

CTCR DOCUMENT

CREMATION AND THE CHRISTIAN

"All things are lawful," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful,"
but not all things build up. 1 Cor 10:23

With these words St. Paul sets out the truth of Christian freedom under the Gospel. The believer is set free in Christ from the demands of the old covenant and is made righteous under the grace of the new covenant. This notion of Christian freedom was near and dear to the Reformers, and appears repeatedly throughout the Lutheran Confessions.¹ Christian freedom was the answer to the demands that Rome sought to impose upon them as necessary for salvation. The Reformers objected that conscience should not be enslaved by the doctrines of men but rather be accountable solely to the Word of God. St. Paul beautifully lays out this freedom for us, even as he emphasizes that this freedom should not simply be exercised for freedom's sake. There may be things that are free to the Christian, yet may not be helpful or build up.

When considering the rising practice of the cremation of the dead in our society, the words of St. Paul are helpful in establishing a God-pleasing answer toward it. Technically, cremation is the burning of the human body following death at a high temperature until only the bones remain, which are then ground up and placed in a container.² What must be stated at the outset is that this practice is not Christian in origin. Although there is no place in the scripture where the practice is expressly prohibited, the practice is also not instituted or endorsed. The reverent treatment of the human body after death, however, is repeatedly emphasized throughout scripture. From the time of the Patriarchs onward, God's people treated the human body with great dignity after death and conscientiously and faithfully established and maintained tombs for the dead.³ Conversely, being burned up with fire is most often associated scripturally with the judgement of God.⁴ Throughout her history, the Christian Church has not sanctioned or encouraged the practice of intentionally destroying the body after death. Following the Jewish burial practices, the human body has been consistently and reverently entombed; its return to dust has been left in the hands of the One who created it. The Jewish practice of placing the bones after decomposition into a box called an ossuary was not a precursor of cremation. The ethos behind the two practices are diametrically opposed to one

¹ AC XXVI, XXVII, XXVIII; Ap VIII, XV, XXVII; FC X

² It should be noted that in this process it is simply not possible to recover all the remains of an individual body from the cremation chamber. Operators of crematoriums endeavour to collect the majority of the bodily remains after the burning process is complete, but inevitably some are left behind. The result is that the bodily remains that are returned to the family are likely to contain some of the bodily remains of previously cremated individuals and that some of the bodily remains of the a loved one will be commingled with the following cremations. This fact is often explicitly stated in the "Authorization to Cremate."

³ Gen 23:19; 25:9; 35:29; 49:31; 50:13-14; Deut 10:6; 34:6; Josh 24:32-33; Judg 8:32; 1 Sam 25:1; 2 Sam 2:4; 21:14; 1 Kgs 2:10; 11:43; 13:31; 2 Kgs 13:20; 23:30 etc. Not to be properly buried is a sign of judgement (Jer 8:2; 16:4, 6).

⁴ Such was the case with Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19: 24) and also with the Golden Calf (Exod 32: 20). The Lord destroys the sons of Aaron (Nabab and Abihu) with fire when they disobey Him (Lev 10:1-2). In Num 11:1-3 the Lord burns part of the Israelite camp when the people complained in His hearing. The Lord commands that Achan and his household be stoned and burned with fire for disobeying His command (Josh 7:15; 7:25). The bodies of Saul and his sons were burned before their bones were buried, but this appears to be a case of expediency due to their dismemberment and display upon the city walls of their enemies (1 Sam 31: 12-13; 1 Chr 10: 12). Even so, the manner of their death and their burial could arguably be connected to God's judgement. In 2 Chr 16: 14 and 21: 19 there appears to be some form of fire connected with the burial of some of the kings of Judah, but it is not clear that these were actual cremations. Christ repeatedly connects the image of burning with fire to hell (Matt 5:22; 18:9; 25:41; Mark 9:42-48). He also connects the image of being burned up with God's judgement (Matt 7:19; 13:40; John 15:6). In the Revelation to St. John God regularly exercises His judgment with fire (Rev 8:5, 7; 9:18; 11:5; 14:10; 16:8; 17:16; 18:8; 19:20; 20:9-10, 14-15; 21:8). Jeremiah 25: 33 implies that not being buried is tantamount to being "garbage", while Num 11: 1-3 recommends that complaining Israelites should be consumed with fire.

