

UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM

LONG DAY'S JOURNEY

*How Interim Ministry can be informed by – and reflect –
theologies of Holy Saturday*

Student number: D17236

MA in Theology, Ministry and Mission

ST MELLITUS COLLEGE

September 2019

This dissertation has been completed as a requirement for a
higher degree of the University of Durham

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Long Day's Journey

How Interim Ministry can be informed by – and reflect – theologies of Holy Saturday

But what about the Sabbath, the day between that evening and that morning, over which the storyteller passes so quickly? Faith's supreme drama tells of *three days* which form the centre and the turning point of history. Yet, ironically, the centre of the drama itself is an empty space.¹

Introduction

Exploring and thinking about the space *in-between* might not seem appealing or necessary. After all, the in-between is just that – a *something* between two solid, easily identifiable things. However, this dissertation is concerned entirely with the in-between. It attempts to hold two things in balance: a dark tomb and an intentional ministry, one viewed through the lens of the other, and both concerned with the space between the before and after. The mystery of Holy Saturday (understood here not as a mere gap between two great events, an insignificant nothingness marking temporal time, but as the greater presence of God; a great *something* in its own right) compels us to look into and inhabit the in-between – a disruptive, uncomfortable, yet transformational space and time. From this starting point and angle the following dissertation will argue that 'interim ministry' (the intentional ministry of the in-between) can both reflect and be informed by theologies of Holy Saturday, contributing to a developing niche in theological writing and offering a useful vantage point for Christian ministry as a whole.

This work, which takes its title from George Steiner's *Real Presences*, seeks to engage with theologies of Holy Saturday and existing literature on interim ministry,

¹ Lewis, A. *Between Cross and Resurrection. A Theology of Holy Saturday*. Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001, 1.

and then go on to offer the beginnings of a theology of interim ministry, informed by both. In the first place this will be offered within a Church of England context. Unlike in the US and Canada, there is a comparatively small corpus of literature on interim ministry in England, and even less on a theology or theological basis for such a specialised ministry. The exploration below seeks to begin to re-address the balance and offer a platform for further discussion.

Interim ministry is very much a ministry of the *in-between*, happening in what Adam Tietje (inspired by Balthasar) terms 'a unique theological space'², often (though not always) between a pastoral crisis or breakdown and a permanent appointment. In a sense, it represents a journey from death to new life; a truly transformational, but tension-fraught journey. The focus of this dissertation is on the in-between nature of interim ministry, a ministry happening in a particular space and time. To aid this discussion, theologians of Holy Saturday will be put in a critical conversation with existing literature and guidance. The subject of tragedy will be briefly acknowledged (in particular the themes of laying the past to rest³ and between times), along with the work of Terry Eagleton, George Steiner, who writes of the 'long day's journey of the Saturday'⁴ that is common to all of us, and Nicholas Lash, who holds that Holy Saturday can also be understood as 'Easter Vigil'⁵, encapsulating the tension of waiting between death and new life, between past loss and future hope, watchful 'for the rising of the sun'⁶.

From such an exploration there can be gleaned a particular theology of interim ministry, reflecting and informed by the story of Holy Saturday, God's active presence (not absence) between death and new life. In turn, the theology of interim

² Tietje, A. *Toward a Pastoral Theology of Holy Saturday. Providing Spiritual Care for War Wounded Souls*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018, 35.

³ Poole, A. *Tragedy: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, 2.

⁴ Steiner, G. *Real Presences*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989, 232.

⁵ Lash, N. "Friday, Saturday, Sunday". In *New Blackfriars* Vol. 71, No. 836 (March 1990), 119.

⁶ *Ibid.*

ministry has something significant to offer into the wider realm of theological thinking on Christian ministry and the human condition, speaking as it does of the 'Saturdayness'⁷ of life, which is always interim, always in-between.

Interim Ministry

In a chapter outlining the biblical and theological basis for interim ministry, Warren Shultz writes: 'Resurrection is won through the cross, and there is a time of transition between Good Friday and Easter Sunday.'⁸ The chapter clearly defines the words 'change', 'transition', and 'transformation', but posits that transformation happens only *after* transition, as if one cannot happen at the same time as the other.⁹ Based on this assumption, Schulz's theological model appears to be too neat and linear and although he speaks of the transition between cross and resurrection, he does not specifically engage with the space between Friday and Sunday, but instead points to other scriptural examples of transition and change. Also, there appears to be a contradiction between a linear model of transition and transformation and a statement affirming that transition times '...were pivot times, times of renewal, times to make a turn.'¹⁰ This might explain Schulz's lack of engagement with the transition time of Holy Saturday – if transformation is only apparent on Sunday, then surely there is nothing in particular to see or engage with between the cross and the resurrection. In this scheme 'transformation' represents a finished product rather than a space, process, or actual place.

⁷ Ibid., 114.

⁸ Schulz, W. "The Biblical and Theological Basis for Interim Ministry". In *Temporary Shepherds: A Congregational Handbook for Interim Ministry*, edited by Roger Nicholson, 121-130. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014, 123.

⁹ Ibid., 121.

¹⁰ Ibid, 123.

This study, set in the presence of Friday darkness and Sunday light, is concerned with the day in-between – Saturday: a real space and time, not a vacuumous void of nothingness, but an actual day into which God is wholly and corporally present. Saturday represents both transition and transformation that echoes back and forth *between* Friday and Sunday, a tension holding both, an in-between that speaks concurrently of God and the human condition. Despite not engaging with Holy Saturday itself, Shultz tantalisingly points to the in-between, the transition between Friday and Sunday. He is also doing something quite new in relating, however fleetingly, Holy Saturday to interim ministry. This observation is not made in isolation but speaks out of a wider context of ministerial practice stretching back in the US to the 1970s.

The wider context

Within the US context, interim ministry is also referred to as ‘transitional ministry’; the latter label encapsulating the broader purpose or hope of the ministry of the in-between. Looking back to the early 1970s Norman Bendroth, a US-based pastor specialising in interim ministry, writes: ‘Interim ministry has matured greatly in the past thirty-plus years, adapting to the insights of social sciences, theological reflection, and curriculum review.’¹¹ This specialist ministry can be traced back to academic research carried out by affiliates of the Alban Institute and a following paper presented by Loren Mead, who argues that in-between times are crucial places for real change and transition.¹² The research which informed the practice also drew on the work of the psychologist Erik Erikson, which focused on the

¹¹ Bendroth, N. “Whither Transitional Ministry?”. In *Transitional Ministry Today. Successful Strategies for Churches and Pastors*, edited by Norman Bendroth, 3-19. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015, 5.

¹² *Ibid.*, 4.

developmental stages of human life and the factors that build either well-adjusted persons or not.¹³

Presently in the US there is a distinctive and well-established practice of interim ministry, with ministers intentionally trained, and with its own methods and qualifications.¹⁴ Molly Dale-Smith summarises this intentional ministry as a ‘...ministry that takes place during the time of transition. The transitional minister leads the congregation through the various processes needed to work on issues arising out of the change.’¹⁵ She proceeds to add that ‘...the trained intentional interim comes to a congregation for a specified time to help the congregation work on both past and present issues so that it may prepare for the future and the arrival of a new pastor.’¹⁶ Currently in the Church of England interims are not intentionally trained for this specialist ministry, but training and guidance is offered to varying degrees depending on the diocese.

Church of England

Closer to home, interim ministry has been used in the Church of Scotland for twenty years, but in the Church of England it has been introduced much more recently, with the Diocese of Chelmsford, for example, pioneering this ministry since 2015.¹⁷ Legislation in 2015 enabled new and more practical means of employing ministers on an interim basis specifically for ministry between permanent appointments.¹⁸

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Woodward, N. “*Complex Changes: Interim Ministry and the Church of England.*” MA diss., Sarum College, 2017, 4.

¹⁵ Smith, M. “What is Transitional Ministry?” In *Transitional Ministry. A Time of Opportunity*, edited by Molly Dale Smith, 2-15. New York: Church Publishing, Incorporated, 2009, 3.

¹⁶ Ibid., 6.

¹⁷ Gheorghiu Gould, H and Hill, P. “Improving the Future by Disturbing the Present.” *Church Times*, January 20 2017. <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2017/20-january/comment/improving-the-future-by-disturbing-the-present>.

¹⁸ Woodward, N. “*Complex Changes: Interim Ministry and the Church of England.*”, 14.

Interim ministers are now used increasingly across Church of England dioceses and the Archbishops' Council guidance (which will be examined in more depth later on) is, as Natasha Woodward puts it, 'the closest we have to a policy statement'¹⁹. The guidelines have allowed, from diocese to diocese, for there to be slight variations on what interim ministry is and how interims are to be employed. However, there is a commonality in that interim ministry is employed in the vacancy between two permanent appointments following on from a pastoral breakdown or in response to a need for positive change. Woodward holds that there is also a common focus in a 'desire to help congregations to discover their vocation in the midst of change.'²⁰ In the English context other authors of note are Elizabeth Jordan²¹ and Helen Gheorghiu-Gould, both of whom have reflected on interim ministry practice within the Diocese of Chelmsford. Gheorghiu-Gould has sign posted the in-between nature of interim ministry, referring to the 'hinge moments' of church communities; moments of 'extraordinary potential'²².

