

Soul Sleep –

What does the Bible teach us about the nature of the dead?

..the end of the ages has come - *1 Cor. 10: 1 1*

The promised restoration which we are awaiting has already begun in Christ, His Body – The Church

This is a Catholic response to the Seventh-day Adventist question about the nature of death with the following SDA publications and other 'soul sleep' believers in mind.

Seventh-day Adventists **pamphlet** : Solving the Mystery of Death, by Steve Wolberg

Seventh-day Adventists **book** : Solving the Mystery of Death, by Howard Peth

CRAM – Luke Wayne

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1. Jesus Says It As It Is

The Bible tells us in Romans 3: 23 that all have disobeyed the Lord; all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God; fallen away from the Lord. From Adam and Eve, to Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, even King David and the prophets, even though some were righteous, all sinned and were longing for the salvation to be brought about through Christ's death and resurrection so that they may enter heaven and live forever with Christ Jesus, seeing God Face to face, which is called the 'Beatific Vision', from the word beatitude; see the beatitudes in Matt 5: 3-11.

The Bible teaches us that we do not get a 'resurrected body' until Christ's Second Coming. Jesus Christ Himself said, in His own preaching, and recorded in Luke's Gospel, Luke 20: 34-39, that those who had died before Him, even though they had died in their body, those who had died before Him were alive; clearly, not alive in their body, but alive in their soul. The New Revised Standard Version (NRVS) Bible, Luke 20: 34-39, says:

³⁴ Jesus said to them, "Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage; ³⁵ but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. ³⁶ Indeed they cannot die anymore, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection. ³⁷ And the fact that the dead are raised Moses himself showed, in the story about the bush, where he speaks of the Lord as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. ³⁸ Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living; **for to him all of them are alive.**" ³⁹ Then some of the scribes answered, "Teacher, you have spoken well."

In Exodus 3: 6, God says to Moses, "*I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.*" Nothing is said here by God to Moses about Abraham, Isaac or Jacob being alive or dead, however, we know that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were dead in the body by the time God was speaking to Moses in the Burning Bush. Jesus tells us in Luke's Gospel, 20: 34 – 39, that, even though Abraham, Isaac and Jacob have died, dead in the body, dead in the flesh, in the eyes of God, "all of them are alive." They died in their body but are alive; alive in their soul. The SDA objection here is that the scripture quoted does not say they are alive in their soul, however, if they are not alive in their body, what part of them is alive; it must be that they are alive in their spirit or soul. In addition, by verse 38 of Luke 20, Jesus is no longer talking about the resurrection of the body in the future but has shown that even back in Moses's own day, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who by then were already dead in the body, were alive in God's eyes, "**for to Him all of them are alive**"; and He says, 'are alive', present tense, and that was when Jesus was speaking 2000 years ago.

Eccles 12: 7 says that, at death, the body returns to dust from which it came, while *'the soul returns to God who gave it'*. So, death is: separation of body and soul. When the soul and body have separated, death has occurred. Jesus reveals to us in Luke 20: 34-39 that at death, when the separation of body from soul has occurred, to God the soul is alive, even though the body is dead in the ground; the soul is alive in God's eyes. This is completely opposite to what the SDAs teach. SDAs teach 'soul sleep', that is, that at death both soul and body are dead, and for anyone to teach otherwise is to deny the dead are dead and to have been 'taken in by the lie of the devil', the serpent, in Genesis 3: 4, who says, "*You will not die*".

2. Jesus And The Prison

Remembering that we have all disobeyed God, from Adam onwards, the Bible tells us in 1 Peter 3: 18-20, that when Jesus was dead in the flesh but alive in the spirit, He preached to the spirits in prison; that is, He preached to all who had died before Christ's own death. All had not obeyed God, even Abraham, although he was the Father of Faith, was a sinner in need of Christ's salvation. The New Revised Standard Version (NRVS) Bible, 1 Peter 3: 18-20, says:

¹⁸For Christ also suffered^[a] for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you^[b] to God. **He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit,¹⁹ in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison,²⁰ who in former times did not obey,...**

(See: http://biblehub.com/1_peter/3-18.htm *alive in the spirit*, Ellicott's Protestant Biblical Commentary for 1 Peter 3: 18 and http://biblehub.com/1_peter/3-20.htm for 1 Peter 3: 20 about Noah.)

So the question is, 'When was Jesus dead in the flesh?' and 'When was Jesus dead in the flesh and alive in the spirit?' We know that Christ died on the cross and was dead in the flesh, separated from His soul, from Friday, known as Good Friday, until His Resurrection on Sunday; the First Day of the week. So, when Jesus was dead in the flesh, as of on the cross on Friday until his Resurrection on Sunday, the Bible tells us His spirit was alive. His flesh was dead but His spirit was alive. His spirit or soul was not extinguished. What did Jesus do at this time while His flesh was dead but His spirit alive? According to the Bible, Christ's spirit preached to the spirits in prison. What was this prison in which the spirits were held and why were they spirit and not '*people in the flesh*'? The prison in which the spirits were held was not some man made jail run by the Romans in Jerusalem; not some prison like Strangeways in Salford or Leicester Prison. The prison was the 'Bosom of Abraham'. The spirits are all those righteous souls who died before Christ had died, held in the Bosom of Abraham, waiting for Christ's victory of salvation, because Christ had not yet opened the gates of heaven, for He had not only to die but also to rise from the dead to bring about salvation.