another. The Jewish practice does not seek to promote decomposition but rather to preserve the remains, while cremation has at its very heart the goal of destroying the human body.⁵

The origins of cremation are not Christian but pagan. The practice comes to us from outside the Christian faith and has as its basis a separate belief system with regard to the human body. Although many Christians have recently chosen to have their bodies cremated without understanding or accepting the belief system behind the practice, understanding that belief system may help us to determine whether or not this practice is helpful or up-building for those who hold to the Christian faith. Cremation of the human body after death appears largely in those cultures where the material world is regarded as neither good nor profitable. Much of Greek philosophy saw the body as the prison of the soul. The goal of every life was to attain a higher spiritual state of existence. Matter, including the human body, was in and of itself evil. The various followers of Gnosticism had a similar understanding of the material world, and the human body in particular, as they sought to marry Christianity and contemporary pagan philosophy. This same understanding of the material world pervades much of eastern mysticism in its various forms. The Christian Church has repeatedly rejected this understanding of creation as being contrary to the scripture. Sadly, however, many modern Christians have taken up such a negative attitude toward the human body.

Holy Scripture clearly identifies creation as good. If the book of Genesis is taken seriously as the veritable word of God, then there is no escaping the divine verdict on all that God made. The repetitive refrain from the creation account is “God saw that it was good (Gen 1:3, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25).” His final assessment after the whole world was created, including mankind, is that it all “was very good (Gen 1:31).” Man was created in the beginning consisting of a good soul and a good body. The objective judge who alone stands outside of creation declared both to be so after He had formed them. The scripture tells us that God created man in His own image (Gen 1:27). God created man in the beginning with both body and soul. The dissolution of that union would be contrary to God’s image, where unity is eternal (Mal 3:6). To view the human body as a prison in which the soul must suffer for a time until it is released to a higher level of existence is contrary to the Word of God and so misrepresents the loving Creator. Prior to the advent of sin in the world, creation did not suffer death and decay. Only when man rejected the life God gave to him did death become a part of his life experience (Gen 2:17; 3:19). The shattering of God’s image in man brought about the dissolution of the bonds that united his body and soul, and so brought about the death and the destruction of the human body.

To save us from this terrible end, the Father sent His only Son into the world to become man, and to suffer and die innocently under our punishment, for our release (John 3:16). The very incarnation of the Son of God clearly testifies to the goodness of the human body. The writer to the Hebrews clearly states for us that the Son became man like us in every way, except without sin (Heb 2:14-18; 4:14-16). The Gospel of John in particular emphasises the truth that the Word indeed was made flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). Since God is incapable of evil (Lev 19:2), it is not possible that the Son of God could have taken up a human body if it was evil in itself. The Lord Jesus Christ takes up our sin and is made to be sin for us (2 Cor 5:21), but nothing that is His can in and of itself be evil. The human body of our Lord Jesus was very good. His Resurrection confirms this verdict. The Lord’s tomb on Easter morning is found empty by numerous witnesses. The Lord then appears in real flesh and blood that can be seen and felt (John 20:26-28). He even eats food before the disciples to clarify that He is not a ghost or spirit, but a real and complete man (Luke 24:41-43). The Lord’s body is not a new distinct body from His old one. The tomb is found empty. His resurrected body wears the scars of the cross. The Lord has defeated sin and death. He no longer humbles Himself by bearing the burdens of sin. Yet He still stands in front of the disciples in His human body.

The inherent goodness of the human body is further testified to by the life of God’s people as it flows out from the cross. The gift of the Holy Spirit to live and abide in the saints after Pentecost is expressed by St. Paul in the truth that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19-20). The body is not simply a container for the soul, where a spiritual union occurs between the soul of man and the Triune God. As the Son of God took up both a human body and a human soul in the incarnation and still retains them after His resurrection and ascension, the gift of the life that He shares with us by the Holy Spirit is intimately connected to us both spiritually and

⁵ Most provinces in Canada do not regard cremated human remains as “human remains” under the law. There are statutes that are instituted to protect the dignity of the human body after death; however, once the body has been burned these statutes do not appear to apply.

