



UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

Burial. Visual arts

Chavannes-Mazel, C.A.

DOI

[10.1515/EBR.burial](https://doi.org/10.1515/EBR.burial)

Publication date

2012

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

Encyclopedia of the Bible and its reception. - 4: Birsha-Chariot of fire

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Chavannes-Mazel, C. A. (2012). Burial. Visual arts. In H-J. Klauck, V. Leppin, B. McGinn, C-L. Seow, H. Spieckermann, B. D. Walfish, & E. Ziolkowski (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its reception. - 4: Birsha-Chariot of fire* (pp. 637-639, pl. 7a). De Gruyter.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/EBR.burial>

General rights

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE BIBLE AND ITS RECEPTION

Acknowledgments.....	vii
Contributors.....	xi
Translators.....	xviii
Figures, Plates, and Maps.....	xxix
Abbreviations.....	xxix
Technical Abbreviations.....	xxix
Abbreviations of Ancient Sources.....	xxix
Hebrew Bible/Old Testament.....	xxix
New Testament.....	xxix
Apocrypha and Septuagint.....	xxix
Old Testament Pseudepigrapha.....	xxix
New Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha.....	xxix
Apostolic Fathers.....	xxix
Rabbinic Works.....	xxix
Abbreviations of Secondary Sources.....	xxix
Index.....	xxix
Chariot of Fire.....	xxix

4

Birsha – Chariot of Fire

De Gruyter
Berlin · Boston

© 2012 Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co.
Illustrations in cooperation with sig-images Berlin, Germany
Cover design: Martin Koch, Bremen, Germany
Typesetting: Metz Systems Publishing & Printservices GmbH, Wetzlar, Germany
Printing and binding: Huber & Co. GmbH & Co. KG, Göttingen, Germany
Printed on acid-free paper

Printed in Germany

www.degruyter.com

When Jesus dies, the text recalls images from the Gospels (the corpse wrapped in cloth, placed in a cave, women preparing perfumes and oils), but as the others discuss where to dispose of "the Gally," we find another allusion to the "donkey's burial" (see Jer 22:19), as Musa reminds them, "We have a grave. My little donkey's grave. It must be meant for him."

Bibliography: ■ Hotz, M. E., *Literary Remains: Representations of Death and Burial in Victorian England* (Albany, N.Y. 2009). ■ Loomis, R. S., *Studies in Medieval Literature* (New York 1970). ■ McGlothlin, E. H., *Second-Generation Holocaust Literature* (Rochester, N.Y. 2006). ■ Scutts, J., "Battlefield Cemeteries, Pilgrimage, and Literature after the First World War: The Burial of the Dead," *English Literature in Transition* 52/4 (2009) 387–416.

Jessica DeCou

VIII. Visual Arts

Intentional burial may be one of the earliest forms of religious practice: it implicates the concern for the dead that transcends daily life. Although human beings in their earliest existence appear to have perceived that the body was interred while the spirit had left, the burial place was a sacred one, to be marked and honored in various ways.

1. Depictions of Biblical and Legendary Burials.

a. Depictions of Biblical Burials. Owing to the lack of a typological meaning, actual moments of biblical burials are seldom a subject in the visual arts, except for Jesus' entombment (see "Burial of Jesus V. Visual Arts"). In narrative Bible illustration, they can be found sporadically, one of the earliest being a miniature of the death and burial of Isaac in the Vienna Genesis (6th cent. CE, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek MS theol.gr. 31, miniature 27). Abraham insisted on finding a proper cave in which he could bury his wife, Sarah, and for that reason, medieval Bibles illustrate her burial and sometimes Rachel's as well (History Bible, 15th cent., The Hague Royal Library 78 D 38 I, ff 26v, 35r). Gustave Doré included Sarah's burial in his extensive biblical illustration program, too.

b. Burials in Legendary Context. Many more representations emerge for legendary burials, like the burial of the Virgin (Duccio, *Burial of the Virgin* [1308–11; Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena]; Fra Angelico, *Burial of the Virgin and the Reception of Her Soul in Heaven* [1434–35; Museum of Art, Philadelphia]), burials of saints (Simone Martini, *Burial of Saint Martin* [1312–17; Church of San Francesco, Assisi]; Caravaggio, *Burial of Saint Lucy* [1608; Bellamo Museum Syracuse]; Francesco Francia, *Burial of Saint Cecily* [1504–6; Church of San Giacomo Maggiore, Bologna]), and even the burial of the cross (Arezzo; Church of San Francesco, by Giovanni da Piamonte, the assistant of Piero della Francesca, 1452–66). Generally, such representations form the end of an extensive cycle illustrating the vita of the saint and

have been intended to decorate the church dedicated to him or her.

