

The Ways of Death

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I

"There is a forbidden zone marked on the map of twentieth-century American culture, a place every citizen knows but fears to enter. It is a place whose borders are open but never willingly trespassed, a place guarded by dread but surrounded by fascination. It is the zone of death, the modern American Hades."

Michael Lesy, *The Forbidden Zone*

"Why is it that in the present day funerals are of much less significance than in earlier times and in other cultures. . .? The reason is simple. Today funerals have so much less work to do. . . . The lack of *communitas*, of *gemeinschaft*, the growth of individualism, involves a certain withdrawal from each other's problems including their deaths and their dead. . . ."

Jack Goody, "Death and the Interpretation of Culture"

"This illness is not unto death; it is for the glory of God. . . ."

John 11:4

It is late afternoon and I am standing beside a county road in rural Virginia. The land by the road falls quickly down a brush and vine-covered slope until it reaches a small, swiftly-running creek, then it rises sharply to form a forested hill on the far side. In my hand is a photograph of a young man, a man barely twenty years old. His dark eyes look toward, but beyond, the camera. His face is fixed, unsmiling, betraying nothing. I turn my eyes from the photograph toward the shadowy valley below, where the creek burns orange at the close of day. I look back at the face, trying to understand, trying to read in his expression what he must have felt when he stood so long ago where I am now standing. One thing is certain: Down there in the valley's dimness, by the water's edge, in the tangle of briars and pine, is where he died.

The face in the photograph is a kinsman, the brother of my great-grandfather. In June of 1862 he and others like him from South Carolina, most of them hardly more than schoolboys, all of them scared, were sent down that Virginia hillside toward the Union troops dug in on the other side of the creek. They stumbled down the slope, feet snared by the vines, eyes blinded by the cannon smoke. They never reached the creek. The next morning a chaplain packed his body, and those of over thirty others from his home village, in charcoal and loaded them on wagons for South Carolina. Back home there were no speeches about the "glorious cause," no flags waving on Main Street; only

prayers, quiet tears of grief, a community gathered at worship in the churchyard cemetery, the singing of psalms, and then gravestones which even now still say, in weatherworn letters, "I am the Resurrection and the Life" and "Though he were dead, yet shall he live."

I look at his face, frozen there in some early photographer's glass plate, and know that there are many things about him and his death I may never know. I may never know what forces conspired to bring him to this hillside, what foolish vision sent him on his tragic journey down it. I see the familiar curve of my own cheek in his, find the rounding of his nostrils imprinted in the lines of my own face, the secret continuities of a family hidden in seed and blood. We are divided by only two generations, he and I, flesh of my flesh, and yet I do not know him.

What I most want to understand, though, even more than the personal secrets hidden behind his dark eyes, is what his death, and the deaths of all the others, could possibly have meant to the families and the neighbors in that village. There was grief, to be sure. "We are now overwhelmed," wrote the local newspaper. "The first blow [of the war] is stunning." But that village was by no means unacquainted with youthful death. Smallpox, typhoid, diphtheria waged unrelenting warfare upon them. My kinsman and the others were buried in a cemetery full of young people. In every family plot are the graves of infants, the graves of children, the graves of young women who died in childbirth and young men who succumbed to "fever." A century ago people lived with death in a way we can hardly imagine. Death often came early, suddenly, unpredictably, and there was little defense against it.

The people of that village, and a thousand like it, were often at prayer in the cemetery, somehow managing to weave the ending of yet another person's story into the ongoing story of the community's life and faith. We can barely imagine what they faced or how they faced it; we just know that somehow they did. There is so much that separates us.

II

"The idea of turning a deceased person into a living one in order to pay tribute to him one last time may seem to us to be childish and ridiculous, intertwined, as it often is in America, with commercial concerns and advertising jargon. It is, however, proof of a rapid and precise adjustment to complex and contradictory feelings. It is the first time that a society has in a general way honored its dead while refusing them the status of death."

Philippe Aries, "La mort inversee"

"These dames that write these books—they don't want to hear anything good. If you kill sentiment you're a dead pigeon. The world runs on sentiment."

New York funeral director commenting on
Jessica Mitford's *The American Way of Death*

“But some of them said, ‘Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind have kept this man from dying?’”

