitzmyer, *Romans* 434; cf. the absence of any comment on this phrase, Barrett, *Romans* 112; Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* 133-34; Cranfield, *Romans* [1975] 304; Ziesler, *Romans* 157.

shades of the dead.¹⁴⁴ Ἐκ νεκρῶν refers not to an abstract state of being, but to people who have died.¹⁴⁵ The distinction is not a pedantic one, when it is recognised that modern western, substantially demythologised, notions of death as the end of life, and therefore of meaningful existence, result in a very different line of interpretation. Christ, having died on the cross, is understood to be, not an isolated individual denuded of meaningful existence, but a “shade” who has entered the same place and state of being (εἰς τὸν θάνατον) as other deceased humans, and shares in their collective identity and aspirations for continued meaningful existence, whatever form these might have taken.¹⁴⁶ Jesus entered Hades at his death, where, if the line of argument in the previous section is correct, Christians are joined with him through baptism. From Hades, Jesus was raised ἐκ νεκρῶν, from among the dead, i.e. the shades of the dead. This, I would propose, not merely dovetails with the interpretation of εἰς τὸν θάνατον offered above, but provides a key to understanding how dying with Christ in baptism could be conceived as establishing union with him in his resurrection.¹⁴⁷ By entering through baptism into Christ’s death, Christians symbolically join him in Hades, from where Christ was raised. From there, Christians too would be raised ἐν καινότητι ζωῆς.

Descensus ad Inferos?

The period between Jesus’ death and resurrection, and his state of being during that time, have received only intermittent attention in critical scholarship. Historical critical study ends with the interment of Jesus’ body in the grave, and resumes with the Easter experience of the disciples. Modern conceptions of death have perhaps ensured that this goes beyond recognising the limits of critical scholarship, to

¹⁴⁴ Again, **DNF** is also rendered γίγαντες in the LXX (Proverbs 21:16; Isaiah 14:9, etc) but refers here to superhuman creatures rather than to deceased human beings. Νεκροὶ is used in Psalm 88:10; Isaiah 26:14, 19, but circumlocutory phrases are more common, cf. Daniel 12:2.

¹⁴⁵ Pace, Blass-Debrunner-Funk, *Greek Grammar* 133. The significance attached to the absence of the article would seem unfounded, and either serves a conscious demythologising agenda or demythologising presuppositions. Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:29, where νεκροὶ without the article clearly refers to deceased human beings.

¹⁴⁶ Bernstein, *Formation of Hell*; Davies, *Death, Burial and Rebirth*; Garland, *Greek Way of Death*; Hopkins, *Death and Renewal*; Johnston, *Shades of Sheol*; Segal, *Life after Death*; Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death*.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Hanson, *New Testament Interpretation of Scripture* 122-26; Lundberg, *Typologie baptismale* 249.

overlooking allusions in the New Testament. Exegesis of these verses would seem to be an example.

Christian tradition, reflected in the pseudepigraphical if not the canonical Gospels, and also in ancient liturgical texts, saw the development of the myth of the *descensus ad inferos*.¹⁴⁸ It has been argued that Romans 6:1-11 and 1 Peter 3:18-4:6 draw on a common tradition influenced by midrash on Psalms 88 and 89.¹⁴⁹ Attractive though aspects of this theory are, one major distinction between Paul and the myth of the *descensus ad inferos* reflected in later literature, is that for Paul Jesus enters Hades as a dead human being, not as a superhuman being who overcomes Satan and himself releases the dead from captivity.

It has been argued that the myth of the *descensus* is widely presupposed in the New Testament writings, and specifically in such Pauline texts as Romans 10:6-9,¹⁵⁰ 1 Corinthians 15:4, 8,¹⁵¹ Philippians 2: 9, (Ephesians 4: 8-10,¹⁵² Colossians 2:12¹⁵³), and also is passages such as Matthew 27:52,¹⁵⁴ John 5:19-29,¹⁵⁵ Acts 2:24,¹⁵⁶ and 1 Peter (3:18-19;)

¹⁴⁸ R. J. Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (Leiden: Brill, 1998); C. E. Laufer, *Hell's Destruction: An Exploration of Christ's Descent to the Dead* (London: Routledge, 2013); Trumbower, *Rescue for the Dead*. For theological reflection, H. U. von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990). For pastoral reflections, P. J. J. Sheppy, *Death Liturgy and Ritual. I. A Pastoral and Liturgical Theology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003) 64-77.

¹⁴⁹ Hanson, *New Testament Interpretation of Scripture* 123-24.

¹⁵⁰ Hanson, *New Testament Interpretation of Scripture* 135-41.

¹⁵¹ G. Every, *The Baptismal Sacrifice* (London: SCM, 1959) 66; Hartman, 'Into the Name of the Lord Jesus' 71; Leenhardt, *Romans*; cf. De Maris, "Funerals and Baptism", 29.

¹⁵² J. D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making* (London: SCM, 1980) 186-87; Hanson, *New Testament Interpretation of Scripture* 141-48.

¹⁵³ Post-pauline, Hartman, 'Into the Name of the Lord Jesus' 95-97; U. Schnelle, *Gerechtigkeit und Christusgegenwart: Vorpaulinischen und paulinische Tauftheologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983) 80; earlier form of tradition, Tannehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ* 10.

¹⁵⁴ Bernstein, *Formation of Hell* 252; U. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (Berlin: Benziger, 2002) 360-61; pace, R. E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah* (New York: Doubleday, 1994) 1123-33; W. D. Davies & D. C. Allison, *Matthew. III* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997) 633-35.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John* (New York: Doubleday, 1966) 215; E. G. Selwyn, *the first Epistle of Peter* (London: Macmillan, 1961) 346-51; pace, C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John* (London: SPCK, 1955) 218-19.

¹⁵⁶ Hanson, *New Testament Interpretation of Scripture*; Selwyn, *1 Peter*.

4:6.¹⁵⁷ While traditions which evolved into the myth of Christ's *descensus ad inferos* may well have been employed in Christian discourse at an earlier date than has generally been acknowledged in scholarship, this is not to suggest that a fully developed *descensus* myth lies behind Romans 6:3-4 or the imagery it employs.¹⁵⁸ In the *descensus* myth as attested in such texts as the Gospels of Peter and Nicodemus,¹⁵⁹ and possibly reflected in canonical 1 Peter,¹⁶⁰ Jesus enters **ΛΙΛΥ** / ἄδης in power, overcomes Satan and the personified Hades, and leads the dead out to resurrection. In Romans 6:4, on the other hand, Paul, in keeping with Pharisaic and Christian Judaism alike, presumes that the dead enter Sheol, and therefore that this was the destination of Jesus after his crucifixion. Rendering *hoge/rqh* in the passive, Paul clearly understands God to be the active party in raising Jesus from the dead,¹⁶¹ as is surely emphasised by *διὰ τῆς δόξης τοῦ πατρὸς*.¹⁶² If *ἡγέρθη χριστὸς ἐκ [τῶν] νεκρῶν*¹⁶³ reflects an Aramaic formula of Palestinian origin,¹⁶⁴ this would suggest that Paul

¹⁵⁷ Cf. F. W. Beare, *the First Epistle of Peter* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958) 145; Hanson, *new Testament Interpretation of Scripture* 122-56; D. G. Horrell, "Who are the 'Dead' and When was the Gospel Preached to Them? The Interpretation of 1 Peter 4.6", *New Testament Studies* 49 (2003) 70-89; B. I. Reicke, *The Disobedient Spirits and Christian Baptism: A Study of I Pet. III.19 and Its Context* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1946); Trumbower, *Rescue for the Dead* 33, 46; cf. Brown, *Death of the Messiah* 1127-28; J. R. Michaels, *1 Peter* (Waco: Word, 1988) 237-41; pace, P. J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996); W. J. Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation to the Spirits: A Study of 1 Peter 3:18-4:6* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965); J. H. Elliott, *1 Peter* (New York: Doubleday, 2000) 730-42; Selwyn, *1 Peter* 198-201.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Stommel, "Begraben mit Christus", 9-11.

