

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY — Natural Burial and Christian Theology

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National Home Funeral Alliance website. homefuneralalliance.org/abouthomefunerals/ Extensive, up-to-date, resources and news about home funerals. Current listing of trainings/workshops for caring for the dead in hospice and/or home care.

Davies, Douglas, and Hannah Rumble. *Natural Burial: Traditional-Secular Spiritualities and Funeral Innovation*. Continuum, 2012. An academic study of natural burial practices and their religious-spiritual dimensions, largely based on field work in Europe.

Deloria, Vine. "Death and Religion," in *God Is Red*, 165–184. Grosset & Dunlap, 1994. Spiritual and religious dimensions of death practices in Native American communities, with emphasis on ecological interconnections and resistance.

Fournier, Elizabeth. *The Green Burial Guidebook: Everything You Need to Plan an Affordable, Environmentally Friendly Burial*. Novato, California: New World Library, 2018. The most up-to-date and helpful guide to planning natural burial in the United States.

Funeral Ethics Organization, Lisa Carlson, Executive Director. funeralethics.org A scrappy organization and website, in the tradition of Jessica Mitford, cutting through the up-selling and obfuscating patterns of the funeral industry. Fantastic individual state-by-state guides here: <http://funeralethics.org/rights.htm>

funerals.org Helpful, informative website from the Funeral Consumers Alliance, including a section on Green Burial. "We do for funeral purchases what *Consumer Reports* does for products." The main concerns of this organization are consumer rights, frugality, and simplicity. Sometimes there is tension between these values and the values of ecology or spirituality/theology.

greenburialcouncil.org The most prominent voice in promoting and certifying natural burial service providers. The site offers lists of GBC-approved service providers (burial vessels, funeral homes, cremation facilities, cemeteries). Important note: many providers are not listed in the GBC directory, so don't limit yourself to the list here. In all cases, be cautious of greenwashing.

Harris, Mark. *Grave Matters: A Journey through the Modern Funeral Industry to a Natural Way of Burial*. Scribner, 2007. An accessible overview of natural burial practices that places them on a spectrum toward the most ecologically responsible.

Holloway, Karla. *Passed on: African American Mourning Stories: A Memorial*. Duke Univ. Press, 2002. Helpful for understanding the place of the body in death, particularly in African American communities.

Kelly, Suzanne. *Greening Death: Reclaiming Burial Practices and Restoring Our Tie to the Earth*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2015. The most important and thorough account of natural burial in the United States. The book seeks to inform and gather a wide movement toward natural burial.

Kelly, Suzanne. "Dead Bodies That Matter: Toward a New Ecology of Human Death in American Culture." *Journal of American Culture* 35, no. 1 (March 2012): 37–51. Academic article charting the disassociation between bodies and the earth through American burial practices... and the promise of natural burial for reassociation.

Long, Thomas G. *Accompany Them with Singing: The Christian Funeral*. 1st ed. Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009. An outstanding theological meditation on Christian funeral practices, with strong countercultural emphasis on the significance of the body.

Lynch, Thomas. "The Holy Fire: Cremation: A Practice in Need of Ritual." *Christian Century* 127, no. 7 (Apr 2010): 22–27. Considers the spiritual/scriptural motifs for an earthy spirituality of cremation.

Mitford, Jessica. *The American Way of Death Revisited*. Rev. ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998. A controversial classic. A muck-raking journalist exposes the calculated up-selling in what appears to be the pious business of funeral homes and cemeteries.

Paulsell, Stephanie. *Honoring the Body: Meditations on a Christian Practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002. A beautiful set of essays on caring for bodies as a Christian spiritual practice. Especially relevant: the chapters on human suffering, mortality, and on bathing the body.

Quivik, Melinda. *In Sure and Certain Hope: A Funeral Sourcebook*. Augsburg Fortress, 2017. Excellent resource with cultural helps; a rite for washing, anointing, and clothing a body; and a section on natural burial by Benjamin Stewart designed to give individuals and congregations everything they need to get started on natural burial planning and/or ministries.

Ruether, Rosemary Radford. "Chapter 5: Classical Narratives of Sin and Evil." In *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*, HarperSanFrancisco, 1992. A classic account of ecotheology, in this chapter dealing with the confused association of mortality with sinfulness.

Slocum, Joshua, and Lisa Carlson. *Final Rights: Reclaiming the American Way of Death*. Upper Access, Inc., 2011. "The Bible" for understanding what is legal and possible when seeking to care for the dead with less commercial and bureaucratic artifice.

Sölle, Dorothee. *The Mystery of Death*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007. The great activist-theologian offers a meditation on the earthy spirituality of death. She wrote the book as she was dying. The unfinished manuscript was posthumously edited and brought to publication.

Stewart, Benjamin M. "Committed to the Earth: Ecotheological Dimensions of Christian Burial Practices." *Liturgy* 27, no. 2 (2012): 62–72. An academic but accessible introduction to theology of natural burial.

Stewart, Benjamin M. "Wisdom's Buried Treasure: Ecological Cosmology in Funeral Liturgies," in *Full of Your Glory: Liturgy, Cosmos, Creation*, ed. Teresa Berger, Liturgical Press Academic, 2019. An account of wisdom literature's dust-to-dust approach to death and its resonances with natural burial.

Undertaken with Love: A Home Funeral Guide for Congregations and Communities. Oak Ridge, N.C. Home Funeral Committee Manual Pub. Group, 2009. Extensive guide for beginning a home funeral committee at your congregation. (available online in free pdf)

A Will for the Woods. Browne, Amy, Jeremy Kaplan, Tony Hale, and Brian Wilson. Bullfrog Films, 2013. A powerful and at times wrenching documentary film following the decision of Clark Wang to pursue natural burial after a cancer diagnosis. Available as DVD or video download.