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# The Dead and the Living in Paris and London, 1500–1670

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Vanessa Harding

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## 7 'Meet and convenient for my estate and degree': funeral conventions and choices

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So far this study of burial practice has treated the living and the dead as if they were distinct and opposed categories, focusing on how the living responded to the demands that the dead made on them in the long term – for space, seclusion, protection, attention, respect – and how those demands themselves shaped the material environment of the living. However, all of the living will in due course join the category of the dead; all of the dead were once living. For all societies, the rituals accompanying an individual's transition from one state to the other are of great significance, designed to satisfy a practical imperative – the safe determination of the physical remains – and to meet the social, moral, emotional, and spiritual needs of the occasion. In urban societies, the first of these requirements has real urgency. Satisfying the latter may also be more pressing, as a society in flux has to deal with loss and interruption, though it also faces greater difficulties owing to high mortality rates: the strict observance of forms and rituals may at times have to be dispensed with, as epidemic experience shows.

If the *place* of burial remained of paramount and determining importance, funerals and the language of funeral ceremony had the potential to form a very powerful element in the social relations and mutual interactions of city-dwellers. Though it may have been more difficult to assert the importance of the eternal and transcendent against the pace and intensity of city life, the ritual gained added meaning from doing so. In pre-modern urban societies individuals were at greater personal risk of untimely death, and evidence of the death of others was all around them. Though daily totals varied by season and by year, in both London and Paris there must have been fifteen to twenty thousand burials every year in the later seventeenth century. An adult citizen would certainly attend a number of funerals over a period of years, and he or she would perforce notice many more. Even if in smaller parishes there might be only a few funerals in a month, the dense texture of the urban fabric and the close spacing of churches meant that all would have been aware of such events in parishes other than their own. In larger parishes funerals

were a daily occurrence. The map of the city was traversed by frequent processions transporting bodies to churches or churchyards for services and interment; knells and peals filled the air. Normal civic activities were periodically suspended to allow larger civic or national funerals to take the stage.

Wills and parish records underline the importance attached to all parts of the funeral ritual, and indicate a considerable similarity of custom in London and Paris, following the shared Christian tradition, including the literary tradition of the *Ars Moriendi*. The major circumstantial differences are the smaller number of parish churches in Paris, which meant that burial communities were larger and perhaps more internally differentiated, and the greater frequency, at least as time went on, of family chapels within churches there. The major historical difference is of course the Reformation, and the institution of a reformed theology and practice in London, compared with a Counter-Reform ideology in Paris. Even with this, however, the continuities were considerable, and attitudes had much in common. Londoners certainly had to accept the Reformation's changes to liturgy and accompaniments, but interest in funeral practice remained vigorous and they were able to reshape and develop their traditions to maintain a sense of continuity and meaning. Parisians held strongly to the observance of tradition but similarly added new components and elaborated practices in response to a changing and challenging world.

Urban funerals shared the general liturgical framework of their time, but a great variety of additions, ecclesiastical and secular, was available to build a personal statement out of the event. The wealth of the two capitals, and perhaps an element of competition between their multiplicity of parishes, fraternities, and religious houses, made their inhabitants aware of a wider range of alternatives in burial ritual than their contemporaries in smaller communities. In both cities there were literate, articulate laymen and women ready to take an active part in their own and others' funeral arrangements, and to exploit the variety and richness of the urban church's resources. The city offered an almost unlimited range of supply for the material constituents and human participants of a funeral, and to that extent could encourage choice and display. It could also guarantee a large and appreciative audience for the performance. Contemporary Londoners and Parisians understood and valued this. The disposable wealth of the urban middling and upper classes allowed them to exploit these resources and opportunities for the occasion of the funeral. As with the choice of burial location and the design of memorials and epitaphs, it is not always easy to know whether it was the deceased person, or his or her heirs or executors, who was responsible for the programme of a

particular event, but it must always have been a compromise between the desired, the affordable, the appropriate, and the feasible. However, ‘the personalization and publicity of such burial was still a spiritual luxury’;<sup>1</sup> we should remember that alongside this encouragement of display and discrimination, and perhaps adding to its impact, was the fact that most of the urban population were buried much more unceremoniously, and often almost anonymously.<sup>2</sup>

The next three chapters consider the funeral in early modern London and Paris from a number of different perspectives, though even these are not exhaustive. This chapter focuses on the individual, and looks at the funeral as an event scripted by its central participant, or by those to whom he or she had delegated that power. A common ceremony could be shaped into an expression of identity, affiliation, confession, and status. It also shows, however, that in responding to these demands for difference, the church became involved in secular preoccupations with display and discrimination. Chapter 8 considers the constraints set by existing institutions, interests, and practices, and points to the professionalisation or commercialisation of funerals over the early modern period. It also explores the ambivalence of attitudes towards funeral expense. The question of involvement and participation, and the construction of the funeral as a collective ritual in the urban context, is discussed in chapter 9. It is not, however, fully possible to separate the constituents of the funeral ritual into discrete ‘liturgical’, ‘commercial’, and ‘social’ elements; all these aspects interlocked, and all carried messages about status and social identity. Anthropologists and social historians emphasize that death ritual is often co-opted for purposes of ideological and political domination, and it has, for example, been assigned an important role in the creation of a new social and theological order in Reformation and post-Reformation Germany.<sup>3</sup> Undoubtedly many aspects of the urban funerals considered here reflected and helped to inculcate the values of order, stability, and hierarchy, as well as affirming more explicitly devotional attachments, but power in urban societies is widely dispersed among groups and individuals, and it is not clear that any single ideology – except in the broadest of definitions – dominated or controlled funeral performance. Despite considerable change over time, funerals remained complex rituals, in some aspects perhaps over-determined, in others no doubt failing to achieve their authors’ ends. In particular, while there was collaboration between

<sup>1</sup> Ariès, *The hour of our death*, p. 207.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Harding, ‘Whose body?’ Some examples used in this chapter are also discussed there.

<sup>3</sup> C. M. Koslofsky, *The Reformation of the dead. Death and ritual in early modern Germany, 1450–1700* (Basingstoke, 2000), pp. 6–8; cf. S. C. Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of ritual. An interpretation of early modern Germany* (London, 1997), p. 192.

the church as provider and the laity as consumers of elements of funerary performance, there was also resistance to both the theological and the social discourses proposed by such performances. A wide variety of interests, aspirations, and constraints in practice shaped the funeral in early modern London and Paris.

### **Funeral liturgy and the evolution of practice**

Over a long time, liturgical prescription and social custom combined to evolve a tradition of Christian burial. By the early sixteenth century, there was a widely accepted set of rites and practices associated with burial, which helped to satisfy the spiritual and emotional needs of the living.<sup>4</sup> The church specified what was essential in the way of service and ceremonial, but also offered extras and elaborations. Around the liturgical requirements there had also gathered a number of secular or semi-secular traditions, sanctioned but not prescribed by the church: the conduct of the deathbed, watching the corpse, the procession to bring it to church, bellringing, lights, the distribution of alms, and drinking and eating. Such elements have been described by Bob Scribner as 'paraliturgical celebrations' and by Susan Karant-Nunn as 'pararituals': 'all those ritualized social practices that were sometimes . . . only tenuously and initially perforce linked to ecclesiastical practice', taking their significance 'from life events rather than theological dictates'.<sup>5</sup> There could be important local or regional variations in practice, particularly in popular custom; there would also be very specific local differences in what was actually available, according to the staffing and equipment of the church and the spaces it could offer for burial. Many of the liturgical and secular elements could be varied or elaborated according to personal choice and means.

Several elements of the tradition of Christian burial were called into question by the Protestant Reformation. The fundamental change was the rejection of the doctrine of purgatory and the abandonment of the proposition that there could be any effective interaction between those in this world and those in the next. All prayers and acts of intercession for the dead in England were terminated by the Chantries Act of 1548. The cult

<sup>4</sup> G. Rowell, *The liturgy of Christian burial; an introductory survey of the historical development of Christian burial rites* (London, 1977); Duffy, *Stripping of the altars*, pp. 301–37, 369; J. Maltby, *Prayer book and people in Elizabethan and early Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 56–63. Cf. R. Dinn, 'Death and rebirth in medieval Bury St Edmunds', in Bassett (ed.), *Death in towns*, pp. 151–69.

<sup>5</sup> R. W. Scribner, 'Ritual and popular religion in Catholic Germany at the time of the Reformation', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 35 (1984), 53; Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of ritual*, p. 193.

of saints and the veneration of relics and images, which had been criticised since the mid-1530s, were also eliminated, and by 1552 the sacrifice of the mass had been recast as a commemorative communion. These developments reflected the doctrine of justification by faith alone: no prayer, intercessor, image, or liturgical activity could affect the salvation of the individual, before or after his death. No multiplication of any of these could enhance his prospects. Taken to its logical conclusion, it meant that no place of burial, no elaboration of the order of service, was holier or more beneficial to the deceased than any other. By declaring that the living could do nothing for the dead, and vice versa, it challenged the reciprocity previously exemplified by testamentary benefactions and obligations.

This paradigm shift ought, perhaps, to have entailed a complete interruption to traditional funeral and burial practices. It should certainly have undermined some aspects, deplored by leading reformers, of the composite burial ritual discussed below. The fact that it did not do so completely seems to indicate that the rationale behind many practices associated with burial was not exclusively a spiritual one. Though there was certainly a Protestant discourse of simplicity and anti-ritual, many Protestant societies retained a good deal of traditional practice, if not of liturgy. German Lutheranism retained a degree of 'pomp and circumstance . . . though without papist sacramentals': bells, black palls, mourning dress or emblems, the attendance of clergy and children all continued there.<sup>6</sup> Huguenots in Paris, though obviously requiring the use of a reformed liturgy, and eschewing some aspects of the funeral they deemed Catholic or superstitious, did not express indifference either to the fate of the body or to the ceremonials with which it was interred. Chaunu emphasises the continuities and similarities of Protestant and Catholic testamentary discourse. The two faiths shared a tradition of the *arts de mourir*, and of approaches to death, including the need to settle earthly responsibilities by willmaking. In one study of sixteenth-century Parisian wills, all the Protestant wills (10 per cent of the sample) dwelt on the theme of redemption, but so too did nearly 60 per cent of the Catholic ones, though the latter continued to invoke the Virgin and other saints as well. In another sample, 75 per cent of Protestants asked for pardon or mercy, but so did nearly 30 per cent of Catholics. Chaunu also suggests that a dualistic view of the body – as both the temple of the spirit and as an earthly shell, to be discarded – was common to both, and that some at least of the apparent differences of Huguenot testamentary provision for the place and style of burial resulted from their civil disabilities, and

<sup>6</sup> Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of ritual*, p. 181.

perhaps a wish to avoid attention, and not from a real divergence from the tradition.<sup>7</sup> Many traditional or Catholic beliefs persisted in Protestant England, even in apparent strongholds of reformed thought. Elaborate ritual practices survived the Reformation, not just because they could find justification in Protestant theology, but because they served 'deeprooted social and familial needs'.<sup>8</sup>

What in fact happened to the English rite was that a few elements disappeared, while others gained in importance; some required new justification, while others were simply translated regardless of their original, possibly now discredited, rationale. Several factors contributed to this process of accommodation. As has often been noted, the English Reformation was piecemeal and sometimes reversed direction; reformed theology and liturgical practice moved haltingly towards ascendancy. Many of the reforms of Edward's reign had been signalled in the 1530s, though not enacted, and they had perhaps begun to influence the ways in which death and burial were approached. But of greater significance than the slow pace of change was the secular importance attached to many aspects of the funeral ceremony. It was surely this that ensured that post-Reformation funerals could be as complete a representation, as rich in ceremony, attendance, and decoration as their predecessors, even if they now lacked many of the liturgical options and a substantial clerical presence. The multiplicity and variability of detail, in reformed as in traditional practice, were an essential part of the strength of the ritual, allowing participants in this common rite to reaffirm the individuality of the deceased and his or her situation. At the same time, variation entailed discrimination and implied hierarchies of desirability. Meanings, especially of status, were associated with particular choices, and assumptions about the appropriate and normal began to inform decisions: 'my body to be buried in holy grave in such decent order as to the good discretion of my executors, meet and convenient for my estate and degree'.<sup>9</sup> Funerals became one of the ways in which wealth could, through various socially accepted forms of spending, be translated into status.

