



Türkiye İlahiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi
Turkey Journal of Theological Studies
[Tiad-2017]

[Tiad], 2019, 3 (1): 117-135

**Pre and Post-Death Rituals in Christianity: A Phenomenological
Analysis**

Hıristiyanlık'ta Ölüm Öncesi ve Sonrası Ritüeller: Fenomenolojik Bir Tahlil

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Makale Bilgisi / Article Information

Makale Türü / Article Types : Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article
Geliş Tarihi / Received : 09.04.2019
Kabul Tarihi / Accepted : 16.04.2019
Yayın Tarihi / Published : 16.04.2019
Yayın Sezonu : Haziran
Pub Date Season : June

Atıf/Cite as: Kızılabdullah, Ş . (2019). Pre and Post-Death Rituals in Christianity: A Phenomenological Analysis. Türkiye İlahiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi, 3 (1), 117-135. Retrieved from <http://dergipark.gov.tr/tiad/issue/43978/551256>

İntihal/Plagiarism: Bu makale, en az iki hakem tarafından incelenmiş ve intihal içermediği teyit edilmiştir. / This article has been reviewed by at least two referees and scanned via a plagiarism software. <http://dergipark.gov.tr/tiad>

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Pre and Post-Death Rituals in Christianity: A Phenomenological Analysis

Abstract

There are different practices in every nation about pre and post death rituals. While Jewish traditions have been an example for the early Christians, there have been some changes in the funeral and the burial services in time. The death and the resurrection of Jesus have regarded as main reason for the reality of afterlife in Christianity. Luther's doctrine of salvation has also influenced the afterlife approaches and rituals. Some relevant concepts to that such as the perception of death, afterlife, resurrection have been briefly dealt with at the outset of the article. Pre and post-rituals after that constitute the mean frame work of the article. In this context, the preparation given to the person just before the death, funeral and memorial services, burial practices have been dealt with. I have also mentioned my observations and some conclusions from my dialogues with the priests during my research in Indiana, USA.

Keywords: Christianity, Death, Funeral, Burial, Afterlife

Hıristiyanlık'ta Ölüm Öncesi ve Sonrası Ritüeller: Fenomenolojik Bir Tahlil

Öz

Her toplumda ölüm öncesi ve sonrası farklı uygulamalar bulunmaktadır. İlk dönem Hıristiyanlar için bu konudaki örnek Yahudi gelenekleri olmuşken zamanla cenaze adetleri ve defin süreçleri ile ilgili değişiklikler meydana gelmiştir. Luther'in inanca dayalı kurtuluş fikri, ölüm sonrası hayata dair yaklaşımları ve ölüm öncesi ve sonrası uygulamaları da etkilemiştir. Nihayetinde ölüm, korkulan bir durum değil bir kavuşma zamanı olarak algılanmıştır. Makalenin ilk kısmında, Hıristiyanlık açısından ölüm algısı, ölüm sonrası hayat, yeniden dirilme gibi ölüm ile ilişkili bir takım kavramlar kısaca ele alınmıştır. Makalenin ana çerçevesini ise, ölüm öncesi ve sonrasında gerçekleştirilen ritüeller oluşturmaktadır. Bu çerçevede ölüm hazırlama, ölüm sonrası gerçekleştirilen cenaze ve anma törenleri ve defin şekilleri ele alınmıştır. Araştırmamı yaptığım esnada, ABD, Indiana Eyaletinde katıldığım cenaze merasimlerindeki gözlemlere ve din adamları ile gerçekleştirdiğim diyaloglara da yer verilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hıristiyanlık, Ölüm, Cenaze, Defin, Ahiret.



Introduction

Death is a reality in the life of mankind like birth. Death has brought many questions for the human being in the world for a limited time. For example; What is death? Is there a life after death? Can the dead communicate with the living? Where and how will life continue after death? The answers of the religions to these questions always seem to be of interest and will continue to be.