John 11:37

Last year marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of Jessica Mitford’s *The American Way of Death*, a book that climbed to the pinnacle of the bestseller lists and shook the American funeral industry to its depths. Mitford wrapped a sheaf of facts and statistics—average funeral costs, the number of cemetery plots per acre, state embalming laws, and the like—in the strident but witty prose of a reformer and produced a ringing expose of funeral home avarice and malpractice. Modern American funeral homes, she claimed, were not service organizations quietly expressing the cherished values of people at the painful moment of death. They were greedy, manipulative *businesses* preying upon the fragile emotions of the bereaved. Disguised as high-minded civic leaders and armed with bronze caskets sporting innerspring mattresses and useless waterproof burial vaults, funeral directors were gouging the public in a fashion so brazen as to make the robber barons of the last century blush. She winced at the sight of contemporary funeral parlors, calling them “baroque wonderlands,” and she expressed outrage at the industry-coined, profit-motivated euphemisms, like “slumber rooms,” “memory pictures,” and “floral tributes.” She repeated Paul’s ancient question, “O grave, where is thy victory?” and gave her own contemporary response: “The victory has been won hands down by a funeral establishment—in disastrously unequal battle.”¹

The funeral industry, obviously not amused, quickly cried foul. Mitford, they claimed, had exaggerated the misdeeds of a few unscrupulous funeral operators into an indictment of the whole trade. (Not so, replied Mitford, who claimed that she was describing the “average” and “typical” practices of the vast majority of “ethical undertakers.”) Some accused Mitford herself of mercenary intent. “Now, I read Jessica’s book,” said one funeral director. “I’d say it was about twenty percent fact and the rest was all distorted. She had to make her book interesting so it would sell. She made a lot of money. I think anyone who does any writing has this as their main objective.”²

It was almost inevitable that the war over *The American Way of Death* would be fought on a financial battleground. After all, the book itself had all the markings of a tract on consumers’ rights. Although Mitford was scornful of what she called the “dramaturgy” and “burlesque” of the standard American funeral, she was essentially more concerned about mortuary profiteering than she was about melodramatic funeral customs. Her main goal was not to make funerals better, but to make them *cheaper*. Mitford was out to reduce the sticker shock of the American funeral, and, to a degree at least, she succeeded. Indeed, some recent laws regulating the financial practices of the funeral industry can no doubt be traced to the public awareness generated by her book.

There was, however, another story hidden in the pages of *The American Way of Death*, a cultural lesson almost drowned out in all of the sound and fury over funeral costs. Mitford’s main lament garnered most of the publicity, namely that we pay funeral directors a lot more money than we should for the ceremonies surrounding death. Her more basic insight, however, and perhaps her more important one, was the fact that there are funeral *directors* at all,

whether or not they are in need of economic reform. The very concept of a funeral “industry” with “traditions” and practices of its own is indicative of the dramatic changes that have taken place in funeral customs in recent decades. Most people today—indeed, many current funeral directors themselves—are simply not aware that the idea of a funeral home, complete with a fleet of hearses and a staff of embalmers and cosmetologists, is a latecomer to the cultural scene. Many, if not most, funeral homes are family businesses, with the ownership passed down through the generations, and they are often housed in older homes or in buildings that possess the quiet and solid appearance of permanence. “Serving faithfully since 1906” and “Dignity is our watchword” proclaim their ads in the Yellow Pages. One could easily believe that these establishments have been at work “serving the bereaved in times of need” forever.

As Mitford carefully documented, though, the funeral home business is actually a quite recent entrepreneurial development, a product of the industrial age. Before the late nineteenth century there were no mortuaries, few commercial cemeteries, and no funeral “directors.” (Indeed, the few specialists around in the “dismal trade” were universally called “undertakers.”) Metal caskets (iron was the fashion in the nineteenth century) were a recent invention, an exotic novelty virtually unheard of, much less used, by ordinary folk. The science of embalming was known, but it was almost never practiced. Embalming originated with the ancient Egyptians, but it remained a relic of history for thousands of years “until it was made a part of the standard funeral service in twentieth-century America.”³