### Deathbeds and burial intervals

Most prescriptions for deathbeds, and most accounts of funeral practice, assume the dying or dead person to be adult, at home, and at least potentially *compos mentis*. They also tend to assume that he, or less often

<sup>7</sup> Chaunu, *La mort à Paris*, pp. 249–60, 312, 319, 346.

<sup>8</sup> D. Cressy, 'Death and the social order: the funerary preferences of Elizabethan gentlemen', *Continuity and Change* 5 (1989), 99–119.

<sup>9</sup> PRO, PROB 11/38, f. 186.



explicitly she, had goods to leave and worldly as well as spiritual affairs to settle, and that willmaking would form an important part of the event. In reality, at least half of all urban deaths were of juveniles; many adults died accidentally, unprepared, away from home, or as vagrants or lodgers in a strange city. In mid-seventeenth-century Paris, up to a quarter of all deaths occurred in a hospital. Nevertheless the flourishing literature of prescription offered a set of customs for model circumstances; perhaps these could not always be observed, but they helped to establish norms and expectations that shaped practice more widely.<sup>10</sup>

Urban deathbeds may have had some distinctive features. Epidemic disease, especially plague, must often have disrupted or precluded the desired sequence of repentance, reconciliation, communion (for Catholics), and resignation. In Paris also there were long periods of civil unrest, if not open warfare, during which normal practices must have been jeopardised. In crowded urban dwellings, a private and peaceful death must have been hard to accomplish. On the other hand, there was perhaps no shortage of neighbours to assist, admonish, and afterwards bear witness.<sup>11</sup> In Paris even passers-by were drawn into deathbed scenes, according to an eighteenth-century commentator.<sup>12</sup> There ought at least to have been no delay in obtaining professional attendance, whether of notaries, attorneys, clerks, or clergy. This was obviously important, since many wills were written on the deathbed, whether or not the testator claimed to be sick in body; other deathbed wills were made verbally, and subsequently proved with the assistance of those who had been present.<sup>13</sup> The Hôtel-Dieu in Paris took seriously its responsibility to those dying there, the priests and chaplains witnessing deathbed testaments and their notarisation.<sup>14</sup> The small size of most parishes in both London and Paris, and the numbers of clergy, should have meant that no city-dweller dying at home need be without the services of a priest. Failure to obtain the Sacrament was more likely to be due to clerical negligence than distance or the difficulty of obtaining it.<sup>15</sup> The disposable wealth of some city-dwellers, and their freedom of testamentary disposition, could have

<sup>10</sup> Chaunu, *La mort à Paris*, pp. 274–87; R. A. Houlbrooke, 'The Puritan death-bed, c.1560–c.1660', in C. Durston and J. Eales (eds.), *The culture of English Puritanism, 1560–1700* (London, 1996), pp. 122–44, esp. pp. 130–1; Houlbrooke, *Death, religion and the family*, pp. 146–219.

<sup>11</sup> See the forthcoming London Ph.D. thesis of Danae Tankard.

<sup>12</sup> Restif de la Bretonne, cited by Chaunu, *La mort à Paris*, p. 347.

<sup>13</sup> Chaunu, *La mort à Paris*, p. 298; for London examples, see *Consistory Court Wills*, p. xv, and nos. 186, 188, 200 (nuncupative wills), and nos. 156, 158, 160, etc. (sickbed wills).

<sup>14</sup> Archives de L'Assistance Publique, register of testaments at the Hôtel-Dieu, cat. 6358 (layette 330, liasse 1413(1)), f. 6.

<sup>15</sup> But cf. Houlbrooke, *Death, religion and the family*, p. 153.

made the deathbed a more charged and contested scene, though here as elsewhere the spouse and immediate biological family were the principal players and beneficiaries.<sup>16</sup>

Few people had much choice about where they died, or the setting and attendance of the deathbed. Social and financial circumstances dictated the speed and style of the subsequent proceedings for the great majority. For some individuals, however, the precise form of the rituals following their own death was of great significance. Some of those who could afford to do so took pains to specify their performance in detail. This is apparent from both deathbed and 'precautionary' wills, but it seems that the approach of death could be an important stimulus. Forty wills out of 244 proved in the Consistory Court of London between 1514 and 1547 contain instructions about the funeral. Nine of the testators said they were sick, and several more were within a few days of death. Only one claimed to be 'in good helthe', and one other, a priest, dilated on the shortness of life and the possibility of sudden death.<sup>17</sup> In Paris, deathbed wills also formed a significant proportion of the whole, and there must also have been a number of sickbed wills written but not executed, owing to the patient's recovery. Jean Amery in 1571 expressed a precautionary sentiment also common in English wills ('considerant qu'il n'est rien plus certain que la mort et rien si incertain que le jour et l'heure d'icelle'), when he was already ill: 'et que dieu par ceste griefve maladie luy a pleu le visiter'. He still had time to make a full written testament.<sup>18</sup> In some of Chaunu's students' will samples, as many as 55, 60, or 75 per cent of wills were made 'gisant au lit malade', and in many cases death clearly ensued in fairly short order.<sup>19</sup> How well someone 'syke of bodye' could envisage and prescribe the ritual, and how far he or she may have been assisted or prompted by clerical or other attendants, is not clear, but some very detailed prescriptions do exist, for both London and Paris.

Joan Brytten of London (d. 1540) and Jeanne Passavent of Paris (d. 1582) were both widows of a middling or *bourgeoise* sort. The wills of both women specify the place of burial and the kind of service, itemising attendance, lights, ringing, distributions, and subsequent commemorations. They suggest that each woman, from her deathbed, envisaged her funeral as performance, centring on herself, with a cast moving in

<sup>16</sup> J. Murray, 'Kinship and friendship: the perception of family by clergy and laity in late medieval London', *Albion* 20.3 (1988), 376.

<sup>17</sup> *Consistory Court Wills*, passim, but esp. 32, 215. For further discussion of this, see V. Harding, 'Memento mori: la peur de l'agonie, de la mort et des morts à Londres au XVIIe siècle', *Histoire Urbaine* 2 (Dec. 2000), 39–57.

<sup>18</sup> Chaunu, *La mort à Paris*, p. 475. <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 188–9, 299.

a chosen setting according to her instructions.<sup>20</sup> These provisions are unusually comprehensive, but many sixteenth-century testators specified some aspect of their funeral.<sup>21</sup> Sir Cuthbert Buckle made his will when he was already 'diseased in body', only two days before he died on 30 June 1594, though he still invoked the stock phrase that 'death is most certain but the hour thereof altogether uncertain'. He may well have had a preliminary draft or an earlier will to work from, but his instructions – naming forty-six persons to whom mourning was to be given, and making other funeral bequests – indicate that scripting his own funeral and the distribution of remembrances was for him an important part of preparing for death.<sup>22</sup> Precise instructions of this kind became less common in seventeenth-century London wills, just as specification of the place of burial also waned, though they by no means disappeared.<sup>23</sup> It is hard to say whether their decline is due to either a more Puritan or a more secular view of the funeral ceremony. Arguably, since funeral ritual (and cost) was not itself declining, it simply reflects a move away from using the will to express such preferences; executors were trusted, and perhaps previously instructed, to do what was appropriate. In Paris, it appears that the majority continued to make some reference to their funeral; even if nearly half of a sample of 250 willmakers (1599–1653) left the arrangements to their executors, the mid-seventeenth century still marked 'un sommet dans le faste des convois'.<sup>24</sup> The pious preamble and the endowment of intercessory masses remained vigorous and widespread through the seventeenth century.<sup>25</sup>

From the moment of death, the inescapable course of physical decay impelled the sequence of actions and rituals. As far as can be ascertained, most bodies remained in the place of death until removed for interment. The registers of Saint-André-des-Arts often note the place of death ('mort en son hotel', 'mort en l'hotel de Thou', 'mort chez son frere Claude, logé en la rue Pavée') and this makes sense if this is where the funeral convoy started from.<sup>26</sup> More strikingly, when the baron de Thiers died

<sup>20</sup> See appendices 3, 4. <sup>21</sup> *Consistory Court Wills*, passim.

<sup>22</sup> PRO, PROB 11/84, f. 87v; Bodl. MS Ashmole 818, f. 45.

<sup>23</sup> E.g. the will of John Juxon, senior, citizen, and merchant taylor, 1626 (PRO, PROB 11/150, f. 112), transcribed in K. Lindley and D. Scott (eds.), *The journal of Thomas Juxon, 1644–1647* (Camden 5th series 13, 1999) pp. 171–86. His son, Thomas Juxon, however, made no reference to his own funeral in his will of 1672 (PRO, PROB 11/340, f. 147): *ibid.*, pp. 187–92.

<sup>24</sup> Chaunu, *La mort à Paris*, pp. 357–9. <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 365–431.