¹⁵⁹ *Gospel of Peter* 10:41; *Acts of Pilate* 25-27.

¹⁶⁰ Several scholars argue that the *descensus* is alluded to in 4:6, but not in 3:19; Hanson, *New Testament Interpretation of Scripture*; Horrell, "Who are the 'Dead'?"; Reicke, *Disobedient Spirits*; Trumbower, *Rescue for the Dead*; the absence of any such allusion is argued by Achtemeier, *1 Peter*; Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation to the Spirits*; Elliott, *1 Peter*; J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude* (London: A & C Black, 1969); Michaels, *1 Peter*.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Romans 4:24; 8:11; 10:9; 1 Corinthians 6:14; 15:15; 2 Corinthians 4:14; Galatians 1:1; (Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 2:12); 1 Thessalonians 1:10.

¹⁶² Cf. Fitzmyer, *Romans* 434.

¹⁶³ Cf. 1 Peter 1:21; Polycarp, *Philippians* 2:1; cf. Mark 16:6; Acts 2:22-24; 3:26; 4:10; 10:40; 13:33.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. D. C. Allison, *Resurrecting Jesus: The Earliest Christian Tradition and its Interpreters* (New York: T & T Clark, 2005) 229-31.

remains close to earliest Christian beliefs on this point. Notwithstanding any christological developments Paul may have adopted or himself have generated, these do not occasion any revision of his understanding of Jesus' death.

So far as Paul is concerned, therefore, Jesus entered **לואו** / ἄδης at death in the same way as any other deceased person, joined the **רפאים** / νεκροί, and remained in the state and place of θάνατος until God raised him from there. Baptism ritualises the process whereby Christians undergo symbolic death, which entails entering Sheol / Hades, before they can be raised to new life. Paul envisages some participatory connection between the resurrection of Jesus and that of Christians, conferred symbolically or proleptically in baptism, even if this is implied in the underlying narrative and not articulated explicitly for modern readers.¹⁶⁵ This is not to deny the essentially eschatological nature of resurrection for Paul, or to imply that the resurrection of Christians has already taken place in their baptism.

There is no suggestion in Romans 6:3-4 that the **רפאים** / νεκροί, whether the righteous of the Old Testament or anyone else, literally accompany Jesus out of **לואו** / ἄδης at his resurrection. Nevertheless, this passage implies that, in baptism, Christians, symbolically or proleptically, make the transition from Sheol to **καινότητι ζωῆς** which represents and anticipates their resurrection.¹⁶⁶ While in this particular context having clear ethical connotations, **καινότητι ζωῆς** needs to be understood more broadly, as the life in the risen Christ which Christians enjoy, which has consequences for the way they lead their lives in the present.¹⁶⁷

Conclusions

This study has made essentially two, inter-related, proposals concerning the interpretation of Paul's treatment of baptism in Romans 6. The first is that, understood against the background of contemporary funeral customs, the image popular in northern European and North American scholarship and popular interpretation, which depicts baptism as analogous to burial in a vertically excavated

¹⁶⁵ Hartman, *Into the Name of the Lord Jesus* 88-90; cf. Frankemölle, *Taufverständnis des Paulus* 122; Hanson, *New Testament Interpretation of Scripture* 123. It is perhaps not insignificant that baptism is conferred on the dead as they are raised in the *descensus* accounts in Hermas, *Similitudes* 9.16.5-6; *Gospel of Nicodemus* 27; *Sibylline Oracle* 8:310-17; *Epistula Apostolorum* 27; *Apocalypse of Peter* 14; cf. *Odes of Solomon* 42:20; Clement, *Stromateis* 2.43.5; 6.6.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Dunn, "Baptized as Metaphor", 307; cf. Tannehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ* 10.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* 101-102; Cranfield, *Romans* 305; Dunn, *Romans* 316; Firzmyer, *Romans* 434.

grave, is at best tenuous. Such imagery does not correspond with any known ancient funerary practices, and rests upon too narrow, and culturally conditioned, an interpretation of the Greek verb θάπτειν. Paul is referring not to a specific mode of disposal of corpses, but to the whole rite of passage which accompanies death and transition to the netherworld.

Secondly, it has been argued that the temporal and logical order of progression from physical death to the grave and beyond, and not the other way around, requires that the netherworld be recognised as the destination of that mythical journey which baptism represents. Jesus entered Sheol as a human shade, and remained in that state and that place until God raised him from the dead. From there, God effects Jesus' resurrection. Developments in the *descensus* tradition in which Jesus enters Hell or Hades in triumph, and himself overcomes Satan and raises the dead, are dependent on developments in Christology which are not attested in Paul's letters, which tend to diminish Jesus' humanity and mitigate his death.

To conclude therefore, in Romans 6:3-4 Paul reinforces his injunction to moral behaviour by expounding baptism as the rite whereby Christians symbolically die and enter the netherworld with Christ, and enter a renewal of life which anticipates and reflects that to which Jesus was raised by God, and in which they will also share. Rather more than "acknowledging an experience previously undergone by Christ",¹⁶⁸ baptism effects "direct union with Christ's death"¹⁶⁹ and is the "cultic actualisation of the salvific work of Jesus"¹⁷⁰ in the lives of those baptised.

¹⁶⁸ Wedderburn, *Baptism and Resurrection* 389.

¹⁶⁹ Tannehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ* 35.

¹⁷⁰ Hartman, *Into the Name of the Lord Jesus* 163.

How Can We Help People to Talk about Death?

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As people of faith who have hope in a life after death, how can we reach out to each other to speak about death, dying and bereavement? Are there ways in which we can encourage and normalize this discussion in a safe environment before this subject becomes too difficult and painful? Raising death awareness is a way to encourage us all to have conversations about death and dying, and by doing so, help us to be less afraid of it. We all need help to confront and verbalize our vulnerability in this area as this will encourage us to live more meaningful lives. The aim of this project is to discover what is already happening in churches in the Diocese of Edinburgh of the Scottish Episcopal Church and to find ideas that could be used and developed. Then it will be possible to disseminate any initiatives of good practice and enthuse others to be more proactive in this area of ministry and mission.