The Bible tells us that Jesus's spirit or soul preached to the spirits in prison, the Bosom of Abraham, and Jesus always preaches the Gospel, so Jesus preached the Gospel to them, those who had died since Adam. The Bible shows us that when the flesh, that is the body, is dead, the spirit (or soul) is not extinguished but is conscious and can know, communicate, is aware, and can receive the Gospel. Those in this prison, the Bosom of Abraham, are the 'righteous' dead, sinful yes, in need of salvation yes, because we have all sinned and fallen shorty of the glory of God; but they are not the dammed, who are destined for hell.

The SDA objection at this point would be that Jesus had to died: body, spirit and soul, otherwise He did not really die. What is being said by those who oppose the SDA dogma of 'soul sleep' is that Christ's experience of death is exactly the same experience of death as the rest of mankind; that His soul or spirit separated from his body and joined his ancestors in the Bosom of Abraham, no different experience to anyone else, and that this is what happens at death and therefore Jesus did die, just like the rest of us die. Scripture confirms this fact when the Bible tells us that Jesus went to preach to the dead in prison, 1 Peter 3: 18-20, to those who had died before Him, who were in the

abode of the 'righteous' dead, called the Bosom of Abraham. No one is denying that the dead are dead – what is in dispute is the nature of death, and specifically, that nature of the human soul (or spirit) when it is separated from the body. (See: http://biblehub.com/1_peter/3-18.htm *alive in the spirit*, Ellicott's Protestant Biblical Commentary for 1 Peter 3 18 – 20).

So Jesus, in His Soul, went and preached the Gospel to all the righteous souls, who were in the Bosom of Abraham, which means that, the 'righteous' dead, in their souls, could receive the Word of God, the Good News, and the spirits or souls of the 'just' understand the preaching of Jesus, otherwise it would be pointless for Christ to preach to them. Another SDA objection at this point is that Jesus's preaching to those in the Bosom of Abraham seems like '*a second chance at being saved*', however, the Good News of the Gospel was preached first by Jesus Christ, beginning with the Annunciation by the Angel Gabriel and Jesus's Incarnation, and the preaching of the Gospel continued by His Apostles, see Hebrews 2: 3, so for those in the Bosom of Abraham, this is the first opportunity they have to hear the Gospel of the Lord, the Good News, and from Christ Himself, when, after His death on the cross but before His resurrection to New Life, He preached to the dead, 1 Peter 4:6. As Jesus says in the Gospel according to Matthew, 13: 17, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV):

¹⁷ Truly I tell you, **many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it.**

So, all the righteous, who had died before Christ's own death had not heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ, so they needed to hear it, that they may be saved. That is why Jesus '*preached even to the dead*', 1 Peter 4:6, that they might be saved, that is, those who were in the Bosom of Abraham.

Those 'spirits' or souls who were 'in prison' in the abode of the Bosom of Abraham, are saved by Christ's victory accomplished by His death and by His Resurrection on the First Day of the week, Sunday, when Jesus rose from the dead, when His body and soul were re-united, and when they who were in the Bosom of Abraham, entered heaven, at Christ's Resurrection, not in their bodies but only in their soul. So their spirit or soul entered heaven, at His resurrection, but they still await union with their bodies, as their bodies are dead in the ground, as the 'resurrection of the body' will take place at Christ's Second Coming. Those who were in the Bosom of Abraham before Christ's death are now reigning with Christ Jesus in heaven, in their souls, since Christ's resurrection.

The Scripture text of 1 Peter 3: 18-20 is further confirmed by 1 Peter 4: 6, in which the Bible tells us that Jesus preached even to the dead where they are judged by what they did in the flesh. The New Revised Standard Version (NRVS) Bible, 1 Peter 4: 6, says:

⁶ For this is the reason **the gospel was proclaimed even to the dead**, so that, though they had been judged in the flesh as everyone is judged, they might live in the spirit as God does.

If, as the SDAs say, that the 'dead are dead' and that 'their soul knows nothing', how can the Gospel be preached '**even to the dead?**' Since we are all spiritually dead due to our sin and in need of the Gospel to be preached to us, the expression that the Gospel was proclaimed '**even to the dead**' must mean those who have 'died in the body', those whose soul had separated from their body,

their body is dead in the ground so the preaching must be to their spirit or soul, those who's souls were in the abode of the 'righteous' dead, the Bosom of Abraham, to whom Christ, in His own soul, went and preached the Gospel.

The Bible also tells us that in death Jesus gave up His Spirit, otherwise known as His soul. The New Revised Standard Version (NRVS) Bible, John 19: 30, says:

³⁰When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and ***gave up his spirit.***

The Bible further confirms to us that we are, and therefore Jesus is, both 'body and spirit', 'flesh and soul', and that a body without a spirit is dead, **the body is dead** – not the spirit or soul. The New Revised Standard Version (NRVS) Bible, James 2: 26, says:

²⁶For just as **the body without the spirit is dead**, so faith without works is also dead.

So, at Jesus's death, His spirit (his human soul) left His Body. Please note that the **Holy Spirit** is another Person, distinct from the Son, because God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God is the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three Persons, one God.

Seventh-day Adventists claim that the Bosom of Abraham, referred to by Jesus in Luke's Gospel, 16: 22-23, is only a parable and is therefore symbolic, and not what really happens at death. (See *SDA booklet: Solving the Mystery of Death, page 27*.) But one has to ask, if it is only symbolic, symbolic of what? The answer is, even if it is symbolic, it must be symbolic of the reality. The reality being that righteous souls who died before Christ's own death and resurrection, those who died from Adam onwards, after their death, are gathered in to one abode, lovingly called 'the Bosom of Abraham', to which Christ 'went' in His soul, 'and made a proclamation', to preach the Gospel to them. And what a joy this must have been.