<sup>26</sup> BN, MS Fr. 32589, passim; cf. AN, L 510, microfilm no. 27. Some London parish registers also noted the dead person's origin or place of residence: see e.g. E. B. Jupp and R. Hovenden (eds.), *The registers of christenings, marriages and burials of the parish of Allhallows London Wall within the city of London, from the year of Our Lord 1559 to 1675* (London, 1878), pp. 88–135.

in a stranger's house after being attacked by enemies on his way home after supper, his body remained there for five days, before being removed to the family chapel in the parish church. It also appears that the convoy of Messire Jacques le Coigneux, *conseiller au Parlement*, started from the house of the linendraper on the pont Saint-Michel where he had died suddenly the previous night.<sup>27</sup> It looks as if it was felt impossible to transport the dead body of a notable individual except in a formal and ritualised manner. The vicar of the dean of Paris, who convoyed the bodies of deceased associates to burial, recorded the house, and often the room, in which death took place, and clearly expected to collect the body from that place.<sup>28</sup> This was also the case with the funeral convoys attended by the Bureau de Ville.<sup>29</sup> However, many poor people died in a space that was not their own and in which their bodies could not be permitted to stay. In Paris, the religious of Sainte-Catherine collected the dead from the streets and the river and buried them, probably mostly at the Innocents; the *emballeurs* of the Hôtel-Dieu were also rewarded for seeking and removing bodies from private houses and taking them to the Hôtel-Dieu, presumably for shrouding and a charity burial.<sup>30</sup> In London, the parish accepted responsibility for those found dead in the street, but the details of how such bodies were handled between death and burial are not clear.

In English practice, and in model circumstances, the body was washed after death, dressed at least in a shift, wrapped in a shroud or sheet, placed in a coffin or bier, and covered with a pall or cloth, ready for the watch.<sup>31</sup> The choice of burial place, and indeed the amount to be spent on the funeral, probably determined whether a burial was to be cofined or not, and whether wood or lead would be used, and few testators mentioned coffins in their wills.<sup>32</sup> Bodies that were to be buried without coffins would be completely wrapped, as the name suggests, in a winding-sheet.<sup>33</sup> In eighteenth-century Paris, the sisters of Charity supplied a shroud (*suaire*)

<sup>27</sup> BN, MS Fr. 32589, entries for 8 April 1565 and 18 Jan. 1623.

<sup>28</sup> AN, L 510, microfilm no. 27.

<sup>29</sup> E.g. *RDBVP*, vol. VIII, pp. 198–9, 352–4, 365–6, 502–3.

<sup>30</sup> Hillairet, *Les 200 cimetières*, p. 25; Brièle and Husson, *Inventaire-sommaire*, vol. II, p. 103. For discussion of the different treatment of 'personalised' and 'depersonalised' corpses in Paris, see Harding, 'Whose body?', pp. 171–6.

<sup>31</sup> Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and death*, pp. 425–32; Mr Tate, 'Of the Antiquity, Variety and Ceremonies of Funerals in England, [30 April 1600], in *A Collection of Curious Discourses written by eminent Antiquaries upon several heads in our English Antiquities, together with Mr Thomas Hearne's preface and appendix to the former edition*, 2 vols. (London, 1775), vol. I, p. 217. I thank Scott Newstrom for this reference. Cf. Chaunu, *La mort à Paris*, pp. 350–1, for the uncertainty of rituals around the corpse in Paris.

<sup>32</sup> One exception was Denise Leveson (d. 1560), who requested church burial and 'a coffin of boards': PRO, PROB 11/43, f. 463.

<sup>33</sup> Wieck, *Painted prayers*, pp. 120, 126, 128–31.

for pauper burials; it is not clear what happened earlier.<sup>34</sup> For burials of this kind, parishes and fraternities lent hearses and coffins, to serve for the vigil, transport, and funeral, retrieving them before the interment.<sup>35</sup> Shrouds for coffined burial could be looser and less completely concealing than those that wound a corpse; they served a different function and could be represented as more or less garment-like. John Donne and others are portrayed wearing shrouds that are closer to classical drapery, though still usually with the distinctive ties and knots of the real item.<sup>36</sup> Several writers have discussed the evolution of winding-sheets, shrouds, and corpse-clothes, and there is now some archaeological evidence for late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century practice in London. By that date, it was not uncommon to dress the corpse either in real clothes or in a simulacrum of them; it was also required (from 1678) that the shroud and other clothing be of wool.<sup>37</sup>

An important first step, for those of modest status who were not obliged to seek professional intervention, was to notify the sexton or gravedigger, so that a grave could be opened, and also to arrange the necessary equipment for the funeral. The authority for agreeing a grave space, fees, and other arrangements lay with the churchwardens, who were concerned to prevent private negotiations with gravedigger or priest.<sup>38</sup> In London the sexton delivered the parish's hearse-cloth to the house; he may also have brought a temporary coffin, for the watch or immediately before the removal of the body.<sup>39</sup> In Paris, too, the parish gravediggers were expected to deliver the pall, the bier or hearse, and trestles to the house where the dead person was, and bring them back with the body. An eighteenth-century gravedigger complained of having to go up to the fifth or sixth floors of some houses to collect bodies. The fact that these would have been the bodies of poorer persons, for whose burials he received less, added to his grievance.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>34</sup> AN, L 663. For the parish *charités*, see Bernard, *The emerging city*, pp. 142–5.

<sup>35</sup> The parish of St Dunstan in the West paid 20d. for a coffin in 1533–4, and probably owned at least two: GL MS 2968/1, ff. 105 ff (1533–4), 159 ff (1553–4). St Michael Cornhill mended its 'coffen that carrys the corssets to churche' in 1553–4: Overall, *Churchwardens' account of St Michael Cornhill*, p. 112.

<sup>36</sup> For examples see Litten, *English way of death*, pp. 67 (John Donne, 1632), 68 (Sir Geoffrey and Lady Palmer, 1674); Llewellyn, *Art of death*, pl. 30 (Lydia Dwight, c. 1674).

<sup>37</sup> Esp. Litten, *English way of death*, pp. 57–84. Cf. Janaway, 'An introductory guide to textiles from 18th and 19th century burials', pp. 17–32.

<sup>38</sup> E.g. GL, MS 3016/2, f. 5v (St Dunstan in the West, 1664); AN, L 651 (Saint-Gervais, 1675); AN, LL 687, ff. 183r–184 (Saint-André-des-Arts, 1687).

<sup>39</sup> See e.g. GL (printed books), Broad-sides 12.79; Overall, *Churchwardens' accounts of St Michael Cornhill*, p. 112.

<sup>40</sup> AN, LL 805, p. 255; BN, MS Fr. 21609, f. 37; AN, L 663 (un-numbered 18C papers concerning charity burials at Saint-Jean-en-Grève).

Pre-modern burials were normally prompt, with a small number very delayed, and this was the case in both London and Paris. The pre-Reformation practice of reciting *placebo* with vespers the night before the funeral and a dirge and mass on the morrow implies at least a day's interval for most people. In many cases it may not have been much more, though there was a natural correlation between rank and length of time to burial; heraldic funerals clearly took days or even weeks to arrange.<sup>41</sup> Stephen Gardiner, bishop of Winchester, remained unburied for over three months, from 13 November 1555, when he died at Whitehall, to 24 February 1556, when he was buried in Winchester.<sup>42</sup> In the later sixteenth century, although there is little statistical evidence, burial on the same day was not unknown, and it seems likely that most intervals were short, though as the antiquary Tate wrote in 1600, 'Amongst us there is not any sett and determinate time how longe the corps should be kept, but as seemeth best to the friends of the deceased.'<sup>43</sup> In the city-centre parish of St Mary Woolnoth in the second half of the seventeenth century, 70 per cent of the dead had been buried by the end of the second day after death. As earlier, longer death–burial intervals correlate with higher rank: for such people, the problem of arranging a substantial funeral seems to have delayed the ceremony and interment.<sup>44</sup>

In Paris, even in a sample of higher social status from the parish of Saint-André-des-Arts, at least 75 per cent had been buried by the end of the second day after death. The modal burial date moved from the day of death in the mid-sixteenth century to the day after in the later sixteenth and seventeenth, but there is no indication that it was becoming common for burial to take more than three days. Moving a body around was likely to extend the interval, though not inevitably and not necessarily for long. Transport and burial on the same day were quite feasible.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Houlbrooke, *Death, religion and the family*, p. 259; Machyn, *Diary*, pp. 105–6, 111, 155, 170–1, 218–19, 268–9, 270–1, 306–7; *Collectanea topographica et genealogica*, vol. IV (London, 1837), pp. 382–4 (I thank Caroline Barron for this reference); BL, Add. MSS 71131/A–X.

<sup>42</sup> Machyn, *Diary*, pp. 96–7, 100–1.

<sup>43</sup> E.g. *Register of St Pancras Soper Lane*, pp. 287–8; Tate, 'Of the Antiquity, Variety and Ceremonies of Funerals in England', p. 217.

<sup>44</sup> S. Porter, 'Death and burial in a London parish: St Mary Woolnoth, 1653–99', *London Journal* 8 (1982), 76–80.

<sup>45</sup> BN, MS Fr. 32589. The 597 cases with dates of death and burial are only 36 per cent of the total number of surviving register entries; and the entries are themselves selected from a larger whole, of which, at best, they probably make up not much more than 10 per cent; so the 597 cases may only be 3 to 4 per cent of the total of burials. Funerals of the poor are not represented at all. These would probably bring down the death–burial interval still further. There would be little reason for delay: no elaborate arrangements to be made, a common grave already open, not to mention the cramped living conditions of the poor and the unlikelihood of preservative measures. Cf. Harding, 'Whose body?', pp. 176–80.

Some burials, even of the great, happened in a remarkably short time. Dr François le Picart, dean of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, died in the early hours of 17 September 1566. Within a few hours his body had been opened and the heart removed. The body was displayed in the courtyard of his *logis* that afternoon, and many came to view it. At about 5 o'clock it was taken into the church of Saint-Germain, and the heart buried; then the full funeral procession escorted the body to the church of the Blancs-Manteaux, where it was buried that evening. On the next day, the company reassembled for the *service* and funeral oration.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, some funerals took weeks or even months. Long-distance convoys were largely confined to the highest groups in society – burial outside Paris was usually on the deceased's family estates – so in that respect too a long death–burial interval correlated with class.<sup>47</sup>

### Liturgy, choice, and change

The individualisation of the funeral performance, whether specified by the deceased or by his or her executors, entailed a series of choices between possible alternatives. The first choice, usually made before death, and in many cases not a conscious choice at all, was the location of burial.<sup>48</sup> This decision was partly influenced by cost, but still more by association and affiliation. As we have seen, most people were buried in their parish of residence; a minority chose burial in some other location, either another parish, a conventual church or churchyard, or one of the civic or non-parochial churchyards. A substantial minority in right-bank Paris chose the Innocents. Of those buried in their parish, a few chose, and many more accepted, burial in the churchyard, but a small but important number chose burial in the church, sometimes specifying a particular site. The decision on location determined the physical setting of the funeral ceremonies, and by extension some of the attendant clerical personnel.<sup>49</sup> For those buried in private or family chapels, the setting may have been prepared over a longer period, and its appearance could certainly have been envisaged. The choice of location also framed the range of choices about service and accoutrements which could subsequently be made, since most of these were offered or managed by the representatives of the burial church itself. Although parishes were not competing with one another directly for burials, there was probably a spirit of fairly

<sup>46</sup> *RDBVP*, vol. II, pp. 450–1; cf. *ibid.*, vol. V, pp. 54–5.