There have been many secular initiatives attempting to break the stigma of fear and denial that surrounds death. This project was set up to investigate whether Scottish Episcopal priests are initiating anything similar as a form of pastoral care for those within and beyond the church community. If we were able to find ways to integrate the topic of death into our society, it could help to mitigate a phobia about death and make it feel more familiar and freeing. As Rowan Williams writes: 'Death is real and yet conquerable [...] there couldn't be anything worse than denying the reality of death, because that is encouraging people to live out a lie.'¹

The priests who took part in the project are all rectors of one or two churches. They have been in ministry for between ten and thirty-five years so have a rich depth of experience and wisdom. Initially a questionnaire was emailed to twenty-five priests with the following questions:

- Q1 Do you find that people are prepared for their own death or the death of those close to them, physically, emotionally or spiritually?
- Q2 In what ways do you help people to think and talk about death?
- Q3 Have you ever put on an event such as GraveTalk, Death Café, funeral planning events, or other events such as 'When Christmas Hurts'?
- Q4 Would you say that encouraging people to talk about death is an area of life in which you have special interest?

¹ Rowan Williams, *God with Us: The Meaning of the Cross and Resurrection – Then and Now* (London: SPCK, 2017), 90.

Q5 Do you think that encouraging talk about death could be some kind of mission for your church?

Q6 Are there any ways we can encourage people to have conversations about death, dying and end of life?

Ten priests returned completed questionnaires, demonstrating great variation in their engagement; clearly this was a more important area to some of them than to others. The results were collated and five of the respondents were invited to be interviewed. They were selected for their obvious interest in the subject and with the aim of finding a varied range of people, by gender, age, experience and style of church. Three are at churches in the city; two of them are in rural towns. All five of the priests who were asked if they would be willing to be interviewed kindly agreed to be involved.

The following questions were created with the aim of probing deeper into their experiences, especially practical ways of helping people to engage with death talk:

Q1 In what way does your own life story influence how easy you find this topic to discuss?

Q2 Would it be useful to develop a death-confident congregation, able to talk about death and dying?

Q3 How would you answer someone who asked you what comes after death?

Q4 Do you ever talk to children and young people in or beyond your church about death, and if so, how?

Q5 Are there ways that we can encourage other priests and churches to engage with this area of life?

Q6 In your questionnaire, you said...?

The five interviews took place in December 2017. Responses to the questionnaire and the interviews are incorporated within a wider reading around the subject (below).

Dying, death and grief are fundamental aspects of the human experience, as well as being complex and sensitive places. Alasdair MacIntyre described a useful philosophy when he said: 'Any account of morality [*sic*] which does not allow for the fact that my death may be required of me at any moment is an inadequate account.'² Although normalizing talk around death is a positive idea, this is not to negate the emotion involved. Our own death is difficult to anticipate, bereavement is painful, and the grieving process is experienced at different intensities. 'The joys of love and

²Christopher Stephen Lutz, *Tradition in the Ethics of Alasdair MacIntyre: Relativism, Thomism, and Philosophy* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009), 34.

the pain of grief both touch the essence of what it means to be human.’³ The bereavement that follows the death of a spouse or close family member is in the top five of the most stressful life experiences in the Holmes and Rahe Stress Scale.⁴ Death and grief are inevitable experiences for those who love, it is part of the cycle of life.⁵ Believing in Jesus’s death and resurrection can help to transform our repulsion of death into something holy and beautiful. The journey of approaching death could be seen as a pilgrimage for people of faith, living well so we can approach dying well.

Stanley Hauerwas is inspiring when he writes: ‘One of the most deterministic witnesses Christians can make in our time is to be a people who know how to speak about dying [...] we need help to recover our voices as a people taught to speak by the one who died on a cross.’⁶ There are many reasons to normalize the conversation about death and why this can be like a vocation for those who are brave enough, as Whipp says: ‘Part of life’s mystery is its terrible fragility. Despite our best human efforts to protect ourselves and those we love, the changes and chances of earthly life promise no lasting stability and no certainty or assurance that any of us will be immune from affliction. Religious wisdom teaches us [...] that all human life is vulnerable to sorrow and sadness and that true faith is not a matter of denying fragility, but rather of seeking the resources to grow through it.’⁷

Our death rituals have evolved and changed drastically over history. Douglas J. Davies states: ‘Until the twentieth century most families in Western Europe and the USA cared for their own family members while dying and for the body after death.’⁸ Newer customs distance us and a technological medicine treats death as a kind of correctable accident rather than a reality to be accepted as a necessary part of life. We need to relearn how to go about our dying and what kind of person that requires

³ Margaret Whipp, *The SCM Study Guide to Pastoral Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2013), 68.

⁴ Holmes and Rahe Stress Scale, https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTCS_82.htm.

⁵ Kevin Armistead Gourley, *Creating a Ministry in Memorial Park Presbyterian Church to Those who Grieve*, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary: Doctorate of Ministry in Pastoral Care.

⁶ Stanley Hauerwas, introduction to *Speaking of Dying: Recovering the Church’s Voice in the Face of Death*, by Fred Craddock, Dale Goldsmith & Joy V. Goldsmith (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2012), xi.

⁷ Whipp, *SCM Study Guide to Pastoral Theology*, 69.

⁸ Douglas J. Davies, *Death, Ritual and Belief: The Rhetoric of Funerary Rites* (London and New York: Continuum, 1997), 36.

us to be.⁹ Most people do not want to be reminded of their mortality as it is the unknown and beyond their control. Daniel Callaghan points out: 'We can hide death in hospitals and nursing homes, and among the old, often well out of sight of the young.'¹⁰ This is part of the sanitization of death. One analysis is: 'Death is a social event with a medical component, not a medical event with a social component.'¹¹

In 2016 the National Records of Scotland recorded 56,728 deaths.¹² It is estimated that each death affects at least five people so cumulatively millions are affected by these deaths every year. It will impact us for the rest of our life and our grief touches others. Hauerwas suggests that humanity has found the sheer cessation of a person unthinkable and 'the grammar surrounding death seems to make it difficult for us to get a handle on dying or death'.¹³ We can feel that we have no control and experience powerlessness, despite our hope that we can be fixed by medicine.

There are many approaches to death. Ernest Becker, a cultural anthropologist, wrote a book called *The Denial of Death*. In it he described how we try to hide from our own death. He describes embracing health fads and fitness regimes as 'proximal defences', trying to keep control of our lives. People can behave in unhealthy ways such as driving too fast, using drugs, alcohol or smoking, giving an illusion of mastery over fate. Distal defences are about religion, life insurance policies and anything that allows us to imagine we will go somewhere other than death. He writes: 'The real world is simply too terrible to admit. It tells man that he is a small trembling animal who will someday decay and die.'¹⁴ This denial of death is a fundamental drive in our individual behaviour and culture. One of the most basic functions of culture is to help us avoid awareness of our mortality: suppressing that awareness plays a crucial role in keeping us functioning. Our culture assists us in this denial by encouraging us to feel that our existence is permanent and invulnerable.

⁹ Daniel Callaghan, foreword in *Facing Death: Where Culture, Religion and Medicine Meet*, ed. by Howard M. Spiro, Mary G. McCree Curnan and Lee Palmer Wendell (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), xiii.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, xii.

¹¹ Allan Kellehear, <https://www.facebook.com/LifeDeathGrief/photos/a.536895606337191.144870.305443639482390%20/2109433922416677/?type=3&theatre> .