The death is defined in physical and theological sense in different ways. In physical sense, it is defined as the biological end of life in this world as a result of the stop of the heart and loss of functions of the brain (Ebersole, 2005: 2235). Theologically, it is defined as the loss of the material source of life by separating the soul from the body (Gürkan, 2007: 32). In many religious traditions, death is perceived as the return of man to his original, true form. Even Edward Taylor describes death as the justification for the existence of religions (Ebersole, 2005: 2237-2242). At the same time, in some cultures and mythologies, death is accepted as a result of a magic or error, hostility of some animals or God's curse without any justification. In addition to being accepted as the cause of death due to old age, death is also acceregarde as an unnatural condition and the act of a supernatural being (Hartland, 1971: 411-413). In addition that weakness of old age is considered as the cause of death, death is also regarded as an unnatural state and the act of a supernatural being (Hartland, 1971: 411-413).

Religious and philosophical perspectives have brought different explanations to the phenomenon of death. For example, death in Islam is not considered to be an end and extinction, but as a transition to eternal life, while in Hinduism it is described as the soul migration that continues until the salvation. Empedocles discussed death with the emphasis on the idea of immortality of the soul. According to Eliade, one of the contemporary thinkers, death is the beginning of real life. This real life is not spontaneous. The soul is judged according to sins, takes his punishment and re-embodies after a while (Eliade, 2003: 220).

Method

The method of this article can be expressed in the most general sense as literature review. The sources of death in Christianity have been examined, and Catholicism and Protestantism have been compared in terms of both doctrine and practices concerning this fact. In the preparation phase of the article, the observations I made at the funeral ceremonies that I attended during my stay in the US, state of Indiana are touched upon, if required.

A. Death in Christianity

In Christianity, death is perceived as is a punishment from the creation of Adam as well as a punishment given as a cost of the sin committed, not from his



creation. The latter is particularly widespread in the opinion of the Catholic Church, which was argued by Augustine. According to Augustine, the death of the soul due to sin is also regarded as a kind of death as well as this physical death. This death is defined as the peace, happiness and comfort of the soul. According to Augustine, the third death is the death of both body and soul, expressed in the Gospels as the second death (Jones, 2007: 40-41).

Death in the gospels is described as the enemy and expressed as the result of the sin of mankind: "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.", " For the wages of sin is death..." (Romans 5: 12, 6: 23). Also by saying "but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die." (Genesis 2: 17) it is expressed that death is ordained for man. In Genesis 3: 19 "for dust you are and to dust you will return." human is reminded of his end. In return, life is accepted as God and a gift of God saying "but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6: 23). This is emphasized with the statement in Genesis 2: 7 "Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." The creation of man by God and then the breathing are mentioned in many places in the Holy Bible (Job 27: 3; Revelation 11: 11; Acts 17: 25). From the Biblical statements above, it is understood that God created man with the potential to live forever, but as a result of the first sin, this potential was replaced by the mortal reality (Erickson, 1998: 1176-1177; Klin, 2007: 220). Death is regarded as an indicator of God's domination and power. In this context, it is disapproved to commit suicide, abortion, afterlife medical support, and excessive anguish, because it is God's responsibility to give and receive life (Anderson, 1986: 132-135; Death and Dying Seminary, 2017; Sümer, 2015: 68-84).

A1. Physical and Spiritual Death

In the Christian tradition, body and soul unity is believed, and thus the body in this world is considered sacred as the essence/seed of the eternal body. This idea is based on the Biblical expression that the human being is created in the Image of God and that the body is accepted as the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6: 19) In Christianity, the idea of death has been influenced by the Jewish tradition and the Hellenistic approach. with the Helen effect, death was seen as the separation of the soul and body and then the idea of resurrection was added to this (Flinn, 2007: 220). It is accepted that the state called bodily death is the death to be experienced by all people. Following this death, a second death or an eternal life is mentioned. The second death concerns non-



believers, while eternal life concerns Christians (John 10: 28; 17: 3; 2; 1 Thessalonians 1: 9-10). The advice of Jesus to his believers “ Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of God who can destroy both soul and body in hell.” is considered to point to both the resurrection after death and this second death in question. Physical death is a phenomenon for all people who believe or do not believe. This death is a situation that all people, good or bad, face as a punishment for being away from heaven for being human. However, while the second death is a bad phenomenon to be feared and the eternal destruction for those who do not believe, it is a good, even missed one, as there will be a transition to endless happiness for believers. However, the bodily death which means the separation of man and his soul, which God creates as a whole in the form of body and soul, is evil. However, the bodily death of man, which means the separation of his body and soul, created by God as a whole in the form of body and soul, is bad in itself. However, the fact that death itself is bad does not mean that the death of good people will be bad. For example, the death of martyrs is not bad because death itself is bad. When the body and soul are naturally a whole in creation a creation from the creation, it is a necessity that the separation that occurs with bodily death ends and an eternal reunion happens (Jones, 2007: 43-45).

