

the american way of death revisited

The American Way of Death Revisited: Unpacking the Realities of Death Care in the U.S.

the american way of death revisited invites us to take a closer look at the funeral industry in the United States—its practices, costs, and cultural significance. Originally coined from Jessica Mitford's groundbreaking 1963 exposé, "The American Way of Death," this phrase has evolved over decades, highlighting the complexities and controversies surrounding death care in America. Today, revisiting this topic sheds light on how the funeral business operates, the financial burdens families face, and the growing interest in alternative end-of-life options.

Understanding the American funeral industry means more than just recognizing the rituals involved; it involves grappling with an industry that has long been criticized for its opacity and high costs. While death is a universal experience, the way Americans handle it is often shaped by commercial interests, legal frameworks, and cultural traditions. Let's explore the various facets of this subject to gain a clearer, more informed perspective.

The Evolution of Death Care in the United States

The way Americans approach death has changed significantly over the last century. In the early 1900s, families typically cared for their deceased loved ones at home. The advent of embalming during the Civil War popularized cemetery visitations and formal funerals. Over time, funeral homes became the centralized hubs for death care, offering a range of services and products that many families rely on today.

The Rise of the Funeral Industry

By the mid-20th century, funeral homes had transformed death care into a professionalized business. Jessica Mitford's original critique exposed how funeral homes capitalized on grieving families through upselling elaborate caskets, embalming, and extravagant ceremonies. Today, despite increased regulation, many of these practices persist.

The American funeral industry now generates billions annually, with companies competing in a market driven by tradition, emotion, and often, misinformation. This commercialization has led to a widespread misconception that expensive funerals are necessary, even though simpler, more affordable options exist.

Changing Attitudes Towards Death and Funerals

In recent years, there has been a noticeable shift in how people view death and funerals. Many Americans now question the traditional funeral model and seek more personalized or environmentally friendly alternatives. Options such as direct cremation, green burials, and home funerals are gaining traction as ways to honor loved ones without the high costs and formalities of conventional services.

This cultural shift is partly fueled by greater access to information online, more open conversations about death, and a desire to reduce the financial and emotional strain on families.

Decoding the Costs: Why Funerals Are So Expensive

One of the most significant issues highlighted by "the american way of death revisited" is the high cost of funerals in the U.S. The reasons behind these expenses can be complex but understanding them helps families make more informed choices.

Standard Funeral Expenses

A traditional funeral typically involves several key components, each adding to the overall cost:

- **Basic service fee:** This covers the funeral home's overhead, staff services, and administrative costs.
- **Embalming and preparation:** Embalming is often required by funeral homes for viewings, and preparation includes dressing and cosmetology for the deceased.
- **Casket:** One of the most expensive items; prices can vary widely from a few hundred dollars to several thousand.
- **Facilities and transportation:** Use of the funeral home's chapel, hearse rental, and transportation of the body.
- **Memorial or graveside service:** Costs related to the ceremony itself.
- **Cemetery expenses:** Burial plots, grave opening and closing fees, and headstones or markers.

Hidden Fees and Upselling

An important aspect to consider is the potential for hidden fees or pressure to purchase additional products. Funeral directors may suggest expensive urns, elaborate floral arrangements, or premium caskets, which increase the final bill. Many families are not fully aware of their options or rights, leading to unnecessary spending.

The Federal Trade Commission's Funeral Rule mandates transparency and gives consumers the right to receive itemized price lists and choose only the services they want. However, not everyone is aware of these protections.

Alternatives to Traditional Funerals: Exploring New Options

As awareness grows about the cost and environmental impact of conventional funerals, alternative death care options have become more popular.

Direct Cremation

Direct cremation skips the traditional funeral service and embalming, offering a straightforward and affordable option. The body is cremated soon after death, and families can hold memorials at their convenience. This method significantly reduces costs and is often preferred by those seeking simplicity.

Green Burials and Eco-Friendly Funerals

Green burials emphasize minimal environmental impact by avoiding embalming chemicals, using biodegradable caskets, and forgoing concrete vaults. This method supports natural decomposition and conserves land. It appeals to environmentally conscious individuals looking for a meaningful way to return to the earth.