¹² National Records of Scotland (NRS), <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/statistics/weekly-monthly-births-deaths-data/2017/may/monthly-2017-may-tab3.pdf>.

¹³ Stanley Hauerwas, *A Cross-Shattered Church: Reclaiming the Theological Heart of Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009), 83.

¹⁴ Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (London: Souvenir Press, 1973), 82.

The history of the church's interface with society forms part of the narrative of how modern society has become a death-denying state. The European Enlightenment influenced society with ideas of rationalism and a scientific approach which changed the way many accepted the church's role in their lives and the traditional view of life after death. 'Historians and social anthropologists describe stark contrasts in modern attitude to death in comparison to our forebears. The demography of bereavement has changed beyond recognition in recent centuries. From the days when death could strike at random in any village or any family, making the experience of bereavement utterly commonplace and natural, modern scientists have fostered an illusion that death can somehow be kept under control.... [T]he encounter with death has become unfamiliar and remote.'¹⁵

There are many secular websites, blogs and books that are designed to help think through death issues. One of these is 'Good Life, Good Death, Good Grief' which is 'working to make Scotland a place where there is more openness about death, dying and bereavement so that people feel better equipped to support each other through difficult times'.¹⁶

In her online essay 'The Joy of Death', Kirstie West proposes the need for a positive attitude towards bereavement. She believes we do not see any good in death because we are not open to it, culturally programmed into thinking that it is always sad and tragic. The idea that it could somehow be good is considered disrespectful. For those who have suffered, either physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually, death can be a release that relieves pain and suffering. Yet part of the legacy of loss is the impact that death has on their loved ones. She shows that we have a reason to look for good in a death — for our sake and the memories of those we have lost.¹⁷

Even among regular church-goers there is often uncertainty about the nature or existence of an after-life as recorded in the New Testament and by the early church. This confidence was one of the most challenging things about the early Christians, leading to a contempt for death; their hope of immortality through resurrection was certain.¹⁸ The gospels were written from the disciples' resurrection perspective, as they had been rocked by such a devastating experience of loss after Jesus's death. The Christian understanding of death is dominated by the belief of the first friends of Jesus

¹⁵ Whipp, *SCM Study Guide to Pastoral Theology*, 70.

¹⁶ The Good Grief Project, accessed April 4 2018, <https://thegoodgriefproject.co.uk/>.

¹⁷ Kristie West, *The Joy of Death*, <http://deathcafe.com/blog/15/>.

¹⁸ Morna Hooker and Frances Young, *Holiness and Mission: Learning from the Early Church about Mission in the City* (London: SCM Press, 2010), 49.

that he had died and yet was raised by God to a life beyond death.¹⁹ This changed everything, they went from the depths of despair to stunned disbelief and then to elation. The apostle Paul writes: 'For I am convinced that neither death, nor life [...] nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.'²⁰

The participants in this project were asked if they have ever held specific events to help others to talk about death. The particular ones suggested were GraveTalk, Death Café, funeral planning, or a Blue Christmas event. Eight out of ten replied in the affirmative to some kind of event, but surprisingly only one rector was at a church that had hosted Death Café events. Another had attended one but was not impressed. Death Café was created to encourage people to discuss life, and why we fear it, over tea and cake, stating: 'Some people fear that by talking about death, it will make it more likely to happen.'²¹ The movement spread quickly: 6059 Death Cafés were held in 56 countries by 2018.

GraveTalk is similar, created by the Church of England to normalize the discussion within some kind of Christian environment. Their website suggests that 'talking about death, dying and funerals raises big questions that we need to face at some point, but it's hard to talk to family and friends. It can take place in a church hall, community centre or a café [...] there is always tea and cake.'²² There are GraveTalk discussion starter questions covering areas of life, death, society, funerals, and grief. These are examples of the questions:

- What is your earliest memory of death?
- Would you take a child to a funeral?
- What was the best funeral you have been to?
- How would you like to be remembered?
- Do you believe in life after death?

A GraveTalk event can be seen as a form of hospitality where listening and pastoral care are offered in a compassionate, non-judgemental space. This is designed to offer hope and understanding of life and death and convey the good news of Jesus Christ in actions and words. Two of the priests mentioned GraveTalk as being an

¹⁹ John Bowker, *The Meanings of Death* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 75.

²⁰ Romans 8.38-39.

²¹ New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/11/international-home/jon-underwood-dead-death-cafe-movement.html>.

²² GraveTalk, <https://churchofenglandfunerals.org/gravetalk/> GraveTalk.

event used to open up the discussion about death and one of them uses it as part of funeral planning.

In response to the questionnaire, half of the priests wrote that they have put on a Blue Christmas event, either 'When Christmas Hurts', or 'Silent Night', or the 'Longest Night' (when it is held on 21 December). Blue Christmas is described as: 'Many bereaved people find Christmas unbearably difficult. Where all around are enforcing celebration and good cheer to all people, those who mourn can feel shut out and excluded.'²³ This is another excellent way of reaching out to others both in and beyond the church, giving a space to acknowledge loss and bereavement.

The other events used by priests were advance funeral planning (one-to-one), funeral planning events, funeral workshops, and healing services. Their comments include: 'involvement in helping people is seen as listening, being present and alongside'; 'it's about relationships, travelling with people and building trust'. The priests said that they also offer: 'A workshop based on the 'good grief initiative' funeral planning'; 'Two funeral planning sessions – from the undertaker's side and from the church side'; and 'a workshop after Sunday mass on 'planning your funeral', discussion — feelings about dying and death [...] simple questionnaire, hymn/reading list, to get people talking and thinking'.

The question about children was: Do you ever talk to children and young people in or beyond your church about death, and if so, how? The answers differed depending on what contact a priest had with young people, either in the church, in schools, or in family. Working with children is an essential area of church life and can give excellent opportunities to witness about faith. One priest sees his visits into schools as a vital part of his ministry, greatly valuing the time that he has contact with school children, saying: 'Funerals are what they are most interested in, they have brilliant questions.'

The subject of liturgy came up many times, saying that liturgy is full of life, death and resurrection. The priests said the useful liturgies for death awareness are Holy Communion, All Souls, Remembrance Sunday, and Holy Week — especially Good Friday. The priests find that the Anglican tradition and its liturgy provide deep, rich seams of resources for speaking about life and death.

Rituals and liturgy are traditionally used at Christian funerals giving great comfort. 'Death is awesome and grief powerful. ...[R]itual is a necessary thing when what we experience is too deep, too profound, too significant for ordinary expression

²³ Church Support Hub, <https://churchsupporthub.org/idea/blue-christmas/>.

and routine words.²⁴ The language of liturgy is central to our ability to sustain the connection between living well and dying. As part of the healing process, prayer and ritual are tied closely to the thread of our existence.²⁵ In the funeral liturgy, the priest says: 'Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ.'²⁶ There is an expectation that these definite and reassuring words will be used.