physically. The life of the Church bears this out particularly in the sacramental gifts, in which the believer is made one with Christ by the means of Word-infused elements that are applied or given to the body to benefit the whole person – body and soul.⁶ The Church through her union with the Son of God is identified with His body, which is not just a spiritual concept, but has a concrete physical reality to it. Thus the Lord Jesus says, “Whatever you do to the least of my brethren you do unto me” (Matt 25:31-40). For this reason He can also accuse Saul of persecuting Him when Saul is physically assaulting His Bride the Church (Acts 9:4). The soul and the body, although distinct parts of the whole human being, cannot be separated from one another without resulting in the person’s death. Although they may be distinguished from one another as two integral parts, they form one cohesive whole, wherein their separation makes the human being incomplete. The Lord has created us in this way, and so cannot share a life with the soul that the body does not also partake in. Thus the Lord’s salvation for us is a complete restoration of all that sin has broken.

The resurrection of the dead is the final outcome of the Lord’s salvation for mankind. The Lord’s empty tomb is the foundation of this hope for all believers. The Lord Jesus Christ, through His own death, destroys the power of death and rises victorious on Easter morning. We are told that the Lord’s resurrection is not an event unique to Him, but is what He has prepared for His whole body the Church (1 Cor 15:20-23). The Lord Jesus Christ is the first fruits of them that sleep, and we are told that if we share in a death like His through Baptism we will share in a resurrection like His (Rom 6:3-5). The human body, as the church clearly confesses in her creeds, will rise from the dead (1 Thess 4:13). The only referent that we have for such a resurrection is the Lord’s own resurrection and the simultaneous resurrection of many saints who appeared in Jerusalem (Matt 27:52-53). The tombs in those cases were empty. New bodies were not given while the old bodies lay mouldering in the dust. On the last day a new body will not emerge from nothingness but will be born of the very flesh and blood that we have possessed on earth. A new perfect body like Christ’s body emerges, but the origin of that body is the original one we are given (Phil 3:21). The body is the same body, yet set free from sin. Those who are left alive until the return of Christ do not discard their bodies at His appearing. Their bodies in that moment will be changed to be like His glorious body (1 Cor 15:52). As the temple of Christ’s body was destroyed and built up again on the third day, so too the temple of His body the Church, consisting of all those whose bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, are restored to glory in the end. Reason unsubmitted to an Almighty Creator who knows every bit of dust of the earth may balk at such an assertion, but it is the plain teaching of Holy Scripture.

In light of this truth our Lord Jesus resists speaking of the dead as dead. Notably, with both Jairus’ daughter (Luke 8:49-56) and His friend Lazarus (John 11:11), the Lord refers to them as “sleeping.” In both cases others protest in unbelief. The mourners at Jairus’ home laugh at Him. Lazarus’ sister sets forth the truth about the decay of his body. Yet Christ unveils the truth of His great salvation by waking the dead from their slumber. The rest of the New Testament repeatedly employs the term “sleeping” for resting saints⁷. In keeping with this truth, the Church has also often spoken of the Christian body as only “sleeping”. Luther draws attention to this fact when he points out the origin of the word cemetery is actually derived from the Latin for “dormitory”.⁸ He also makes the point that the bodies sleeping in the ground continue to be holy, and even hallow the ground where they are laid.⁹

⁶ “We must think this way about Baptism and make it profitable for ourselves. So when our sins and conscience oppress us, we strengthen ourselves and take comfort and say, “Nevertheless, I am baptized. And if I am baptized, it is promised to me that I shall be saved and have eternal life, both in soul and body.” For that is the reason why these two things are done in Baptism: the body – which can grasp nothing but the water – is sprinkled and, in addition, the Word is spoken for the soul to grasp. Now, since both, the water and the Word, make one Baptism, therefore, body and the soul must be saved and live forever (1 Cor 15:53). The soul lives through the Word, which it believes, but the body lives because it is united with the soul and also holds on through Baptism as it is able to grasp it.” LC IV. Baptism (44-46)

Luther asserts a similar truth with regard to the Sacrament of the Altar in his writing of 1527 entitled, *This is my Body*: “But the heart knows well what the mouth eats, for it grasps the words and eats spiritually what the mouth eats physically. But since the mouth is the heart’s member, it must ultimately live in eternity on account of the heart, which lives eternally through the Word, because it also eats here physically the same eternal food which its heart eats spiritually at the same time.” AE 37:87