In short, contemporary Americans bury their dead in ways that are sharply different from the practices of only a few generations past. At first glance these changes appear to be mainly a matter of technique. Modern technology has given us the professional embalmer, flesh-toned embalming fluid, the cosmetologist’s restorative brush, mortuary chapels, and “perpetual care” public cemeteries. The alterations have been more than superficial, however. Despite our assumption that death is at least one constant that connects us to all prior generations, the villagers who gathered in that cemetery in the 1860s to bury my kinsman were participants in a set of death rituals markedly different from those we practice today. Ministers, the general population, and the funeral establishment have joined forces to create profoundly new death customs, gathering the technical changes into distinctly new ways of ritualizing and understanding death, which, in turn, disclose much about the larger character of our culture. As Mitford said, “One of the interesting things about burial practices is that they provide many a clue to the customs and society of the living.”⁴

What do our burial practices reveal about “the society of the living”? What does it mean that “undertakers” have become “funeral directors”? What is it that these people “direct,” and how does this affect the Christian community? What are the larger cultural understandings about death reflected in our burial practices? In order to glimpse some answers to these questions, we need to retrieve a sense of what death and burial were like in a time now barely remembered.

III

"Attitudes about Christian burial, historically, seem to have evolved through three quite different stages: hope, fear, and refusal to think about it."

James F. White, *Introduction to Christian Worship*

"No one under eighteen years old will be murdered on this show."

Lorimar Productions executive explaining
the ethical standards of a new television series

". . . many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother."

John 11:19

His name is Charles Reagan Wilson, but by many of his students he is called "Dr. Death." Wilson is a professor at the University of Mississippi and a scholar at the University's Center for the Study of Southern Culture. His field is American History, but his life's quest is to understand the ways of death in the American South. "The funeral industry was developed in the Northeast in the nineteenth century," he says, "but was late coming into the South." This tardy arrival of modern funeral technology means that the rural South is the ideal place, according to Wilson, for observing the cultural changes brought about by the funeral industry. Wilson is aware, though, that the time for study is short since the dew of older customs is rapidly evaporating in the homogenizing heat of Southern urbanization. "The students I get, a lot of them are not living through this the way I did," Wilson told Mark Silk of the *Atlanta Constitution*. "My generation may be the last." He cites the funeral of the celebrated football coach "Bear" Bryant as a symbol of the move toward a "suburbanized" new South. Bryant's funeral was a "modern, low-keyed" affair—"the kind of funeral *Southern Living* magazine could have done if it did funerals."⁵

Most Southerners today, even those in quite rural areas, call upon the services of a modern funeral home and a funeral director, just like everyone else, Wilson acknowledges. "That would not have been true," he claims, "as recently as sixty years ago." I asked him to describe the rural social customs surrounding death that would have been in place then. "When a person died," he said, "women in the community were charged with the responsibility of washing and preparing the body for burial. [I thought of the New Testament accounts of the women going with spices to the tomb of Jesus.] Often, the men would make the coffin, sometimes using handles and other hardware purchased at the local furniture store. Members of the family, perhaps with friends, would sit up with the body the night before the funeral. The body was never left alone. The burial took place fairly soon after death, but many times there would be an extended season of memorialization. The family and neighbors would gather in the days after the death for visiting and storytelling. Often the church would have, once a year, a day for worship dedicated to remembering the dead."

As he talked, Wilson evoked the memory of a culture in which the event of

death set into motion a communitywide effort of support and care. At one level, all of this activity can be explained by the simple fact that there were jobs to be done at the time of death, and friends and neighbors were the only ones around to do them. At another level, though, a person's death becomes the occasion for the community to act out its basic convictions: that people belong to each other and that stories can be told that are larger and more powerful even than the sad tale of death. From the preparation of the body to the digging of the grave, from the bringing of food to the telling of stories, everyone in the community had a role to play, and together these roles became a ritual enactment of community faith.

Now, of course, everyone pays professional people to do what friends and family used to do. We have turned over to the funeral home the tasks of preparing the body, arranging for the coffin, digging the grave, providing transportation, and so on. In part this is a matter of convenience. Not many contemporary people have the time or the inclination to dig a grave or build a casket. Most of us would find the washing and preparing of a dead body an unpleasant assignment. We are more than glad to turn these difficult and distasteful chores over to the funeral directors and their staffs. The problem is that as we have lost the responsibility for these essential rituals of death, we have also cut ourselves off from the power they held to shape our attitudes about death, grief, and life.