Liturgy is described on the Scottish Episcopal Church website as 'the structured and shared worship that Christians engage in when they are together' and is about repentance, prayer, self-offering, and thankful sharing.²⁷ 'To have the Eucharist at the heart of worship is to place the mystery of death and resurrection at its centre. It means that we have a framework in which death is part of a larger rhythm of Christian life rather than an aberration.'²⁸ As Hauerwas writes: 'Jesus has been raised never again to die. ... [I]n sharing the Eucharist, that feast of bread and wine, we learn to gaze upon Christ, who makes it possible to view our lives and deaths through the power of the resurrection.'²⁹

There were many practical and useful ideas identified by the priests. Most of them spoke of ways in which they tried to speak about death with their congregations, which included sermons and services at particular times in the church year, especially Holy Week. Observing All Souls, or The Commemoration of the Faithful Departed, was mentioned several times as being a useful service to speak about dying. Hauerwas spoke about the necessity for our involvement: 'There is a need for the church to speak publicly about dying, as it brings the full gospel message to a death-defying and death-denying world from the pulpit.'³⁰ One of the priests spoke about the wisdom of his congregation and how he finds themes about the different stages of grief in John's Gospel. He also spoke of his sorrow for when he had not been given enough time to be present at the bedside of the dying.

²⁴ Derek Nuttall, 'The Needs of Bereaved People at the Time of the Funeral' in *Interpreting Death: Christian Theology and Pastoral Practice*, ed. by Peter C. Jupp and Tony Rogers (London: Cassell, 1997), 88.

²⁵ Gourley, *Creating a Ministry in Memorial Park Presbyterian Church*.

²⁶ Funeral Liturgy, <http://www.scotland.anglican.org/who-we-are/publications/liturgies/revised-funeral-rites-1987/>.

²⁷ <https://www.scotland.anglican.org/who-we-are/publications/liturgies/>.

²⁸ Karen Scheib, 'Make Love Your Aim' in *Living Well and Dying Faithfully: Christian Practices for End-of-Life Care*, ed. by John Swinton (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 49.

²⁹ Hauerwas, *A Cross-Shattered Church*, 87.

³⁰ Hauerwas, introduction to *Speaking of Dying*, xix.

Paula Gooder suggests: 'A good theology of death challenges us to re-imagine who we are and what the world might be. Most of all it summons us to worship the one who created the world, who breathes deep life into us and breaks out of the constraints we put upon him to speak to us.'³¹ The Episcopal Church appears nonspecific about doctrine, except in the Creeds. The Nicene Creed says about Christ: 'He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. [...] We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.'

One of the priests wrote: 'A lot of people avoid the issue [of death] because it is such a difficult topic and is filled with fear and anxiety. Theologically, it is not easy: we don't have a clear scriptural reference and cannot give any guarantees.' This comment prompted the interview question: 'How would you answer someone who asked you what comes after death?' Surprisingly none of the interviewees gave a standard doctrine of death, such as parousia and general resurrection. Instead they said: 'We put a person's life into a safe place, held safely, in the memory [...] it's a mystery'; 'a loving God who doesn't abandon us, our existence continues in God's bosom'; and 'We don't know what our bodies will be like, never mind our spirit [...] it will be wonderful'. Another comment was that 'it depends on who was being spoken to, we go to a resting place, peace of heaven, journey: I work with people where they are, and — a loving God who doesn't abandon us'. One last comment was: 'It's important for clergy to say something about Christian hope — all metaphor — a loving God who doesn't abandon us.'

Nicholas Peter Harvey makes the point: 'Christians claim to believe in a loving, forgiving, nurturing and incarnate God, but this can appear contradicted by the practices and language of institutionalised Christianity. The churches need to present coherent, accessible statements of belief with which to help the unchurched to understand the meaning of life and death.'³² Christopher Race believes that some Christians seek a deeper Christian understanding of the meaning of death but many reject what the church offers, speaking of the 'ineffectual ministry and widening public dismissal of the Christian message'.³³

Our pastoral care to those who mourn and to the dying is incomplete if we do not provide a Christian witness to death's meaning and God's promise. The

³¹ Paula Gooder, *Heaven* (London: SPCK, 2011), 106.

³² Nicholas Peter Harvey, *Death's Gift: Chapters on Resurrection and Bereavement* (London: Epworth, 1985), 10.

³³ Christopher Race, *A Reconsideration of Identity through Death and Bereavement and consequential Pastoral implication for Christian Ministry*, 3. Accessed 4 April 2018.

triumphant words of Paul, 'O death, where is thy victory? O death where is thy sting?'³⁴ give hope for both the living and the dying. This hope of resurrection enables people to integrate death into life in ways that are constructive, healing and radically countercultural. However, it is impossible to know how to speak about life after death with any certainty. 'This frequent silence over death within Western churches could be read by traditionalist Christians as the result of lack of faith and disbelief in the long-accepted images of the after world. Times change and so do the ways in which Christian beliefs are appropriated and even transformed.'³⁵ We must be concerned as to how we can develop accessible and acceptable words that will give hope and comfort.

John Swinton says: 'At the heart of Christian faith is the affirmation that death is the enemy of God that was finally defeated in the death and resurrection of Christ. So, God, not death, is the ultimate reality.' He continues: 'The inclusive nature of the communion of saints requires us to accompany people through the journey of death, this is to reclaim the rhythm of death and resurrection at the heart of Christian life.'³⁶ The Christian tradition lives with the tension as well of ambivalent thoughts and attitudes towards death. The tensive unity between embracing and resisting death pervades the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments. We witness an anticipation of death and simultaneously the dread and terror of those experiencing the approach of death.³⁷ One priest spoke these wise words: 'There are worse things than being dead, one of them is not living when you are alive.'

The question 'Would it be useful to develop a death-confident congregation by training people to be able to talk about death and dying?' had varying answers ranging from 'a really good idea' to a less positive 'small family sized churches probably don't need this'. The priest at the largest church said: 'It's a big congregation problem — a death confident congregation could help lessen the load. ... I would love to create a community who talk about death.' The most proactive priest in death awareness said: 'In my congregation are compassionate, skilled lay people who can give support, talk one to one. We have a pastoral team, we have people in to train them, they're brilliant.'

One of the priests talked about hope, saying: 'It's important for clergy to say something about Christian hope.' They went on to add that that should also include

³⁴ I Corinthians 15.55.

³⁵ John Swinton, *Living Well and Dying Faithfully: Christian Practices for End-of-Life Care* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 42.

³⁶ Ibid., 46.

³⁷ Esther E. Acolatse, 'Embracing and Resisting Death,' in *Living Well and Dying Faithfully: Christian Practices for End-of-Life Care*, by John Swinton (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 248.

'being held by God'. Another said: 'It's a mystery, we do not know, but we have hope.' This is echoed by Esther E. Acolatse, when she writes: 'Death is still a mystery that our faith cannot completely resolve on this side of eternity. ... Christ has conquered death for us, and so we will not be undone by this mystery called death. This is our hope, this is our justice.'³⁸ We need to try to understand how it might be possible to live our lives with a hopeful narrative of death.

Any theology must also be a theology of life. This idea is present in various comments by four priests in the questionnaires.

- 'A priority is to encourage people how to live a good life— generally if they do that, and live well, they tend to die well too.'
- 'Death is part of life.'
- 'The church has a duty to proclaim death as not a disaster.'
- 'Death is part of living.'