This duality manifests itself in Paul’s thought as worldly life and spiritual life rather than the separation of soul and body (Obayashi, 2005: 156). The death that Augustine describes as the death of the soul due to sin is the end of this spiritual life. According to the statements in Revelation 2: 11, 20: 6, 20: 14, 21: 8 and Hebrews 9: 7, because of Jesus, the believers will awaken from death to eternal life, and those who do not believe will pass from death to second death. In Matthew 25: 30, this second place of death for the unbelievers is described as dark and tooth squeaking.

A2. Life After Death

All religious traditions gave answers to the questions about human death. Religions have answered many of these questions such as death is not extinction, life in different forms and forms will continue, people who die will be reborn or resurrected, there will be a query and a new eternal life will begin. It is possible to see signs of life after death in many cultures. For example, the figure of fertility and female in the ancient Greek and Roman tombs is reported by Ebersole as the harbinger of a life after death. Similarly, in traditional societies, the appearance of shamans or psychics as individuals who can communicate with the dead shows the belief that there is a life after death (Ebersole, 2005: 2239-2240). One of the priority issues of Islam, along with the tawhid (oneness of God) and prophethood, has been the belief in the Hereafter (al-Baqara, 62, 177; al-Nisâ, 59). The findings of the ancient tombs dating back



to 5000 BC are regarded as evidence of the belief in life after death even at that time in Chinese history (Mu-Chou Poo, 2005: 169).

The ideas of Christians about life after death are derived from the Gospels. In John 11: 25-26 Jesus heralds that believers will have eternal life by saying “Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?” According to the gospels, Jesus, in terms of afterlife, has come closer to the Pharisee, one of two important movements in Jewish tradition (Akbaş, 2002: 47). In Matthew 22: 23-32 discussion between Jesus and the Sadducees about the life after death is mentioned, and Jesus expresses that there will absolutely be resurrection after death. Paul also continues these statements of Jesus about the life after death in his letters. He explains his views about the life after death as follows “Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord’s word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Therefore, we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words (1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18). At the same time, Paul sees Jesus’ coming back to the world as the basis of his beliefs and indicates that his coming is a sign that believers will rise again after death (1 Corinthians 15: 12-19). It is believed that after death, the one to be given to the believers will be a heavenly body, and that the heavenly will be superior to the earthly. This is based on the fact that Adam, the first human is earthly and Jesus is heavenly, and that the heavenly is superior to the first one (1 Corinthians 15: 35-55). These statements of Paul shaped the approach of Christianity to life after death (Obayashi, 2005: 156).

A3. Heaven, Hell and Purgatory

In almost all religions, there are acceptances for the types of reward and punishment for postmortem life. Although there are differences between African tribes and Indians, Iran and Egypt, India and China, they all have a common belief of a good and bad place after death (Şahin, 1993: 374). In this



sense, heaven has been considered above in connection with light and illumination and that the divine is exalted and high. Hell is considered to be below, in connection with darkness and shadow, on the grounds that it is demonic and evil (Tober&Lusby, 1987: 3884). The Hereafter in Islam is an important matter of faith, and it is believed that the world is temporary, resurrection will take place after death, people will be judged and ultimately the good will go to heaven eternally and the wicked to hell (Küçük, 2014: 510). In Judaism there is thought of heaven and hell which transformed from going to "She'ol" to the idea of resurrection, and then changed into a place to be gone in the world or hereafter. It is possible to say that this idea first began to emerge in the aftermath of Babylonian exile, developed in the Rabbinic period, and became detailed in Medieval Judaism.