Home Funerals and Family-Led Services

Home funerals involve caring for the deceased at home, allowing families to take a more hands-on role in the process. This practice fosters intimacy and can reduce costs by eliminating funeral home service fees. While less common, it is gaining attention as people seek more personalized and culturally sensitive death care.

The Cultural and Emotional Dimensions of Death Care in America

Beyond costs and logistics, "the american way of death revisited" also encourages reflection on how Americans emotionally and culturally process death.

The Role of Rituals and Traditions

Funerals serve multiple purposes: honoring the deceased, providing closure, and bringing communities together. Rituals—whether religious ceremonies, military honors, or cultural customs—help families navigate grief and celebrate life. Understanding this emotional context is crucial when discussing alternatives to traditional funerals.

Grief, Transparency, and Consumer Empowerment

Navigating death care is often overwhelming, especially for those grieving. The more transparent the industry becomes, the better equipped families are to make choices that reflect their values and financial realities. Advocating for consumer rights and open conversations about death can help demystify the process and reduce exploitation.

Practical Tips for Planning and Managing Funeral Arrangements

If you find yourself responsible for a loved one's funeral planning, there are several strategies to make the process smoother and more affordable:

1. **Request itemized price lists:** Don't hesitate to ask funeral homes for detailed costs before committing.
2. **Compare providers:** Shop around, including crematories and cemeteries, to find the best fit and price.
3. **Consider pre-planning:** Arranging your own funeral in advance can alleviate stress for family members and lock in prices.
4. **Explore alternative options:** Don't feel obligated to choose a full traditional funeral; ask about direct cremation or green burial possibilities.
5. **Know your rights:** Familiarize yourself with the Federal Trade Commission's Funeral Rule to avoid unnecessary charges.

Understanding these points empowers consumers to make informed decisions that honor their loved ones while respecting their budgets and wishes.

The conversation surrounding "the american way of death revisited" is evolving, reflecting broader shifts in how Americans confront mortality, grief, and financial realities. By exploring the historical context, industry practices, and emerging alternatives, families can better navigate this deeply personal journey with clarity and compassion. Whether choosing a traditional funeral or exploring eco-friendly options, the key lies in informed choices that align with values and needs.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is 'The American Way of Death Revisited' about?

'The American Way of Death Revisited' is a book by Jessica Mitford that exposes the funeral industry's practices in the United States, highlighting issues of overcharging, unnecessary services, and lack of transparency.

Who is the author of 'The American Way of Death Revisited'?

Jessica Mitford is the author of 'The American Way of Death Revisited.' She was an investigative journalist known for her critical exposés.

When was 'The American Way of Death Revisited' published?

The original book was published in 1963, and the revisited edition was released in 1998 to update the information and address changes in the funeral industry.

What are some major criticisms Jessica Mitford makes in the book?

Mitford criticizes the funeral industry for exploiting grieving families through high prices, unnecessary services, aggressive sales tactics, and lack of regulation.

How did 'The American Way of Death Revisited' impact the funeral industry?

The book raised public awareness, leading to increased consumer protections, regulations, and more transparency in funeral pricing and services.

Is 'The American Way of Death Revisited' still relevant today?

Yes, the book remains relevant as it sheds light on consumer rights and ethical concerns in the funeral industry, which still faces criticism and regulatory challenges.

What changes did Jessica Mitford suggest for the funeral industry?

Mitford advocated for better consumer education, government regulation, transparent pricing, and simpler, less expensive funeral options.

Does the book discuss alternatives to traditional funerals?

Yes, Mitford discusses alternatives such as direct cremation and simpler burial options as cost-effective and less exploitative choices.

How does 'The American Way of Death Revisited' approach

the topic of grief?

While focusing on industry practices, the book also acknowledges the vulnerability of grieving families and the importance of protecting them from exploitation.

Where can I read 'The American Way of Death Revisited'?

The book is available in libraries, bookstores, and online platforms such as Amazon and Google Books in both print and digital formats.