Theological and biblical basis

Plenty has been written on the theological and biblical basis of interim ministry. Linda Snyder writes about the interim task of discovering a new identity and embeds this in the theology of the Second Letter to the Corinthians (5:17) within which is written that in Christ everything has become new.²³ She uses this biblical verse to

¹⁹ Ibid., 15.

²⁰ Ibid., 22.

²¹ See Jordan, E. "Interim Ministry – running with the wind of change". Diocese of Chelmsford. https://www.chelmsford.anglican.org/uploads-new/pages/Elizabeth_Jordan_Interim_Ministry_digest.docx

²² Gheorghiu Gould, H. "A Reflection on Interim Ministry". Diocese of Chelmsford Turnaround Project. https://www.chelmsford.anglican.org/uploads-new/pages/A_Reflection_on_Interim_Ministry_FINAL.docx

²³ Snyder, L. "Discovering a New Identity". In *Temporary Shepherds: A Congregational Handbook for Interim Ministry*, edited by Roger Nicholson, 75-85. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014, 75.

uphold 'one of the firmest foundations of our Christian faith': God who, in Jesus, is not only a God of 'continual regeneration', but also opens up to us new life and a new identity.²⁴ This verse, according to Anthony Harvey, builds on the previous verses in 2 Corinthians, which make it clear that new life and new identity in Christ first involves a death of sorts in which we 'carry his dying and death in our bodies'.²⁵ Through this interpretation, Snyder's choice of scriptural reference is apt for a ministry in which new life is sought out of death.

In offering a theological reflection on interim ministry, and by way of giving 'encouragement and guidance', Natasha Woodward focuses on four areas: life, love, power, and priesthood.²⁶ There is a strong emphasis on the Genesis (chapter 1) narrative of order being created out of chaos and she goes on to posit that God's 'action is seen in disorder and disruption as well as order.'²⁷

However, more generally in the English context, there is a gap in the theological literature when it comes to explicitly linking the nature of interim ministry with Holy Saturday. Again, Schulz (for example) discusses the 'transition' between cross and resurrection, but he does not go into detail about that very particular space to be identified in this study. There is no theological discourse of the in-between itself.

The exploration below attempts to dig deeper into the *in-betweenness* of Saturday with the implications for interim ministry born out theologies of Holy Saturday. It will examine how such a specialist ministry can be informed by, and reflect, theological understanding of the day between Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

²⁴ Ibid., 75-76.

²⁵ Harvey, A. *A Companion to the New Testament: the New Revised Standard Version*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004 (2nd ed.), 576.

²⁶ Woodward, N. "Complex Changes: Interim Ministry and the Church of England.", 43-57.

²⁷ Ibid., 45.

Theologies of Holy Saturday

With the dissertation's focus in mind, the following presents a brief survey of those theologies, providing a foundation to explore how a particular theology of interim ministry might look.

The Gospel writers commit few words to the Second Day. It is perhaps reasonable to surmise that the momentous events of crucifixion leading to resurrection were still so raw, tangibly real and wonderful, even unfathomable, that perhaps the memory of that Sabbath day – being in-between two events – was just *too present* and too outside the realms of narrative possibility to explain the presence of an eternal God in the midst of a finite tomb. Even in the light of the resurrection, the gospel narrators told their human stories *out* of the in-between – between death and resurrection: still remembering, still waiting, still living a Saturday existence.

A gradual theologising and expansion of the day between Friday and Sunday (burial, death, and descent) can be traced back to Paul's letters (later informing Balthasar's descent theology²⁸), the creeds, and the recorded sermons of Early Church theologians such as John Chrysostom.

Born in Antioch in c.349 John Chrysostom was raised into what might sound familiar to contemporary readers, a world 'that was at once both stable and caught up in the inexorable momentum of change.'²⁹ In the Paschal homily attributed to him he delves deep into Christ's action on Holy Saturday: 'Let no one fear death, for the Death of our Saviour has set us free. He has destroyed it by enduring it. He destroyed Hell when He descended into it. He put it into an uproar even as it tasted

²⁸ See Pitstick, L. *Christ's Descent into Hell. John Paul II, Joseph Ratzinger, and Hans Urs von Balthasar on the Theology of Holy Saturday*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016, 1-6.

²⁹ Mayer, W. and Allen, P. *John Chrysostom*. Oxford: Routledge, 2000, 3.

of His flesh.'³⁰ This theology is mirrored in the so-called 'Dated' Creed of 22 May 359: '[He]...died and descended into the parts beneath the earth, and regulated the things there, whom the gate-keepers of hell saw and shuddered...'³¹ The Apostles' Creed, unlike the Nicene Creed, adds: 'he descended to the dead.'³²

The present Catechism of the Catholic Church states that the death of Christ was a 'real death'³³. It also holds up the Apostles' Creed affirmation of Christ's descent into hell 'because in his Passover it was precisely out of the depths of death that he made life spring forth.'³⁴ Saturday is a day which is 'condensed in time' but is 'vast in its real significance: the spread of Christ's redemptive work...'³⁵

With the opening up of the Second Day, the way was paved for greater and more in-depth exploration of the question of God's and of our presence on the Saturday. The Easter narrative is a *three*-day event, the second of which reveals the God of the in-between, the Lord of the Sabbath – transforming and renewing all: past, present, and future. Interim ministry itself is informed and enriched by this divine-human revelation that happens in the depths of a space between the old and the new. God's revelation is human revolution – a life-changing movement. The movement's nativity lies in the Saturday, in the darkness of the tomb – held in the space between yesterday and tomorrow.

³⁰ John Chrysostom, *Paschal Homily*, http://anglicansonline.org/special/Easter/chrysostom_easter.html

³¹ Stevenson, J. (Editor) *Creeds, Councils and Controversies. Documents illustrative of the history of the Church A.D. 337-461*. London: SPCK, 1966, 47.

³² The Apostles' Creed, <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/common-worship/common-material/apostles-creed>

³³ Apostolic Constitution 'Fidei Depositum'. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. London: Burns & Oates, 2000, 143.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 144.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

Death and descent: Barth, Balthasar, and Benedict XVI

In more recent times there have been theologians who have written on the subject of Holy Saturday and have thought deeply on the creedal implications of a Christ who died and was buried. Karl Barth, Hans Urs von Balthasar and Joseph Ratzinger are of particular importance here. Their theologies of Holy Saturday both inform and are reflected in the premise of interim ministry, even if these are not explicitly stated in the current Church of England guidance.

Barth writes: 'In Jesus Christ man is exalted and appointed to the life for which God has set him free in the death of Jesus Christ.'³⁶ Given the nature of this present study, the question is to be asked: What of the death, the Second Day? In 'Credo' he refers to *sepultus* and the inescapable truth of the true humanity of Christ – one who was buried.³⁷ This is something *actual*, real, and tangible; an event that draws us in because it shares in our very human experience, an event in the Christian creed undeniable to both believer and unbeliever.³⁸ "Jesus Christ suffered death and was buried" is a scandalous creedal statement. It attests to the fact that the second person of the Trinity is also fully human; Mary's son and Pilate's victim – dead and buried. As Barth puts it, 'He was a true real man.'³⁹ In a chapter on Barth's Christology Hunsinger writes: 'He is not merely a human being with a special relationship to God... [He is] a single person who is at once 'complete in deity' and 'complete in humanity'.⁴⁰ This is a crucial, Chalcedonian standpoint for a potential Holy Saturday theology of interim ministry: the God who is proclaimed present in the interim is a God who is *completely and actually* present and united to us and our

³⁶ Barth, K. *Dogmatics in Outline*. London: SCM Press, 1949 (English edition), 121.

³⁷ Barth, K. *Credo*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1962, 84-5.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 85.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Hunsinger, G. "Karl Barth's Christology. Its basic Chalcedonian character". In *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, edited by John Webster, 127-142. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 127.

experience in Jesus Christ: fully God, fully man – one God without separation or division.⁴¹ The creator of all things is also the God of the specific places and spaces; the God who is fully God on the day between Friday and Sunday.

For Barth, the God of Holy Saturday is the God of grace and reconciliation who, as Hunsinger points out, ‘completely embraces our destruction, carrying us to death in his death, that we might be raised in and with him to newness of life.’⁴² Only the *person* of Jesus Christ can achieve this; the one who shares our death in order that we might be transformed and raised to new life.⁴³ This proclamation is central to interim ministry, because it embraces past, present, future – acknowledging all in truthful recognition of the past and in the light of resurrection hope.