<sup>47</sup> E.g. BN, MS Fr. 32589, entries for 5 March 1645, 4 July 1616.

<sup>48</sup> According to Naz, *Dictionnaire du droit canonique*, only the deceased, not his heirs or family, may make this choice; it cannot be presumed: vol. V, p. 920.

<sup>49</sup> See chapter 9, pp. 236–8, below.

friendly rivalry and emulation between them as to the kinds and qualities of services they could provide for their parishioners. In pre-Reformation London and in Paris, parishes were also conscious that the convents, including the friaries, were in a more real sense their competitors in this field. As with the place of burial, increasing demand (in both numbers and quality) stimulated the management of supply: relying on the strength of personal wishes and the pressure to conform to expectations, the parish vestries offered a range of bells, hearse-cloths, hangings, and silverware.

The liturgical core of the Catholic funeral ceremonies was the trio known as *placebo*, *dirige*, and *requiem*. *Placebo*, or evensong for the dead, was recited in church the night before the funeral; *dirige* (alias dirge) or matins was usually said or sung the following day in the presence of the corpse, and was immediately followed by the requiem mass and interment. By the end of the middle ages some special votive masses were available to those who could afford it, in addition to the standard requiem.<sup>50</sup> The liturgical choices made in pre-Reformation London reflected personal devotions as well as an appreciation of display and drama, together with an awareness of cost. The primary distinction was between high and low *dirige*, and high and low mass. The 'high' versions entailed a larger cast and a longer performance, and hence greater expense: Sir James Taylor, priest, in 1519, apologising for the fact that 'my substance is no bettyr', asked his executor to ordain for him 'a lowe dirige and a masse of requiem because I have but smalle goodes'.<sup>51</sup> More ambitious choices, from testators in the same middling social stratum, were for a sung mass, or an additional sequence of five masses of the Five Wounds.<sup>52</sup> Up until the time of the Edwardian reforms, most London parishes had several chantry priests, chaplains and conducts, and some could probably put on an elaborate musical performance. St Michael Cornhill appointed a choirmaster in 1509, with detailed instructions as to his duties 'syngyng of pryksong and playnsong'.<sup>53</sup> The church of St Mary at Hill certainly had several singing priests at the Reformation, and apparently a local musical tradition. William Peyrson, a clerk there, in 1545 requested a mass and *dirige* by note 'accordyng to the use and custome of the sayd churche', for which each of the priests and clerks was to be paid 12d.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Duffy, *Stripping of the altars*, p. 369.      <sup>51</sup> *Consistory Court Wills*, 90.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 59, 85, 86, 102, 155.

<sup>53</sup> Overall, *Churchwardens' accounts of St Michael Cornhill*, pp. 1–2.

<sup>54</sup> *Consistory Court Wills*, 236; C. Burgess, 'Shaping the parish: St Mary at Hill, London, in the fifteenth century', in J. Blair and B. Golding (eds.), *The cloister and the world: essays in medieval history in honour of Barbara Harvey* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 248–50.



Wills and other accounts of funerals from London from the 1540s and 1550s indicate some confusion and inconsistency, and a great deal of variation from case to case. We can see a new theology of salvation: many wills omit the traditional request for intercession from the Virgin and the holy company of heaven (which both Joan Brytten and Jeanne Passavent invoked) and express a belief in the merits of Christ's blood and passion as the only source of redemption.<sup>55</sup> The endowment of chantries and commemorative services dwindled, to disappear under Edward. Liturgical variation was obviously curtailed by the Protestant prayerbooks, but the most obvious thing to go in the Edwardian reforms was the multiplication, in time or space, of liturgical celebration. Funerals were now commonly performed on a single day, and without either simultaneous services elsewhere or repeated services in the same place. The funeral was the end: it was not re-enacted, as in the annual obit, and the deceased was not taken as having any significant and ongoing relationship with the living. Benefactors' names were no longer kept on bederolls or recalled in beneficial masses.<sup>56</sup> Preference for a reformed liturgy was also occasionally expressed: Ralph Davenaunt in 1552 asked for the Parish Clerks to bring his body to the earth, 'singing such godly psalms in English before me as now be used for the dead'.<sup>57</sup> Henry Machyn, the London merchant taylor and memorialiser of city ceremonies in the 1550s, records the shifts over those years. His notes of Edwardian funerals are laconic, but mention sermons, and singing up to 1552. From the accession of Mary, the dirge and requiem mass were restored, with torches and candles.<sup>58</sup> He notes that several higher-status people such as aldermen had three successive masses on the day of burial, usually sung masses of the Trinity and Our Lady as well as the requiem.<sup>59</sup> Soon after Elizabeth's accession, though Catholic services did not cease immediately, Machyn begins to report funerals with 'nodur crosse nor prest, nor clarkes, but a sermon and after a salme of Davyd', or the presence of 'the nuw prychers in ther gowne lyke ley[men]' and prayers in English.<sup>60</sup>

The Elizabethan prayerbook, which governed Anglican funeral ritual until the Directory of Public Worship in 1645, eliminated lights and clerical processions, but left space for the 'personalisation' of the funeral with the accoutrements noted below, and the processions discussed in chapter 9. Bishops remained anxious that old practices continued to subvert the new, enquiring in 1560 whether parish clerks 'use to sing any

<sup>55</sup> E.g. *Consistory Court Wills*, 120, 206, 240. <sup>56</sup> Duffy, *Stripping of the altars*, pp. 474–5.

<sup>57</sup> PRO, PROB 11/36, f. 11. <sup>58</sup> E.g. Machyn, *Diary*, pp. 17, 43, 59.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 99, 106, 110, 161, 167, 171. <sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 179, 191, 193, 199.

number of psalms, dirge-like, at the burial of the dead?<sup>61</sup> In the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the choices available to those who wished to direct the spiritual character, as well as the material setting, of their funeral focused on preachers and sermons. Some merely left money that there should be a sermon; others named the preacher. Already quite common by the mid-sixteenth century, the genre, both preached and published, expanded considerably in the century after the Reformation.<sup>62</sup> It is probable that most Londoners of middling status and above had some kind of address at their funeral, most commonly given by the local minister or lecturer, but in some cases involving an invited outsider. In the 1660s the keen funeral-goer Richard Smyth noted the occasional absence of a sermon as if it were somewhat unusual.<sup>63</sup>

Though we should not underestimate the esteem with which conformist Anglicans regarded the liturgy of the prayerbook,<sup>64</sup> Puritan sympathies and observances, and a stronger resistance to funeral ceremony, were certainly present in London. Londoners were among those vocal in their opposition to Anglican ceremonial, including vestments, and many parishes showed their support for more advanced Protestantism by funding lectures, for which they often employed men of Puritan sympathies.<sup>65</sup> London was also a home for the early separatist churches. The New Churchyard offered a place of burial for members of irregular or dissenting congregations; an order of 1590 suggests that some funeral ceremonies there did not follow the Anglican prescription.<sup>66</sup> Londoners were also vocal in their opposition to the Laudian injunctions of the 1630s, which included full observance of the rituals and dress prescribed by the prayerbook. Possibly such sympathies lay behind the protest of the wife of Francis Jessop, who in 1636 attempted to bury her own daughter at St Katherine Creechurch without the services of the minister, and boycotted the service when he intervened.<sup>67</sup> The Directory of Public Worship of 1645 rejected the customs of kneeling, praying, and singing around

<sup>61</sup> W. H. Frere (ed.), *Visitation articles and injunctions of the period of the Reformation*, 3 vols. (London, 1910), vol. III, p. 91.

<sup>62</sup> Houlbrooke, *Death, religion and the family*, pp. 295–330.

<sup>63</sup> McMurray, *Records of two city parishes*, pp. 206, 207, 210, 214, 215, 232, 233, 235, 236, 237, 238, 326; Richard Smyth, *The Obituary of Richard Smyth, Secondary of the Poultry Compter, London, being a catalogue of all such persons as he knew in their life, extending from AD 1627 to AD 1674*, ed. H. Ellis (London, 1849), pp. 75, 84, 93, 97, 98.

<sup>64</sup> Maltby, *Prayer book and people*, esp. pp. 1–30.

<sup>65</sup> Cressy, *Birth, marriage and death*, pp. 403–9; Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan movement*, esp. pp. 84–91; Seaver, *The Puritan lectureships*.

<sup>66</sup> Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan movement*, pp. 370–1; M. Tolmie, *The triumph of the Saints. The separate churches of London, 1616–1649* (Cambridge, 1977). See above, pp. 95–8.

<sup>67</sup> Cressy, *Birth, marriage and death*, p. 405.

the corpse, but as Cressy has noted 'it lacked the disciplinary machinery to secure any kind of uniformity. Radicals could bury as they wished, while conservatives could continue as before'.<sup>68</sup> London in the 1640s and 1650s contained congregations that instituted the full Presbyterian structure, others that failed to do so, a few traditional Anglicans, and many independent or gathered congregations.<sup>69</sup> Almost certainly there was a variety of funeral practices, with only the most ritualistic observances being excluded. Testators continued to choose places of burial, to specify more than minimal burial costs, and to leave bequests to local poor for attendance. Churchwardens' accounts and vestry minutes, while they reflect responses to many contemporary developments, do not suggest any consistent changes in burial practice.<sup>70</sup> The parish of St Bartholomew Exchange continued to pay sums of between 10s. and about £1 2s. for the funerals of foundlings and pensioners through the 1650s, including payments to the bearers and for the cloth, and for wine and bread.<sup>71</sup> By this time also, however, the alternative approach was well established, and the separation of Quakers and other nonconformists from Anglican burial places and traditions was becoming marked.<sup>72</sup>

Catholic Paris continued to offer a wide range of liturgical choices, both in number and location and in specific devotion. The traditional funeral service and associated ritual of the middle ages were not undermined by changes in the sixteenth century. As Jeanne Passavent's will, typical of many, indicates, there was considerable continuity. The reform of ritual in 1614 simplified the formal requirements, and the second and third funeral masses were omitted, leaving only the mass of requiem; this change may not have been universally observed immediately, but appears to have been firmly established by the later seventeenth century.<sup>73</sup> Seventeenth-century Parisians seem to have concentrated more on the sequence of commemorative and intercessory masses beginning after the interment than on the liturgy of the funeral itself. There is indeed no consistent distinction, in the use of words such as *obsèques*, *pompe funèbre*, and *funerailles*, between services said at the time of burial and those held later or for someone dying and buried elsewhere.<sup>74</sup> It is not always easy to distinguish testamentary requests for masses at the time of the funeral

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 416. <sup>69</sup> Tai Liu, *Puritan London*, pp. 51–148.