Additional Resources

The American Way of Death Revisited: An Investigative Review

the american way of death revisited remains a pivotal work in understanding the complex and often controversial landscape of the funeral industry in the United States. Originally authored by Jessica Mitford in 1963, this book exposed the predatory practices and hidden costs that dominate American funeral services. Decades later, Mitford's follow-up, **The American Way of Death Revisited**, re-examines the industry with fresh insights, updated data, and a critical eye toward how much – or how little – has changed in the decades since her initial exposé.

This article delves into the core themes and revelations of **The American Way of Death Revisited**, providing an analytical perspective on its enduring relevance within the modern death care system. By exploring the book's investigative findings, industry critiques, and the evolving consumer landscape, we shed light on the controversial business model that continues to shape American attitudes toward death, burial, and memorialization.

The Legacy and Impact of The American Way of Death Revisited

Jessica Mitford's original **The American Way of Death** was groundbreaking for its fearless critique of funeral directors and morticians who often exploited grieving families by inflating prices and pushing unnecessary services. When Mitford revisited the subject nearly 30 years later, her updated analysis reaffirmed many of the original allegations, highlighting persistent issues of transparency, cost gouging, and lack of regulatory oversight.

The book's investigative approach uncovers how the funeral industry capitalizes on emotional vulnerability, often leading consumers to make decisions under pressure without understanding their rights or alternative options. Mitford's revisitation is not simply a nostalgic reflection but a sobering reminder that despite increased public awareness and some regulatory changes, the fundamental challenges within the American death care system endure.

Economic Realities of the Funeral Industry

One of the most compelling aspects of **The American Way of Death Revisited** is its detailed

breakdown of funeral costs and the economic incentives driving the industry. Mitford highlights that the average funeral can cost upwards of \$7,000, a figure that has only risen with inflation and increasing demand for elaborate services. Beyond the obvious components such as caskets and embalming, many families face hidden fees for “essential” services that are often optional or overpriced.

Mitford’s investigation reveals that funeral homes benefit from vertically integrated business models where they not only sell funeral services but also operate cemeteries, sell headstones, and even handle cremation in-house. This consolidation allows for a significant markup on ancillary products, which consumers may not realize they can obtain independently at lower costs.

Transparency and Consumer Rights

A critical theme in **The American Way of Death Revisited** is the pervasive lack of transparency in price structures. Funeral homes are not always forthcoming with itemized pricing, making it difficult for consumers to make informed decisions. The book underscores the importance of the Federal Trade Commission’s (FTC) Funeral Rule, enacted in 1984, which mandates funeral homes to provide clear, itemized price lists and prohibits deceptive practices.

However, Mitford’s research shows that despite such regulations, enforcement can be inconsistent. Some funeral homes continue to obscure costs or pressure consumers to purchase unnecessary services. The author advocates for increased consumer education, encouraging individuals to ask direct questions, compare prices, and consider alternatives such as direct cremation or green burials.

Changing Trends in American Death Care

Since the publication of **The American Way of Death Revisited**, there has been a notable shift in how Americans approach death and funeral planning. Increased interest in pre-planning, cremation, and eco-friendly alternatives reflects evolving cultural attitudes and economic considerations. Mitford’s revisitation touches on these emerging trends, analyzing their impact on traditional funeral homes and the industry at large.

Cremation and Alternative Burial Methods

Cremation rates in the United States have surged dramatically over recent decades, with the National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA) reporting that nearly 56% of funerals in 2023 involved cremation, compared to around 10% in the 1960s. This shift is partly due to cremation’s lower cost, simplicity, and flexibility in memorialization. Mitford’s book acknowledges this trend as a challenge to the conventional casket-and-cemetery model but also points out how some funeral providers have adapted by offering premium cremation services that still command high prices.

Green burials and natural funerals represent another growing movement that counters the traditional funeral industry’s practices. By foregoing embalming and concrete vaults, green burials emphasize environmental sustainability and cost reduction. Though still niche, these alternatives reflect a desire among consumers for more personalized and less commercialized death care, a sentiment that

echoes the critiques Mitford raised about the commodification of grief.