Lee Palmer Wendell says: 'All life is a preparation for death — the consequences of how one lived were eternal.'³⁹ One priest had been inspired by people who were dying: 'Actually dying itself [is] the transformative resurrection.' Samuel Wells writes: 'A good death is a window into the glory of God [...] a revelation of Paul's conviction that nothing can separate us from the love of God.'⁴⁰ Wells also wrote that life and death are both about coming to terms with our humanity, with the humanity of those around us and with the limitations and weaknesses of the human spirit.⁴¹ Another positive point taken from a questionnaire was: 'Faith in the resurrection that death is not the end, but the end of the beginning.' The responses gave many affirmative approaches to death.

We are called to offer caring, compassionate ministry to our communities, where so many need help with emotional pain. David Lyall writes: 'There is much pastoral work of high calibre being done by ministers and others [...] having a distinctive pastoral role which is largely independent of confessional theologies of ordination.'⁴² The church should be an ideal place for addressing these hurts,

³⁸ Ibid., 271.

³⁹ Lee Palmer Wendell, *Facing Death: Where Culture, Religion and Medicine Meet* (New Haven and London: Yale University, 1996), 3.

⁴⁰ Samuel Wells, *Be Not Afraid: Facing Fear with Faith* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2011), 3.

⁴¹ Ibid., 4.

⁴² David Lyall, *Integrity of Pastoral Care* (London: SPCK, 2001), 3.

especially with the pain of grief. People may long for a compassionate, caring community to help them through the painful parts of life's journey, and the church is equipped to proclaim and demonstrate the real, complete and redemptive love of Christ to our world.

This paper was designed to learn from the engagement of priests in the Diocese of Edinburgh of the Scottish Episcopal Church with death and dying. Our belief in a God of love and the mandate to preach the good news of Jesus Christ motivates us to encourage us all to speak about the end of life. This project demonstrated the remarkable work that priests are doing: they are inspirational in their thoughtfulness and spirituality. Their vocation is to give of themselves sacrificially, showing the love of Christ to others in the difficult task of naming the presence of death in life, helping others to live well right up to death. Their commitment and dedication are humbling. Their strong sense of vocation is evident in the way that they witness to their faith. Listening to them was a great privilege.

Book Reviews

R. ALAN STREET. *Caesar and the Sacrament: Baptism: A Rite of Resistance* (Eugene OR: Cascade, 2018). 190 pp. ISBN 9781498228404.

The penultimate paragraph of this book reads:

Many of us read Scripture through a set of lenses that often distort rather than cast light on the meaning of the text. Some of us read our Bibles through the eyes of Western individualism, others from the perspective of a particular theology, still others through the spectacles of the Enlightenment. If we can only remove these blinders, use our historical imaginations, and walk in the shoes of the original readers, then we might be able to recapture the authentic gospel.... [P]erhaps it will be said once again of Christians, “These people who have been turning the world upside down ... saying that there is another king named Jesus” (Acts 17:6-7).

This sums up both the ambition and the failure of this book. Streett recognizes the problem, or at least acknowledges the shortcomings of much biblical interpretation, not least on the subject of baptism, at least within the North American conservative-evangelical tradition with which he is most familiar. He recognizes also that there is a political implication to Christian profession of the sovereignty of God, brought into sharp relief by the claim that the crucified Jesus had been raised from the dead. He makes this insight the defining, if not often the sole, lens through which references to baptism in the New Testament are interpreted. Without denying that this is an aspect of early Christian life that has all too often been neglected, the way in which it is presented here is at best an over-simplification.

The first three chapters offer a wide range of introductory material, potentially helpful to readers unfamiliar with the history of Israel through the Old Testament or, more likely, with the socio-economic factors which shaped the life of colonized people in the ancient world. However, much of the material is over-simplified, and the author shows little awareness of the complexities involved in recovering reliable information about particular places at particular times.

Three subsequent chapters treat John the Baptist and Jesus. The canonical gospels are used as though an unmediated source of information on John. No account is taken of the theological agenda of the evangelists in subordinating John to Jesus, and there is no adequate consideration of the account of Josephus which presents John without any reference to or relationship with Jesus. The treatment of Jesus is

similarly uncritical, using all the canonical gospels as though uncomplicated historical accounts which can simply be amalgamated into a single, monolithic, narrative.

The three chapters dealing with the narrative in Acts are similarly weakened by a lack of any historical, critical rigour. It is simply assumed that all episodes reported are historical, and took place precisely as described. Unwarranted and unexplained assumptions are made to fill any gaps in the story, in ways which exceed the parameters of controlled and responsible historical imagination.

The chapter on the undisputed Pauline letters would have merited greater depth and detail. While continuing his theme of baptism as a subversive counter-imperial ritual, the author fails to grapple with ways in which the first Christians sustained their daily lives in the present world while professing the Gospel. The letters provide an abundance of evidence of compromises and controversies which could usefully have been related to this issue. Also, there is no serious attempt to question ways in which the early Church implemented its counter-imperial ideology and egalitarian principles in its own life – if, indeed, it did so.

The final chapter is somewhat perfunctory in its treatment of the other epistles, but illuminating in demonstrating how baptismal imagery, and therefore the early Christian experience of baptism, are implicit through much of Revelation. If only the remainder of this book were as insightful.

One cannot but be disappointed that this book does not live up to its promise or to the author's stated ambition. There may well be circles within North American Protestantism where an uncritical reading of Scripture through a single, unfamiliar and subversive, lens would be unsettling and provocative. Those who live in and benefit from the present empire might well find their domesticated gospel and vested economic interests threatened, in which case this book contains a prophetic message to the North American religious right. If this is the author's intended audience, let us hope he communicates his message effectively. But for readers in the Episcopal tradition, much greater critical rigour is needed, and more appreciation of the diversity and dynamism of early Christianity as it negotiated its existence and proclaimed its Gospel in a hostile world.

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PAUL R. TREBILCO. *Outsider Designations and Boundary Construction in the New Testament: Early Christian Communities and the Formation of Group Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). 366 pp. ISBN 9781108418799.

This book is a companion volume to the author's *Self-Designations and Group Identity in the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). Paul Trebilco has made several significant contributions to the study of Christian origins, most particularly but not exclusively in Asia Minor. His historical critical rigour is complemented by skilful and careful use of appropriate theories derived from the social sciences. In this particular study, he draws on sociolinguistics, social identity theory, and the sociology of deviance to illuminate ways in which early Christian groups defined various groups of outsiders.

Trebilco draws on some breadth of New Testament texts, conscious that the different literary traditions reflect different communities with different experiences and different approaches to troubled relations with their neighbours. He is conscious also that even as towering a figure as the apostle Paul wrote different letters to different churches experiencing difficulties of different kinds in coexisting with neighbours in different contexts.

While identifying key terms used to label outsiders to the early Christian communities, Trebilco shows that the same words may be used in quite different ways by different groups in different contexts, and therefore cannot be ascribed uniform connotations. His careful study of the ways in which various words are used in the Septuagint illustrates this point further. While the biblical tradition undoubtedly provided the early Church with language and concepts with which to articulate its sense of its own identity, and its categorisation of others on religious, ethnic, and moral grounds, different Christian groups used this heritage in quite different ways, in response to circumstances no longer possible fully to reconstruct.