It is thought that Egyptians, Canaanites and Zoroastrianism were influential in the formation of the perception of heaven in Judaism after the Babylonian exile and early Christianity (Küçük, 2014: 340). According to the Catholic Church, heaven is considered a non-physical, existential state where God, angels and believers who will be saved are found, The Church defines heaven as believers reaching happiness in the presence of God without waiting for the general judgment immediately after death. Those who do not believe will go to hell (eternal absence) after death (Flinn, 2007: 342-343; Akgün, 2018: 77-98). In addition to this view, there is also another opinion that the first trial will be held after death, souls will remain in Purgatory, and in the meantime, people will pay their atonement for the human sins, and after the second coming of Christ, the good will be resurrected immediately and the wreck after a thousand years of domination and the second trial will be done and the good will go to heaven and the wicked to hell forever (Küçük, 2014: 416-417). The beliefs about this final end are based on Matthew 25. In this chapter, Jesus talks about the fates of people who believe and do not believe in parables and finally informs about their endings, saying, " Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." (Matthew 25: 46).

B. Applications Before and After Death

With death, the end of life and the beginning of a different process is a moment of natural, existential and social transition (Eliade, 1991: 161-162). In these transitional periods in human life, organizing a number of special ceremonies is a common practice in all societies. Birth, marriage and death are among the most important of these periods. Some of the aims of the pre-death and afterlife applications can be listed as to prepare the person for death, to facilitate the transition of the deceased person to the other life, to perform the final tasks for the post-death salvation etc. (Eliade, 1991: 162). Others come to the fore with



their social aspects such as rather than dead, the needs of his/her relatives and the society they live in, their acceptance of death and their rehabilitation. The rituals in these periods are indispensable parts of religious life for the individual and society. For example, in Buddhism, it is recommended that the relatives of dead should stay calm, avoid emotional reactions, and let him go so that dead person could experience and accept this natural and inevitable state (Koperasi Buddhisme Malaysia Berhad: 1).

Death is considered to be one of the factors affecting the emergence of mythological elements (Armstrong, 2005: 5). In some primitive societies, there are practices such as leaving the people who are approaching death and there is no chance of recovery to their fate, leaving them a place away from everyone, burying or burning before death. In addition, a number of rituals are applied to prevent the soul from leaving the body or to ensure that it left the body. The fact that in Ancient Greece the closest relative of dead kisses dead in his/her last breath, that in Nias people, dead's son takes his last breath from dead's mouth, and that in some regions in Europe, dead is called loudly can be given as examples of this practices. In the process of declaring death, an application observed in almost all cultures is to cry and lament. Whilst when it begins and when it will begin, who will participate, what to wear and what to do change from society to society, lamenting is considered an integral part of the funeral process (Hartland, 1971: 414-416).

A number of practices such as "Sacrament of Blessing the Patient" prior to death, preparation of the deceased for burial, funeral ceremony, burial or cremation, mores after funeral are carried out.

B1. Pre-Death Preparations

There are a number of practices in the Christian tradition for good death. These practices are based on the healing of Jesus crippled, blinde and variegated people. This tradition of Jesus, from the early dates, has led Christians to serve in patient care. Even today, it is seen that almost every church group has hospitals both to serve in their own region and within the framework of mission activities.

Extreme-Onction and viaticum that began from the first centuries and the Catholic Church accepted as a sacrament led to the emergence of support services carried out to prepare the person on deathbed for his last respect. This service is called "the Sacrament of Blessing of the Patients" since the Second Vatican Council. Extreme-Onction is performed by the priest to put the sacred oil on the patient and to bless him by putting his hand on him, and it is believed



that this will bring healing and comfortable death to the patient (Flinn, 2007: 25-26; Küçük, 2014: 440). These practices, called *Ars Morendi* in the Middle Ages, became a tradition within the Catholic Church. Protestant groups, as in Catholics, do not apply the final lubrication as a sacrament. However, within these groups, religious counseling and assistance services are carried out for both patients and their relatives in both hospitals and Hospice. Religious support for pre-death patients and their relatives is among the religious practices carried out within the framework of death. In the Christian tradition, the spiritual support service, expressed as cure of souls (*cura animarum*), is the area in the west where the hospital religious duty (Pastoral Ministry) is concentrated (Anderson, 2003: 14-15; Çapcıoğlu&Çapcıoğlu, 2016: 37-41). In the context of "Pastoral Ministry", which is considered within practical theology and taken back to the formation of the church, the church official has duties such as teaching, preaching, saving the souls and protecting them. These tasks are seen as responsibilities imposed on church officials, even with different names in the New Testament (Stitzinger, 1995: 147-148). The Blessing of the Patients applied only to people who are about to die has also been implemented since the Second Vatican Council for those who suffer from emotional, spiritual and physical illnesses in the Eucharistia period (Flinn, 2007: 25-26).