When the women in a community prepared the body and the men sawed and hammered the wood of the coffin, they were required to be a community of care in a way not demanded by the newer rituals of death, and they were also required to face the reality of death in a way unknown to most in our culture. It has become commonplace among sociologists and theologians to say that ours is a death-denying culture. Death, they say, is a nasty trick played on a society obsessed with youth and human potential, and the only way around it is to pretend that death does not exist. Funeral homes, with their perfumed slumber rooms and their goal of making death appear to be an afternoon nap, are, the argument goes, our partners in this cultural crime.

Perhaps so; perhaps we do participate in the cult of the denial of death, but the more immediate truth is that death, real death, is simply hidden from our eyes. *Imaginary* death is omnipresent; a thousand pictures of tragic death appear on the evening news; ten thousand fall at our right hand in the detective shows; but it never comes nigh us. "Our culture," writes Michael Lesy in *The Forbidden Zone*, his study of death in America, "is permeated by images and accounts of death, but they are only fictions, works of the imagination, counterfeits."⁶ He goes on to say:

The real thing is carefully hidden. Photographs are cropped; news footage is edited. What finally appears is only a flicker, out of context, reduced to a rectangle of light or printer's ink. Every Hollywood movie, television drama, and executioner's song, no matter how explicit, is only a fabrication, mantled with art, artifice, and commercial interruption. Death's fictions are everywhere available, shrink-wrapped like chicken legs and hamburger meat, but death itself is rarely revealed, only the mirror image of our fear, dread, and fascination with it. Eighty years ago,

people died at home and their friends prepared their bodies for burial. In England and America, cemeteries were designed as parks where families strolled for refreshment—landscapes dotted with graves, where the living might contemplate the dead. Today, instead of gazing at death, we watch violence: instead of the long look at the steady state, we switch back and forth from one violent epiphany to another. Ordinary and inevitable death, death as an actual part of life, has become so rare that when it occurs among us it reverberates like a handclap in an empty auditorium.⁷

So, countless imaginary deaths take place in our dens and living rooms every evening, but real deaths, the deaths of our neighbors, our family, our friends—the people we know and love—occur out of sight in hospitals and nursing homes. We do not anoint their bodies, nor do we dig their graves. We see them alive, and then we see them looking alive in a casket ordered from a funeral home showroom.

What do we lose when “ordinary” death becomes invisible? Some would point to the psychological problems generated by the hiddenness of death. People simply do not grieve as fully or as well when the object of their grief cannot be seen. This is surely true, but there is another and deeper loss, this one more corporate, more theological. A culture that does not face death, that does not regularly “see death’s face,” loses the ability, as the Psalmist put it, “to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.” Death is the most secure border of our humanity, the clearest limit to our prideful illusion of invulnerability, a constant invitation to treat our days as gifts, and a strong reminder that “from everlasting to everlasting Thou (and not *we*) art God.”

“I saw through a glass darkly before I had cancer.” These are the words of Howard Greenhalgh, the president of an organization of support groups for people with life-threatening diseases. He continues:

I wonder if the person who just goes along and all of a sudden drops dead of a heart attack . . . people say what a wonderful way to go. Well, maybe so. But then, what a wonderful thing it is, what a wonderful privilege it is to have some time to think—real, in-depth thinking. All of a sudden, the fog is lifted. The person who drops dead of a heart attack is robbed of that.

One night I was sitting alone and I did something that I was thinking about for a long time. I thought of Isaiah. When God had to get something done, Isaiah said, “Here I am, Lord, send me.” I repeated Isaiah’s words. That prayer can be very detrimental to your psychological well-being. You don’t utter those words unless you mean them. If you don’t live up to them, it can destroy your conscience. I meant them.

Why am I here? What’s it all about? As long as there’s any life in my body, there’s got to be a purpose in my existence; and until that life is taken naturally, then I haven’t fulfilled why I’m here. It has become obvious to me in the last few years why I’m here. At the cost of sounding boastful, I know what my life is all about. I know why I’m living. I’ve had my disease now for four and a half years, and I’ve come to realize how precious and beautiful life really is.⁸

What Greenhalgh discovered in facing the prospect of his own death is available in a wider sense to a culture which has the courage to encounter death and the faith story to place death in a context of meaning.