3. What Jacob And Rachel Can Tell Us

The death of Jacob in Genesis 49: 33 - 50: 14, is interesting to look at because it says that, '*When Jacob ended his charge to his sons, he drew up his feet into the bed, breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.*' How is Jacob 'gathered' to his people? Jacob's body is not buried straight away. Joseph, Jacob's son, weeps over Jacob's body, he has his physicians embalm Jacob's body – which alone took forty days to accomplish, then Jacob's body is transported to the burial site, but on the way, once they got to Atad which is beyond the Jordan, which they re-named Abel-mizrai, they have seven days of mourning there before going on to Canaan, and finally the body of Jacob is buried in Canaan. So, Jacob breathed his last and was 'gathered to his people'. What was 'gathered' and who were 'his people'? Clearly Jacob's soul separated from his body at death and his soul is 'gathered' to his people; his people being 'the Bosom of Abraham', the abode of the righteous dead, to whom Jesus, after His own death on the cross, preaches the Gospel too, as described in the Bible, 1 Peter 3 : 18 – 19, and 1 Peter 4 : 6. SDAs object to the soul being gathered to the Bosom of Abraham, so the question to SDAs must be: What is gathered if not his soul? It is not his body, so it

must be his spirit or soul. The order in which the Scripture is written is that Jacob was 'gathered to his people' after which his body was 'dealt with', that is, then his body was prepared and buried. As Ecclesiastes 12: 7 says, the soul returns to God who gave it. So Jacob's soul is gathered to the 'Bosom of Abraham'.

The death of Rachel gives further insight into what happens as death. The Bible tells us that Rachel's soul departs 'for she died' as Genesis 35: 16 – 18, says:

¹⁶Then they journeyed from Bethel; and when they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel was in childbirth, and she had hard labour. ¹⁷When she was in her hard labour, the midwife said to her, "Do not be afraid; for now you will have another son." ¹⁸**As her soul was departing (for she died),** she named him Ben-oni;^[a] but his father called him Benjamin.^[b]

The Biblical definition of human death is that: death is the separation of body and soul, period. Scripture **never says the soul knows nothing**. The SDAs are adding words and concepts to scripture, for Scripture says **the dead know nothing, it does not say the soul knows nothing**. The Bible tells us that the body knows nothing as in Eccl 9: 5, and Jesus tells us that for God, the souls of those who die are alive in His eyes. Let's look at what Ecclesiastes 9: 5 in The New Revised Standard Version (NRVS) Bible, actually says,

⁵The living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no more reward, and even the memory of them is lost.

The scripture is saying that those who are alive are concerned that they will one day suffer death, either with pain or pain free, death is something we suffer, the separation of body and soul. The living know that they will die, the dead do not have to ponder the future event of dying as it has already happened to them, that is why they know nothing, they no longer have to ponder the future event of dying. Then the scripture says 'even the memory of them is lost', so others will in time forget us, at least our own personal experience which belongs to us alone will not be remembered by others, even a biography is not the lived experience, the lived experience will not be remembered by others. The opening line of Ecclesiastes sets the scene for the whole document - **Vanity of vanities all is vanity**; it is about the shortness of this life on earth and is pondering about life in the body, the purpose of it all, not about the life to come – which in Christ Jesus had not yet been fully revealed in the Old Testament, but would be fully revealed in the Gospel and the New Testament.

Ecclesiastes 9: 5 is hardly the basis for a dogma on the nature of the soul separated from the body. Jesus Christ is a much better source of information on this subject. The Seventh-day Adventists have developed dogma based on Ecclesiastes 9: 5 which says that 'the dead know nothing' and are 'dead in the ground', and by this they also mean that the soul knows nothing as well as the body knows nothing. From this the SDAs claim that the soul, like the body, knows nothing once death of the body has occurred, and that the soul cannot get to heaven until after the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, when the resurrection of the body takes place. However, if SDAs were to read on in Ecclesiastes, Chapter 12: 7 they will find that the author of Ecclesiastes says that the dead body returns to dust from which it came, while the soul returns to God who gave it. The soul cannot get

into heaven until Christ's victory of his death and resurrection. So the author of the very verse SDAs use to build their dogma of the nature and condition of the dead is not supported by the author of Ecclesiastes, the very author they rely for their dogma, because the soul returns to God, and Jesus tells us in Luke 20: 38, that such souls are alive, **"for to him all of them are alive"**. Why are SDAs trying to argue with God on this point; and with scripture, the Gospel no less; the very Words of Jesus?

So there is a separation of soul and body at death – the body knows nothing, but the soul is not extinguished, even at death, and the soul can receive the Word of God, just as Jesus can proclaim His Gospel while His body is dead in the tomb, but his soul or spirit is alive, and can preach, even without the lips of His body, He preaches the Gospel with His soul.

4. The Breath Of God And The Conscious Soul

SDAs say that God Breathed the breath of life into Adam and he became a living soul, and claim that the human soul is like any other created living life, which knows nothing once the body has died. However, this is not the case. Only man is created in the image and likeness of God. This shows that the soul of man is unique. God only breathed into man. He did not 'breath into' animals or plants, yet they are able to breath and they die when they cannot breath. The Breath of God is spiritual so the Breath of God in us, the soul, is spiritual. The soul is untied to our flesh. Man has the Breath of God in him, which is the soul, and the Breath of God never dies. There is a spiritual death, which is a spiritual separation from God, which we freely chose by sinning, which entered Adam and Eve when they sinned, and there is an eternal separation from God which is called hell. This separation of the spiritual soul from relationship with God is a spiritual death, and from Adam's sin onwards, sin had a physical consequence too, which is shown by recognition of nakedness, shame, aging, death of the body, as well as spiritual death of the soul.