Technology and Funeral Planning

The rise of digital tools and online resources has transformed how Americans research and plan funerals. Websites offering price comparisons, reviews, and direct purchase options empower consumers to bypass conventional funeral homes, potentially reducing costs and increasing transparency. Mitford's revisited analysis, while predating many of these technological advances, anticipates the ongoing need for empowerment through information.

Additionally, digital memorialization—such as online obituaries, virtual memorial services, and social media tributes—has redefined mourning and remembrance. These innovations challenge the traditional in-person rituals that have long been a cornerstone of American funerals, suggesting a complex evolution in cultural practices surrounding death.

Critical Reflections on The American Way of Death Revisited

While **The American Way of Death Revisited** remains a foundational critique of the funeral industry, some critics argue that the book's tone can veer toward cynicism, potentially overshadowing genuine efforts by many funeral professionals who prioritize ethical practices and compassionate care. The death care industry is not monolithic, and regional differences, nonprofit funeral homes, and family-run operations often provide more transparent and affordable services.

Moreover, regulatory improvements and consumer advocacy groups have made strides since Mitford's first investigation. Organizations such as the Funeral Consumers Alliance and the NFDA's own consumer education initiatives have contributed to raising awareness about funeral costs and options. Nevertheless, the core issues of price opacity and emotional vulnerability remain challenging to fully resolve.

- **Pros of the American Funeral Industry:** Provides comprehensive services, offers professional support during grief, and maintains cultural rituals.
- **Cons:** High costs, lack of transparency, potential for exploitative practices, and limited consumer protections in some states.

This nuanced understanding is vital for consumers navigating their options and for policymakers seeking to balance industry viability with consumer protections.

Relevance for Today's Consumers

For readers and consumers today, **The American Way of Death Revisited** serves as a cautionary tale

and an educational resource. The book encourages individuals to approach funeral planning with a critical eye, to research and compare costs meticulously, and to consider alternative options that align with their values and budgets.

By demystifying the funeral industry's pricing and marketing tactics, Mitford's revisited work empowers consumers to reclaim agency in a process too often clouded by grief and confusion. This empowerment is particularly crucial in a society where death is frequently sanitized or avoided in conversation, leaving many ill-prepared to make financially and emotionally sound decisions.

In revisiting Jessica Mitford's incisive exploration of the American funeral industry, it becomes clear that despite societal and technological changes, many of the systemic issues she identified persist. The blend of tradition, commerce, regulation, and evolving cultural attitudes creates a complex landscape in which consumers must navigate carefully. *The American Way of Death Revisited* remains not only a critical historical document but a relevant guide for anyone seeking clarity and fairness in the final rites of life.

[The American Way Of Death Revisited](#)

the american way of death revisited: The American Way of Death Revisited Jessica Mitford, 2011-11-23 Only the scathing wit and searching intelligence of Jessica Mitford could turn an exposé of the American funeral industry into a book that is at once deadly serious and side-splittingly funny. When first published in 1963, this landmark of investigative journalism became a runaway bestseller and resulted in legislation to protect grieving families from the unscrupulous sales practices of those in the dismal trade. Just before her death in 1996, Mitford thoroughly revised and updated her classic study. The American Way of Death Revisited confronts new trends, including the success of the profession's lobbyists in Washington, inflated cremation costs, the telemarketing of pay-in-advance graves, and the effects of monopolies in a death-care industry now dominated by multinational corporations. With its hard-nosed consumer activism and a satiric vision out of Evelyn Waugh's novel *The Loved One*, *The American Way of Death Revisited* will not fail to inform, delight, and disturb. Brilliant--hilarious. . . . A must-read for anyone planning to throw a funeral in their lifetime.--New York Post Witty and penetrating--it speaks the truth.--The Washington Post

the american way of death revisited: The American Way of Death Revisited Jessica Mitford, 1998 An updated edition of a work first published in the early 1960s, this is a study of the USA's funeral practices. Its celebrated and now deceased English author argues that, if anything, the industry has become more pernicious than ever in its assault on the American people's customs and wallets.