This work is technically rigorous in its study of words and texts, and makes extensive use of Greek, but in ways which assist rather than impede the comprehension of readers with little knowledge of the language. While readers literate in Greek will clearly benefit most, and be able to engage more thoroughly with the arguments, those without this advantage should be able to appreciate the gist of Trebilco's arguments, as well as the importance of being able to read Scripture in the ancient languages.

As well as being a substantial contribution to scholarship, this book is a model of making the fruit of scholarship accessible to the less erudite. It is much to be commended.

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DAVID W. FAGERBERG. *Liturgy Outside Liturgy: The Liturgical Theology of Fr. Alexander Schmemmann* (Hong Kong: Chorabooks, 2018). 220 pp. ISBN 9789887851547; Kindle ISBN 9789887851509; epub ISBN 9789887851585.

The Reverend Alexander Schmemmann (1921–1983) was a leading theologian in the Orthodox Church in America and one of the foremost thinkers in liturgical theology. David W. Fagerberg (Professor of Liturgical Studies at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, USA) has seen this book as an opportunity to tease out Schmemmann's insistent idea that liturgical theology is 'the slow and patient bringing together of that which was for too long a time broken and isolated – liturgy, theology, and piety, their reintegration within one fundamental vision' (11).

Liturgy Outside Liturgy is a book made up of five lectures delivered in Sweden during January 2017. They represent a fresh survey and summary of Schmemmann for a community of theological students from Orthodox, Catholic, Lutheran, and evangelical traditions. In this way their broad attractiveness is apparent.

Fagerberg's central proposition about Schmemmann's liturgical theology is that, in addition to looking *at* liturgy (a responsible scholarly exercise), it is also important to look *through* liturgy, at the world and at life in all its aspects. The liturgy must therefore have an impact on the world and our everyday lives. Liturgy, he suggests, puts a light into our eyes by which we can see; a light like that of Mount Tabor, illuminating creation so that its truth, beauty, and goodness glorify God. Having a theological eye means seeing by this light: a liturgical theologian has this charismatic sight by which to see the world, its history, its people, and their hearts.

This image of the liturgy emitting the light of Mount Tabor is key to Fagerberg's interpretation of Schmemmann. The author's central idea is that liturgy gives birth to something beyond itself. One of the most important questions Schmemmann asked, therefore, was whether liturgy is an object of theology, or the source of theological thinking. His advice was to watch the liturgy in motion, for as it moves it will throw off theology, like a grinding wheel throws off sparks. For the Church Fathers, Schmemmann pointed out, liturgy as the life, the 'sacrament' of the Church, is not the object but the source of their theology because it is the epiphany of the Truth, of that fullness from which the 'mouth speaks' (55). Schmemmann sought to show how the fruit of our new life in Christ is grounded in the Church's liturgical action.

Schmemmann noted too that people are often uninterested in understanding liturgy, much less theology, because they desire of some kind of 'spiritual experience, spiritual food' provided to those in a 'cultic society'. The liturgy, for Schmemmann, is the Paschal mystery coming to meet us in our lives. Schmemmann wrote, 'I realize how spiritually tired I am of all this 'Orthodoxism', of all the fuss with Byzantium, Russia, way of life, spirituality, church affairs, piety, of all these rattles. I do not like any one

of them, and the more I think about the meaning of Christianity, the more it all seems alien to me. It all literally obscures Christ, pushes Him into the background' (92).

Fagerberg uses Pavel Florensky's concept of antinomy to explain how Christians are all the time leaving the world, but all the time remaining in it. This idea derives from Schmemmann's complex understanding of 'world'. On the one hand, world means rebellion, death, communion with a dying world; 'food itself is dead,' wrote Schmemmann, 'it is life that has died and it must be kept in refrigerators like a corpse' (120–21). But on the other hand, world is simply that 'in which and by which we live,' and if we could re-establish the world and its proper relationship to God then, says Fagerberg, we could be said to consecrate the world. And here the author draws on his previous works, *Consecrating the World* (2016) and *On Liturgical Asceticism* (2013). Consecrating the world means the overcoming of the passions so that we no longer misuse the world: liturgy and asceticism are connected. Money, sex, or alcohol is not wrong in itself; it is in avarice, lust, and gluttony that the problem lies.

Fagerberg suggests, in the end, that human sanctification occurs when God is glorified. When we are given new life, then God is glorified, and the new life is to be found in the Church and in the liturgy. This means that liturgical piety is the antithesis of worldliness – taking the world without reference to God. We do not need liturgy in our life, says Fagerberg, in order to have a place where we can go to escape the world, we need liturgy in our life in order to receive the world again as it was given: 'Liturgy will change the world' (116). Fagerberg and Schmemmann's world-transforming view of liturgy, then, is a corrective to the view which thinks that the world can be understood and transformed by human action alone. Against those who have said religion is abnormal – an escape from the world – they have said liturgy is the only way to be normal. 'To the naked, secular eye,' writes Fagerberg, 'nothing looks different, but to the sanctified, consecrated eye every object and moment has a new potentiality. Once we have seen God invite himself into the house of Zacchaeus for supper [...] there is no meal which is purely secular [...] Once we have seen God on the cross there is no corner of suffering or darkness where our spiritual eyes do not see him moving' (203–4).

Finally, in order to understand liturgical theology, we must understand the origin of liturgy, for it 'is a divine decision to summon a people, enter into covenant with them, [...] illuminate them in the light of Mount Tabor [...] [and] make all the baptized concelebrants of the Church's mystical sacrifice [...]' (204–5).

God has made us liturgical creatures, and we are most truly ourselves when we glorify God; and when we glorify God, we find our perfection and our fulfilment.

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ANDREW F. WALLS. *Crossing Cultural Frontiers: Studies in the History of World Christianity* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2017). 296 pp. ISBN 9781626982581.

Andrew Walls was the founder, and for many years the head, of the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World which was firstly at Aberdeen University and then Edinburgh University from 1987. Walls's most significant observations have concerned the geographical trends in Christianity in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, especially in terms of expansion in Africa, in what is generally termed 'World Christianity'. His pioneering research led the magazine *Christianity Today* to describe him in 2007 as 'a historian ahead of his time'.

This book is a collection of essays from 1970 to the present day covering a wide range of topics and contexts which reflect on the global spread of the Christian faith and its implications for the church in the west today. If there is a common theme, it would be Walls's conviction that the Christian faith grows and its theology develops as it engages with local contexts and worldviews. He believes that in some ways the revitalisation of the church in the west lies partly in it really taking seriously the insights and experiences of the church in Africa, Asia and Latin America. His material includes Origen (who he calls the Father of Mission Studies), a variety of past and present contexts in Africa, the Evangelical revival, seminal moments in the Chinese encounter with Christian missionaries and the Great Migration of western people throughout the world followed more recently by the Reverse Great Migration of peoples to the west. He shows in fast moving and yet insightful essays that there is so much more going on in the global church than we realize and that Enlightenment shaped western theology is unable to keep up. 'Western theology is left with nothing to say to a whole range of human situations, including some of the most distressing that people face; it is just not big enough' (264).