B2. Funeral Rituals, Burial and Cremation

Performing certain ceremonies after the deceased dates back to the beginning of history of mankind. It is seen that these applications, which were first encountered in 150000-35000 B.C. also exist in Sumerian, Assyrian, Egyptian and Hittite civilizations (Demirci, 1993: 353). In many cultures, wedding gift is applied in funerals in order to quench the thirst of the dead. At the same time, in mythological and folkloric applications, it is accepted that this wedding gift will have a revitalizing effect on the deceased (Eliade, 2003: 225).

In different periods and regions, it is possible to see various applications related to the body of the deceased. These are applications such as burying in tree, sea or land, putting in a cave, a high place, or in hanging, burning, using as a cadaver, keeping in cellars, pyramids or tombs, keeping of ashes in cubes. In addition, ecological burial application has become widespread in recent years, especially in Europe.

The dying person is required to be prepared for death with some rituals after death. Some of these preparations include washing, cleaning, closing eyes, dressing beautiful clothes, and even sometimes dressing wedding clothes and adorning. There are some preparations for the funeral in every part of the world, from Africa to America, from China to Europe. Embalming and mummifying of the body for different purposes and durations is also one of the methods used in the funeral process (Hartland, 1971: 417-418; Demirci, 1993: 353). Death is a



different process for the dead and the survivors. The religious ceremonies carried out immediately after the death, in fact, means to help dead who is in the period of a journey or transition between death and life to complete this journey. Getting over this process in peace will also affect to find peace in the next life. For this reason, a number of rituals have been adopted to appease the deceased by inculcating (Ebersole, 2005: 2240-2241). Therefore, funeral ceremonies are seen as practices in which religious beliefs of societies are reflected. As a matter of fact, the funeral ceremonies make visible how the perception of the world and the hereafter, and the perception of human and God are. Funeral ceremonies, as well as dealing with the suffering of death, which is a natural process, mean a learning/remembering for both family and society. For a Christian family the death of the deceased is accepted as the testimony of his family, religious leader and community to the deceased's faith in Jesus (Decker, 2007: 9). For example, the Christians in the United States usually organize two kinds of ceremonies in the framework of funeral rituals. These are the Funeral Service and the Memorial Service. Although American funerary practices/sector vary slightly from individual to individual, family to family and church to church, they have been shaped, to a large extent, in a similar manner since the end of the 19th century. Nowadays funeral procedures are carried out by commercial organizations called Funeral Home. An enterprise that the deceased negotiates before the death or a company with which the relatives agrees fulfills all the funeral procedures within the framework of the stated religious preferences. The average funeral expenses in the United States is around \$6,500 (Decker, 2007: 10-11). These costs can of course increase according to the economic and social situation of the family. In the Christian faith, the funeral is considered to be of no benefit to the deceased, This ceremony rather makes sense for the rest. The fact that the funeral proceedings cost high amounts has led many Americans to prefer cremation which is a cheaper burial process. The burial process costs \$600 on the average. Cost difference between the two ceremonies is at least ten times. Apart from the ceremonies planned and performed by the funeral company according to religious affiliation, the ceremony, which is planned as the Commemoration Ceremony, is usually performed at the anniversary. If the burial process was not carried out in a buried manner, then in this case, a memorial service is carried out according to the religious affiliation of the person, usually a week after the cremation. For these types of burials, a memorial service can be made with the completion of a year.

In this context, the funeral ceremony we attended at Lutheran Church in the town of Martinsville, Bloomington, Indiana, can be given as an example where