IV

"It's funny—not funny, ha-ha, but funny tragic. There was an old woman who lived across the street from us. I guess about a year ago she was put into a home. Well, she died about three weeks ago and my wife and I went to her funeral. We were down at the cemetery and they were putting down the artificial grass, getting ready for the big countdown, for the lowering into the deep abyss in the ground, covered with plastic flowers. Her son walked up to us and I said, 'I'm sorry about your mother.' And he says, 'Why? You know it was the damndest thing about that old broad. For years she lived at home and was fine, then I put her in a home for 300 bucks a week, and she falls, breaks her hip and dies.'"

Garrett Hartmann, advertising salesman

"When answering the funeral home telephone, always identify the establishment and the speaker, as: 'This is Blank Funeral Home, Mr. Blank speaking.' Nothing is more incongruous than a funeral director answering his telephone with a gruff 'hello' or 'yes' and then changing to a more pleasant tone of voice the instant he discovers that this is a death call. . . ."

The Principles and Practice of Embalming

"Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died., . . . Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.'"

John 11:21,23

Down one of the corridors of New York's Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center, an institution devoted to the saving of life, there is an office occupied by people who are devoted to the study of death. The Foundation of Thanatology⁹ was founded twenty-three years ago by Dr. Austin Kutscher, partly in response to his personal quest to find meaning and comfort in the death of his wife from cancer. In its brief history the foundation has sponsored dozens of symposia on death and related topics and supervised the publication of nearly one hundred academic books in the field of thanatology. One of these books is a text that outlines the basic principles and convictions of the Foundation, including a section on "religious and social mourning rituals." The authors decry the passing of what they call "certain cultural and ethnic rituals," by which they mean such actions as the community care dimensions of funerals, sitting "shivah," and the wake.¹⁰

As we have seen, many of the actions that a community once routinely performed at the time of death have now passed behind the doors of the funeral home and have been absorbed into the machinery of the professional funeral establishment. As a result the rituals of death, which were once varied and wide, involving the working and helping hands of many in the community,

have been narrowed in many cases to the funeral service alone. A funeral service, of course, can be a powerful witness to the claims of the gospel about life and death, but until very recent times the funeral liturgy proper was but a single occasion placed within the larger ritualized context of everything a faith community did on the occasion of death. The task of a religious community is, in the words of Edgar Jackson, to "surround the fact of physical death (with) a framework of reality" that grows out of the community's fundamental convictions about the nature and value of human life.¹¹ The funeral service itself is but one piece of the scaffolding; everything a faith community says and does at the time of death contributes to the manifestation of this framework of reality.

In a long, scholarly study called "Death and Burial in Christian Antiquity," Alfred C. Rush has documented how the early Christian developed a set of ritual actions around death that were self-consciously at variance with the prevailing customs of non-Christian society. The Romans avoided touching the body, sometimes refusing even to look at the dead; Christians gave their dead the kiss of peace. Among the Romans, the task of laying out the body was a chore given to a slave; among Christians it was a work of love carried out by family and friends. The Romans processed to the graveyard to the sound of trumpets and lutes, the Christians to the chanting of psalms. When an impoverished Roman died, he was buried unceremoniously in a common burying ground; Christians raised endowments for the burial of their poor.¹² There is a sense in which all of these actions, and not just the words of the funeral prayers, constitute the true funeral liturgy, the "framework of reality" by which the Christian community surrounded and interpreted death.

When my grandmother died many years ago, her neighbors brought food in vast quantities to her home. The food was not placed on paper plates or on disposable dishes, but rather was carried in on the very best china platters. On the bottom of each plate was a piece of adhesive tape with the name of the neighbor who had brought the dish. What that meant, of course, was that, in the days after the funeral, the platters had to be divided up among the family members and returned to their owners. An inconvenience? Actually, no, because what it also meant was that members of the family were required to call on the neighbors, were invited in for "a cup of coffee before you go," were summoned back into the land of the living. There was wisdom in those pieces of adhesive tape.

V

"I've been digging graves by hand since I was six years old—as soon as I could hold a shovel I started digging graves. . . . You see a lot of things working in a cemetery over the years, and it's something to glory in and something to laugh over."