the american way of death revisited: Summary of Jessica Mitford's The American Way of Death Revisited Everest Media,, 2022-06-13T22:59:00Z Please note: This is a companion version & not the original book. Sample Book Insights: #1 The funeral industry is a sales industry, and the funeral directors are the salesmen. They long to be liked and understood, and they want to be worthy of high regard. They are preying on the grief, remorse, and guilt of survivors, or they are trained professionals with high ethical standards. #2 The funeral industry is suffering from a lack of image and identity. To solve this, Dakota Tom recommends that funeral directors and suppliers produce fifteen- to thirty-second commercials which affirms the personality of the industry. #3 The American Way of Death was a best-seller, and funeral service went on a diet from which it never

recovered. Enoch Glascock, who had worked in mortuary school, explained that funeral homes should do something positive about themselves. #4 There are many ways to gain name recognition and patronage. One method is to give turkeys at Thanksgiving and Christmas to deserving families, which allows everyone to participate.

the american way of death revisited: The Columbia History of Post-World War II

America Mark C Carnes, 2007-07-06 Beginning with an analysis of cultural themes and ending with a discussion of evolving and expanding political and corporate institutions, The Columbia History of Post-World War II America addresses changes in America's response to the outside world; the merging of psychological states and social patterns in memorial culture, scandal culture, and consumer culture; the intersection of social practices and governmental policies; the effect of technological change on society and politics; and the intersection of changing belief systems and technological development, among other issues. Many had feared that Orwellian institutions would crush the individual in the postwar era, but a major theme of this book is the persistence of individuality and diversity. Trends toward institutional bigness and standardization have coexisted with and sometimes have given rise to a countervailing pattern of individualized expression and consumption. Today Americans are exposed to more kinds of images and music, choose from an infinite variety of products, and have a wide range of options in terms of social and sexual arrangements. In short, they enjoy more ways to express their individuality despite the ascendancy of immense global corporations, and this volume imaginatively explores every facet of this unique American experience.

the american way of death revisited: Women and the Material Culture of Death Beth Fowkes

Tobin, 2017-07-05 Examining the compelling and often poignant connection between women and the material culture of death, this collection focuses on the objects women make, the images they keep, the practices they use or are responsible for, and the places they inhabit and construct through ritual and custom. Women's material practices, ranging from wearing mourning jewelry to dressing the dead, stitching memorial samplers to constructing skull boxes, collecting funeral programs to collecting and studying diseased hearts, making and collecting taxidermies, and making sculptures honoring the death, are explored in this collection as well as women's affective responses and sentimental labor that mark their expected and unexpected participation in the social practices surrounding death and the dead. The largely invisible work involved in commemorating and constructing narratives and memorials about the dead—from family members and friends to national figures—calls attention to the role women as memory keepers for families, local communities, and the nation. Women have tended to work collaboratively, making, collecting, and sharing objects that conveyed sentiments about the deceased, whether human or animal, as well as the identity of mourners. Death is about loss, and many of the mourning practices that women have traditionally and are currently engaged in are about dealing with private grief and public loss as well as working to mitigate the more general anxiety that death engenders about the impermanence of life.

the american way of death revisited: The Afterlife in Popular Culture Kevin O'Neill,

2022-06-17 The Afterlife in Popular Culture: Heaven, Hell, and the Underworld in the American Imagination gives students a fresh look at how Americans view the afterlife, helping readers understand how it's depicted in popular culture. What happens to us when we die? The book seeks to explore how that question has been answered in American popular culture. It begins with five framing essays that provide historical and intellectual background on ideas about the afterlife in Western culture. These essays are followed by more than 100 entries, each focusing on specific cultural products or authors that feature the afterlife front and center. Entry topics include novels, film, television shows, plays, works of nonfiction, graphic novels, and more, all of which address some aspect of what may await us after our passing. This book is unique in marrying a historical overview of the afterlife with detailed analyses of particular cultural products, such as films and novels. In addition, it covers these topics in nonspecialist language, written with a student audience in mind. The book provides historical context for contemporary depictions of the afterlife addressed in the entries, which deal specifically with work produced in the 20th and 21st centuries.

the american way of death revisited: Encyclopedia of Death and the Human Experience