⁷ Matt 27:52; Acts 13:36; Acts 7:60; 1 Cor 15:6, 18, 20, 51; 1 Thess 4:13-15; 5:10; 2 Peter 3:4

⁸ AE 53:326

⁹ AE 43:137

The image that St. Paul uses for the sleeping body of the Christian is that of a sown seed (1 Cor 15:35-49). The seed is buried in the ground in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection. The seed is precious because it contains within it the life of the plant. Without the seed there is no plant. Until recently, Christians have consistently set apart and consecrated ground as “dormitories” for the saints. They have firmly believed that on the last day the earth and the sea will give up their dead (Rev 20:13). Worldly man laughs at such a notion. In his supposed wisdom he declares a bodily resurrection absurd and impossible. Sadly, some Christians have adopted such folly and have sought out another answer to the resurrection in some form of spiritualized body that has no part in God’s original creation, despite the clear testimony of our Lord’s empty tomb. A God, however, who cannot keep track of the dust of our flesh and return it to life ceases to be an Almighty One.

Our bodies do not belong to us apart from the gift of the Creator, who still maintains dominion over us (Rom 14:7-12). As Christians we have been bought with a price, and so should glorify God in our bodies (1 Cor 6:20). The body we have, like our whole life, is a trust from the Lord. In opposition to the modern notion of individual autonomy, Christians recognise that their lives flow out of the heart of the Father. The choices we make with regard to our bodies need to reflect that we are only stewards of our lives and will, at the end, be required to give an account of what we have done in the body – whether good or evil (2 Cor 5:10). As God’s people we do have freedom under the Gospel to choose things that are not expressly forbidden to us by the Word of God. These choices, however, should always bear in mind the need to make a clear confession of what we believe, and so be helpful and up-building to our brothers and sisters in Christ as well as those outside the Church. Such concerns should govern our decisions as we contemplate what should be done with our bodies at the end of life. At the moment of our death we have an opportunity to make a clear confession about our hope in the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting.

The resurrection is one of the key foundation stones of the Christian faith. St. Paul argues this point in his first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 15:12-19), saying that if there is no resurrection of the dead then Christ was not raised, and if Christ was not raised then we are still lost in our sins. The sun, however, did rise on the third day to shine its brilliant rays through an opened door to reveal an empty tomb to the world. Standing firmly on this truth, the Christian Church boldly confesses with the Lord Jesus that the saints are only sleeping in their graves until He comes to wake them. We also firmly believe with St. Paul that our bodies are the seeds from which will spring forth our recreated resurrection bodies. The practice of destroying the sleeping body or precious seed with fire runs contrary to these truths, which the Lord has given us to confess. The small box of ground-up bones provides a rather disjointed (if not outright contrary) confession to the world about our belief in the bodily resurrection. While an almighty God can and will raise up even those who have chosen to have their bodies burned into dust, the historic Christian burial practices make a clearer testimony to the resurrection of the dead, and leave in God’s hands the return of the body to dust. If it is the will of almighty God that our bodies are destroyed in some way by the manner of our death, such as fire etc., then we can leave the care of our remains safely in the hands of Him who rules all things. The same can also be said for those rare occasions where bodies may need to be burned to prevent the spread of illness or disease. When, however, the Lord leaves the trust in our hands, we are right to consider the truths of our faith in making a final decision.

Without realizing the implications of faith, Christians have sometimes chosen cremation for financial reasons. They falsely believe that cremation is always a more economical option, and so to be chosen based on necessity or pious frugality. At present, a direct earth burial in some instances can in fact be less expensive than cremation. A pious Christian burial can be performed without many of the trappings that have come to be part and parcel of modern funeral practices. These trappings are not wrong, especially as they work to confess our faith in the sanctity of the human body as well as our hope in the resurrection, yet they can be piously laid aside in accordance with need and good stewardship. As Christians, however, we do not worship the tyrannical god of Mammon, but the loving Holy Trinity. Finances, except in cases of genuine need, should not be the main governing principle in deciding whether or not our bodies should be cremated. A clear confession of our faith should be our main concern while making what may well be the final act carried out in our name on earth. Such an action should clearly be one that can be carried out in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, confessing His awesome albeit mysterious work in our lives. In cases of genuine need there is a great opportunity for the Church to carry out her work of charity in assisting those who are not able to provide for themselves. Such a work has been carried out by those congregations who have maintained, and continue to maintain, often at some cost of both time and money, their own cemeteries.