burial is preferred as the burial process and both the official and the religious ceremony are held together. The deceased was a Christian who served as police chief for a long time in the region. For this reason, both the official and the religious ceremony were held in the church to which the person affiliated. About a week after the death, the funeral, which was embalmed by a funeral firm with chemical products and prepared in the form of an open coffin, was opened to visitors in the entrance of the church before the ceremony. After the visits and prayers of the ceremony, the coffin wrapped in American flag was brought to the worship area with the police in charge and a formal ceremony was held. Afterwards, after reading the relevant biblical passages of prayer which mention Jesus' death and resurrection, give information about death and after life, the priest of the church gave a sermon to the congregation. What was striking in this sermon was that the content was cheerful in the way we were not accustomed to seeing at many funerals. Although the first-degree relatives of the deceased sometimes experienced sad moments, almost all of the congregation, including them, seemed to be very cheerful. In fact, some funny situations with the person in the sermon were told and laughed out loud. Our question about the cause of this situation was answered as follows: "No one who believes in Jesus and lives as a good Christian should not have a concern about life after death. So our Father Jesus took her hand and took him with him. For this fate, we need to be happy not to worry." This statement by the cleric shows the effect of liberation doctrine on the daily religious life and practices in the Protestant faith. This acceptance that a believer who believes in Jesus and goes out of his way will achieve salvation in a normal way will have a comforting effect in terms of accepting the death, which is a sad process, and coping with the trauma accompanying it. Another example is a funeral ceremony in which we attend the Unitarian Universalist Church in Bloomington, Indiana, where the burial, in the form of cremation, and the commemoration ceremony take place. The funeral we attended was the funeral of a lady who died after a long period of cancer treatment. Since it was an expected process, afterlife applications were fully planned. Who will make the speeches, which chanting and singing will be performed were determined by the deceased lady before. The lady had chose to be cremated and after the official procedures related to the death she had been burned with the participation of the family members. A week after his burial, a ceremony was held in her church, where its plan and contents had been determined by her. In terms of religious rituals and symbols, the ceremony was different. Unlike other Christian groups, a distinctive symbol that reflect Christian culture was not used. The ceremony was performed in the form of a full commemoration ceremony, unlike the usual funeral ceremonies. As can be seen from the two examples, it is seen that there is no unity as to how to perform the funeral ceremonies. Although they follow theologically the doctrine of the Protestant



tradition, the traditional or liberal views of the churches have differentiated the practices. In some societies, since the body is considered dirty after death, not everyone can touch it. Sometimes one of his relatives, sometimes one of the clergymen prepares the funeral. In the modern period, this is usually done by professionals in hospitals (Ebersole, 2005: 2242). In the Christian tradition, the burial of the dead or the burning of the dead is left to the preferences of the individual or his/her heirs, as there is no precise guidance on burying or burning the body, and it is believed that the body came from the soil and will become a part the soil again. There are no restrictive provisions in American law. Hence, cultural and economic conditions mostly determine the preferences of people today.

In the early Christians, cremation is not applied as a form of burial. There is no practice in the form of the burning of Jesus, the apostles and the church elders in the first centuries. Both Jesus and the early Christians practiced mostly Jewish traditions in burials. One of the most important evidence for this is that Jesus was put in a cave after his death, wrapped in cloth (Luke 23: 53-56). In this preference, an acceptance that resurrection would be easier was also effective. In addition to Judaism, Pagan practices had an impact on the formation of Christian funeral procedures. The distancing between the early Christian community and the Jews took place in the first century, which was also evident in the funeral and burial procedures. From the beginning of the 2nd century, Christians began to build their own cemeteries. The cemeteries belonging to the early periods of Christianity indicate that the burial was largely adopted. The increase of separate cemeteries from the 4th century onwards led to more careful construction of the graves. In this process, funeral ceremonies began to take shape. From the Roman period, the dead were usually placed in the underground cemeteries (Catacombs) outside the city. This tradition is known as an application that the Romans started for the Jews (Cessal&Salinas&Winn, 2005: 59; Silverman, 2003: 103). With Constantine, in many parts of the empire cemeteries and churches were begun to build on behalf of saints and martyrs. These graveyards could be a few floors. The body of each person was dressed, wrapped in a cloth, creamed to prevent the smell of decay, and a plate with the name and date of death, and a religious symbol were placed on the head (Cessal&Salinas&Winn, 2005: 59). These tombs, called Catacombs during the Romans, were later named as cemeteries. In this nomenclature, the fact that the word referred to the sleeping place and had a symbolic meaning of the resurrection after death was effective (Mitchell, 1971: 456-457). While in European and North African Christians, the tradition of being buried near the church is common, Americans living in large farms chose to make a family



cemetery (Mitchell, 1971: 456; Cessal&Salinas&Winn, 2005: 48). While it was not preferable for different members of the denomination to be buried in the same cemetery, this sensitivity was lost in the big city cemeteries established after the growth of the cities. Although in the early periods, some areas around the church in the USA were used as cemeteries, from the beginning of the 19th century cemeteries have been started to build outside the church. Today, although there are differences according to states, burial operations are carried out in the cemeteries established by local administrations in the border regions of the city. In this sense, three types of cemetery are mentioned. The first one is in the vicinity of the church, the second in the vicinity of the city and the third in the rural / green areas. In small settlements, the burial in the vicinity of the church still continues (Cessal&Salinas&Winn, 2005: 63; Morris, 2003: 80).