Clifton D. Bryant, Dennis L. Peck, 2009-07-15 Death and dying and death-related behavior involve the causes of death and the nature of the actions and emotions surrounding death among the living. Interest in the varied dimensions of death and dying has led to the development of death studies that move beyond medical research to include behavioral science disciplines and practitioner-oriented fields. As a result of this interdisciplinary interest, the literature in the field has proliferated. This two-volume resource addresses the traditional death and dying-related topics but also presents a unique focus on the human experience to create a new dimension to the study of death and dying. With more than 300 entries, the Encyclopedia of Death and the Human Experience includes the complex cultural beliefs and traditions and the institutionalized social rituals that surround dying and death, as well as the array of emotional responses relating to bereavement, grieving, and mourning. The Encyclopedia is enriched through important multidisciplinary contributions and perspectives as it arranges, organizes, defines, and clarifies a comprehensive list of death-related perspectives, concepts, and theories. Key Features Imparts significant insight into the process of dying and the phenomenon of death Includes contributors from Asia,; Africa; Australia; Canada; China; eastern, southern, and western Europe; Iceland; Scandinavia; South America; and the United States who offer important interdisciplinary and cross-cultural perspectives Provides a special focus on the cultural artifacts and social institutions and practices that constitute the human experience Addresses death-related terms and concepts such as angel makers, equivocal death, end-of-life decision making, near-death experiences, cemeteries, ghost photography, halo nurses, caregiver stress, cyberfunerals, global religious beliefs and traditions, and death denial Presents a selective use of figures, tables, and images Key Themes Arts, Media, and Popular Culture Perspectives Causes of Death Conceptualization of Death, Dying, and the Human Experience Coping With Loss and Grief: The Human Experience Cross-Cultural Perspectives Cultural-Determined, Social-Oriented, and Violent Forms of Death Developmental and Demographic Perspectives Funerals and Death-Related Activities Legal Matters Process of Dying, Symbolic Rituals, Ceremonies, and Celebrations of Life Theories and Concepts Unworldly Entities and Events With an array of topics that include traditional subjects and important emerging ideas, the Encyclopedia of Death and the Human Experience is the ultimate resource for students, researchers, academics, and others interested in this intriguing area of study.

the american way of death revisited: *Peace At The Last* Robert Atwell, 2014-09-12 Until relatively recently a Church of England funeral was the default option of the majority of the British population. This is no longer the case. Exploring what makes a good funeral, Robert Atwell suggests many practical ways in which the church can become better at conducting funerals and engaging with those who seek pastoral support.

the american way of death revisited: *The Truth about Death and Dying* Karen Meyers, Robert N. Golden, Fred Peterson, 2009 Offers clear and concise information and covers the many issues, feelings, and processes that relate to death and dying.

the american way of death revisited: *The Living Church*, 1999

the american way of death revisited: *Work of Love* Leonard J. DeLorenzo, 2017-02-02 The saints are good company. They are the heroes of the faith who blazed new and creative paths to holiness; they are the witnesses whose testimonies echo throughout the ages in the memory of the Church. Most Christians, and particularly Catholics, are likely to have their own favorite saints, those who inspire and “speak” to believers as they pray and struggle through the challenges of their own lives. Leonard DeLorenzo’s book addresses the idea of the communion of saints, rather than individual saints, with the conviction that what makes the saints holy and what forms them into a communion is one and the same. *Work of Love* investigates the issue of communication within the *communio sanctorum* and the fullness of Christian hope in the face of the meaning—or meaninglessness—of death. In an effort to revitalize a theological topic that for much of Catholic history has been an indelible part of the Catholic imaginary, DeLorenzo invokes the ideas of not only many theological figures (Rahner, Ratzinger, Balthasar, and de Lubac, among others) but also

historians, philosophers (notably Heidegger and Nietzsche), and literary figures (Rilke and Dante) to create a rich tableau. By working across several disciplines, DeLorenzo argues for a vigorous renewal in the Christian imagination of the theological concept of the communion of saints. He concludes that the embodied witness of the saints themselves, as well as the liturgical and devotional movements of the Church at prayer, testifies to the central importance of the communion of saints as the eschatological hope and fulfillment of the promises of Christ.