A practice that sometimes accompanies cremation is the scattering of the remains in some memorable location.¹⁰ This practice comes from Eastern Mysticism that sees the soul being reunited with the “oneness” of the universe after death. Scripturally the scattering of one’s remains over the ground is in fact a sign of judgement against those who have worshipped the creation over the Creator.¹¹ Without a grave such people are forgotten. The custom of scattering the cremated remains over and above the act of cremation itself takes an even greater step away from the clear confession of our faith. The practice of scattering the remains of the body is incongruous with a belief in the resurrection of the dead.¹² An actual grave preserves the truth about the sanctity and uniqueness of each human body, and provides a location for grieving family to visit and express their grief. The absence of an actual grave for a person leaves the family and future generations without any lasting memorial of that person’s existence.¹³ Similarly, the practice of keeping the cremated remains of a loved one on a mantle, etc., rather than reverently laying them to rest, is not in accord with our faith.¹⁴ The Christian body, even if it happens to be cremated, is no simple memento left behind at death, but is an integral part of a person’s being as God created him. The Christian Church firmly believes that that body will be resurrected on the last day, and that the departed soul will be returned to it. The practice of keeping the urn in the home should be discouraged. Our hope for our departed loved ones is found in Christ. Closeness to them is not maintained through keeping their cremated bodies close at hand, but through the Communion of the Church, where the faithful are forever bound together in their Lord (Rom 8:35-39). In the resurrection on the last day a true physical reunion will be granted to all the faithful in Christ’s Kingdom, which will have no end.

Although there is no Word of the Lord that forbids the practice of cremation, clearly the traditional Christian form of burial is more in keeping with our faith. The intentional destruction of the human body after death may be free to us under the Gospel, but the practice is neither helpful nor up-building in making a clear confession of our faith in the bodily resurrection of the dead. In making a decision for his own burial, it is preferable for the Christian to confess this truth by entrusting his body into the keeping of almighty God. In making decisions for a loved one who has not given direction for his own burial, the same counsel is recommended. In looking after the affairs of a loved one who has made a decision to be cremated, the Christian may, without harm to conscience, fulfill the wishes of the deceased. They may not, however, fulfill the wishes of a loved one to have his ashes scattered in an illegal manner. In this case the Christian must obey God, rather than man, who has commanded us to obey the authorities set over us in all things that do not contradict the Word of God (Rom 13:1-2, Acts 5:29). The Christian

¹⁰ Most Provincial Law in Canada does not expressly forbid this practice and in some cases is being amended to allow it. The scattering of ashes on land that is not your own cannot be done, however, without the express permission of the land owner or appropriate governing body. Scattering ashes without express permission to do so is illegal and you can be prosecuted for trespassing and littering. Unlike land that has been specifically designated for cemetery use, the scattering of ashes in a particular location in no way guarantees the relatives future access to that land or in any way protects the way in which that land may be used or developed in the future. Ashes scattered or buried on your own land in no way binds future owners with regard to the use of that land.

¹¹ “And they shall be spread before the sun and the moon and all the host of heaven, which they have loved and served, which they have gone after, and which they have sought and worshiped. And they shall not be gathered or buried. They shall be as dung on the surface of the ground.” (Jer 8:2).

¹² A plethora of practices is emerging as the scattering of ashes is becoming more socially acceptable in the North American context. Some, while seeming to border on the ridiculous (such as fireworks and helium balloons loaded with human remains designed to explode at certain altitudes), are a clear assault on the sanctity and dignity of the human body and by no means can be countenanced by God’s people. Other practices involving memory and sharing circles or portioning of the remains in cups to be individually cast into the wind have a markedly pagan air about them and should also be avoided.

¹³ God’s people have consistently from Old Testament times established memorials of a person’s existence. These memorials not only provide invaluable records of our ancestry but also stand as a constant reminder of death and the need for repentance. If emerging trends continue, whole generations could leave this world without any record left of their existence. Conceivably a time could come when no one would have to face death and the need for salvation in a body being laid to rest in the ground; no rows of stones would call out to passers by to number their days and consider the world to come.