<sup>70</sup> E.g. McMurray, *Records of two city parishes*, pp. 236–7, 337–47.

<sup>71</sup> E. Freshfield (ed.), *The account books of St Bartholomew Exchange in the city of London, 1596–1698* (London, 1895), pp. 141–66.

<sup>72</sup> Stock, 'Quaker burial: doctrine and practice', pp. 129–43. For an attempted Quaker burial in 1664, see McMurray, *Records of two city parishes*, pp. 101, 349.

<sup>73</sup> Ariès, *Hour of our death*, p. 178.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. R. Giesey, *The royal funeral ceremony in Renaissance France* (Geneva, 1960), p. 159, on the performance of obsequies without the body.

from the establishment of services of a more commemorative nature, but the majority of a sample of sixteenth-century testators, and a fairly large minority of seventeenth-century ones, used their wills to request specific numbers of masses. The proportion asking for more than sixty masses – implying a more extended period of commemoration – was small in the sixteenth century, but increased in the seventeenth.<sup>75</sup> Claude le Gay, widow, did not specify the service at her funeral in 1634, but asked for fifty low masses to be said in the church of her burial on the day of her death, or if not possible, on the morrow; she also asked for a total of five *services complets* to be sung in four other churches immediately after her death.<sup>76</sup> Nicolas Lambert, *conseiller du roi* and *secrétaire de ses finances*, was more explicit about his priorities in 1646. Conscious that the funeral (in the modern sense) centred on the physical body, which would soon be reduced to decay and dust, he asked that the *pompes funèbres* be carried out with the honour and modesty required by his condition as a miserable sinner. For the salvation of his soul, however, apart from the prayers and services that would be said at his burial, he specified two low masses for a year, in his parish church and a nearby convent.<sup>77</sup> Especially striking, by comparison with reformed practice in London, are the large numbers of priests involved in the liturgical life of the parish, and the continuing flourishing tradition of endowment for commemorative purposes. At Saint-Jean-en-Grève, Jeanne Passavent's parish, there were at least twenty-five new foundations of commemorative services between 1550 and 1600, and nearly fifty between 1600 and 1670. Some of these were just anniversary masses, some weekly or daily services, and not all were being fully maintained by the end of the seventeenth century, but the total is impressive.<sup>78</sup> Several parishes could only keep track of the sequence of services and commemorations that their priests were bound to perform by setting out a detailed programme organised by days of the week, month, and special dates.<sup>79</sup>

The concentration on longer-term intercession need not mean that Parisians lacked interest in the details of the services held at the time of interment, but the evidence does suggest that their concern focused on attendance and appearance rather than liturgical variety. The city churches were well staffed with priests and chaplains, whose attendance could be obtained for the appropriate payment, while the numerous religious communities in the city could supply additional personnel, often distinctively clad, representing a range of devotional associations. The lavishly baroque funeral preparations of a Parisian of relatively modest

<sup>75</sup> Chaunu, *La mort à Paris*, p. 410.   <sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 505–7.   <sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 515–16.

<sup>78</sup> AN, LL 805.   <sup>79</sup> E.g. AN, LL 691, 692 (Saint-André-des-Arts).

status, Raphael Bonnard, *marchand fripier*, in 1616, required the *curé* and forty priests of his parish church, and the attendance of members of the convents of the Augustins, the Cordeliers, the Jacobins, and the Carmes. His body was to be carried by brothers of the Caputs de Montaigu, and attended by children from the four hospitals of Saint-Esprit, la Trinité, the Enfants Rouges, and the Enfants de la Charité, all bearing torches.<sup>80</sup> Selection among the available religious, if usually on a more modest scale, clearly remained a significant and characteristic aspect of Parisian funerals, as it could no longer be in London. Pre-Reformation Londoners had called on parish clergy, children, and members of the religious orders to attend their funerals, but the number of religious personnel was sharply reduced by the Dissolution and the suppression of the chantries, whereas in Paris new orders and houses multiplied.<sup>81</sup> There may also have been a strong impulse on the part of devout testators to assert and exploit this particularly Catholic, Counter-Reformation, and Parisian feature of religious practice in their arrangements for interment and commemoration.

### Lights, cloths, and bells

As has been noted, the liturgy formed only the core of a larger and more elaborate funeral performance. The Catholic rite was augmented by a number of 'paraliturgical rituals', many of which could be varied according to choice and means; even though some elements were eliminated from the reformed rite, it still allowed choice and the articulation of identity and status.

Almost inseparable from the sounds and gestures of the Catholic liturgy was the use of lights. Candles burned during funeral ceremonies, either placed around the hearse, in the hands of processionaries, or on the altar, 'an act with profound resonances', standing both for the illumination of Christ and as a form of prayer for the deceased.<sup>82</sup> In pre-Reformation London, churchwardens' accounts for wax, or separate lightwardens' accounts, suggest that every burial had some lights burning, either provided at the expense of the deceased or given of charity. The lightwardens' account for St Andrew Holborn for 1477-8 records the supply of lights for twenty-nine individuals (including ten children), probably all the deaths in the parish that year.<sup>83</sup> Other parishes recorded fewer payments, for larger or more numerous lights ('R of goodwife Cletherow for the ij

<sup>80</sup> Chaunu, *La mort à Paris*, p. 358, citing the research of Bruno de Cessole.

<sup>81</sup> E.g. *Consistory Court Wills*, 10, 39, 57, 59, 82, 143, 164, 215; Pillorget, *Paris sous les premiers Bourbons*, pp. 496-509; B. Plonger, *Le diocèse de Paris*, vol. I: *Des origines à la Révolution* (Paris, 1987), pp. 230-4.

<sup>82</sup> Duffy, *Stripping of the altars*, pp. 361-2; cf. *ibid.*, p. 147.

<sup>83</sup> Barron and Roscoe, 'The medieval parish church of St Andrew Holborn'.

standards in the choir for the waste at her husbands terment, 4d.),<sup>84</sup> and probably supplied lights free for the poor. Some individuals provided lights for their own funerals but left what remained for the use of the parish. Richard Mylles in 1544 ordained six torches for his funeral; after his month's mind, two were to remain in his parish church of St Mary Colechurch, and two each to the nearby churches of St Sithe and St Stephen Walbrook, 'to be burnyd in the said church to the honer and prayse of All myghty God'.<sup>85</sup> The practice also provided an opportunity to combine charity with religious observance, since poor men were often employed as lightbearers.<sup>86</sup>

Testators specified the number and kind of lights they wished to have or could afford. Joan Brytten had five children carrying 1-lb tapers, and more tapers before the cross; John Hudson, citizen and ironmonger, had four children holding tapers, but 'no torchis I will have'.<sup>87</sup> These were modest funerals in parish churches, and there are very few references in London churchwardens' accounts and the wills of the middling sort to more than six lights at a time. Belonging to a fraternity was a way of guaranteeing a better provision of light. The rules of the fraternity of St Fabian and St Sebastian in the church of St Botolph Aldersgate prescribed seven wax tapers each weighing 20 lbs, to be lit on feast days, and also to be set about the bodies of brethren who could not afford their own. Torchets also were to be provided when any dead brother was brought into church. The fraternity of St Katherine in the same church had similar rules, but only provided five tapers; the fraternity of Holy Trinity kept both torches and tapers.<sup>88</sup> Craft guilds and companies likewise supported the burial of poor members. The Brewers' Company buried two almsmen in 1435–6: for one they paid 10d. 'for the hyre of ij taperes wt the wast and other smalcandell', while for the second they paid 10d. for two wax tapers, each of 4 lbs, and 14d. for 'the wast of torches wt the haldyng of the same'.<sup>89</sup> The number and resulting splendour of candles, tapers, torches, and standards could be multiplied almost indefinitely, and a grand funeral could have hundreds of lights. The sister of Clarenceux Herald was buried at the Savoy in 1556 with a hundred silver candlesticks, each with a half-pound candle, and twelve torches. This may have been exceptional, but the Catholic alderman Sir Thomas White buried his wife in March 1558 with 'a goodly herse of wax', four dozen torches, and 'ij grett whytt branchys'.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>84</sup> GL, MS 6842, f. 28.   <sup>85</sup> *Consistory Court Wills*, 215.   <sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 59, 155.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 122, 85.

<sup>88</sup> P. Basing (ed.), *Parish fraternity register Fraternity of the Holy Trinity and SS. Fabian and Sebastian in the parish of St Botolph without Aldersgate* (London, 1982), pp. 139, 140, 103.

<sup>89</sup> GL, MS 5440, f. 269v. I thank Judith Bennett for this reference.

<sup>90</sup> Machyn, *Diary*, pp. 121, 167. Cf. pp. 47, 59, 99, 119.

Lights were one of the features of religious practice specifically targeted by the reformers. Lights before images were condemned as superstitious in 1538, as were rood-lights and the use of candles round corpses in the Injunctions of 1547.<sup>91</sup> London churches sold off their stocks of wax, and lightwardens closed their accounts.<sup>92</sup> The accounts of St Martin in the Fields record receipts and payments for lights consistently up to 1545–6, and again in the account starting at Christmas 1553, but not in between.<sup>93</sup> Machyn reports one funeral with torches in the reign of Edward VI, in June 1552, but this was an Italian ('Baptyst Borow the melener'), which may have been a reason for the exception. Torches and tapers were carried again at funerals throughout Mary's reign and in the first year of Elizabeth's. Machyn's last reference to torches appears to be the funeral of Lady Copley in Southwark in December 1559, 'with xx grett stayffe torchys bornyng', but before then, in October 1559, Lady Cobham had been buried in Kent with 'a goodly hers with-owtt wax'.<sup>94</sup> The Elizabethan Injunctions repeated those of 1547. Bishop Bentham of Coventry and Lichfield enjoined his clergy in 1565 'away with your lights at the burial of the dead', and Grindal in London must have taken a similar line.<sup>95</sup>

A lingering attachment to old forms, and an appreciation of their aesthetic quality, is suggested by the new tradition of honourable night burial, first much remarked in the early seventeenth century. It appears to have been an aristocratic innovation, drawing on Scottish practice and perhaps also on revulsion from the expense and formality of the heraldic funeral. Although it had not been hitherto a popular option in England, being associated with shameful burial, a number of the gentry and nobility in London chose night burial in the seventeenth century.<sup>96</sup> It obviously entailed the use of torchlight and candles, which may have been part of the attraction for some, but was also a cause of anxiety: 'I rather think it was brought up by papists which serve their turn by it in many ways.'<sup>97</sup> The occasional specification of daytime burial may therefore have been an expression of religious opposition to this practice.<sup>98</sup> Although night

<sup>91</sup> Duffy, *Stripping of the altars*, pp. 407, 451, 461.

<sup>92</sup> Walters, *London churches at the Reformation*, pp. 333, 415, 453, 481, 502.