the american way of death revisited: *Death Rights and Rites* Judith Karen Fenley, Oberon Zell, 2020-11-08 Reclaim the Right to a Sacred, Sustainable Death Exploring the spiritual and legal aspects of alternative death-ways, home funerals, and green burial *Death Rights and Rites* presents practical information and questions for approaching death and dying with a sense of sacred meaning. You will discover ideas for navigating the spiritual and legal issues related to home-based dying, home funerals, and alternative burial methods. Reverend Judith Karen Fenley offers insights into approaching relevant legal frameworks with respect while assisting your loved one in ways that support the best medical care, the natural environment, and the emotional needs of the community. Explore ideas for memorial services and ways to be open to spontaneous rituals for letting go, preparing for death, being at peace, and more. It is possible to manifest your deepest values before, during, and after death. *Death Rights and Rites* shares examples and provides support as you explore final transitions that are environmentally conscious and spiritually meaningful. Includes a foreword by Jerrigrace Lyons, founder of Final Passages: The Institute of Conscious Dying, Home Funeral & Green Burial Education and an epilogue by Oberon Zell, cofounder of the Church of All Worlds

the american way of death revisited: *The Last Enemy to Be Destroyed* Ralph K. Hawkins, 2024-11-11 Sooner or later, we are all faced with death and are left asking whether death has the last word. The Bible does not pretend that death is not a problem, but instead views it as an enemy that has invaded God's world and torments humankind. The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ has triumphed over death, but there is debate about when that triumph will be realized. The apostle Paul says that death will be "the last enemy to be destroyed" (1 Cor 15:26), and the author of the letter to the Hebrews says that, ironically, it was "by his death" that Jesus "broke the power of death" (Heb 2:14). *The Last Enemy to Be Destroyed* will take readers on a guided tour of the progressive revelation from the garden of Eden, where the fall occurred and death first entered the world, to the last days, when the general resurrection will occur and death will finally be defeated once and for all. It will encourage anyone who has either lost a loved one or received a frightening diagnosis themselves. Readers will be assured that there will come a day when the last enemy, death, will be defeated, and we will be redeemed.

the american way of death revisited: *The Future of the Corpse* Karla Rothstein, Christina Staudt, 2021-10-22 This book reviews the spectrum of death, from when the living person turns to corpse until the person lives in the memory of mourners, and its impact on the ecology of the socio-cultural community and physical environment. This book demonstrates that American society today is in a pivotal period for re-imaging end-of-life care, funerary services, human disposition methods, memorializing, and mourning. The editors and contributors outline the past, present, and future of death care rituals, pointing to promising new practices and innovative projects that show how we can better integrate the dying and dead with the living and create positive change that supports sustainable stewardship of our environment. Individual chapters describe prevailing practices and issues in different settings where people die and in postmortem rituals; disposition and current ecologically and, in urban areas, spatially unsustainable methods; law of human remains; customs and trends among key stakeholders, such as cemeteries and funeral directors; and relevant technological advances. The book culminates in a presentation of emerging sustainable disposition technologies and innovative designs for proposed public memorial projects that respond to shifting values, beliefs, and priorities among an increasingly diverse population.

the american way of death revisited: *Death, Dying and Bereavement in a Changing World* Alan R. Kemp, 2015-10-16 This title takes a comprehensive approach, exploring the physical,

social, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of death, dying, and bereavement. Through personal stories from real people, *Death, Dying, and Bereavement* provides readers with a context for understanding their changing encounters with such difficult concepts.

the american way of death revisited: Faithful Living, Faithful Dying End of Life Task Force of the Standing Commission on National Concerns, 2000-02 An important examination of the theological, spiritual, and ethical issues surrounding death. At the end of a life of faithfulness comes our dying. To approach it as faithfully as we have our living calls for some serious forethought. Because one of the simplest facts of life—that we all die—seems like the most complicated thing we do. Not only have advances in medical technology saved lives, but they also have prolonged death, and raise a number ethical, moral, social, and theological issues. How far should we go to sustain life? Is it right to withdraw artificial feeding from the dying? Is it wrong to end the lives of those in pain? No matter who we are, dealing with these sorts of choices near the end of life is difficult to do on our own. *Faithful Living, Faithful Dying: Anglican Reflections on End of Life Care* brings together the wisdom of a task force created by the 72nd General Convention of the Episcopal Church to study what faithful living and faithful dying mean today. The task force's reflections, published for the first time in this book, assist individuals, congregations, and the Church as a whole to disentangle the thicket of ethical, theological, pastoral, and policy concerns.