Those who disagree with the Seventh-day Adventism dogma of 'soul sleep' and 'the dead knowing nothing' are accused by SDAs of denying scripture and denying that the dead are dead, and SDAs claim we are 'taken in by the lie of the devil', the serpent in Genesis, who said, "You will not die". In reality, no one is denying that the dead are dead – what is in dispute is the nature of death, and specifically, that nature of the human soul (or spirit) when it is separated from the body. When scripture does not fit in with SDAs dogma they decide scripture is not to be taken literally or to be taken only symbolically. Revelation 6 is a prime example where the SDAs do this. Revelation, as the name states, is all about revealing the true nature of things.

The New Revised Standard Version (NRVS) Bible, Revelation 6: 9 - 11, says:

⁹When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slaughtered for the word of God and for the testimony they had given; ¹⁰they cried out with a loud voice, "Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long will it be before you judge and avenge our blood on the inhabitants of the earth?" ¹¹They were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number would be complete both of their fellow

servants^[h] and of their brothers and sisters,^[i] who were soon to be killed as they themselves had been killed.

In this passage from Revelation 6 it shows:

- the soul is separated from the body
- the souls are in heaven, not their bodies
- their bodies have been killed
- their bodies are slaughtered because of their testimony to the Word of God while on earth
- the souls are asking how long will it be – (they are aware that more needs to be done, that things are not yet finished)
- the souls are crying out to the Lord
- the souls are waiting for God to avenge their martyrdom
- those who killed them are still on the earth
- the souls in heaven under the altar are waiting for others to join them
- it shows the Second Coming of Christ has not yet occurred

So, clearly this passage shows that this 'situation of the souls under the altar' is before Christ's Second Coming because their bodies are not united to them. SDAs do not believe that anyone is in heaven before Christ's Second Coming yet, in this scripture passage, we see that there are people still on earth who have not died, yet there are souls under the altar in heaven, and they still have companions on earth not dead in their bodies, because the souls in heaven 'have to wait a little longer' for their fellow martyrs to join them. All scripture, even where it is symbolic, has to show the truth, and the truth shown here is that there are souls in heaven before the Second Coming of Christ. The SDA pamphlet, *Solving the Mystery of Death*, by Steve Wohlberg, claims that, '*teaching that disembodied "souls" are really alive under a heavily altar makes a mockery of the rest of the Bible.*' The truth is, not teaching what the Bible says makes a monkey of the teaching, the preacher and the church. Revelations 6 shows, there are souls in heaven before Christ's Second Coming but SDA teaching is fundamentally opposed to this Biblical Truth. Once SDAs accept that there are souls in heaven before Christ's Second Coming, and, as Revelation 6 says, souls are aware of their situation, their history, what they have suffered, that they pray to the Lord, that they are aware of what is happening on earth while they are in heaven, SDAs will come closer to the fullness of truth. Of course these souls do not cry out with their lips, or see with the eyes of their body, or think with their brains, because their bodies are dead in the ground, on earth, but they see with their soul, pray with their soul, they cry out to the Lord with their soul, are concerned for the inhabitants of the earth in their soul, literally, in reality.

In Revelation 20: 4, John says again that he sees the souls of those who had been beheaded, souls separated from their bodies. The New Revised Standard Version (NRVS) Bible, Revelation 20:4, says:

⁴Then I saw thrones, and those seated on them were given authority to judge. **I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus^[a] and for the word of God.**

5. The Witnesses And The Cloud

I want to say something of the spirituality of the soul, both in the body and also separated from it. In Hebrews 12: 1, Paul says that we are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses. What can he mean? Looking at Hebrews, Chapters 11 – 12, Paul gives us a great insight into the spirituality of the soul. I am not going to present the whole text here but, from Hebrews Chapter 11 – 12: 1 it says:

By faith Abel, ⁵By faith Enoch, By faith Noah, ⁸By faith Abraham ²³By faith Moses, ²⁹By faith the people, ³¹By faith Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, ³⁹**Yet all these, though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised,** ⁴⁰**since God had provided something better so that they would not, apart from us, be made perfect.** 12 ¹**Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses,** let us also lay aside every weight and the sin...

Hebrews 11: 40, is almost like a double negative, ⁴⁰**since God had provided something better so that they would not, apart from us, be made perfect**. So, they would not be made perfect apart from us but we are made perfect 'together', with them, due to and in, Christ Jesus, yet they died before us, but are alive in God's eyes, according to Jesus in Luke 20: 38.

The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) Bible, Hebrews 12: 1, says:

¹**Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses,** let us also lay aside every weight and the sin...

So, we are 'surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses', Abel through Abraham and so on. This text is not presented to us in the past tense, but in the present tense; we ARE SURROUNDED, here and now; Abel through Abraham, and others. They are not simply an example from the past history but are present witnesses. So they **are** (here and now) **a great cloud** (not seen with our eyes) **witnesses** (present). We say that William Wilberforce **was** an MP, **did** witness slavery, **did** work to abolish slavery, past tense; we do not say he **is** an MP, because he is dead. We say of people in past history that they **were** witnesses, past tense; but the people listed by Paul in Hebrews 12:1 'are witnesses', because Jesus tells us in Luke 20 : 38, that their souls are alive, they are witnesses, here and now, to Paul then and to us now.

