

Preface

Since the dawn of humanity, post-mortem wellness consulting has been a much sought-after occupation by those weary of engaging in prosaic endeavors that involve the production of worldly goods and the provision of actual services. Although worldly goods and actual services provide humans with concrete benefits while alive, efforts to produce and provide them are often not as handsomely rewarded as the marketing of wellness after death and, worse still, require real work—an infelicitous feature that renders them unattractive to work-averse people.

Tired of responsibly tending to the needs of living humans for years to earn an honest wage and keen on finding easier—but still legal—means of income, I decided to search for lucrative opportunities in assisting people with their quest for wellness after death. Marveling at the hundreds of books that multifarious experts publish every year to help people assure their souls' well-being and lacking experience in the oral presentation of divine instructions and commands, I surmised the printed word could be a good medium to convey my yet-to-be-acquired expertise on wellness in the afterlife.

Familiar with disciplines featuring similar motley instructions to religion, like sorcery and economics, I promptly realized that there was ample room in post-mortem wellness counseling for more comprehensive literary works, such as a periodically updated handbook compiling—from all extant and, just in case, extinct religions—the best practices for the salvation of the soul. With it, believers of all faiths, whether believing in the one true religion or in false ones, would assure salvation for their soul and avoid nagging doubts about having made the wrong choice. Moreover, they would need not peruse countless holy books or screen dozens of publications to keep up with conduct norms in old and new religions alike, saving time, effort, money, and, of course, their souls.

My handbook would also save believers shelf space in their libraries, replacing obsolete editions of soul-saving guides of limited scope and uncertain value—as well as holy books written in archaic languages—with a single, brand-new book with updated provisions in easy-to-read, contemporary writing. Furthermore, if handsomely bound in a shiny vinyl fabric in a choice of pastel colors, readers could buy it in a shade that best coordinates with their living room décor and display it on their coffee table.

Not a person to take dead people lightly, especially in a handbook on their well-being intended to appeal to billions of potential buyers, I first undertook, in earnest, the complex task of clearly understanding that which it must help save—the soul. Lacking one, I drew upon my dictionary for a definition and discovered that the soul is the immaterial part of a human being or animal. Since animals cannot read, do not manage money, and hence would not buy the handbook, I decided it would strictly focus on saving the human soul—until such time when animals become literate and enjoy disposable income. Satisfied that further characterizing the soul was neither necessary nor possible once I learned that it was immaterial, I also decided to let the people who do have one imagine it in whichever way they wish.

The second question that came to mind as a conscientious, soul-salvation handbook writer was, of course, from whom must the handbook help its readers save their souls. Ideally, the handbook would give readers comprehensive advice for saving their souls from all currently active and sadly departed deities. For this purpose, it was not enough for me, as a responsible scholar, to again resort to my dictionary; instead, I had to examine every religion's doctrine for the salvation requirements their deities set. However, upon learning that thousands of religions exist, and being not only a

responsible person but also a realistic one, I decided souls be damned: I could not, in good conscience, write a handbook for their salvation. Besides the task's tediousness, there is no way humans can comply with so many different and often conflicting godly requirements, so no matter how hard I strived, my readers' souls would inevitably end up in some religion's hell—or, in all probability, in quite a few of them.

Recalling a religious friend's experience with the effectiveness of prayer, whose requests were always granted when he prayed not to win the lottery but never when he prayed to win it, I initially thought that the sensible thing was to instead write a handbook to help believers damn their souls. With such a goal in mind, I could assure readers that they would always get their money's worth, even when paying full price for a new copy. Furthermore, as a soul-damnation-guide writer, I would not be competing with millions of soul saviors. Upon realizing that compiling prohibitions from all extant and extinct religions would encompass every human thought and action, I inquired into the commercial potential of a book titled *What You Need to Damn Your Soul* with the text, "To be alive," on a single page between its covers—but I received negative feedback.

After being further told that adding a second page instructing readers to intentionally end their lives to save their future dead selves, as well as another page with a table of contents, would not improve the book's prospects, I realized that I would have to find another way to profitably enter the post-mortem wellness consulting business if the dead were to benefit from my assistance. Happily, comparing consulting services for the dead with those for living people revealed a unique feature: people pay again and again until death for such guidance. Unlike apprentices in other fields of knowledge, those learning about how to achieve wellness when dead never graduate. Post-mortem wellness consultants and their customers maintain a symbiotic relationship for life, one in which the consultants procure wellness for customers after death and customers procure wellness for the consultants before it.

However, this sophisticated business model, of which its best practices were developed in prehistory by wise and cultured people privy to the ways and mores of the dead and perfected by consultants for millennia through practices like deception, intimidation, coercion, extortion, torture, and human sacrifice, seems to have run its course: people accustomed to instant gratification in modern societies do not want to wait until death for confirmation that they will enjoy wellness when their life ends. This book hence provides a novel, alternative approach in that it answers frequently asked questions about death as an existential condition, provides readers with a rest-in-peace-while-dead technique, and dispels all doubts about humans' peaceful status when lifeless. Furthermore, the book's unconditional perennial satisfaction guarantee lets readers continue with their temporal life without any uncertainty about their future when dead, stop gifting monies to soul saviors and soul-salvation-guide writers, and go on vacation instead.

Since the book may thus lead to reduced overall revenues in the post-mortem wellness consulting business, clerics may want to buy and delete multiple copies of the digital edition to prevent their customers from reading it. Should an irresistible urge to peek into its contents strike them, I warn them against doing so without permission from their superiors. On the other hand, people who will mourn the demise of the present era's foremost source of amusement may want to delay it by purchasing and burning multiple copies of the printed edition. They can do so without fear of retaliation and with a discount at the point of purchase. I remind prospective readers with partners that relationships are fleeting nowadays, so it is best to buy two copies to avoid haggling over one when breaking up.

Out of concern for my well-being while alive, especially regarding the integrity of my cervical vertebrae, I have not sought authorization for publishing this book from authorities in the Nation of Brunei, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, or other countries under Sharia law. Neither have I sought authorization from other entities under the command of wrathful immaterial aliens. Moreover, I acknowledge writing the book's contents, but I explicitly and unequivocally state that I do not

authorize them. This book, therefore, is thoroughly and unconditionally unauthorized at its origin, so nobody anywhere needs to unauthorize it further.

In pursuit of my mission to bring wellness after death to readers, I often refer to knowledge about reality acquired through science unavailable to writers of holy books. Fully aware that some believers will find my conduct discourteous, I remind them that I am not to blame for reality—it is what it is; I did not make it that way. For those readers' benefit, I have set up a section on the book's website called the whineryⁱ, where they can vent their frustration at reality not conforming with their beliefs. In this section, they can highlight what offends them about reality, whine about it to their heart's content, and instruct scientists on what to find when they examine it and how to rearrange the Universe to conform to their expectations or holy writings.

To the extent of my knowledge, no papal bull, fatwa, or religious decree of any kind has yet been issued condemning readers' souls, spirits, auras, or emanations on account of this book insufficiently annoying—despite my steadfast efforts—clerics and theologians everywhere. Nevertheless, I remind readers that keeping good relations with fickle supernatural beings is of the utmost importance for their well-being while alive, and I advise them to hide the book when in the company of their zealous representatives or passionate, fundamentalist believers. As the new leading expert on wellness after death, however, I personally guarantee readers of all religious persuasions that, once they die, there is nothing for them to fear. Nothing.

ⁱ Nursery for crybabies.