We are introduced to many individuals and incidents that we may not have heard of. Tiyo Soga a Xhosa pastor and Behari Lal Singh a Punjabi pastor both who had extended stays in Scotland in the mid-nineteenth century and gave powerful critiques and challenges to the British church at that time. Then there is the distinctive symbol of the Cruciform Lotus and the articulate and unusual testimony of conversion to the Christian faith of the Buddhist monk Kuantu 'using words of unique richness and solemnity such as only a mind molded in higher Chinese Buddhism can use' (236). There is also the wonderful Christian experiment of Sierra Leone which many saw as the Morning Star of Africa, the first mass movement of Christianity in modern Africa.

These are not given as exotic examples but illustrations of the rich and varied story of World Christianity which is only set to grow and eclipse the story of the western church. As Walls says in his closing words: 'Is there any more exciting

vocation at the present time than missiology? I who am nearing the end of my course, must envy those of you with many years to serve. May God speed you.' (266).

There is some overlap between essays as one would expect in a collection such as this and there is not a clear direction of travel or development of an argument, indeed in the introduction he himself calls the book a ragbag. It is a most stimulating and varied read however, with most chapters able to be read as standalone pieces, and of course the inspiration then to buy and read some of his books in which he follows his thought through more systematically. A good read for a cold, grey winter day!

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IAN MEREDITH. *Lost and Forgotten: Irish Episcopalians in the West of Scotland 1817-1929* (Amazon CreateSpace, 2017). 432 pp. ISBN 9781973701521.

On first reading the Reverend William Humphrey's *Recollections of Scottish Episcopalianism* (London, 1896), I was surprised to discover that his congregation in Dundee, St Mary Magdalene, had been largely composed of Irish adherents of the Orange Order. While the younger generation had adopted the High-Church principles of the Scottish Episcopal Church, their elders had not, and Humphrey was himself surprised by the strength of the protest when he used a green altar frontal on a Sunday after Trinity which happened to be the 12th day of July. Personally, having myself then only had experience of the Scottish Episcopal Church of the last four decades which is generally Catholic in nature, Jacobite by descent, liberal in outlook and broadly middle class and intellectual, I was puzzled to discover another aspect of Episcopalianism. Since then it has been good to discover different traditions in the Scottish Episcopal Church including the remnant of working class Irish Anglicanism in Scotland with its links to the Orange Order.

Ian Meredith, a priest of Irish ancestry who has served in the diocese of Glasgow and Galloway, has produced a history of Irish Anglican immigrants in the West of Scotland, and he describes how the Scottish Episcopal Church was not able to retain the vast majority of them within its fold. It is an abridgement of his 2007 Durham University doctoral thesis and thus founded on sound research but it is refreshingly free of academic jargon. The story is one of the growth of the Episcopal Church in the West of Scotland from the separation from Edinburgh of the United Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway in 1837, when there were estimated to be 10,000 Anglicans in the territory of the new diocese but only 426 actively involved in Episcopalian congregations, up to the 1920s. We see how heroic individual priests

responded to this challenge by founding missions, schools and social projects. Their church-planting and community involvement could provide inspiration to the Church's mission today. There was, however, less involvement, at least at first, by bishops: Bishop Walter Trower (1849-1859) spent ten months of each year in Tunbridge Wells running the diocese by correspondence. Bishop Campbell (1904-1921) built links with the Church of Ireland and attempted to consolidate the small missions and the church grew to its greatest extent in his episcopate but thereafter numbers declined and the mass of Irish Anglicans did not become Scottish Episcopalians. Although the Scottish Episcopal Church was sometimes known as 'The English Church' and much of its leadership was English, for most of the nineteenth century Irish Anglicans were in the majority in Scotland.

One of the key questions of the book is why the Scottish Episcopal Church failed to retain the Irish, unlike the Scottish Roman Catholic Church. One answer, cited by a number of clergy at the time, was the indifference and immorality of the poor Irish, another was middle-class dominance in churches which drove them out, and another was the clash between the Protestant principles and prejudices of the Irish Anglicans and the Catholic revival in the Scottish Episcopal Church. As the Reverend Charles Brooke of Jordanhill said in 1879, 'it is very difficult to neutralise the inveterate prejudice of half-educated men'. In this latter conflict the Orange Order was central as from its beginnings in Ireland the Orange Order was a largely Anglican institution and this connection was maintained after the Order spread to Scotland in 1798. In the 1860s the Episcopal Chapel in Carruber's Close, Edinburgh (now Old St Paul's) hosted several Orange Lodges and the link was also strong in Dundee, Glasgow, Paisley and Greenock. Traditional histories of the Episcopal Church such as Marion Lochhead's *Episcopal Scotland in the 19th Century* (London 1966) neglect the Protestant and Evangelical side of Episcopalianism but Meredith examines it together with the Anglican break-away movements in Scotland such as the English Episcopal Church and Reformed Episcopal Church. He chronicles clashes between Irish Anglicans and ritualistic Scottish priests but also notes some anomalies such as the high-church priest Walter Hildesley of St Mungo's, Alexandria (1889-1893) who was also Grand Master of his local Orange Lodge and the Depute Grand Master of the Grand Orange Lodge of Scotland in the 1920s and Robert Milligan of Coatbridge, who was also an Anglo-Catholic and a member of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament. Meredith's study does expose the complexity of the situation and it is interesting that it was the traditionally Irish churches in the West of Scotland who were in the forefront of the ritualist movement in the Episcopal Church in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Part of the interest of this book are the case studies of individual churches such as St John's, Anderston, St Michael's, Govan, St John's, Girvan and St Augustine's,

Dumbarton. The conclusion is that when the Episcopal Church lost the Irish Anglican immigrants and their children all were losers, especially the poor. While the influx of Irish Protestants did inspire mission, this failed because of poor mission strategies, a growing bourgeoisie culture in the churches which made the poor feel unwanted and because of hostility towards the Scottish Episcopal Church on the part of Church of Ireland clergy. The main reason given for the failure, however, is that ritualism in the Scottish Episcopal Church alienated the Protestant Irish. Meredith identifies the 1920s as the final division between them and the Scottish Episcopal Church. This was the high-water mark of Protestant bigotry in Scotland when the Orange Order reached its peak membership of about 40,000 and the (Presbyterian) Church of Scotland received a report from its Church and Nation Committee in 1923 on 'The Menace of the Irish Race to our Scottish Nationality', a report which specifically excluded Irish Protestants. Given this, the failure of the Scottish Episcopal Church to absorb the Orange Irish may be seen as a providential success as it has enabled this Church to remain true to its traditions, avoid the worst excesses of Protestant narrowness and sectarianism and be ready for Christian mission in modern society without the divisions found in Irish and English Anglicanism.

This is an interesting and readable book which uncovers a neglected aspect of recent Episcopalian history. It draws parallels with the influx of Christian immigrants in modern Britain and with current conflicts in British Anglicanism. There are a few mistakes such as an incorrect definition of the 'regulative principle of worship' (395), it does not mean that in worship one can do anything not forbidden by Scripture but rather that one can only do things in worship that are explicitly commanded by Scripture. The book is, however, worth buying, both as a work of history and as an inspiration to think carefully about how the church does mission today.

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