Barth’s ‘Credo’ explores the significance of Christ’s descent. It is a happening and a movement in anticipation of resurrection hope and beginnings of new life – even in the midst of death. It begins with the self-surrender of God ‘in which He does not cease to be God.’⁴⁴ The divine existence becomes ‘invisible’⁴⁵, but God’s action and presence changes all. The words of the creed *descendit ad inferos* describe more than a descent to the dead: they tell of the completeness of our salvation. In *Dogmatics in Outline* Barth asks, ‘Has not man separated himself from God by his own act? ‘Descended into hell’ is merely a confirmation of it.’⁴⁶ It is in Christ’s death and descent that we gain life and ascent from the depths of separation from God. Therefore, we never again need to ask, “Why has God forsaken us?”⁴⁷

⁴¹ Ibid., 129.

⁴² Ibid., 137.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Barth, K. *Credo*, 87.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Barth, K. *Dogmatics in Outline*, 118.

⁴⁷ Barth, K. *Credo*, 94.

Alan Lewis later wrote that 'Karl Barth... learned dramatically to rethink the very doctrine of God in the light of Jesus' death and burial.'⁴⁸ Here lies another central strand in thinking throughout interim ministry in light of Holy Saturday theology – in this case, Barth's: the greater, redeeming presence of God is to be experienced in places that might be thought God-less, precisely because of God's triune nature and his *becoming* and *action* in our temporality and time.⁴⁹ In Barth's Christocentric Trinitarian theology we need look no further than the cross and the grave to see the very presence of God among us and with us.⁵⁰ God is no less God on Friday and Saturday than he is on Sunday. For Barth, as Lewis puts it, 'Only the Trinity can both experience the rupture of that Saturday and accomplish the resumption which is Easter Day.'⁵¹

It is the rupture that speaks so clearly into interim ministry – it is in the rupture, the break – the space in-between the before and the after – that God acts.

Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988) was a Swiss Catholic theologian who was influenced by the theology of both Karl Barth and his friend and fellow theologian Adrienne von Speyr. He wrote the foreword to her book *The Passion from Within*. Speyr writes about Jesus' 'body' on Holy Saturday: 'He assumes the boundaries and measures of a body and, to a large degree, the human way of acting in a fallen world... But since he became individual while being God, he opens the way back to God for us individuals.'⁵² In another words, he entered into the temporal in order to free us from the limits of temporality. Holy Saturday is not an empty space: it contains a body – a sign of God's complete identification with us. The Word of God

⁴⁸ Lewis, A. *Between Cross and Resurrection. A Theology of Holy Saturday*. Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001, 197.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 206.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 207.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 222.

⁵² Speyr, A. *The Passion from Within*. (Translated by Lucia Wiedenhöver). San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998, 154.

is *embodied with us* in the Saturday.⁵³ The notion of embodiment is vital to interim ministry. Interim ministry does not happen in a void – it happens in a space where there is past, present, future; where there is potential for creative encounter forming new life and new direction.

In *Life out of Death* Balthasar writes: ‘Dying is the most ordinary thing’⁵⁴, but it is through death that we are united with the God who removes the barrier to heaven, therefore allowing glimpses of heaven here on earth, accompanying creation as it journeys to heaven.⁵⁵ The death that is Holy Saturday is not ‘nothingness’, but is about the one who gives life in the midst of death.⁵⁶ It is about, as Riyako Hikota posits, the God who has everything within His scope, including hell.⁵⁷ Hikota’s major study on Balthasar’s theology of Holy Saturday presents a scholar whose theology was both innovative and considered by some to be on the verge of heresy.⁵⁸ Overall, he reads Holy Saturday and Christ’s descent into hell as a Trinitarian event in which salvation is found in Christ’s complete and utter solidarity with us.⁵⁹ According to Hikota, Balthasar’s theology is nothing short of the appreciation of the in-between – he gives us the lens to peer in and glimpse sight of both God’s action and being between Friday and Sunday. In looking inwards, we see the outwards implications for Christian life as a whole.⁶⁰

In *Mysterium Paschale* Balthasar explores the wide-ranging significance and theo-dramatic possibilities of Holy Saturday. It is a study of the in-between and a proclamation of the in-betweenness of Christ himself on Saturday, in solidarity with

⁵³ Ibid., 8.

⁵⁴ Balthasar, H. *Life out of Death. Meditations on the Paschal Mystery*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012, 9.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 85.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 51.

⁵⁷ Hikota, R. *And Still We Wait. Hans Urs von Balthasar’s Theology of Holy Saturday and Christian Discipleship*. Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2018, 118.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 1.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 9.

us in our dark place and with us 'subjectively waiting in solidarity' for a victory that is already 'objective reality'.⁶¹ Hikota asks, 'Does this passive waiting in silence for the subjectively hidden victory not represent the tragic tension within Christian existence very well?'⁶² The 'silence' of the Gospels is something to be grateful for because 'death calls for this silence' – it focuses our minds on the first instance of Christ's complete solidarity not only with the living, but also with the dead.⁶³ The theme of silence is echoed in Rachel Muers' book *Keeping God's Silence: God's 'silence' points not so much to his inaction or not speaking, but to the inadequacy of our words to articulate and thus grasp his actions and being.*⁶⁴ It is within Balthasar's 'silence' of the in-between that we hear the mysterious action of God's salvation bring new life out of death.

Mysterium Paschale describes Holy Saturday not so much as a 'descent' (although, it is posited, the creedal word is justifiable), but much more a 'going to' and 'solidarity' with.⁶⁵ To describe a simple above/below movement of God's salvific presence and action is inadequate. A 'going to' is biblically justified (Balthasar cites 1 Peter 3: 19 and 22 in which Christ 'went' to the spirits in prison and 'has gone' into heaven)⁶⁶ and in the interests of this dissertation a 'going to' and a 'being with' have currency when describing the initial motivation of interim ministry. In interim ministry terms the notion of descent, help or rescue from above, could be pastorally less effective than a ministry which seeks to bring about new life from within – working in partnership and *being with* a congregation.

⁶¹ Ibid., 140.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Balthasar, H. *Mysterium Paschale. The Mystery of Easter*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000 (English translation 1990, T&T Clark), 148-9.

⁶⁴ Muers, R. *Keeping God's Silence. Towards a Theological Ethics of Communication*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004, 14.

⁶⁵ Balthasar, H. *Mysterium Paschale*, 150.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

Holy Saturday (the 'going to') is placed and needs to be understood in light of and in parallel with the Resurrection.⁶⁷ Balthasar's choice of the First Letter of Peter is useful in seeing in how he wished to show a 'going to' and 'being with' movement of God rather than a descending/ascending, which presents a more simplified or mythical 'three-storey world picture'.⁶⁸ According to Eric Eve's commentary of 1 Peter, the verses quoted by Balthasar together 'serve to reassure the addressees that their suffering... really will lead to blessing...'⁶⁹ More specifically, Eve's commentary holds with Balthasar's insistence that Christ's preaching to the spirits in prison does not represent a descent.⁷⁰ There is debate, however, over the nature of the addressees, whether they are the pre-Christian dead or angelic beings.⁷¹

Finally, Balthasar posits that the salvific event of Holy Saturday is Trinitarian. In obedience to the Father, Christ 'takes the existential measure of everything that is sheerly contrary to God...'⁷². None of this happens outside God's scope: all belongs to him, including judgement and hell, and all happens within his saving grace – the eternal Son, as a 'dead man' so that the dead might (Balthasar quotes John's Gospel) 'hear the voice of the Son of God' and live.⁷³

Commenting on Balthasar's theology of Holy Saturday, Lyra Pitstick points to the fact that in Balthasar's view Holy Saturday represents *completion* of redemption – the saving power of the Cross cannot be seen in isolation from the reconciliation (in light of the Resurrection) achieved on the Saturday.⁷⁴ It is precisely the trinitarian nature of the event that enables the completion of redemption: 'By bringing the sins of mankind into the being of the Son, they are simultaneously brought into the

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 149-150.

⁶⁹ Eve, E. "1 Peter". In *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, edited by John Barton and John Muddiman, 1263-1270. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, 1268.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Balthasar, H. *Mysterium Paschale*, 174.

⁷³ Ibid., 175.

⁷⁴ Pitstick, L. *Christ's Descent into Hell*, 1.