<sup>93</sup> Kitto, *St Martin in the Fields, accounts of the churchwardens*, pp. 1–110, 151–78.

<sup>94</sup> Machyn, *Diary*, pp. 21, 43–177 passim, 179, 193, 194, 201, 213–14, 221.

<sup>95</sup> P. L. Hughes and J. F. Larkin (eds.), *Tudor royal Proclamations*, 3 vols. (New Haven, 1969), vol. III, *The later Tudors (1588–1603)*, pp. 122–4; Frere, *Visitation articles and injunctions of the period of the Reformation*, vol. III, p. 166.

<sup>96</sup> Houlbrooke, *Death, religion and the family*, pp. 272–5; Gittings, *Death, burial and the individual*, pp. 188–215, esp. p. 199; J. Woodward, *The theatre of death. The ritual management of royal funerals in Renaissance England* (Woodbridge, 1997), p. 141.

<sup>97</sup> McClure, *Letters of John Chamberlain*, vol. I, p. 578 (1615). Cf. Forbes, *Chronicle from Aldgate*, p. 30 (night burial of a recusant, 1617).

<sup>98</sup> E.g. GL, MS 9051/8, f. 353; McMurray, *Records of two city parishes*, p. 214.

burial revived the use of lights and torches, it seems likely that these were not supplied or purveyed by parish churches, as before, but by one of the private agencies increasingly involved in funeral provision.

Parisian practice with regard to lights seems to be similar to that in pre-Reformation London, in that it was shaped by personal choice, the need to make charitable provision, and the possibility of support from fraternities and guilds. Unlike London, of course, the use of lights as an element of the church's provision continued into the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and may have been consciously encouraged. At the highest level, the number consumed was prodigious. The *chapelle ardente* for the service held in Notre-Dame for the queen of Spain in 1611 had 800 or 900 candles of half a pound each, and there were six great chandeliers with more large candles, and candles lining the choir and nave at one-foot intervals.<sup>99</sup> The cortège of Cardinal Richelieu in 1642 is said to have had over 2,000 candles and torches.<sup>100</sup> Lights had a very important part to play in later sixteenth- and seventeenth-century funeral convoys and processions, carried before or around the corpse, varying from a dozen to scores or even hundreds. One of the contributions made by the Bureau de Ville to honour colleagues and other notables was to provide torches, with the arms of the Ville, at their burials, from four for a *quartemier* to a dozen for an *échevin*.<sup>101</sup> At a more modest level, parishes hired out silver candlesticks for the vigil (up to twenty at Saint-André-des-Arts), and argued about who had charge of the waste wax from candles burning in the church.<sup>102</sup> Parisian citizens, like Londoners, often specified the number and kind of lights they wanted to be used: Jeanne Passavent had four dozen torches, each weighing 2 lbs; Raphael Bonnard had a dozen 1-lb torches carried by children, and at least an equal number carried by the religious who attended his convoy. Others, as in London, left it to their executors.<sup>103</sup> Lights were also maintained in particular memories on a more or less permanent basis in the church, as well as being used for anniversaries and chantry masses.

The use of hangings and hearse-cloths made an important contribution to the spectacle of the funeral. For noble and heraldic funerals, the church was hung with black, and in such cases there were usually also troops of soberly clad poor and mourners, but for most burials the hearse-cloth was the principal furnishing. London parishes owned cloths which they lent out for parishioners' funerals. Probably most had been gifts or bequests to the parish, some specifically recalling the donor's name: donating a cloth

<sup>99</sup> *RDBVP*, vol. XV, pp. 117–21.      <sup>100</sup> Chaunu, *La mort à Paris*, p. 357.

<sup>101</sup> See chapter 9, below.

<sup>102</sup> AN, LL 687, ff. 5v, 183v–184; cf. Thibaut-Payen, *Les morts, l'église, et l'état*, p. 69.

<sup>103</sup> AN, L 664, no. 6; Chaunu, *La mort à Paris*, pp. 358, 509.



of this kind was a pious work in itself, but also a way of ensuring notice and prayer from a funeral congregation in the future. Others belonged to parish fraternities. In 1555 the parish of St Dunstan in the West had four cloths, including one of green and gold velvet, one called 'Mrs Flaxton's hearsecloth', and two others kept by the sexton. Before the Reformation the wardens of St John's light in the church had been in charge of 'St John's hearsecloth'.<sup>104</sup>

These pre-Reformation hearse-cloths were often elaborate and beautiful. This is one area where London parishes were perhaps exceptionally well equipped, compared with other urban and rural parishes, having over the years accumulated donations from wealthy and pious parishioners, with access both to the imported fabrics and to the craftsmanship with which they were made.<sup>105</sup> The Edwardian inventories indicate, for example, that St Michael Cornhill had two fine hearse-cloths, one of purple velvet with images of gold, with a blue buckram cover for it, and another of black and red Bruges satin, with images of gold, and a black buckram cover. All Hallows the Great had one of black velvet with dead men's heads, but also one of black camlet with a cross of red *bawdkyn*.<sup>106</sup> Where there was more than one cloth, the differences in appearance or quality could be a means of denoting different categories, such as the cloths of blue velvet with pelicans for adults, and of tawny velvet for children, owned by St Stephen Coleman in 1542.<sup>107</sup> Parish fraternities lent cloths, and some Londoners also were able to borrow the hearse-cloths of the city companies, such as that given to the Drapers in 1518 by Alderman John Milborn and his wife, worth 100 marks, or the surviving one of the Saddlers' Company, of crimson and gold velvet, embroidered with the company's arms and religious symbols.<sup>108</sup>

London parishes seem to have retained their hearse-cloths at the Reformation, though the religious symbols and words, originally intended to attract devotion (and perhaps subliminally seen as offering talismanic

<sup>104</sup> Walters, *London churches at the Reformation*, p. 256; GL, MS 2968/1, ff. 48v, 164, 167, 172.

<sup>105</sup> Walters, *London churches at the Reformation*, passim. Damasked and/or embroidered cloths of gold and other colours are illustrated in a number of continental books of hours: Wieck, *Painted prayers*, pp. 120–7.

<sup>106</sup> Walters, *London churches at the Reformation*, pp. 94, 498. *Bawdkyn*, *baudekin*: a rich embroidered stuff, rich brocade (OED).

<sup>107</sup> GL, MS 4456, p. 19.

<sup>108</sup> W. Herbert, *The history of the twelve great Livery Companies of London*, 2 vols. (London, 1834, 1837; reprint, Newton Abbott, 1968), vol. I, pp. 71–2, 444. The Saddlers' pall is illustrated in K. Oliver, *Treasures and plate: the collection of the Saddlers' Company* (Chichester, 1995), pp. 18–19 and endpapers; the Vintners', in Lewellyn, *Art of death*, pl. 49; the Parish Clerks', in R. H. Adams, *The parish clerks of London. A history of the Worshipful Company of Parish Clerks of London* (London, 1971), pl. II.

protection), were probably amended or deleted to conform to new sensibilities, as in the case of the Saddlers' hearse-cloth.<sup>109</sup> Over the early modern period, the cloth seems to have changed in appearance and somewhat in function, though there is no consistent change of nomenclature. Early examples and illustrations indicate shaped, richly decorated cloths, cut with flaps to hang neatly over a coffin or hearse; later ones show more voluminous examples that draped the coffin more fully and sometimes enveloped the bearers.<sup>110</sup> Probably parishes replaced their embroidered cloths at different dates, according to need or local sentiment. The Parish Clerks' surviving hearse-cloth of crimson and black velvet was either newly made or re-embroidered after 1582, with the new arms of the company granted that year.<sup>111</sup> St Anne Aldersgate in the 1580s had their best hearse-cloth newly embroidered with candlesticks ('xvj new branches'), and edged with cord or fringe, for a cost of at least 33s. 10d.<sup>112</sup> However, though gorgeous cloths remained in use for some time, black or sober colours became more common. In 1615 the parish of St Mary Colechurch paid 9s. 4d. for 'dressing, drawing and dieing' a black hearse-cloth, while in the same year two old hearse-cloths, possibly coloured ones, were made into a carpet for the communion table and a pulpit cloth.<sup>113</sup> In 1624 the parish of St Dunstan in the West paid 58s. 6d. for three and a quarter yards of 'brown blue cloth' for a burial cloth, presumably of good-quality woollen.<sup>114</sup> Black cloths were accepted as an indispensable part of the funeral ritual by the 1640s, required for decency and comeliness and apparently free from Puritan suspicion. The parish of St Anne Aldersgate bought a new black burial cloth in 1653–4, and hired it out for at least 1s.; the parish of St Christopher le Stocks bought a black cloth in 1658; the parish of St Giles Cripplegate bought 'a very good hearsecloth' in 1659.<sup>115</sup>

Parishes had begun to charge for the use of the hearse-cloth from the 1540s onwards, perhaps to replace the income they had formerly gained from wax and lights, perhaps also to maintain one of the possible differentials in the quality of funerals.<sup>116</sup> By the seventeenth century many

<sup>109</sup> Oliver, *Treasures and plate*, pp. 18–19.

<sup>110</sup> Litten, *English way of death*, pp. 9, 12–15; Llewellyn, *Art of death*, pp. 73–4.

<sup>111</sup> Adams, *Parish clerks of London*, pp. 18, 32, and pl. II. The new arms eliminated the six 'haly water sprencl'es' of the older arms, relics of a now-disused ritual. The new cloth was repaired again in 1686.

<sup>112</sup> McMurray, *Records of two city parishes*, p. 63. <sup>113</sup> GL, MS 66, ff. 15–16.

<sup>114</sup> GL, MS 2968, f. 247v.

<sup>115</sup> McMurray, *Records of two city parishes*, pp. 344, 346; Freshfield, *Vestry minutes of St Christopher le Stocks*, p. 43; GL, MS 6048/1, f. 2v.

<sup>116</sup> The earliest reference to hiring a parish hearse-cloth in London sources that I have found is at St Mary Woolnoth, 1539–40: GL, MS 1002/1A, f. 2. Payments may have been made for fraternity cloths before then: cf. C. Welch (ed.), *Churchwardens' accounts*

parishes had a better and a less good cloth, and charged accordingly for their use. At St Andrew Undershaft in 1638, the black hearse-cloth was lent out at twice the rate of an embroidered one.<sup>117</sup> At St Giles Cripplegate in 1644, 'any of the clothes that cover the corps of the dead . . . are freely lent without any pay whatsoever, only what you please to give the sexton for his labour to bring it', but this was unusual, and by 1664 the same parish was charging 2s., 1s. 6d., and 1s. for use of its best, second, and third cloths.<sup>118</sup> Presumably 'best' and 'worst' cloths must have been visibly distinguishable, even if both were black, perhaps because of the quality of the material or the edgings or trimmings.