There are also different applications related to putting the body in the grave. Usually in a coffin, the funeral is placed in the grave, either with chemical products (embalming) or as equipped. The body of the deceased is placed in the grave with its feet facing east. The reason for this is that it will help the deceased resurrect on the day of judgment. It is seen in many societies that the body is wrapped in some special clothes while it is placed in the grave. These clothes give important clues about the perceptions of cultures of the world and the hereafter. For example, many Christians in the United States prefer for burial to wear their dress on the way to church. a formal dress or a sleeping dress (Cessal&Salinas&Winn, 2005: 49-50). The funeral prepared for burial is taken to the cemetery with a coffin. There are different applications according to the denominations such as carrying the body on the shoulders or the coffin by holding the handles on the side (Atasagun, 1989: 95).

It is understood from the examples that in Old and New Testament the burying is appropriate for the burial. The practices of the Israelites and early Christians also support this situation. In the later period, the Catholic Church has also been opposed to the burning process (Korpiola&Lahtinen, 2015: 20). In the Christian tradition, if the cremation processes for punishment are kept separate, it is observed that the burial process for the first time was in the 5th century. The first burning process in America was realized in 1876. There is no burning action before this (Hitchcock, 2005: 84). However, in recent years, the application of cremation and burial of ashes has been widely practiced in America.

The tradition of burial at sea as an another burial method dates back to ancient times. The fact that it became known in the US in the modern period was realized with the need for burials of the navies during the second world war. Even in the cremation process, the Catholic Church does not find it appropriate to swing the ashes, allowing it to be buried in water with a special container or



coffin. In this type of burying, cremation and burial of the ashes are generally performed. Even in the process of cremation, the Catholic Church does not find it appropriate to swing the ashes, allowing it to be buried in water with a special container or coffin. A remembrance ceremony is held before the ashes are left in the water. This type of funeral procedures are carried out by commercial organizations in the major coastal cities of America. The remaining parts of bodies of those who donated their bodies as a cadaver are buried after two years of education and research in a general ceremony held without being bound to any denomination (Cessal&Salinas&Winn, 2005: 49-54).

B3. Ritual in the Church

The main ceremony related to the funeral ceremony is the ritual performed in the affiliated church. If the person for whom the ritual will be performed in the church is a police officer or a soldier or a high-ranking official, an official ceremony called "catafalque party" is also held at the church (Cessal&Salinas&Winn, 2005: 60).

The funeral of the Catholic Church consists of three stages. The first ceremony, called a wake service, is carried out in the afternoon or at night with the awaiting of deceased's family members or friends over the funeral. Although this is not the case in the Catholic Church, it is also practiced by some Protestant churches. The second one is the funeral service, in which the funeral is visited at the entrance of the church. Then water is sprinkled and blessed, and a white cover is covered on the coffin. The sprinkled water and white cover represent the baptism and that the person will be resurrected with Jesus after death. The third and final stage consists of taking the funeral to the cemetery in the presence of a priest or religious assistant and the prayers performed during the burial. During the ceremony in the church, the sections from the Old and New Testament such as Hebrews 5:7-9 where the theme of death is mentioned are read. In addition, accompanied with the participants, chapters of the Psalms are read, the 103: 8-18 where tell of God's mercy, 42: 2-3, 43: 3-5 expressing the soul's desire for God and the thirst for Him, 27: 1-6 describing God as the sole source of salvation and light and 23:1-6 emphasizing that God is his only wish (Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, n.d.: 5; Cessal&Salinas&Winn, 2005: 60; Masses for the Dead, 2019). Similarly, the Old Testament section "... for you are dust and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3: 19) is read in the cemetery when the body is put into the grave.