The Biblical use of the word **cloud** in Hebrews 12: 1 is significant. In the Old Testament, the Pillar of Cloud lead Moses and the people out of captivity in Egypt. Surrounding the Tabernacle was a Cloud, which was 'The Presence of God', not symbolic of the presence of God, but 'The Presence of God', the *Shechinah*, as described in Ex 40: 34-35. The word *Shechinah* is a Rabbinic word, a derivative of the Hebrew word for tabernacle, meaning the dwelling place of God. Where, before Christ's death, the righteous souls listed by Paul in Hebrews 12:1 were in the abode of the Bosom of Abraham, are now, since Christ's victory over death, in the **cloud**, the tabernacle, dwelling place of God, heaven itself. I have here proven to you that the righteous souls listed by Paul are in heaven, because Paul is writing his Letter to the Hebrews after Christ's victory over death. The **cloud** of

witnesses is therefore heaven itself, these souls are witnesses to God, to Paul than and to us now, from heaven. The Knox Bible translation from the Greek into English is even more helpful.

Greek	English
<p>1 Τοιγαροῦν καὶ ἡμεῖς, τοσοῦτον ἔχοντες περι κείμενον ἡμῖν νέφος μαρτύρων, ὄγκον ἀποθέμενοι πάντα καὶ τὴν εὐπερίστατον ἀμαρτίαν, δι' ὑπομονῆς τρέχωμεν τὸν προκείμενον ἡμῖν ἀγῶνα,</p>	<p>1 Why then, since we are watched from above by such a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of all that weighs us down, of the sinful habit that clings so closely, and run, with all endurance, the race for which we are entered.</p>

Claiming something to be symbolic or not literal is not an argument against its reality, especially when it is used in Scripture to describe spiritual reality and the reality of God. For example, in the Old Testament the Israelites bowed down at the Ark of the Covenant, not to the Ark itself but to the Presence of God, which was in the **Cloud** covering the Ark of the Covenant. This was not a symbolic presence of God but the Real Presence of God; the Cloud was not symbolic as if God's presence was not real, the cloud was the Real Presence of God; that is why the people bowed down, all the people 'stood up and bow down to worship': *The New Revised Standard Version (NRVS) Bible, Ex 33: 10*. The SDA pamphlet, *Solving the Mystery of Death*, by Steve Wohlberg, in which it is claimed that the 'souls under the altar crying out' in Revelation 6, is not a literal 'crying out in a loud voice' but only symbolic, shows that the author of the pamphlet does not understand the spirituality of the soul or the text. For instance, Hebrews 12: 2 says that we should be: ² *looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith*. Does this mean we should look to Jesus with our literal bodily eyes or does it mean looking to Jesus with the eyes of our mind, or in even more reality look to Jesus with the eyes of our soul, our spiritual eyes?

Again in Hebrews 12: 11- 13 it says:

Now, discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. ¹² **Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, ¹³ and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.**

Does Paul literally mean we should lift up our bodily drooping hands, or our bodily weak knees, make literal paths straight; is Paul talking about literal bodily feet, or literal bodily lameness? No, Paul is talking about our literal soul, the spirituality of our soul, our drooping weak soul, the lameness of our soul – our souls are real, not symbolic, and the condition in which our soul is - is real. Our souls are not symbolically frailty, they are literally frail. So too, the souls under the altar in Revelation 6, they literally cry out, not with the lips of their body but with the voice of their soul. Jesus says in Luke 10: 27 that we must love God with all our heart, and **with all our soul**, and with all our strength, and with all our mind; so our soul can love and hate; for the soul is spiritual. The soul is the seat where God's gift of love and faith sit, and where the grace that comes from God has a home; and we can lose this love, lose this faith and lose the grace from our soul that comes from

God alone. The soul is the 'place' where we have relationship with God, not a feeling or a thought, but a union, a relationship, a communion, a covenant beyond words.

The New Revised Standard Version (NRVS) Bible, Hebrews 12: 28, says:

²⁸Therefore, **since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken**, let us give thanks, by which we offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe; ²⁹for indeed our God is a consuming fire.

Again, Paul speaks in the present tense, since we 'ARE RECEIVING', not the future tense we 'WILL RECEIVE', but the present tense, we 'are receiving God's Kingdom, here and now, continuous, in our souls, day by day, moment by moment. And we 'are receiving' because it is a continual relationship with God. The Kingdom of God is at hand, here and now, present among us, we who are baptised into Christ Jesus. This is important when it comes to understanding the meaning of covenant.

6. The Church And The Body

A covenant means more than a contract; it means a relationship, with God. God made Covenants with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and a New Covenant with us Christians. God made a Covenant with Adam and when Adam sinned Adam broke the Covenant relationship God had with him. In SDA dogma, sin is the breaking of God's Law, and they claim that sin is the transgression of the Law, and of course it is, but sin is so much more than breaking the Law. When we sin we break God's Covenant with us; we break the Covenantal relationship God has with us. So sin separates us from God; separates us from relationship with God. It seems that the dogma of the SDA church has forgotten to include the Covenantal relationship God has with us from Adam onwards. Christians have a Covenant with God, with Christ Jesus, so we are in relationship with Him, in our souls, and with our bodies, see Eph 2: 19 - 22. Through Baptism we have become members of the Body of Christ, the Church, we are living stones, with Christ as the corner stone, the foundation stone. We are grafted into the Tree of Life, Jesus Christ; He the True Vine, we the branches. By Baptism we are in the Church, in the Kingdom of Christ on earth.