¹⁴ Once again a disturbing number of options are being made available for the disposal of cremated bodily remains, including having them transformed into a gem stone or encased in some piece of jewellery or picture frame. Such practices clearly make a veritable mockery of the human body and are decisively opposed to the truth of the bodily resurrection of the dead.

should endeavour to ensure that the bodily remains are treated with the dignity that they deserve. A pastor should make every effort to confess and teach the scriptural truth about the bodily resurrection of the dead in his congregation. In the case where a decision has already been made to cremate the body of a congregational member, he may in good conscience officiate at such a funeral as long as the remains are reverently laid to rest.¹⁵ In the case where no decision has been made he should offer his counsel in accord with our faith. If the opportunity arises prior to death the pastor should lay out the truths of our faith for the dying person and/or family members, that they may make a faithful decision. If a person in weakness chooses to be cremated despite the pastor's teaching and counsel, the pastor may still officiate in good conscience. Although the practice of cremation does not make a clear confession of our faith in the resurrection, the Lord has not expressly forbidden it.

The Church does not seek to unduly burden the conscience of the Christian with new laws and so teach as doctrines the precepts of men. She does, however, seek to encourage the Lord's children to live out their faith keeping in mind that all things may be lawful but not all things are helpful or build up. The traditional burial methods that the church has practised for hundreds of years make a clear confession about the resurrection of the dead. This practice was not something new but flowed out of the Old Testament into the New Testament and so out into the life of the Church. Although such customs are not binding on the conscience, they are good and salutary and so should not be abandoned lightly. Cremation as a burial method has become relatively common in dealing with the human body after death. Even amongst Christians the practice has been rising in frequency. It must be admitted, however, that the intentional destruction of the body of the sleeping Christian does not make a very clear confession of the resurrection of the body. In some cases it can even lead to real confusion about this doctrine. For the sake of our faith and its confession in the world, it is therefore advisable and preferable that whenever possible Christians lay their bodies to rest in the state that God created them. Trusting in the Lord and His promises, we may leave our bodies in the keeping of almighty God until the last day when our Redeemer will stand on the earth and in our own flesh we will see God.

Guidelines for Pastoral Care in the Context of Cremation

Given the fact that a significant number of funerals or memorial services which Christian pastors currently perform are for persons whose remains have been cremated, pastors need to provide care for those grieving in these circumstances, recognizing on the one hand that cremation does not testify to the resurrection of the body in the way that burial does, but at the same time recognizing that for the Christian, having one's remains cremated does not jeopardize one's salvation. The pastor should act in the following manner:

1. While not the case in Canada, there are places in the world where, because of the scarcity of land, it has become virtually impossible to purchase land for cemeteries and for burial plots. If cremation has become the only option in certain lands, Christians need to find ways to make clear witness for our faith in the resurrection of the body.
2. The pastor should not offend the consciences of those who have chosen cremation. In the case of one who is dying and who has made up one's mind on the subject, using the law to convince them to do otherwise could create spiritual doubt regarding their relationship to God.
3. The pastor should discourage thoughts of having the ashes of the departed scattered, for this practice indeed arises from a pagan denial of the importance of the body, and creates the impression that the spirit's survival is all that matters.
4. Families of Christians who have been cremated should be encouraged to have the remains of their loved ones placed in a columbarium, or kept together in some other way. The name of the deceased should be noted on the urn and/or on the niche in memory of the one who has died and who awaits the resurrection.

¹⁵ The act of cremation should not be regarded as a form of committal of the body. The committal involves the actual burial of the remains of the Christian body. The Committal Service should be preformed when the remains are buried, rather than at the Crematorium.

5. Though ashes cannot be committed to the earth in the same way that a body may be committed, a clear message of hope in the resurrection of the body needs take place even as the ashes are commended into the hands of God in the hope of the resurrection.
6. As is always the case, the clear message given at the funeral/memorial of all Christians is the hope of the resurrection of the dead, not merely the survival of the individual in heaven. Our creeds confess the resurrection of the body (indeed, of the flesh!), not merely the survival of the soul.
7. In sermons and Bible studies throughout the church year, especially when dealing with lessons that cover the subject, the Christian teaching on the resurrection of the dead must be stressed, and the blessings confessed by the traditional practice of burial over against cremation must be noted. Burial should be encouraged over against cremation as the means by which the church best confesses before the world the return of Christ and the resurrection of the body.