Trinity...'⁷⁵. However, Pitstick is critical of Balthasar's theology of descent, not least because John Paul II and Benedict XVI praised Balthasar's theology generally, but did not directly reference or praise his writings on Holy Saturday.⁷⁶ Despite the traditional Catholic/Protestant divide on Christ's triumphal descent (Protestant reformers rejected the doctrine) Pitstick takes Christoph Schönborn's line in linking the descent with resurrection rather than Balthasar's emphasis on Saturday as an extension of Christ's passion.⁷⁷

In a more positive light, Rowan Williams praises Balthasar's *Mysterium Paschale* for setting '...out with an astonishingly powerful clarity the necessary centrality to the work of Christ of this 'hiatus' represented by the silence of Holy Saturday.'⁷⁸ He goes on to say that in Balthasar's scheme Holy Saturday is the 'definitive revelation' of God.⁷⁹ Furthermore, Hikota writes: 'Once we note Balthasar's emphasis on the "in-betweenness" of Holy Saturday, we start to see the possibility to widen its scope and explore its implications for Christian life.'⁸⁰ She further asks, 'what kind of implications Balthasar's theology of Holy Saturday can provide for Christian discipleship?'⁸¹ Such is the concern and lens of this dissertation – a Holy Saturday theology of interim ministry is about the Christ-centred definitive revelation of God in the in-between. This theology can also gain considerably from Balthasar's insistence on the notion both of Christ's solidarity with us and that Holy Saturday is a redemptive place.⁸²

⁷⁵ Ibid., 5.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 106.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 83.

⁷⁸ Williams, R. "Balthasar and the Trinity". In *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar*, edited by Edward Oakes and David Moss, 37-50. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 37.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Hikota, R. *And Still We Wait*, 9.

⁸¹ Ibid, 9-10.

⁸² Wainwright, G. "Eschatology". In *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar*, edited by Edward Oakes and David Moss, 113-127. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 117.

Joseph Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI), Pitstick holds, sought to 'moderate' Balthasar's theology of Holy Saturday.⁸³ In his two-part work *Jesus of Nazareth* he does not dwell so much on the Saturday itself, but places a strong emphasis on the death of Christ as a place of redemption and reconciliation.⁸⁴ More can be gleaned from his *The Anguish of an Absence*, a series of three Holy Saturday meditations. In the first meditation the 'death of God' (in Jesus Christ) is in the same moment his 'radical solidarity with us'.⁸⁵ Through His death, *our* death is transformed into hope and our eyes opened and, more so, Ratzinger posits: 'We need the silence of God to experience again the abyss of his greatness and the chasm of our nothingness which would grow wider and wider without him.'⁸⁶ In this sense the 'silence' of God does not denote an empty absence, but rather a greater, transformative presence. The purpose of interim ministry is to be a transformative presence in the in-between.

Ratzinger's second meditation expands on the phrase 'descended into hell', meaning (taking the word 'sheol' into account) that in his death Jesus Christ shared in the 'abyss' of our death.⁸⁷ By Christ entering so completely into it, our death is no longer the same – our closed-ended destiny becomes God's open-ended answer. Finally, the third meditation contains the central message of the Cross as a symbol of hope – in light of the Saturday it is at once a sign of death *and* resurrection.⁸⁸

To fast forward from crucifixion to resurrection is one thing – suffering *immediately* preceding new life – but to pause, even if for a moment, on the Saturday brings something particularly profound into view: an *actual* death and an

⁸³ Pitstick, L. *Christ's Descent into Hell*, 108.

⁸⁴ Ratzinger, J. *Jesus of Nazareth. Part Two: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011, 229.

⁸⁵ Ratzinger, J. "The Anguish of an Absence. Three Meditations on Holy Saturday". In *30 Days Issue* no.3, (2006), 1.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

actual burial; a divine breaking into and a radical solidarity with human destiny of which seeming finality is the grave. What is it to claim that God is fully present in Holy Saturday (and indeed in an interim ministry post), between death and resurrection, fully entombed; to claim (as Barth did) that in this 'He does not cease to be God'⁸⁹?

The theological lens of presence, revelation, solidarity, and hope given to us by Barth, Balthasar, and Ratzinger helps us to see more clearly what a Holy Saturday theology of interim ministry might look like and what it might achieve in adding theological depth and understanding to the ministry of the in-between.

In-between: tragedy and the ascent of new life

As theological interest in Holy Saturday has increased, so have layers of exploration been added to the study of the Second Day; a paradoxical place of tragedy and life-in-death; more than just a hiatus – a space pregnant with hope, expectation, and the theo-dramatic playing out of inward divine purpose. Why might this be a theological concern for interim ministry?

Brother John of Taizé's *Life on the Edge* is a study of the world-changing implications of Holy Saturday. A day between two other days which are more visible and obvious could be perceived as a gap or a space too narrow, too insignificant to make a difference, but this is not so – this is no less than a Trinitarian event in which, Brother John holds, the 'Passover of God's Son from death to life as a human being liberated a new space at the heart of the cosmos, one henceforth accessible to other human beings. Those who enter this new space are brought into an encounter with

⁸⁹ Barth, K. *Credo*, 87

the wellsprings of new life...'⁹⁰. The narrow space that is Holy Saturday makes all things new, making it, in reality, wide and expansive. It is a place of both transformation and transition, where past, present, and future meet and are redeemed. Holy Saturday is also a place in which a new relationship is born, removing an unbreachable barrier and closing the vast chasm between God and us.⁹¹ For Brother John, to enter the space opened up by the Son of God on Saturday is to be in a space that at once transforms us and fixes our eyes on the future, leaving the old reference points of the past behind.⁹² He adds (this is also key to a theological understanding of interim ministry): 'It is by living fully in this time and space that we are being prepared for what will come afterwards.'⁹³ Holy Saturday is also a place of *our* preparation, in light of the eschatological hope of resurrection. This, in Alan Lewis' words is because of 'God's election of the grave', a place '...which reveals the even greater presence of God in the midst of a great absence...'⁹⁴ The space between Friday and Sunday is both a descent of the old and an ascent of the new.

Given the event it marks, is Holy Saturday *tragic*? Balthasar, according to Hikota, certainly saw a kind of 'tragic waiting in the Christian existence, living between the old and the new, between life and death; mirroring Christ's 'waiting for the resurrection in hell on Holy Saturday'.⁹⁵ Hikota highlights in Balthasar's theology the presence of a sort of holy tension of living in the now and not yet; very much a Christian Saturday existence in the in-between, where death is still a reality, even if in the light and hope of new life. She goes on to call this a 'tragedy under grace',

⁹⁰ Brother John of Taizé. *Life on the Edge. Holy Saturday and the Recovery of the End Time*. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2017, 90.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Lewis, A. *Between Cross and Resurrection. A Theology of Holy Saturday*, 163.

⁹⁵ Hikota, R. *And Still We Wait*, 116.

which is also mirrored in the Christian existence 'torn between the truth of Christ and the power of the world'⁹⁶.

Adrian Poole, in his book *Tragedy*, explores the meaning of the tragic. It is often a misused word implying a thing, person, or situation which is very sad or laughable – a word repeated so often in daily discourse that it is at risk of losing 'all meaning'.⁹⁷ However, in a truer sense of the word, 'tragedy' can be employed to describe 'between times' and 'conjunctions of past and future in the here and now'⁹⁸. Poole writes: 'Tragedies are always concerned with the mysteries of timing, both good and bad, with the difficulty of knowing the right time to act or refrain from acting'⁹⁹. This concept of the tragic speaks powerfully into the interim, Saturday experience of Christian and human life. The tragic is also about the 'doubleness' (as Poole posits) of time, in the 'what was' and what 'will be'¹⁰⁰ – 'tragedy' does not necessarily mean a happy or bad ending, but is concerned with the present state of existence, the tension of the in-between. We live in resurrection hope, but still face an inevitable death; even if death itself has been transformed by the death of the One who created all things. The tragedy is being in the state of in-betweenness. It is in the tragedy of Holy Saturday (and interim ministry) that, surprisingly, new life is found.

Terry Eagleton wrote extensively on the notion of the tragic. In his book *Sweet Violence* he explains why Holy Saturday is tragic in the truest sense of the word: 'It was because his death seemed to him [Jesus] a cul-de-sac, as his despairing scriptural quotation on the cross would suggest, that it could be fruitful.'¹⁰¹ A *despairing* deity who experiences genuine abandonment, dies a convicted criminal,

⁹⁶ Ibid., 139.

⁹⁷ Poole, A. *Tragedy: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, 1.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 2.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 97.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 99.

¹⁰¹ Eagleton, T. *Sweet Violence. The Idea of the Tragic*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003, 37.

and is buried presents a truly tragic image. However, ‘...it was precisely this bereftness, savoured to the last bitter drop, which in a classically tragic rhythm could then become the source of renewed life.’¹⁰² The outcome to the story of Holy Saturday is good, but not without the tragic rhythm of loss, abandonment, and seeming finality and hopelessness. Eagleton holds that ‘It is the tragic which both Marxism and Christianity seek to redeem, but they can do so only by installing themselves at the heart of it... and resurrection for Christianity involves a crucifixion and descent into hell... Reclamation is necessary exactly where it seems least possible.’¹⁰³ Tragedy must be fully tragic before there is Resurrection.