In the Protestant tradition, the funeral rituals vary from church to church. In order to facilitate the process during which the person approaches the time of death, the clerics take part in the process by praying. The ceremony in the



church begins with the equipping of the body after death, dressing in beautiful church clothes and visiting with open or closed coffins according to the family's preference. The ceremony is usually carried out as a biblical lesson about death, and the cleric reveals the post-mortal life and the resurrection led by Jesus. During the ceremony, one or more of the members of the family or relatives are possible to share their memories about the deceased. Unlike most traditions, these shares can be fun subjects, and jokes are made. During the service, the coffin is kept closed, and after the completion of the ceremony in the church, the funeral is taken to the cemetery in the company of its relatives. After a short ceremony in the cemetery is the deceased is buried. Prayer and hymns can be read at this ceremony (Cessal&Salinas&Winn, 2005: 217).

B4. Post-Funeral Reception

In many religious traditions, it is taught to visit the cemeteries, to leave flowers, to pray, to offer food and drink. These examples can also be seen in East Asian and Japanese cultures as ceremony with dinner and treat. For visits to the cemetery, the crowded Christian groups' practice of donating and the the Buddhists' reading of sutra can be given as examples of these visits. For Hindus, it is practiced as an important religious ritual to distribute food for their dead parents (Ebersole, 2005: 2240-2241). In Islam, it is preferred that the condolence should be completed after the burial process and, if possible, it should be completed within three days. During the funeral and condolence period, it is seen disgusting (makruh) that the treats are made by the funeral owner. It was recommended that relatives and neighbors eat and treat both the guests and the funeral home, and save them from such burdens (Şener, 1993: 357).

Although there are differences according to the churches, pre-or post-cemetery, usually post-cemetery, people gather in the house of the deceased person or in the church to share the pain of the family. In the case of churches, it is preferable to have the cafeterias before the cemetery and in the case of a house after the cemetery. In the funeral we participated in the Lutheran church, a meal was served in the annex of in the church. After the treat, the funeral was taken to the cemetery with the participation of a part of the congregation. At the ceremony we attended at the Uniterian Universalist Church, there was no such meal. According to our observations, food or catering after funeral may vary from church to church, depends on the funeral to be burial, cremation, or economic power of the family At the same time, the size and financial strength of the church can also affect such services.

CONCLUSION

Death in Christianity is seen as an inevitable punishment as a result of sin committed by man. However, God removed this responsibility/sin from the believers by sending Jesus to the world and sacrificing on the cross. Death is



therefore not the end for those who believe in Jesus, but the beginning of eternal happiness. For non-believers, death means to be punished with extinction. Resurrection of Jesus after death is considered to be the most important evidence for the existence of life after death. Funeral ceremonies are considered as common features of all religious traditions. However, the perception of death affects these practices performed before and after death. In fact, in Christianity, especially in the Protestant tradition, the belief that one will be saved with faith would have affected the funeral ceremonies. The fact that death was not an end, and perceived as the beginning of new and eternal happiness, to some extent, dissipated the sad atmosphere of funeral ceremonies. Christians who see death as the conquest of Jesus and of eternal happiness can even spend a joyous, humorous time at their funeral.

A number of practices for the preparation of death before death contributed to the expansion of religious services in hospitals. Particularly, the final lubrication sacrament of the Catholic Church, especially in the Middle Ages, has become a tradition as "Ars Morendi". In Protestant groups, in order to support separation from this world with faith, it has led to an increase in religious services in hospitals and in the care homes of patients living and their last period.

The center of the funeral ceremonies are the ceremonies held in the church. In the application of these ceremonies, there may be differences from sect to sect or even from church to church. The lack of conclusive judgments about the burial of the dead shows that in the Early Christianity, as in Jesus burial, the Jewish tradition of burying the dead or leaving to the cave was continued. As a result of interaction with different cultures, various practices related to cemetery and burial were observed. While a burial method in the form of cremation was not applied in the first period, it began to be widespread due to economic, social and ecological reasons from the beginning of the 19th century. Now, among the Christians in the United States, one of every two funerals is buried by burning. In the US, almost all of the funeral procedures are organized by commercial organizations called Funeral Service. After the burial, a meal or catering is provided at the church, at the funeral home or by commercial organizations. This process is mostly affected by economic opportunities and the size of the church.



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