the american way of death revisited: Death, Dying, and Bereavement in a Changing World Alan Kemp, 2018-11-02 In this introductory text on thanatology, Alan Kemp continues to take on the central question of mortality: the centrality of death coupled with the denial of death in the human experience. Drawing from the work of Ernest Becker, *Death, Dying, and Bereavement in a Changing World* provides a multidisciplinary and multidimensional approach to the study of death, putting extra emphasis on the how death takes place in a rapidly changing world. This new, second edition includes the most up-to-date research, data, and figures related to death and dying. New research on the alternative death movement, natural disaster-related deaths, and cannabis as a form of treatment for life-threatening illnesses, and updated research on physician-assisted suicide, as well as on grief as it relates to the DSM-5 have been added.

the american way of death revisited: Making Sense Of: Dying and Death, 2004-01-01 This book aims to extend upon the growing body of literature concerned with dying and death. The book analyses various experiences and representations of dying and death from the perspective of academic disciplines as diverse as theology, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and literature. The rationale for this is simple. As objects of study dying and death cannot be usefully reduced to a single academic perspective. One cannot hope to gain a deep and comprehensive understanding of dying and death by gazing at them through a single lens. Bringing various perspectives in a single volume aims to both accurately record those enduring properties of the phenomena, such as mourning and fear, whilst simultaneously analysing the diversity and heterogeneity of human beings' attempts to come to terms with this most forbidding of existential horizons.

the american way of death revisited: Performing Loss Jodi Kanter, 2007-11-13 In *Performing Loss: Rebuilding Community through Theater and Writing*, author Jodi Kanter explores opportunities for creativity and growth within our collective responses to grief. *Performing Loss* provides teachers, students, and others interested in performance with strategies for reading, writing, and performing loss as communities—in the classroom, the theater, and the wider public sphere. From an adaptation of Jose Saramago's novel *Blindness* to a reading of Suzan-Lori Parks's *The America Play*, from Kanter's own experience creating theater with terminally ill patients and federal prisoners to a visual artist's response to September 11th, Kanter shows in practical, replicable detail how performing loss with community members can transform experiences of isolation and paralysis into experiences of solidarity and action. Drawing on academic work in performance, cultural studies, literature, sociology, and anthropology, Kanter considers a range of responses to grief in historical context and goes on to imagine newer, more collaborative, and more civically engaged responses. *Performing Loss* describes Kanter's pedagogical and artistic processes in lively and vivid detail, enabling the reader to use her projects as models or to adapt the

techniques to new communities, venues, and purposes. Kanter demonstrates through each example the ways in which writing and performing can create new possibilities for mourning and living together.

the american way of death revisited: Purified by Fire Stephen Prothero, 2001-02-15 Just one hundred years ago, Americans almost universally condemned cremation. Today, nearly one-quarter of Americans choose to be cremated. The practice has gained wide acceptance as a funeral rite, in both our private and public lives, as the cremations of icons such as John Lennon and John F. Kennedy Jr. show. Purified by Fire tells the fascinating story of cremation's rise from notoriety to legitimacy and takes a provocative new look at important transformations in the American cultural landscape over the last 150 years. Stephen Prothero synthesizes a wide array of previously untapped source material, including newspapers, consumer guides, mortician trade journals, and popular magazines such as Reader's Digest to provide this first historical study of cremation in the United States. He vividly describes many noteworthy events—from the much-criticized first American cremation in 1876 to the death and cremation of Jerry Garcia in the late twentieth century. From the Gilded Age to the Progressive Era to the baby boomers of today, this book takes us on a tour through American culture and traces our changing attitudes toward death, religion, public health, the body, and the environment.

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