The tragic rhythm of Holy Saturday represents both a genuine descent and an ascent of new life out of the least expected place: a tomb containing the corpse of a failed messiah. Alan Lewis in *Between Cross and Resurrection* asks the question: ‘...[What] kind of life...comes to birth among the dead, and what kind of death could yield up its defeated victim to victorious life [?].’¹⁰⁴ The first part of the question is especially candid and relevant to a theology of interim ministry: What kind of life comes to birth among the dead? The ‘dead’ in this case could represent hopes, relationships, direction, even the literal death of a beloved, long-serving parish priest.

Lewis, writing out of his own, deeply personal Holy experience, explores the very subject of the Holy Saturday genesis of new life. The second day *barrier* of the Triduum is not a barrier after all but, with the death of the second person of the Trinity, it is a ‘point of contiguity’ between two realities: death and life. It is a ‘two-way vantage point’ (allowing us to look both backwards and forwards)¹⁰⁵: a point mirrored in our own life journeys. The forward/backward motion of time found on

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 40.

¹⁰⁴ Lewis, A. *Between Cross and Resurrection. A Theology of Holy Saturday*, 76.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 77.

Holy Saturday was also familiar to Jürgen Moltmann, who writes: 'For the Easter hope shines not only forwards into the unknown newness of the history which it opens up, but also backwards over the graveyards of history...'¹⁰⁶.

The ascent of new life from the point of no return, the darkness of the tomb, can only be read and experienced alongside suffering and descent – the two are inseparable. Lewis writes: '...we must face the shocking truth that the seeds of victory lie in the grave's defeat and nowhere else, that the only flower of victory is one which germinates and grows in the darkness of a tomb.'¹⁰⁷ Here, once again, we have the doubleness of tragedy that is entwined in the DNA of the day between days – that 'the grave of Jesus is simultaneously the place where God is undeniably absent and also resolutely present: defeated yet on the way to victory...'¹⁰⁸. Resurrection, through God's election and revelation, begins exactly in the place where it should not – in a grave. Interim ministry often begins at the point in which hope has been lost. A Holy Saturday theology of interim ministry has the potential to offer the theological underpinnings of hope and new life, while acknowledging a very real *death* of sorts. Interim ministry both reflects the *doubleness* of tragedy explored above and is informed by the theological notion of the seeds of victory and new life sown in defeat and failure.

The day of all days

Theologies of the Second Day are particularly appealing and useful in a developing a Holy Saturday theology of interim ministry, or simply a *theology of interim ministry*, because the works we have explored so far speak so profoundly of God's action in

¹⁰⁶ Moltmann, J. *The Crucified God. The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*. London: SCM Press, 2001, 167.

¹⁰⁷ Lewis, A. *Between Cross and Resurrection. A Theology of Holy Saturday*, 77.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 89.

the interim; of hope, tragedy, and new life in the midst of death, and of experience that can be seen mirrored in Christian ministry: especially in the in-between or interim time. The experience of the interim also speaks into the wider Christian life journey – and into the life common to all people; the Saturday we all live in, the tension between life and death, between hope and despair. Holy Saturday speaks into interim ministry and interim ministry speaks out into the experience common to all.

In his first meditation on Holy Saturday Joseph Ratzinger speaks of the ‘one long Saturday’ of this century, and although this, for him, carries negative connotations it is, none-the-less, a source of comfort too.¹⁰⁹ The ‘long’ Saturday of our human existence is also the day of God’s ‘radical solidarity’ with us.¹¹⁰ Not only is Saturday about God’s solidarity with us but also, we are drawn to God through Holy Saturday, a day in which God is at once powerless and omnipotent – and it is this, posits Ratzinger, that is ‘the experience and the wretchedness of our age’.¹¹¹

George Steiner, in *Real Presences*, wrote the following, which is worth quoting at length because it powerfully encapsulates the essence and locus of interim ministry: ‘There is one particular day in Western history about which neither historical record nor myth nor Scripture make report. It is a Saturday. And it has become the longest of days. We know of that Good Friday which Christianity holds to have been that of the Cross. But the non-Christian, the atheist, knows of it as well... We know also about Sunday... But ours is the long day’s journey of the Saturday. Between suffering, aloneness, unutterable waste on the one hand and the dream of liberation, of rebirth on the other.’¹¹² Nicholas Lash, in a lecture entitled *Friday, Saturday, Sunday* given at Blackfriars in Cambridge, was inspired by Steiner’s

¹⁰⁹ Ratzinger, J. “The Anguish of an Absence. Three Meditations on Holy Saturday”, 1.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 2.

¹¹² Steiner, G. *Real Presences*, 231-2.

work, especially by his image of the ‘long day’s journey of the Saturday’. The lecture represents a theological expansion of Steiner’s passage quoted above and an exploration of time and rhythm. He points to Steiner’s insistence on the ‘Saturdayness’ of our condition – if we, supposes Lash, lived in Sunday there would be no need to strive for meaning, sense, or possibility, and if we lived in the Friday we, in despair, would be silenced.¹¹³ However, our existence is a Saturday one; between despair and a place where the waiting is ended. Interim ministry (and indeed all ministry), in light of Steiner’s and Lash’s work, can be seen as *Saturday ministry*.

Lash also highlighted a ‘tension’ in Steiner’s text, a tension that speaks of the duality of our time-bound lives lived out in the light of the Resurrection – Saturday is, after all, just a day, twenty-four hours, a ‘small white space in Pilate’s diary’ – but it is also the day of all days: ‘Saturday is all those days through which we suffer, strive to make something of ourselves or just hang on, endure, from Friday towards Sunday.’¹¹⁴ There is also a tension between Saturday and Sabbath – between ‘a dark and empty’ day merely preceding the day of resurrection and the Jewish Sabbath, a hopeful day of rest.¹¹⁵ To look at Saturday through the eyes of Sabbath is to behold it as a day in which God blesses his creation, a day of completedness.¹¹⁶ In this sense the Christian day between days is one of waiting, of ‘laborious patience’ – it is a celebration of our createdness, in tension, of the now but not quite yet.¹¹⁷

Lash encourages his listeners to learn to read the times in which we live and advises the following: ‘[the long day’s journey of the Saturday] requires of us the tempering of both anger and celebration into solidarity, protecting us from the

¹¹³ Lash, N. “Friday, Saturday, Sunday”, 114.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 115.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

illusion of supposing either that Sunday is, already, simply here, or that the darkness of Friday has now forever entombed us.’¹¹⁸ In this light, Lash likens the Saturday to ‘Easter Vigil’: ‘darkness illumined from the pain of God, in watchfulness for the rising of the sun’¹¹⁹. It is important to note here that by the use of the term ‘Easter Vigil’ a slant (while the death of the cross is still very much in view) is given to Holy Saturday leaning towards victory, new life, and celebration. This is reflected in contemporary Christian liturgy. For example, a liturgical guide written to accompany the Church of England’s *Common Worship* states that (on Holy Saturday) despite the church building being in a ‘bare state’, the time leading up the Easter celebration is a ‘day of preparation’.¹²⁰ *Preparation* for future celebration, between the Friday and the Sunday, is very much the work of interim ministry and ministry as a whole. *Common Worship: Times and Seasons*, providing liturgical material and guidance for use in the Church of England, also adds that Holy Saturday is a day which anticipates celebration; recalling ‘God’s saving work, from creation through to the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.’¹²¹ To *recall* or to *remember* God’s saving work and presence in the in-between is central to ministry; giving hope to all believers.

Lash’s charge to ‘keep createdness in mind’ by learning to the ‘read the times in which we live’ – to be fully present in the tension of the here and now – needs to be reflected in a theology of interim ministry, a theology concerned with the Saturdayness of our present.

What is it to be a Saturday People, or ‘Sabbatarian’ as Steiner puts it¹²², living in the in-between on the day of all days, on the *Easter Vigil* (in Lash’s words)? How does the concept bring hope and give gravitas to a theology of interim ministry,

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 118.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 119.

¹²⁰ Gordon-Taylor, B. and Jones, S. *Celebrating Christ’s Victory. Ash Wednesday to Trinity*. London: SPCK, 2009, 65.

¹²¹ Archbishop’s Council. *Common Worship: Times and Seasons*. London: Church House Publishing, 2006, 323.

¹²² Lash, N. “Friday, Saturday, Sunday”, 232.

viewing it through the lens of Holy Saturday? How can this be put into conversation with current Church of England guidance on Interim Ministry?

Through the lens of Holy Saturday

The above exploration of Holy Saturday theologies, encapsulating the witness to God's greater presence in the temporal period of twenty-four hours, provides both a lens through which to glean a theology of interim ministry and a viewer through which to read and engage with existing literature and guidance. Using Steiner's phrase (with its richness of meaning) the lens can be summarised thus: *the long day's journey of the Saturday*. Looking back, this phrase encapsulates both the above theological exploration of Holy Saturday and, looking ahead, the kernel of a proposed theology of interim ministry, with wider implications for ministry as a whole.