Parisian parishes supplied both the pall (*poêle* or occasionally *drap*) to cover the body, and the *argenterie*, the silver cross and branches for the candles, for the vigil: it was the gravedigger who delivered them to the house of the deceased, after negotiation with the family and the parish clergy. He also retrieved, cleaned, and folded them afterwards.<sup>119</sup> Many palls, as in London, were the gift of wealthy parishioners or benefactors. In 1542 the *abbé* of Gaillac gave the churchwardens of Saint-Gervais a velvet pall he had had made for the funeral in their church of his brother, François de Voisins, late seneschal of Rouergue, and for his obit. In 1576 the parish had at least three more palls. One was 'ung poisle de velours doublé de toile noire garny de broderie sur le meillieu ou sont les images de Saint-Gervais et Saint-Protas et une orme au meillieu semé et fleurie de lys dor de bassin ayant les ymages des quatre evangelistes aux quatres coings'. Another was of velvet lined with black cloth, with a cross of Bruges satin 'semé de larmes', while a third, given by M. de Charmeaux, was of black damask.<sup>120</sup> Saint-André-des-Arts in the early seventeenth century had three palls or cloths given by MM. de Thou, Seguier, and de Montholon, local notables, another with the arms of M. Devousay, and another with candlesticks on it. The first of these may be the pall of black velvet with a white satin cross made for the funeral of Christophe de Thou in the church in 1582. The first three palls could be hired for 3 *livres* each, the other two for 16 or 20 *sous*; there were two more 'pour le commun' for which nothing was charged.<sup>121</sup> The same parish in 1687 inventoried three palls of black velvet ('le beau poel', 'le second poel', and 'le commun

*of the parish of All Hallows London Wall, 1455–1536* (London, 1912), p. 48, 1509–11: 'Item rec for Sente Sythis clothe for the beryng of moder Adams hosbonde 1d.'

<sup>117</sup> GL, MS 5026/1, entry for 13 April 1619; LPL, CM VII/94.

<sup>118</sup> GL (printed books), Broad-sides 12.79, 4.2. The parish increased its burial fees in 1656–7, but paid some of the surplus to the poor; it also paid some of the hearse-cloth fees to the poor from 1666–7: GL, MS 6047/1, ff. 86, 89, 180v, 183.

<sup>119</sup> For example, at Saint-Jean-en-Grève: AN, LL 805, pp. 253–5; BN, MS Fr. 21609, f. 37.

<sup>120</sup> AN, LL 746, ff. 160, 169.

<sup>121</sup> AN, LL 686, f. 20v, no. 91; *Journal de l'Estoile*, pp. 309–11.

poel') lent for 8, 4 and 3 *livres* respectively; one 'grand poel neuf de damas blanq' lent for 8 *livres*, a second and a third 'poel blanq' lent for 4 and 3 *livres*; a 'petit poel de damas blanq servant aux enfans', for 3 *livres*; and a charity pall, supplied free.<sup>122</sup> Saint-Jean-en-Grève also had a pall for convoys with the lesser choir, and one for transportation by coach.<sup>123</sup>

As noted above, some testators, or their executors, provided cloths for their own funerals, subsequently to be used for their chantry or obit, or given to the church. This was also the case with church vestments and some implements. John Claveryng of London, draper, by his will of 1421, left £20 to buy an entire suit of vestments of black camlet, with deacon, subdeacon, and three choir copes of the same, to be used in his parish church of St Christopher le Stocks; all the vestments were to be embroidered with the words 'Orate pro animabus Johannis Claveryng filii Johannis Claveryng filii Rogeri Claveryng et antecessorum suorum et omnium eorum benefactorum'.<sup>124</sup> It does not appear, from London accounts and inventories, that other individuals chose to have particular vestments, or that the churches charged for their use, though there are a few references that imply that crosses, candlesticks, or other plate were hired.<sup>125</sup> By the time of the Reformation, the London churches had accumulated an immense quantity of vestments and hangings, of fine fabrics and workmanship. Most of these (with the exception of hearse-cloths, as above) were sold during the reign of Edward VI, though some parishes may have been able to recover or restore their use under Mary.<sup>126</sup> After that, vestments and ecclesiastical hangings were no longer an option for funeral display, and many of the parish clergy of Elizabethan London were indeed strongly opposed to liturgical vestments of any kind.<sup>127</sup>

In Paris in the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, vestments, hangings, and silverware still formed an important part of the funeral ensemble, and palls and bells could be hired for varying sums. Sometimes the deceased person had selected the trappings he or she wanted before death, in other cases the executors probably made the choice. Pierre de Villiers in 1545 left 25 *livres tournois* to his church of Saint-Etienne-du-Mont, 'tant pour la sonnerie et parements que pour la droict

<sup>122</sup> AN, LL 687, ff. 183v–184.      <sup>123</sup> AN, LL 805, pp. 253–5.

<sup>124</sup> Sharpe, *Calendar of wills proved and enrolled in the Court of Husting*, vol. II, pp. 429–30. This could be the 'thre copes one vestement ij deacons of black Tamaske olde' noted in 1552: Walters, *London churches at the Reformation*, p. 228.

<sup>125</sup> GL, MS 1432/1, p. 11 (St Alphege, 1529–30); GL, MS 1002/1A, ff. 15v ff, 31v (St Mary Woolnoth, 1542–3, 1544–5).

<sup>126</sup> Walters, *London parishes at the Reformation*, passim; Merritt, 'Religion, government and society in early modern Westminster'.

<sup>127</sup> Thirty-three London clergy were deprived in the 'vestments controversy' of 1565: Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan movement*, pp. 75–8, 84–91; *VCH London* vol. I, pp. 309–11.

de sepulture quant a l'eglise'.<sup>128</sup> Raphael Bonnard in 1616 chose 'les beaux paremens des trepassez' and 'la belle argenterie de ladite eglise'; the choir altar was to be hung with black velvet.<sup>129</sup> Bonnard was a parishioner of les Saints-Innocents, the vestry of which was concerned in the mid-seventeenth century about the cost and quality of their funeral accessories. They concluded in 1644 that their charges for bells, vestments and hangings, and silverware were too low, and raised them to 12 *livres* for their use for a *grand service*, 7 *livres* for a *moyen service* (4 *livres* for a *moyen service* without silverware) and 40 *sous* for little services. Two years later they decided that the present set of black vestments and hangings for the daily mass for the dead was too old, and ordered a new set of black with white orphreys (edges or bands). These were to be available for hire, presumably for funerals and individual commemorative masses, for 8 *livres* 10 *sous*.<sup>130</sup> Saint-André-des-Arts in 1687 offered parishioners a choice between 'les beaux paremens de velours noir de M Dautour' at 8 *livres*, 'les secondes paremens de velours noir' at 4 *livres*, 'les paremens blanqs de M d'Hodier' at 8 *livres*, and 'les seconds paremens blanqs' at 4 *livres*. Anyone who did not hire the *paremens* but still wanted chasuble, tunic, and cope paid half the cost of hiring the full set. Similarly, individuals could choose to have the whole set of silver for the convoy and service, comprising twenty candlesticks, two crosses and one *bénitier* (holy-water stock) for 15 *livres*, or only half that number, for half the price.<sup>131</sup> Other parishes charged 10 *sous* per candlestick, used in the house for the vigil or in the church for the service.<sup>132</sup> Though ordinary Parisians hardly participated in the late seventeenth-century phenomenon of exaggeratedly grandiose *pompes funèbres* for the very great, that new tradition drew in part on the old, and on existing conventions: pall, drapes, 'une profusion de lumières et de luxe autour d'un cercueil'. It also encapsulated, in a way that more modest funerals may have echoed, the special character of late seventeenth-century French Catholicism, strongly influenced by Jesuit and Counter-Reformation theology. Certainly the new style could hardly have succeeded without widespread understanding of the funeral performance as an expression of identity, confession, and status.<sup>133</sup>

One more aspect of the funeral performance, also largely under the control of the church, that offered opportunities for the expression of personal

<sup>128</sup> Cited in G. de Rot, *mémoire de maitrise*, p. 215.

<sup>129</sup> Chaunu, *La mort à Paris*, pp. 357–8, citing Bruno de Cessole's research.

<sup>130</sup> AN, LL 758, ff. 97, 101. <sup>131</sup> AN, LL 687, ff. 183r–184.

<sup>132</sup> AN, LL 805, pp. 253–5; AN, L 651/2.

<sup>133</sup> V.-L. Tapié, *Baroque et classicisme* (Paris, 1957), pp. 238–50.

choice and the assertion of status was the ringing of bells. The overt purpose of bellringing was spiritual benefit: the bell was tolled 'when men do lye in perill of death, wherby the said parishioners having thereof knowledge may pray for him', as the vestry of St Dunstan in the West put it in 1553/4.<sup>134</sup> A single bell was tolled immediately after the death was notified, and longer knells or peals were also rung before or during the funeral service, again to attract attention and prayers. But in addition to this function, bellringing carried a message that could be easily understood. The tone, the number of bells, and the duration of the ringing advertised the status of the person for whose benefit the bells were rung. Hard to ignore but easy to decode, it must have made an extremely important contribution to the social impact of the funeral event.

Most London churches had between three and six bells at the Reformation, usually up to four named or numbered bells and the sanctus bell. Each bell sounded a different note, with the great bell being the deepest and most impressive. In the early to mid-sixteenth century several parishes set out charges for ringing different bells.<sup>135</sup> At St Dunstan in the West in 1553–4, the parish charged 6d. for tolling the great bell at the time of death, 4d. for the second bell, and 2d. for the third.<sup>136</sup> The 'normal' funeral knell, a single bell tolling, was for six hours, often called a forenoon's or afternoon's knell, but the bells chosen determined the price. At All Hallows Staining, a six-hour knell of the great bell cost 6s. 8d., a knell of the fourth bell, 5s., and of the third, 3s. The two smallest bells seem to have been rung at no extra charge.<sup>137</sup> Peals, of two or more bells, were briefer but perhaps more impressive. They seem to have lasted either for the time of the procession ('a peal of two bells to bring the corse to church'; 'all the peals of all the bells to the dirige and mass') or of the service.<sup>138</sup> At St Peter Westcheap, it cost 16d. to have peals rung during a 'solemn burial both dirige and mass', but only 8d. during a low dirige and mass.<sup>139</sup> A similar distinction was made at St Michael le Querne, where the knell and peals cost more if rung for a high dirige 'sung by note' than for a low one. The peals were to be rung for an hour and not more than two hours in both cases.<sup>140</sup> The principle on which Parisian parishes rated bellringing – by size, number, or time – is less clear, but

<sup>134</sup> GL, MS 2968/1, f. 157v.

<sup>135</sup> St Dunstan in the East was charging 3s. for a knell of the third bell, 5s. for the fourth bell and 6s. 8d. for the great bell in 1504–5: GL, MS 4887, f. 49 ff. For lists of charges, see GL, MS 4570/1, f. 118v, GL, MS 645/1, f. 182; GL, MS 2895/1, f. 37v; GL, MS 4956/2, f. 7; GL, MS 6842, f. 5 bis; GL, MS 1279/2, f. 49; Overall, *Accounts of churchwardens of St Michael Cornhill*, p. 223.

