

# THE SPRINGFIELDER

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# Christian Burial

By URBANUS RHEGIUS

*We herewith present an article on CHRISTIAN BURIAL by Urbanus Rhegius, died 1541. Rhegius, a popular preacher at Augsburg, sided with Luther against Rome and against Zwingli. He fostered the reformation in Lueneburg, Hannover and other cities. We enclose this little treatise not only because of the piety expressed therein and because of the scholarly efforts of Pastor Poellot, but also because of the fact that as we near the end of the Church Year we are mindful once more of the end of life and of the glorious promises of Everlasting Life which God has given us in His Word which this ancient Church father so beautifully noted in his dissertation. During the past years several of our professors have fallen asleep in the Lord, and as we come to the end of the year and think of the approach of death and judgment for all of us we are minded of the passing of Professor Alexander Monto who for many years was professor of Finnish and Natural Science on our campus and also of Professor Frederick S. Wenger who for a great number of years served as professor in the area of Exegesis. Both of these men died in the Lord and were gathered to their fathers. May the hope of the blessed resurrection comfort those who mourn and those who look for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* J.A.O.P.

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THE CHIEF ARTICLE of our faith teaches that this same flesh which we now have is to be glorified on the Last Day and will be raised to life eternal. For just as Christ rose and will no more die, so, says Athanasius in [his] creed, must all Christians rise with their bodies. Therefore, burial is to be performed piously by Christians, because of the sure hope of our resurrection. The remains are to be taken out to the grave by the pious, and while the body is being interred, the pastor, or minister of the Word, should comfort the people with a brief address, so that one be mindful, first, that in Adam we are all dead and worthy of condemnation; then, on the other hand, that we are all made alive in Christ, who has restored all things which Adam of old corrupted and lost. For He himself died because of our sins; by His death He expiated them all and abolished our death. And He was made the resurrection and the life for all who believe in Christ. He who believes in him shall live, even if he die; and he who lives and believes in Him shall never die, John 11:25-26. Our bodies are members of Christ. Therefore, just as God has raised up Christ, our Lord and head, so He will also raise us up by his power, 1 Cor. 6:14. Here the preacher may also discuss that passage, 1 Thess. 4:13: I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren (etc. to the end). Or some passage from 1 Cor. 15 about the glorious resurrection of Christ and the Christians, so that that article, "I believe in the resurrection of this

flesh," might be firmly impressed on the hearts of men, and faith in the resurrection be strengthened and exercised. For Ambrose rightly says on 1 Cor. 15: "All hope of believers depends on this, that the dead shall rise." This religious rite of honorable burial was always in the synagogue and in the church, and it is a testimony of our faith, that we believe in the resurrection of the flesh, and of our love toward [our] departed relatives, who, we believe, are not lost, but only sent in advance; we do not doubt that on the Day of the Lord we shall again see all our friends and shall remain together with Christ forever.

And in the Old Testament it certainly was a fearful punishment to be denied burial, and for a corpse to be cast out without honor, as we see 1 Kings 13; 2 Kings 9; Jer. 8; 14; 16; 19; 22; 34; 36; Ezek. 39. Did not our father Abraham give his Sarah honorable burial in Hebron, which thereafter was the patriarchs' burial place. Gen. 23:26? Read similar things of other fathers, Gen. 35; 37; 38; 47; 49; 50.

Was not the widow's son carried honorably out of Nain, Luke 7:12? Lazarus received honorable burial in Bethany [John 11].

At burials these or similar comforting words are often to be impressed on the people:

Psalm 72, [14]: Their blood shall be precious in His eyes; and it is said of Christians; God is concerned about their blood.

And Ps. 116:15: Precious in the sight of the Lord [is] the death of his saints. But it would not be precious if the body, the other part of man, would not rise.

1 Cor. 15:42,43: The body is sown, buried in the earth like seed, in corruption, in dishonor, in weakness, but it will rise in incorruption, glory, and power.

I beseech you, brethren, through Christ, the firstfruits of those who rise, to memorize 1 Cor. 15 word for word, so that you might always have comfort from it at hand with the dying and at burials. The Lord give you understanding in all things. Amen.

Translated by Luther Poellot