Our particular concern, in the following section, is an interaction between Holy Saturday theologies and (in the English context) Church of England guidance issued in the form of advice and supplementary advice by the Archbishops' Council.

To see interim ministry happening within the context of the 'long day's journey of Saturday' is to place it precisely where it belongs – in the in-between: between death and loss, hope and new life – both unique and universal to human experience. This is to view it through the lens of Saturday, the day of all days. How might this relate to the understanding of interim ministry as expressed through the current guidance and what sort of questions might come out of a critical conversation between the two? Where can such a conversation aid the

development of a theology of interim ministry (which adds theological depth to interim ministry and holds up a truth to ministry as a whole)?

In conversation with Church of England guidance

The *Guidance on Interim Posts* was issued by the Archbishops' Council in response to new ecclesiastical regulation passed in 2015. This, along with the supplementary advice, provides general guidelines for those embarking on or already licensed into an interim post. Although the guidance is not intended to be a theological treatise on interim ministry, it is something to be engaged with theologically, given the nature of its subject and intent.

Of particular note in the guidance are the following intentions and circumstances calling for interim ministry contained under section 3.1:

- To enable the parish to equip itself more effectively for mission;
- To determine what kind of minister is required in the longer term;
- When the past has been difficult;
- When there is an element of uncertainty about the future.¹²³

Fuller and more focused guidance and so-called 'tasks', partly based on the above, are proposed in the supplementary advice published in 2017 under the following headings outlining the tasks of the interim minister (each heading is accompanied by further advice, scenarios, and suggestions) in section 4.3:

1. *Helping a parish to come to terms with its history*
2. *Enabling it to explore its identity and future direction*
3. *Bringing about necessary changes in leadership*

¹²³ Archbishops' Council. *Guidance on Interim Posts made under Regulation 29 (7D) of the Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Regulations 2009.*

4. *Helping a parish renew links*

5. *Committing the parish to looking in a new direction*¹²⁴

These tasks are preceded by a list of suggestions of how an interim priest might help a parish – including coming to terms with the past, consideration of future witness, a reassessment of priorities, working through transition, and making plans for the future.¹²⁵ The list is comprehensive in its scope. However, the following conversation will be between the latter ‘tasks’ (which go into much more detail), the scenarios contained in Annex 1 of the supplementary advice, and the Holy Saturday theologies explored above.

Helping a parish to come to terms with its history. In the first instance this task suggests a need to look to the past from the vantage point of the present. There is also, in the phrase ‘come to terms’, an implication for the need for healing. The word *history* itself is ambiguous, but more detail and specific scenarios follow on from the heading. For example, the word ‘crisis’ is used in the scenario of a sudden removal from office of a previous incumbent and elsewhere in the suggestion that a parish is to look truthfully at its past, even if that is painful. This is a *death* of sorts and, in Holy Saturday theological terms, is reminiscent of the Friday before. As quoted above from the Catholic Catechism, there was a ‘real death’¹²⁶, and in interim ministry there is a need to acknowledge a *real death*, before the parish can properly consider the future. It is in a death that, in Barthian terms, we find that very presence of God among us¹²⁷ – finality transformed into open and hopeful possibility. There is, in the first task, a strong sense in which the recent ‘history’ of a

¹²⁴ Archbishops’ Council. *Guidance on Interim Posts made under Regulation 29 (7C) of the Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Regulations 2009.*(Supplementary advice issued by the Archbishops’ Council in December 2017).

¹²⁵ Archbishops’ Council. *Supplementary advice issued by the Archbishops’ Council in December 2017*, 4.3.

¹²⁶ Apostolic Constitution ‘Fidei Depositum’. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. London: Burns & Oates, 2000, 143.

¹²⁷ Lewis, A. *Between Cross and Resurrection*, 207.

parish is sufficiently problematic to set out a need for change. Further scenarios warranting the need for interim ministry are given in Annex 1 of the supplementary advice. These reference more specifically the types of 'death' initiating the need for specialised ministry.¹²⁸ They represent a starting point for something new to happen – new life out of a death.

Enabling it to explore its identity and future direction. Firmly rooted in the present, the second task encourages exploration of a parish's identity and a consideration of the future.¹²⁹ The exploration is to be carried out in light of future possibility and marks a shift away from the 'death' of the past, even if the aftershocks of the death are still present in some form. The key, however, is an exploration of present identity with an eye to the future. Holy Saturday is formed by past and future events – it is the crux of both. An understanding of a parish's identity in the present is crucial to knowing the direction of safe travel stretching from the past into the future. It is also vital that a parish, while formed by it in some ways, is set free from a past death in order to celebrate the present and move on. In theological terms espoused by Balthasar, this is the beginning of new life out of death or *descent into hell*; hope out of tragedy; new creation happening in the in-between.¹³⁰

Bringing about necessary changes in leadership, roles and structures. This task is, once again, firmly rooted in the present – changes that need to take place in the here and now. The past and the possibilities of the future require transition and transformation in order to move away from fateful Friday and towards hopeful Sunday. The day is Saturday: the above task is a powerful reminder of what needs to happen on this day and speaks of the wider truth and necessity of change. It is in the

¹²⁸ Archbishops' Council. *Supplementary advice issued by the Archbishops' Council in December 2017*, Annex 1.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.3.

¹³⁰ Hikota, R. *And Still We Wait*, 116.

in-between that this can happen, a space where, echoing Brother John of Taizé's words, new life is born¹³¹, a space that enables change and renewal.

Helping a parish renew links. So far, the tasks have been parish-focused and have suggested a linear motion of travel from past to future. This, in the present, considers a *breaking out* from a past that has imprisoned a parish in some sense. On Saturday the renewal of the life originally intended by God (a life subsequently lost to the death of sin) happens in the space of the tomb. The space is not a cul-de-sac but a place in which a future is possible. As the words of further guidance for this task suggest, there is hope for revitalisation, reclamation, and recovery of what has been lost.¹³² Terry Eagleton alludes to the possibility of reclamation in a place, and on a day (Holy Saturday) where and when it seemed least possible.¹³³ The task of interim ministry, and the interim minister in partnership with the lay leadership, is to open up new possibilities, re-establish healthy links, and reclaim and recover what has been lost – for example church 'members who had fallen away'¹³⁴. In Jesus Christ the God of Holy Saturday is the one who renews and reclaims, opening up new life and establishing renewed relationship through the removal of the barrier that has previously barred the way.

Committing the parish to looking in a new direction. The final task moves the gaze from the past towards the future. This is to be done in the present, in an interim space which speaks of the interim space, the Saturday, in which *all* ministry happens. A ministry of the in-between, of the long day's journey of the Saturday, requires a constant forward gaze towards the future, because it always happens in the present light and promise of that future: of a victory already won, of death

¹³¹ Brother John of Taizé. *Life on the Edge*, 90.

¹³² Archbishops' Council. *Supplementary advice issued by the Archbishops' Council in December 2017*, 4.3.

¹³³ Eagleton, T. *Sweet Violence. The Idea of the Tragic*, 40.

¹³⁴ Archbishops' Council. *Supplementary advice issued by the Archbishops' Council in December 2017*, 4.3.

defeated by the One who died on the cross. To acknowledge the *Saturdayness* of interim ministry is to acknowledge, with the help of Ratzinger's words, God's 'radical solidarity with us', enabling us to imagine a new future direction while travelling in a day which is the 'clearest sign of a hope without end.'¹³⁵

Where next?

Through the lens of Holy Saturday, the beginnings of a critical conversation between the Church of England guidance (especially the 'five main tasks' proposed in the supplementary advice) and particular theologies of Holy Saturday (summarised so wonderfully by Steiner's *long day's journey*) have allowed us to have an appreciation of the Holy Saturday *shape* of the guidance, realising a movement, as they do, from past to present and then from the present to the future. In Holy Saturday theological terms, the guidelines and proposed tasks of the interim minister are very much a second day process: rooted in the present, but with an eye to the past and a firm gaze towards the future. The conversation has also demonstrated that the headings for the five tasks of the interim minister themselves, while demonstrating a strong emphasis on the present, are (despite the additional suggestions and guidance given beneath each heading) left open to a variety of interpretations and can be read in a number of ways.