How do we know that the Church, here on earth, you and me, are the body of Christ? Paul says in Eph 4: 11-13 that some are: *'apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers,*¹² *to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the **body of Christ.**'* So we are therefore the body of Christ, the Church. The New Revised Standard Version (NRVS) Bible, Paul says in Hebrews 12: 22 - 23:

²²But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering,²³ and to the assembly^[g] of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,²⁴ and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Biblical typology, where the Old Testament is shown to be fulfilled in the New Testament, gives great insight and this is what Paul is doing here in Hebrews 12: 22 - 23. Paul is speaking in the present tense, as Christians here and now; through baptism we have come to Mount Zion, which is the Church, the City of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, here on earth; to the assembly of the first born, the Body of Christ. Paul says in the previous verses 18 – 21 that we have **not** come to the mountain of the Old Covenant – to the mount of Moses that can be touched, of which the New Covenant is its fulfilment, but as Christians, through baptism, we have come to the New Mount Zion, the New City of God, the New Jerusalem, in the New Covenant, brought about by God through the New Moses, Jesus Christ, the True Lamb, Who, through the New Passover, and through His death and Resurrection, has brought us from death to New Life, a New Creation in Christ Jesus. Paul says in 2 Cor 5: 17, we are a new creation in Christ Jesus. The New Mount Zion, the New City of God, the New Jerusalem, the New Covenant, are very real, they are literal, not symbolic. Our souls, and bodies, through baptism, become members of Christ's Body, the Church, not symbolically, but literally, in reality, we are members of Christ's Body. This is what SDAs are missing out on when they **deny** that, as Jesus said, in Luke 20: 38, that the soul or spirit of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are alive. So too are, the souls of all those who have died as members of Christ's Body, the Church, and have died in His grace; their souls are in heaven now, as are the souls of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We call this the communion of saints. Jesus said in Luke 20: 36, those who are in heaven, "are like the angels and are the children of God." We will have our resurrected bodies at the Second Coming of Christ, but the souls of those who have already died in Christ Jesus, before the Christ's Second Conning, their souls are alive, in heaven.

In the Gospel of Luke, 1: 46 – 47, Mary, the mother of Jesus says, "My soul magnifies the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my saviour." Her soul or her spirit does not have lips, yet she tells us that they proclaim the glory and joy of the Lord. So the soul can rejoice in God. The soul is spiritual.

What SDAs seem to forget in this debate about death is that death is both physical and spiritual and that you **can have one without the other**. You can be physically dead but alive in your soul, like Jesus said of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in Luke 20: 38, and you can be physically alive in your body but dead in your soul, through sin, through rejecting salvation. The nature of the soul is that true death of the soul comes from sinning, and is a spiritual death, because sinning separates us from relationship with God, and permanent separation from God, for all eternity, is called hell, where both the body and the soul of the damned will go.

7. Transfigured

The Bible tells us that Jesus speaks to the dead, those who have passed on, which SDAs condemn. The three Synoptic Gospels, Matthew 17: 1 – 8, Mark 9: 2 – 8 and Luke 9: 27 – 36 describe the fact that Jesus met with and spoke to Moses and Elijah on the mount, probably Mount Tabor, by this time Moses had been dead 1300 years. The Second Letter of Peter refers to this event in 2 Peter 1: 16 – 18, which we call the Transfiguration of Christ. Peter and James and John were with Christ as witness of this event.

The New Revised Standard Version (NRVS) Bible, Matthew 17: 1 - 8, says:

17 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain apart. ² And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light. ³ And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Eli'jah, talking with him. ⁴ And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is well that we are here; if you wish, I will make three booths here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Eli'jah." ⁵ He was still speaking, when lo, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son,^[a] with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." ⁶ When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces, and were filled with awe. ⁷ But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear." ⁸ And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

The New Revised Standard Version (NRVS) Bible, Mark 9: 2 – 8, says:

² Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, ³ and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one^[a] on earth could bleach them. ⁴ And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. ⁵ Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings,^[b] one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." ⁶ He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. ⁷ Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved;^[c] listen to him!" ⁸ Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.

The New Revised Standard Version (NRVS) Bible, Luke 9: 27 – 36, says:

²⁷ But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God." ²⁸ Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹ And as he was praying, the appearance of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became dazzling white. ³⁰ And behold, two men talked with him, Moses and Eli'jah, ³¹ who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. ³² Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, and when they wakened they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. ³³ And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is well that we are here; let us make three booths, one for you and one for Moses and one for Eli'jah"—not knowing what he said. ³⁴ As he said this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. ³⁵ And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen;^[a] listen to him!" ³⁶ And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silence and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

The New Revised Standard Version (NRVS) Bible, 2 Peter 1: 16 – 18, says:

¹⁶ For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷ For when he

received honor and glory from God the Father and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son,^[a] with whom I am well pleased," ¹⁸we heard this voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.