2. The Grave and the Dead. a. Objects. Both respect for the body of the deceased and a concern for his soul in an unknown afterlife, where he might possess power over those staying behind, have generated the desire to have the human corpse buried together with material goods of all sorts. While the dead person could be helped on his journey by having some of his personal belongings buried with him, precious objects could honor him as well. Emperor Constantine reportedly had a golden cross lowered in St. Peter's grave in Rome to pay tribute to the first apostle, and Charlemagne was buried in exquisite silk with a purple evangeliary resting on his chest. In addition, Chinese emperors had a legion of soldier- and horse-figurines baked in clay to keep them company forever.

b. Death Portraits. The dead could stay alive in the mourner's mind through individualized pictures, though we do not know how such images were used. Lifelike as if the actual mummies covered by them were still alive, death portraits have been found in the region of Fayum in Egypt (1st-mid 3rd cent. CE), and these finds raise questions as to their function: were they intended for the dead or for the living? They were either made years before the mummies as panels for a picture display to be adapted in time for the burial, or they were hastily painted as a record immediately after death to be buried together with the body: archaeological evidence has not yet been able to give an answer.

Both East and West have excelled in portraits and death masks in order to control the memory of the deceased and to surround the burial itself with a common social ritual. Etruscan and Roman artists were at their best when portraying their ancestors. Leon Battista Alberti voiced this notion centuries later in his *Della pittura*, book 2 (1436): "Painting possesses a truly divine power in that not only does it make the absent present, but it also represents the dead to the living many centuries later."

3. Visualizing the Burial. a. Burial in Marble (Pleurants). Picturing the burial itself eternalizes the grief for, and remembrance of, the deceased. From Spain came the sculptured burial as part of the tomb memorial, which was taken over in all its magnificence by the Burgundian court. In Dijon, France, the mourning figures (*pleurants*) still stand, frozen in alabaster, around Philip the Bold of Burgundy lying in state (Dijon, Musée des Beaux Arts, ca. 1384–1410). In the 19th century, the famous sculptor Antonio Canova (1757–1822) emulated the idea for the cenotaph of Maria Christina of Austria in the Augustinian church in Vienna (1798–1805). Life-sized mourners in snow-white marble, their head down in grief, bring the urn inside the crypt, while on the right the angel of death watches the procession (see → plate 7.a). Generally speaking, all

burials in stone and wood are meant as public monuments.

b. Burial in Painting. Contrary to monumental sculpture, function and meaning of painted burials vary. More often than not, the funeral stands for more than the burying of a beloved one. Firstly, the miniature burials painted in Books of Hours at the beginning of the Office of the Dead invite the reader to contemplate in private the transiency of life in general, those who died before him, and his own death in particular. One of the most beautiful miniatures is Jan van Eyck's burial procession in the Turin-Milan Hours (Turin Museo Civico d'Arte Antica MS 47, ca. 1420–25): the coffin of William, Duke of Bavaria and Count of Holland, is waiting under a canopy for the Mass to end, and in the base-page the procession is under way.

El Greco's *Burial of Count Orgaz* in the Church of Santo Tomé in Toledo (1586–88) has an explicit allegorical and public content. The huge canvas (4.9 x 3.6 m) honors a knight so pious that St. Stephen and St. Augustine miraculously appear at his funeral and lower the body into its grave. The calm of the internment contrasts with the exalted emotionalism in heaven, where the little soul is awaited by a host of saints and presented to the enthroned Christ by Mary and St. John. The Roman Church in all its Counter-Reformational glory is here the intended subject of veneration.