The suggestion here is that the *long day's journey* is *one* way of interpreting the guidelines to add theological depth and create a fruitful two-way dialogue between them and Holy Saturday theology, leading to a specific theology of interim ministry. The fact that the terms and words used within the interim tasks are sufficiently broad and open-ended allows for this to be done. However, while the

¹³⁵ Ratzinger, J. "The Anguish of an Absence. Three Meditations on Holy Saturday", 1.

guidance and tasks suppose the role of an interim minister as a catalyst for needed change, it is noticeable that they omit an explicit or specific reference to the ever-present possibility of divine agency and presence in bringing about change, transition, and renewal: God, as Trinity, is the God who holds life and death, the past, present, and future within his realm. This, it is proposed, is something that can be addressed in a theology of interim ministry which would serve to complement the Church of England guidance. A theology of interim ministry could also look more deeply into how a 'death' itself is an initial catalyst for change – enabling a positive and life-renewing process. Also absent from the guidelines is an explicit reference to or acknowledgement of (as witnessed to in Balthasar's theology of Holy Saturday, and Lash's talk at Blackfriars) the tension of living and ministering in the in-between. There is little sense of the *Saturdayness* of Steiner's *Real Presences*. Perhaps this is not surprising because first, the guidelines are not meant to be a theological commentary on the *interim* (rather a practical, legal, and pastoral guide) and secondly, the main concern of the tasks is to move a parish from the past, through the interim, and into the future.

A theology of interim ministry could serve as a theological basis for and complement the Church of England guidelines, providing a particular understanding of what it is to minister in the in-between, while offering a theological insight into the wider perspective of, as Steiner put it, the 'Sabbatarian' character of the Christian journey, between the past and the future – both of which have such a profound effect on the present. Interim ministry, as with all ministries, is about the present: the deaths, the sorrows, the joys, future hopes, and making sense of the tension that holds all together.

Towards a theology of interim ministry

Pastoral theologies of Holy Saturday

An unexplored angle so far in this dissertation is the specifically pastoral theology that has grown out of a particular understanding of Holy Saturday. The insights gained from such theology would enrich a proposed theology of interim ministry – a ministry with pastoral care for a parish and its people at its heart.

Adam Tietje wrote a book entitled *Toward a Pastoral Theology of Holy Saturday*. It is a pastoral guide for those providing spiritual care for war veterans. Tietje, inspired by Balthasar, offers theological insight into Holy Saturday as a ‘unique theological space’, a space that we are invited into by way of deepening our faith and gaining insight into our own lives.¹³⁶ This ‘space’ is the premise for his pastoral theology for those veterans who through their war experience have experienced unimaginable darkness: ‘For those who have descended into the abyss, the story of Holy Saturday is a story of hope. Jesus’s descent into hell assures us that God’s presence abides in the depths.’¹³⁷ The book offers hope to those who have seen or even experienced a kind of death and suffered abandonment – ‘The story of God abandoning God assures us that Jesus has plumbed the depths and goes into the depths with us.’¹³⁸ Tietje goes on to posit that it is through God’s story of Holy Saturday that we find hope in our own story.¹³⁹

Though not written as a pastoral guide, Alan Lewis’ theology of Holy Saturday *Between Cross and Resurrection* has a strong pastoral element in that it contains his own very personal reflection of suffering, and through that offers deep insight and hope for his readers, not least discovering light and hope in darkness: ‘...the banter

¹³⁶ Tietje, A. *Toward a Pastoral Theology of Holy Saturday. Providing Spiritual Care for War Wounded Souls*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018, 35.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

and much laughter that frequently echoed through the valley of my darkness; the discovery with family and special friends of whole new levels of resourcefulness and love...'¹⁴⁰ It is through his own experience that he is able to relate the first Holy Saturday to every Saturday, '...humanity's myriad occasions of godforsakenness and godlessness in company with the God of Jesus Christ...'¹⁴¹ It is through our own Holy Saturdays that we discover our true identity *in* Christ – his life, death, and resurrection: an identity all have a share in.

Mark Scarlata has explored the theological foundations of the Sabbath and its pastoral implications for rest in the presence of the One who created us. In *Sabbath Rest* he shows the reader an image of Jesus as the Lord of the Sabbath, one 'who will reconcile, heal and restore all creation through his death and resurrection.'¹⁴² Scarlata points to the Sabbath as a day of rest when, in the pattern of Christ, we '...put down our yoke to take up our cross, because true rest comes in putting to death what is old and being raised with him in the new.'¹⁴³ Saturday, as *Sabbatarian*, is the day in-between: a day that signifies our true being and reason for existence, making it the day of all days. It is also a day of death and new life.

Between yesterday and tomorrow: a universally particular theological space

Key to developing a theology of interim ministry (with its potential to speak into all Christian ministry) in the light of Holy Saturday, is to proclaim a day that speaks universally of the in-between and what it is to live in the tension between death and new life in solidarity with Jesus Christ who has experienced and transformed both. It

¹⁴⁰ Lewis, A. *Between Cross and Resurrection*, 405.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Scarlata, M. *Sabbath Rest. The Beauty of God's Rhythm for a Digital Age*. London: SCM Press, 2019, 12.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 68.

can be said that Saturday is, to modify Tietje's phrase¹⁴⁴, a *universally* particular theological space. Such a phrase is partly a contradiction in terms, but that is what Holy Saturday is: at once it is both like nothing else (an entombed event), and yet it changes everything, and its mark is universal. It is exclusively the event of a single day, but inclusively the event of all time and places: a day of *all* days. '*Holy Saturday*' itself should have been an oxymoron, an absurd suggestion, anything but holy – but God's scandalous particularity in the entombed body of Jesus Christ made Saturday *holy*. The Trinity is at once particular and universal; local and omnipresent. This claim is central to a proposed theology of interim ministry – the omnipotent creator of the universe is also the particular God of the in-between, of the small spaces.

Hikota writes that the '...Christian's life is like a "see-saw" swaying between the cross and resurrection, death and life, or the old aeon and the new, but this see-saw is always supported by Christ himself who went through both.'¹⁴⁵ She goes on to say that our Christian existence is '...represented by Holy Saturday.'¹⁴⁶ This existence has a commonality about it – most will relate to the 'see-saw' image of life's journey, and most will at one time or another be aware and live in the tension of 'swaying' between life and death, between old and new. The Holy Saturday message of the theologians encountered in this dissertation is that Christ is right at the centre of our lives. Brother John writes that it is Christ who enables our future beyond the interim of Saturday: '...the newly baptized remain in this world with all its ambiguities. But their point of reference is no longer on the existence they have left behind. Their eyes are now fixed on what is to come... entry into the Holy Saturday space is what makes this transition possible... [It] is the prelude to a renewed universe.'¹⁴⁷ It is the very presence of God, in solidarity with us, that makes a future possible – allowing a

¹⁴⁴ Tietje, A. *Toward a Pastoral Theology of Holy Saturday*, 2.

¹⁴⁵ Hikota, R. *And Still We Wait*, 141.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Brother John of Taizé. *Life on the Edge*, 90.

realistic hope beyond our own limitations. Brother John holds that although our vision is to be eschatological, we are to live fully in the present so we are 'prepared for what will come afterwards.'¹⁴⁸

Pete Greig, in *God on Mute*, acknowledges that Holy Saturday describes the 'place in which many of us live our lives: waiting for God to speak.'¹⁴⁹ Interestingly, Greig's theological perspective – much like the Protestant Reformers – emphasises God's silence and absence, rather than his greater presence. The God of Holy Saturday is a veiled God, the same God who has 'switched off our ability to be conscious of His presence', doing this from time to time to 'reduce our dependency on outward things so that we may learn some vital lesson of life.'¹⁵⁰ There is some merit in a theological scheme which gives currency to the apparent absence of God and, at such times, our increased questioning and searching. However, a 'mute', apparently absent God of Saturday (teaching us, through His silence, a lesson) may well be unhelpful for a theology of interim ministry in which the greater presence of God, in solidarity with us, needs to be emphasised. The entombed body of Saturday, rather than a mysterious absence, signifies God's complete identification with us¹⁵¹ – to the point of dying a death in order to defeat it. It is something to behold – rather like the elevated host in the Eucharist: the body is not a sign of absence, but of hopeful and life-giving presence. It is something to be held high and adored – a material sign of divine salvation.

Lewis writes of the 'day between the days' – not a day of nothingness, but 'a very specific, identifiable *second* day, the day *before* the climax...'.¹⁵² Paradoxically, the Second Day was a day like any other Saturday – God's extraordinary presence

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 91.

¹⁴⁹ Greig, P. *God on Mute*. Eastbourne: David C. Cook, 2007, 237.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 245.

¹⁵¹ Lewis, A. *Between Cross and Resurrection*, 32.

¹⁵² Ibid., 32.

and transformation in the absence and in the ordinary. Interim ministry occupies the space between permanent appointments, but rather than marking time, it is the opportunity for full engagement and extraordinary transition, transformation, and new life. Both the particularity and universality of Holy Saturday are concepts central to a progressing theology of interim ministry and speaking a powerful truth into Christian ministry more generally. For instance, Michael Ramsay, in *The Christian Priest Today*, writes: 'The joy and the sorrow are like two sides of a coin... But the door into his sorrow is also the door into his joy.'¹⁵³ In other words, we constantly live in the tension between the two – between cross and resurrection. Furthermore Henri Nouwen, in writing about Christian leadership, asks 'How can we speak about Christian leadership without mentioning Jesus Christ, His life, His crucifixion and His resurrection?'¹⁵⁴ Although interim ministry is the special focus of this study, the signpost of ministry in the in-between points us to all Christian ministry.