Why did Jesus meet with Moses and Elijah and why was He Transfigured? Moses and Elijah represent the Law and the Prophets. Jesus had not long asked Peter who he was, and Peter said to Jesus, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God". Now Jesus, in the Transfiguration event, is meeting Moses and Elijah, those who had passed on from this terrestrial life. It was a spiritual encounter and was to show Peter, John and James what would happen to Jesus in the future, for Moses and Elijah appeared in glory and spoke of Jesus's '*departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem*', which was his soon to be death and resurrection. If, as the SDAs claim, the dead are dead and know nothing, how can Jesus meet with Moses and Elijah, and speak with them? Moses and Elijah, both of whom had passed on, Moses in his soul, while his body dead in the ground and Elijah in both his soul and body, were both in paradise, the abode of the Bosom of Abraham, because no one can enter heaven until Christ had open the gates of heaven by his victory over death, through His own death and resurrection.

Originally, in the Old Testament, the word paradise was used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew word for garden, the earthly paradise of the Garden of Eden, but in the New Testament it takes on a new and more exalted meaning of the abode of the Bosom of Abraham. * Jesus says in Luke 23: 43, to the penitent thief: "Amen I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise", and Jesus, in His soul, while His body was in the tomb, went and preached the Gospel to those in the Bosom of Abraham.

Notice here, in the three Gospels, recording the event of the Transfiguration, there is a cloud, where God's presence is, a visible manifestation to mankind of God, specifically here to Peter, James and John, and they '*entered the cloud*'. At the meeting of Jesus, Moses and Elijah, the apostles realize the True Feast of Tabernacles has come, that Jesus is the living Torah, the complete Word of God. On the mountain the three apostles see the Power of the Kingdom of Christ, for the Kingdom of God is in Christ Jesus, and the Church is the Body of Christ, the Kingdom of God on earth. As Christians our "first regeneration" is our Baptism (Titus 3: 5), where we are baptised into New Life, Christ Jesus Himself; the Transfiguration of Jesus foreshadows the "second regeneration" which is our own Resurrection, in our bodies, at the Christ's Second Coming. From now on, that is, from our own baptism, we share in the Lord's Resurrection through the Spirit who acts in the sacraments of the Body of Christ, in the Eucharist in particular, but the Transfiguration of Jesus gives us a foretaste of Christ's glorious coming, when he "will change our lowly body to be like His glorious body." * So the Bible tells us that Jesus speaks to the dead, those who had passed on, which SDAs condemn.

If Paul believed that when you are dead you know nothing, that you could not die and be with Christ, and that you know nothing until the resurrection of the body which happens after Christ's Second Coming, then Paul would never had said in Phi 1: 23, "My desire is to depart and be with Christ.", because, for the SDAs you do not depart and be with Christ. The SDAs explanation for Paul's words are that when you die, the next experience is in your resurrected body, but the Bible does not says this. For SDAs, to die is nothing and nothingness, but the Bible says to die is gain. How can you gain something if your dogma is saying death is nothingness. The New Revised Standard Version

(NRVS) Bible, Philippians 1:21, says: ²¹ *For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain.* Nowhere in the Bible does it say that when you die, the next thing your conscious is aware of is that you wake with a resurrected body. This is not a quote from the Bible. There is no quote from the Bible like this. It is a fabrication, yet it is a teaching of the SDA church. Another objection I have heard from SDAs concerning the concept of the 'Bosom of Abraham' as the abode of the righteous soul, is that the 'Bosom of Abraham' only appears in the Bible once, in Luke's Gospel. My question is: Where in the Bible does it say that if something is in the Bible only once then it must not to be believed; how can that be a defence of soul sleep?

8. Michael and the Ascended

Jehovah Witnesses believe that Jesus Christ is not God but that Jesus Christ is an angle, the Archangel Michael. On the other hand, SDAs believe that Jesus Christ is God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, and that Michael the Archangel is a name he uses in scripture and so they believe Michael the Archangel is Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity.

SDAs raise a couple of opposition points in regard to the Transfiguration and the question of Moses and Elijah being 'ascended into heaven body and soul'. SDAs believe that Moses and Elijah are in heaven and that is why Jesus can speak to them while all others who have died are dead in the ground and their soul knows nothing, however, the Old Testament must always be read at in the light of the New Testament, and especially in the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus is very clear on this point where in John 3: 13 it says,

¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.

SDAs believe that Moses died and his body was buried but that, according to Jude 9, Moses's body was take to heaven by the Archangel Michael; which SDAs claim Archangel Michael is Jesus Christ; and that Elijah was take up into heaven in both body and soul. Catholics can agree that Elijah was spared bodily death, but as to where both Moses and Elijah went after death, Jesus Christ brings light to the subject. Most Christians believe that no one could enter heaven until Christ's victory of His cross and resurrection. Looking at the full text of John's Gospel where Christ discusses this very issue with the Pharisee Nicodemus, brings greater revelation and clarity on the true situation of both Moses and Elijah. The New Revised Standard Version (NRVS) Bible, John 3: 1-15, says:

¹ Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. ² He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God." ³ Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" ⁵ Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ⁶ What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' ⁸ The wind blows where it

chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”⁹ Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?”¹⁰ Jesus answered him, “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

¹¹“Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. ¹²If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

So, Moses and Elijah can not be in heaven since Jesus says no one has ascended there as yet, that is, before Christ’s own death and resurrection. This is further confirmed by Jesus who says that as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the son of Man be lifted up, referring to the fact that Jesus must die on the cross and rise from the dead so that salvation can be accomplished, and only then can souls go to heaven. Moses and Elijah must therefore be in the Bosom of Abraham, before Christ’s resurrection, and in heaven now.