Frank D'Angelo, gravedigger

"The logic of freezing bodies is to stop somebody from deteriorating after death. . . . It's just putting somebody in a refrigerator, only you're using an expensive refrigerator and a very low temperature. All it's going to do

is keep you from rotting. It's not going to make you young again. . . .Now, you bring somebody back who is seventy-five years old; he can't hear, he can't see, he can't taste—he'd probably strangle you."

Curtis Henderson, Co-founder of the New York
Cryonics Society

"The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with bandages, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.'"

John 11:44

The modern funeral home is no doubt here to stay. No one seriously thinks that we will ever return to a day when those tasks we now pay professional directors of funerals to perform will ever be returned to those who once did them as acts of love and faith. No matter how sincerely the proprietors of funeral homes seek to adapt their procedures to the customs of the faith communities they serve, the fact remains that by taking death off our hands they have taken something away from our lives.

The challenge, then, for the church and the ministry today is not to be nostalgic for a time gone by, but rather to discover ways that contemporary church people can act out the full range of Christian convictions concerning death. There are, to be sure, many communities where the news of a death still brings neighbors to the door with plates of chicken and friends to the home just to sit or to answer the telephone, and these communities are blessed indeed. Such customs may appear to be the quaint habits of rural folk, neighborly gestures impractical in an urban world where death is increasingly a private and lonely moment and where people see their choices for action narrowed to sending a sympathy card and deciding whether or not to take off from work to attend the funeral. As a matter of fact, though, the greatest need before us is to find ways for the Christian community to roll up its sleeves and to go to work together in the face of death, to act out our faith rather than simply thinking about it. We are no longer afforded the graceful privilege of anointing the bodies of our cherished friends or of lovingly crafting their coffins, but there are tasks to be done, stories to be heard and told, powerful rituals waiting to be enacted.

Much of the pastoral literature about death focuses upon the care given to the dying person and to the potential counseling needs of the bereaved. The values in this literature are obvious, but often there is the assumption that preparing for death and coping with loss are private matters of the heart. Ministers and friends are to facilitate the expressions of personal grieving and to enable the feelings necessary for "grief work" to be expressed. Without ignoring the importance of such sensitivity, we should also recognize the need for the Christian community to make itself tangible, visible, and active in ways that transcend the psychological. The singing of psalms, the sharing of memories, the reading of Scripture, the answering of telephones, the breaking of bread, the simple act of being with the family throughout the days of their mourning, the gathering for worship, the proclamation of the gospel are not merely devices for setting the mood of comfort in the midst of grief. They are

dramatic enactments of the framework of Christian reality and public witnesses to the resurrection faith. Some person's death sets them into motion, but they are about more than any one death; they are taunts hurled in the face of all death, victory songs that proclaim that death may be our teacher but, by the grace of Christ, it can no longer be our victor. The bereaved who receive these labors of love need them, but they need them no more than those who give them. At the funeral we will confess the truth that Paul announced in 1 Corinthians 15: "Death is swallowed up in victory." But this confession alone is not enough. We must also surround our liturgies and creeds with rituals of grace that express the way in which Paul ended that majestic chapter: "Therefore my beloved. . . be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."

NOTES

¹ Jessica Mitford, *The American Way of Death* (Greenwich, CN: Fawcett Publications, 1963), p. 13.

² Funeral Director Christopher Van Doren as quoted in Bill Weiner, *Quiet Desperation: Plain Talk on Life and Death* (Secaucus, NJ: Lyle Stuart, Inc., 1980), p. 115.

³ Mitford, p. 153.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

⁵ Charles Reagan Wilson, as quoted in Mark Silk, "Southern Way of Dying is Life's Passion for Mississippi's 'Dr. Death,'" *The Atlanta Constitution*, 5 July 1988.

⁶ Michael Lesy, *The Forbidden Zone* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1987), p. 3.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

⁸ Howard Greenhalgh, as quoted in Weiner, pp. 69-70.

⁹ The Foundation of Thanatology, Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center, 630 West 168th Street, New York, NY 10032.

¹⁰ Elizabeth J. Clark, "The Rights of the Bereaved" *Principles of Thanatology*, ed. Austin H. Kutscher *et al.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 197.

¹¹ Edgar Jackson, as quoted in Kutscher *et al.*, p. 197.

¹² Alfred C. Rush, *Death and Burial in Christian Antiquity* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1941), p. 91 *et passim*.