Long day's journey: towards a theology of interim ministry

Why a specific theology of interim ministry? Quite simply a theology of interim ministry will (along with the studies approaching interim ministry from different angles explored above) further address an imbalance in the English context, which has very little in the way of theological literature underpinning a ministerial practice which is still quite new within the Church of England. Such a theology will seek to ask theological questions and add further depth to a specific ministry which (after a breakdown or crisis of some sort) responds to a particular need within a set

¹⁵³ Ramsey, M. *The Christian Priest Today*. London: SPCK, 1972, 92-93.

¹⁵⁴ Nouwen, H. *The Wounded Healer. Ministry in Contemporary Society*. London: DLT, 1994, 70-71.

timeframe between two appointments. It will also endeavour to open up the exploration of something much broader by speaking into and giving voice to the wider human journey, considering the essence of what it is to live in *interim/ly*. A theology of interim ministry is to be concerned with the action of God in the in-between, the hiatus, the 'theo-drama'¹⁵⁵, as Ben Quash calls it, which happens in the space *between* events, between a death and a new life.

The following needs to be considered. First, the proposed theology will have a strong bias towards a particular understanding (as explored above) of Holy Saturday. It will be informed by theologies of Holy Saturday and will be interested in presenting a wide, universal outlook which seeks an understanding of the Christian (and wider human) condition as interim, or in-between – living in a tension between life and death; so brilliantly phrased by Steiner as the 'long day's journey of the Saturday.'

The approach to the proposed theology will be from a Barthian/Chalcedonian position – the centrality of which presents Jesus Christ, completely and indivisibly human and divine, and scandalously particular with us in our temporality; at once both the second person of the Trinity and Mary's son. It was this Jesus who died on the cross and was placed in a tomb – sharing in our death, and through this, restoring us to new life.

With a Saturday/Sabbatarian shape, the proposed theological scheme will be a way of exploring how, from the present, we experience the past and the future, rooted in the 'see-saw', as Hikota puts it, of the here and now. The *Saturdayness* of interim ministry (with its joys and tensions of being the day between Friday and Sunday, so to speak), the Christian journey, and human life in general is to add colour to the scheme. It can be tempting to think that Sunday has already arrived or

¹⁵⁵ Quash, B. "The theo-drama". In *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar*, edited by Edward Oakes and David Moss, 143-157. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 155.

that we are forever stuck on the Friday, but Steiner holds that *our* day is Saturday, which carries 'the lineaments' of both the suffering of Good Friday and the resurrection and liberation of Easter Sunday.¹⁵⁶ It is the day of Saturday on which interim ministry is carried out, pastoring to a particular, local need, but signifying something beyond that. A theology of interim ministry will give voice to this.

If the angle is to be Barthian, and the shape and colour Sabbatarian, the locus of exploration of a theology of interim ministry will be held in the space in-between, seeking to understand that *universally particular* place as a meeting point between the human and divine, a place of transition and transformation. This is the area in which the proposed theology has a both a specific and wide appeal, because it will deal with the in-between. For instance, Hikota (in her commentary and exploration of Balthasar's theology of Holy Saturday) speaks of the Christian life as a kind of paradoxical in-betweenness: a 'tragic' waiting between old and new, death and life, eternal and temporal, saved and under judgement – all mirrored in Christ's descent.¹⁵⁷

Within the locus of the in-between will be a deeper exploration of what happens *inside* the space. What happens *in* the Saturday? With the theologies we have surveyed so far, we can point to God's greater presence in Holy Saturday, and all days. Ben Quash, in a chapter on Balthasar's theodramatics, writes about God's action in the in-between, a 'theo-drama' that we all take part in. On the 'theo-drama', a concept at the heart of Balthasar's theology of God's action, Quash holds the following: 'It is only because the Trinitarian life has such inescapably dramatic features that our relationship to that life is so singularly well-expressed in the terms which drama offers. Our active relation to God comes to be by *God's* action; that

¹⁵⁶ Steiner, G. *Real Presences*, 232.

¹⁵⁷ Hikota, R. *And Still We Wait*, 116.

action is the 'good' in which we, too, are permitted to share our actions.'¹⁵⁸ This is key – Saturday is not a place of stillness and absence, but a space in which God *acts*; a space which, in Quash's words, 'opens...onto the inner reality of God.'¹⁵⁹ Our participation in the drama of God's action is salvific because we have been invited 'into the movement of Christ's mission'¹⁶⁰. Participation in God's salvific action enables change. How are we changed by the transition and transformation that happens within the in-between, and how are we formed into something that is still recognisably us, but also quite new?

From a perspective placed between cross and resurrection, a theology of interim ministry is about the relationship, change, and transformation made possible by Jesus Christ. He is God's very presence in the in-between, the long day's journey of the Saturday; a paradoxical day which is both God's and ours: an ordinary dark space made glorious light by God's action bringing about extraordinary change and transformation; new life out of death – both Holy Saturday and Easter Vigil. This divine revelation goes far beyond interim ministry and illumines all that pertains to Christian ministry.

¹⁵⁸ Quash, B. "The theo-drama", 155.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 154.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

Conclusion

What kind of life comes to new birth among the dead? The question is at the heart of interim ministry and a theologising of this specialist ministry is nothing short of an appreciation of that question and the in-between, of its paradoxes and hopes, of its tensions and opportunities. A Holy Saturday lens enables a particular interpretation of interim ministry as being both within itself and outwardly signifying the profound Saturdayness of Christian ministry, our existence, and our life journey.

Interim Ministry can be shaped, informed by, and reflect the theologies of Holy Saturday explored in this dissertation; theologies which emphasise God's bodily presence and action in the *in-between*. These theologies have the potential to empower, guide, and inform those who are involved in this aspect of church life, and signpost the direction of new life, while acknowledging a very real death of sorts. They, in light of their subject matter and concern, also have the potential to guide and inform a theology of interim ministry, a specialist, intentional ministry with broad concerns.

In light of theologies of Holy Saturday, this dissertation proposes a step towards a theology of interim ministry. It has attempted this by looking at existing literature, surveying particular theologies of Holy Saturday, putting these in a critical conversation with Church of England guidance, and highlighting the real and possible need for a gap to be filled in current theological discourse. Holy Saturday is a unique theological space that offers profound insight into interim ministry and, more broadly, Christian ministry and human experience as a whole.

A theology of interim ministry is to be a theology of the *in-between*: a theology of the (to repeat Steiner's phrase quoted earlier) 'long day's journey of the Saturday' – telling of the Christian journey; a microcosm of all human experience. Steiner's phrase perfectly encapsulates the theology which promises to underpin,

deepen understanding, and intellectually enliven interim ministry, and it serves as a premise from which to begin. The Saturday journey is not an eventless void but a life-filled tension between death and resurrection; a redeeming tragedy; an Easter vigil made reality by the Lord of the Sabbath; a fertile ground, a rupture allowing new creation, change, and transformation. It is only so because of God's actual presence (a God who in Balthasar's theology of Holy Saturday can be seen not so much in descent but in a 'going to' and 'being with'¹⁶¹) in the midst of it, seeking the lost and bringing life out of death.

The space that is Holy Saturday makes all things new. It is a place of both transformation and transition, where past, present, and future meet and are redeemed. The proposed theology of interim ministry will speak into and reflect upon something vast: on one level, the space between two church appointments – on another level a Saturday common to all. The *in-between* – the long day's journey, of the Second Day of the Triduum – is, in God's economy, the *go-between* uniting us all. This hope is encapsulated in Nicholas Lash's 'Easter Vigil'¹⁶²; the patient waiting in darkness for the sun to appear on the horizon.

Finally, a theology of interim ministry speaks well beyond the particular intention of the interim minister placed in the in-between, holding up a powerful truth to human experience and, as Ramsay puts it, 'the realm of everyday ministry'¹⁶³, which is always concerned with and inhabits the tension between death and new life, between cross and resurrection.

In his appraisal of George Steiner's work, Lash should have the penultimate word: 'We live in Saturday.'¹⁶⁴ The space that is Holy Saturday is the place where all

¹⁶¹ Balthasar, H. *Mysterium Paschale*, 150.

¹⁶² Lash, N. "Friday, Saturday, Sunday", 119.

¹⁶³ Ramsey, M. *The Christian Priest Today*, 92.

¹⁶⁴ Lash, N. "Friday, Saturday, Sunday", 114.

things are made new. It is the long day's journey of interim ministry, all ministry, and human life.

14,724 words

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