As for Michael the Archangel being Jesus Christ – it is just not true. We know that Jesus Christ can rebuke the devil and turn him away, as we see in Christ’s Temptation in the Wilderness in Matt 4, but in Jude 9 which SDAs use to show that Michael must be Jesus, we see that Michael the Archangel is UNABLE to rebuke the devil without calling upon God for help, so Michael the Archangel is not God, the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. The New Revised Standard Version (NRVS) Bible, Jude 9, says:

⁹But when the archangel Michael contended with the devil and disputed about the body of Moses, he did not dare to bring a condemnation of slander against him, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!”

The Bible shows us that Michael was UNABLE to rebuke the devil without calling upon God for help. Michael the Archangel is –an Angel, not Jesus Christ.

See https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don_stewart/don_stewart_24.cfm for more info.

9. Every Knee Shall Bow

We know that the devil does not worship God, neither with his voice or tongue or with the bowing of his head or the bending of his knee. The devil cannot worship God because he hates God, he hates Jesus. Paul says in Philippians, that we should have the same mind as Christ, that while Jesus was on earth he humbled Himself. The New Revised Standard Version (NRVS) Bible, Philippians 2:10-11, says:

⁵Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant,^[a] being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth **and under the earth**, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Those 'under the earth' must refer to those in the Bosom of Abraham, the righteous souls, who in their souls bow down to Jesus when he preached the Gospel to them because; when Jesus was on earth and had become man, it was then that he humbled himself, taking the form of a servant, being born into the likeness of men, so that, when Jesus in His soul preached to those in Bosom of Abraham, they too could bow their knee, bow in their souls, and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, and thereby be saved.

As for the Biblical quote above, 1 Peter 3: 18-20, about Christ preaching to the dead and Noah, the Protestant Biblical scholar Ellicott http://biblehub.com/1_peter/3-20.htm says:

'(20) **Which sometime were disobedient.**--The absence of the definite article here in the Greek (contrary to St. Peter's usage in participial sentences--*e.g.*, 1 Peter 1:5; 1 Peter 1:7; 1 Peter 1:10; 1 Peter 1:17) makes it possible to think that the spirits mentioned in this verse are not co-extensive with those in prison. It is, literally, *to men who once upon a time were disobedient*. Our Lord preached to the whole class of spirits in prison, of all times and races; and then, to magnify the bounty of this act, St. Peter instances a particular group of them, who were the most marked criminals of any, and whose case suggested a useful application. He has a reason for using the word "disobedient." It would not describe *all* sinners, but those who had heard and been convinced by the word of God, but refused to accept it. (See Note on 1Peter 3:2.) This was the case with those to whom Noah preached (2 Peter 2:5); and, in spite of their "disobedience," Christ, after His innocent and sacrificial death, went in spirit and preached a gospel to them.'

10. The Creed & The Ashes

The accusation made by the SDA church of Catholics and other Christians who do not accept the SDA dogma of 'soul sleep' and accuse us of are denying scripture and denying that the dead are dead, and SDAs claim we are 'taken in by the lie of the devil', the serpent in Genesis, who said, "You will not die"; and falsely accuse us of claiming humans to be immortal, when it is the Breath of God in us that is immortal; it seems the SDAs are unaware of the profession of faith Catholics make at every Sunday Mass, in the proclamation of the Creed, part of which says:

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day

...and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

So Catholics and other Christians do believe we die, both physically and spiritually, and profess this to each other and to the world and to God Himself.

On Ash Wednesday we proclaim Genesis 3: 19, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV):

¹⁹By the sweat of your face, you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; **you are dust, and to dust you shall return.**"

At the Ash Wednesday Mass the minister puts the ash on our foreheads and says, "Remember thou art dust and to dust thou shalt return." And so we can say with the prophet Joel, "Rent your heart, not your garments". The Jewish roots of Ash Wednesday are clear where we enter in, with Job 42: 6, who repents in ash, Daniel 9: 3, Esther 4: 1-3, Joel 2: 12-18, where, with the Jewish people, who in sack cloth and ashes, unite in a collective fast for their sins and for the sins of others. During the rest of Lent we privately enter into a share in the mystery of Christ who in Matt 4 it tells us Christ was tempted three times, with pleasure, property and pride, yet Christ overcame these. And we know we will die in our sins if we do not repent. At every Mass we repent of our sins, proclaim, often by singing the **Lord have Mercy** (the Kyrie) and prepare ourselves to welcome the Risen Christ in the Eucharist, and in Lent we prepare to celebrate the New Passover and death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. So we **do not** believe in 'soul sleep' because it is unbiblical but we do believe death is real.

11. Conclusion

In conclusion then, I have shown using the Bible, that the unbiblical man-made dogma of 'Soul Sleep' is completely opposed to Scripture and particularly opposed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I call upon SDAs to embrace the Gospel, Luke 20: 38, and abandon their pursuit and teaching of 'Soul Sleep', because, for God, "all of them are alive."

12. Postscript

SDAs tell us that the 'dead are dead' and 'know nothing', what part of dead don't you understand?; however, I say to SDAs that in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus Christ Himself says of those who had died in the body, **'to God all of them are alive'**; what part of **'alive'** don't SDAs understand?

13. Appendix

So now we come on to the question of the permanent existence of the body and soul either in heaven or in hell, for eternity. **(Coming soon)**. A good non – Catholic Biblical response to the question of soul seep can be found at: https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don_stewart/don_stewart_127.cfm

* Understanding the Transfiguration and the word paradise – see <http://www.ncregister.com/blog/jimmy-akin/10-things-you-need-to-know-about-jesus-transfiguration> , http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p122a3p3.htm
<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14519a.htm> , <http://catholicism.org/immortality-and-the-tree-of-life.html>