When he painted *A Burial at Ornans* (1849–50, Paris Musée d'Orsay), however, Gustave Courbet's intention was totally different. Courbet himself called it "Painting of Human Figures, Historical Record of a Burial at Ornans." With this enormous painting (3.14 x 6.63 m), he pays homage not to the official church but to the ordinary human being. His disdain for the "frivolous art of the day" and the almighty church made him a realist, a socialist, and a firm critic. The painting caused much upheaval, attacked as too vulgar. Still 150 years later, however, it conveys the emotional grief of the villagers to the onlooker.

Bibliography: ■ Brink, L./D. Green (eds.), *Commemorating the Dead: Texts and Artifacts in Context* (Berlin/New York 2008). ■ Buren, A. H. van et al. (eds.), *Das Turin-Matländer Stundenbuch/Les Heures de Turin-Milan/The Turin-Milan Hours* (Luzern 1994–96). ■ Cormack, R., *Painting the Soul: Icons, Death Masks and Shrouds* (London 1997). ■ Davies, D. (ed.), *El Greco: Exhibition Catalogue* (London 2004). ■ Laporte, S. (ed.), *L'art à la cour de Bourgogne: Le mécénat de Philippe le Hardi et Jean sans Peur (1364–1419)* (Paris 2004). ■ Mysok, J., *Antonio Canova: Die Erneuerung der klassischen Mythen in der Kunst um 1800* (Petersberg 2007). ■ Panofsky, E., *Tomb Sculpture* (London 1992 [= 1964]).

Claudine A. Chavannes-Mazel

IX. Music

The role of music in Western Christian burials is closely linked to the development of the ritual practices which gradually took shape with a point of

departure in Jewish and Roman traditions. The rituals which emerge in the earliest detailed documentations of such practices from the Carolingian era show the role of biblical psalms and certain antiphons sung in the Office of the Dead as well as during the funeral procession and at the placing of the body in the grave. Among the items for the grave ceremony, Psalm 117 *Confitemini* (Ps 118 in English Bibles) with the antiphon *Aperite mihi portas iustitiae* ("Open the gates of justice for me," Ps 117: 19) and Psalm 50 *Miserere mei* (Ps 51 in English Bibles) with the antiphon *Dona ei, Domine, requiem sempiternam* ("Grant him eternal rest, Lord") should be mentioned, most likely based on a verse from the pseudographical 4 Ezra (2: 34). The antiphon *In paradisum deducant te angeli* ("Let angels lead you into paradise") was also sung at the procession to the grave in the Middle Ages, in more recent times this item has occasionally been included in settings of the requiem mass.

The Office of the Dead, which included Vespers, Matins, and Lauds, together with the Requiem Mass became the central elements in the rituals for the dead since ca. 800 CE. They would normally be sung on the day of the burial, but also on other days as prayers for the dead. These songs are therefore, strictly speaking, not only burial songs.

Especially items from the Requiem Mass have been set again and again in polyphony and in grand musical settings including soloists, choir, and orchestra by composers from the 15th century and up to modern times.

After the reformations of the 16th century, different traditions for burial ceremonies developed in different countries. In England, all editions of the *Book of Common Prayer* have included a Burial Service retaining much from the medieval rites (in English). A tradition for funeral anthems also developed; high points in terms of such musical settings are *Queen Mary's Funeral Music* by Purcell for the funeral of Queen Mary (1695) and Handel's funeral anthem *The Ways of Zion do Mourn*, to a text collage of biblical verses from various OT books, beginning with Lam 1: 4, e.g., including verses from the book of Job, and ending with Ps 103: 17, quoting Lutheran chorale melodies and earlier Lutheran church music, e.g., by Schütz and, notably, a 16th-century funeral motet by Jacob Handl.

In Lutheran Germany, musical traditions were open and often primarily based on Lutheran hymns. However, in some situations, important larger musical compositions were written. Heinrich Schütz' *Musicalische Exequien* (1636) was commissioned for the funeral of prince Heinrich Posthumus of Reuss: a Lutheran burial Mass based on biblical texts chosen by the prince before his death. Schütz' setting of the *Nunc dimittis* (Luke 2: 29–32) was probably also written for a funeral a few months earlier. J. S. Bach wrote music for funerals;



a) Tomb of Marie Christine of Austria (1798–1805)