<sup>136</sup> GL, MS 2968/1, f. 157v. <sup>137</sup> GL, MS 4956/2, f. 7.

<sup>138</sup> Overall, *Accounts of churchwardens of St Michael Cornhill*, p. 223.

<sup>139</sup> GL, MS 645/1, f. 182. <sup>140</sup> GL, MS 2895/1, f. 37v.

several prescribed rates for 'la grande sonnerie', and for the second, third, and fourth *sonneries*. These were probably peals, since at both Saint-Jean-en-Grève and Saint-Gervais anyone choosing to have the great bell alone paid the same as for the third *sonnerie*.<sup>141</sup> At Saint-André-des-Arts, anyone who employed more than the minimum choir was also obliged to have 'la grosse sonnerie' and to hire the good hangings and silverware.<sup>142</sup>

Bells were treated with suspicion by Protestant reformers, perhaps partly because of their pagan associations. More explicitly, they were rejected because of their implication with intercession for a dying or dead person, though unlike most other accompaniments to liturgical practice only some specific uses, and not their existence, were proscribed.<sup>143</sup> The Injunctions of 1547 and 1559 forbade bellringing and 'knolling' during services.<sup>144</sup> The bishops' interpretations of 1560–1 allowed that a passing bell could be tolled, but that after death only one short peal could be rung before the burial, and another after, and their interrogatories asked whether parish clerks 'use to ring oft and long peals at the burial of the dead'. Bishop Sandys' 1571 articles for the diocese of London enquired again whether parish clerks exceeded the injunctions.<sup>145</sup> Despite this, bellringing remained an important feature of Anglican practice. Churchwardens' accounts continue to record payments for knells, including 'afternoon's knells', as before the Reformation, and parishes certainly maintained their bells at considerable expense and trouble.<sup>146</sup> In the late sixteenth century, London parishes were charging for passing bells, knells, and peals, including six-hour knells of the great and other bells and peals at burials.<sup>147</sup> Despite the opposition to bellringing voiced by a number of Puritans over the years, it seems to have continued even during the Puritan revolution in many places, including 'parliamentarian Cambridge'.<sup>148</sup> Again, local practice in London probably varied from parish to parish. It appears that the parishes of St Christopher le Stocks and St Bartholomew Exchange – both of which have been characterised as 'truly Presbyterian' at this period – ceased to ring knells for a few years

<sup>141</sup> AN, LL 805, p. 254; AN, LL 752 ff. 60–62v.

<sup>142</sup> AN, LL 687, f. 185. Cf. AN, LL 686, ff. 21v, 25.

<sup>143</sup> Walters, *London churches at the Reformation*, pp. 45–7. Walters says that bells had few 'superstitious' associations, but cf. K. Thomas, *Religion and the decline of magic* (London, 1978), pp. 59, 60, 65, 67, 85.

<sup>144</sup> Hughes and Larkin, *Tudor royal proclamations*, vol. I, p. 399; vol. II, p. 122.

<sup>145</sup> Frere, *Visitation articles and injunctions*, vol. III, pp. 62, 91, 309.

<sup>146</sup> For knells, see e.g. GL, MS 6836, passim; McMurray, *Records of two city parishes*, pp. 376–7. For repairing bells, see *ibid.*, pp. 335–50, 375–93. Bellringing remained a recognisable expression of status in other Protestant communities too, one of the ways in which 'class differences were visible practically throughout Germany': Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of ritual*, p. 180.

<sup>147</sup> LPL, CM IX/45. <sup>148</sup> Cressy, *Birth, marriage and death*, p. 425.

after the publication of the *Directory of Public Worship* in 1645, but had begun to do so again by 1650 or 1651.<sup>149</sup> After the Restoration, bellringing was encouraged again, 'to rehabilitate the ceremonies and customs of the restored Church of England'; the bishop of London, Humphrey Henchman, affirmed the value of tolling the passing bell, as a reminder to the living to consider their own death.<sup>150</sup>

In all this the message of status sounded clearly. At St Dunstan in the West in 1623–4, most of those buried in church had peals as well as knell; only a few of those buried in the churchyard in a coffin had peals, and none of those buried in the churchyard without a coffin had any extra bells.<sup>151</sup> A few parishes charged more for bellringing of any kind if the deceased was buried in the choir or chancel, or in the church as opposed to the churchyard. The vestry of St Bride Fleet Street agreed that the great bell should only be used as a passing bell for officeholders or 'such strangers or parishioners as are of good ability', and not for children.<sup>152</sup> The choice of bells in the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries must usually have been left to the discretion of executors, and references to bells in wills seem to be extremely rare. Knells and peals nevertheless remained a constant feature of city life, especially as the urban population increased. Despite the increasing noise of city life, and the familiarity of this sound, it could still draw attention. It seems to have been one of the features especially noted during epidemics. In July 1551, Bartholomew Warner wrote to John Johnson that the sudden and sharp epidemic of the sweat in London was believed to be declining; only thirty had died yesterday, compared with 120 the day before, 'nor today I her no bells wher for I trust yt nigh seased'. Dekker's pamphlet on the 1603 plague mentions 'Bells heavily tolling in one place, and ringing out in another', while Wallington, in 1625, stayed in 'this dolfull citie, hearing of belles tolling and ringing out continually'.<sup>153</sup> Pepys noted in 1665 'a sad noise to hear our Bell to toll and ring so often today, either for deaths or burials; I think five or six times.'<sup>154</sup>

Variation and choice in liturgy and paraliturgical accompaniments were evidently central to the meaning of the urban funeral. For the individual, making choices between the many alternatives was a way both of

<sup>149</sup> Freshfield, *Accounts of St Christopher le Stocks*, pp. 103–113; Freshfield, *Account books of St Bartholomew Exchange*, pp. 121–71; Tai Liu, *Puritan London*, p. 79.

<sup>150</sup> Cressy, *Birth, marriage and death*, p. 425. <sup>151</sup> GL, MS 2968/2, ff. 218–26.

<sup>152</sup> GL, MS 9531/13, pt. 2, ff. 372v–373v, 379–80, 385v–386v.

<sup>153</sup> PRO, SP 46/7, f. 8 (I thank Danae Tankard for this reference); Dekker, 'The wonderful year', in Wilson, *The Plague Pamphlets of Thomas Dekker*, p. 28; GL, MS 204, p. 407.

<sup>154</sup> Pepys, *Diary*, vol. VI, p. 175 (30 July 1665).



asserting a personal identity in the face of death, and of affirming support for an orderly, differentiated, and hierarchical society. Despite the divergence of eschatology between London and Paris, funeral ceremony remained important in both communities, and indeed the flexibility and adaptability of this composite ritual proved to be its great strength. Individual elements in the funeral performance changed or disappeared over time, but new forms and practices replaced them. The confessional change in London meant that specific trappings of the burial ritual – vestments, hangings, lights, intercessory prayer – were abandoned, along with liturgical variation and repetition. The Protestant funeral became less sacramental and sacerdotal; attention was focused instead on secular processions, bellringing, sermons, and feasting, which could still reflect individuality and status but certainly gave the funeral performance a different, and perhaps more sober and secular, feeling. In Catholic Paris, there was a continued emphasis on post-mortem commemoration, and indeed a continuing flow of benefactions towards this end. The presence of the clergy, regular and secular, was enhanced, and the sacramental nature of the rite emphasized.

However, while some of the distinctions in the funeral ritual – such as masses to particular dedications – might be said to be based on disinterested religious devotion, for the most part they were associated with securing advantage, whether spiritual or social. Although charity was often invoked, and the wider sharing of spiritual benefits implied, for instance by the donation of lights, cloths, and vestments, the desire for individual advantage drove the process. Multiple masses, singing, a numerous clerical attendance, and a profusion of lights all won greater spiritual privilege for the deceased, but also set a standard of performance that had attractions for other reasons. By allowing spiritual good to be bought and advertised, the church endorsed the display of status as defined by other criteria. It participated directly in the extension of discrimination in ritual to express differences in secular status when it offered gradations of hangings and hearse-cloths, or of bellringing, which had no direct implication of spiritual benefit. Indeed, by enforcing dues even when the individual was buried elsewhere, or the particular item was not used, parishes appear to have been exploiting a captive market: ‘all parishioners dying in the parish and buried else where are notwithstanding to pay the duties to the parson, church clerk and sexton as if they had been buried in the same sort at home’.<sup>155</sup> Although it could be argued that it was the church’s lay representatives, the vestry, and churchwardens, who invested in this elaboration of distinctions, the clergy were themselves

<sup>155</sup> LPL, CM VII/94. For payments for hire of the black cloth, though not used, cf. GL, MS 9235/1 pt. 1, f. 250.

deeply involved. In London, the minister's fee for a burial service was on a sliding scale, tied to the place of burial.<sup>156</sup> Indeed, as one London minister said in 1638, apropos of his income from burials, 'I may say, if people do not die, I cannot live.'<sup>157</sup> They were certainly seen as having a financial interest. Clerical demand for mortuary payment had provoked the notorious case of Richard Hunne in the early sixteenth century; a seventeenth-century Londoner, with a similar point of view, complained of being 'constrained to have a twelve-penny priest, to say something over the grave, and he will grudge it if he have not more than a shilling'.<sup>158</sup> In Paris, the numbers of priests involved in a funeral had a significant impact on its cost, through their fees and the expense of equipping them properly.<sup>159</sup> And the variations in fees and prices charged by parishes received official endorsement, despite their inconsistencies.<sup>160</sup>

But if the church as provider and the laity as consumers were, effectively, collaborating in the commodification of funeral ceremony, as chapters 8 and 9 will show there were many agencies outside the parish church and community that participated in its development. The maintenance of distinction and difference in the funeral was clearly an important part of its continued appeal, and an increasing number of secular customs also became attached to the ceremony. But it must be asked whether continued elaboration and differentiation of funeral display did not begin to overload the medium, leading either to a dilution of the moral import of the event, or to an alienating appearance of conspicuous privilege. Although funeral ceremony and the satisfactions gained by observing tradition remained, and remain, of great importance to many people, it is also clear that some had growing reservations on the subject.

<sup>156</sup> LPL, CM IX/45.

<sup>157</sup> T. C. Dale (ed.), *The inhabitants of London in 1638* (London, 1931), p. 224.

<sup>158</sup> Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, pp. 98–103; Cressy, *Birth, marriage, and death*, pp. 456–7.

<sup>159</sup> Cf. McManners, *Death and the Enlightenment*, pp. 281–6.

<sup>160</sup> GL, MS 9531/13, pt. 2, ff. 372, 378–9, 383, 385, 400.