

## Fear of Death and Ignorance of What It Is Really About Are Major Contributing Factors to Dual Allegiance and Religious Syncretism

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### Abstract

This article examines the phenomenon of Dual Allegiance (DA) and Religious Syncretism (RS) within the context of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church-Nkoroi of Nkoroi District Churches, focusing on the pervasive impact of fear of death and ignorance about the nature of death as they are the principal causative factors. By integrating theological analysis with psychological insights, the study elucidates how misconceptions about death and the afterlife fuel these vices among church members. This study highlights how historical missionary activities sometimes failed to fully address these deep-seated beliefs, leading to a form of Christianity that is intermittently blended with indigenous religious practices, hence practising syncretism and leading a DA Christian life. Ignorance about the Biblical teachings on death leads to DA and RS, as some members turn to animistic or ancestral practices for reassurance against existential threats. It further advocates for an educational approach that emphasises a clear, Biblically grounded eschatology to empower believers with a correct understanding of death, thereby reducing fear and discouraging reliance on syncretic lifestyle and DA practices. This study calls for a strategic pastoral response that includes comprehensive Biblical teaching focused on the genesis and nature of life at creation, death, and what it is, as well as resurrection as central to alleviating DA and RS. It underscores the need for an approach that not only educates but also spiritually moulds church members, enabling them to resist syncretism but instead affirm their allegiance solely to God and sound Biblical-based Christian doctrine in the aforementioned creation, death and what it is and resurrection.

**Key terms:** Breath of life, dual allegiance, religious syncretism, resurrection, spirits.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The underlying causes of DA and RS, particularly focusing on fear and its psychological impacts as described by clinical studies and pastoral observation, reveal that ignorance of the state of the dead and what really death itself is all about have been observed as the major causes of, not only fear but also DA and RS, both in the Church and in other religious beliefs. However, this article will focus on the SDA Church-Nkoroi of Nkoroi District Churches. The paper posits that the fear of spiritual forces, compounded by an incomplete doctrinal understanding of the state of the dead, what really happens when one dies, and integration of this understanding with the whole Christian life in Jesus Christ, drives some members towards RS practices and DA lifestyle.

Key strategies proposed include enhancing doctrinal clarity and personal spiritual development among members. It argues for a robust engagement with the Bible and Ellen G. White's writings to fortify faith against syncretic influences and fear-driven behaviours. The article also delves into the historical interactions between missionary efforts in their spread of Christianity versus the African spiritual beliefs which the missionaries encountered, suggesting that past missionaries' failures to fully contextualise and impart spiritual authority may have contributed to such ongoing challenges as DA and RS.

Moreover, it addresses the broader implications of fear in religious contexts, drawing parallels from historical Biblical events such as Adam and Eve's reactions post-sin. The analysis extends to a critique of the general human understanding of death and the afterlife, advocating for an educated, Biblically grounded view to prevent doctrinal corruption and promote a comprehensive, life-affirming Biblical understanding, which grounds the believers firmly in the word which dispels all manner of misconceptions and instead commands trust in the authority of the thus says the Lord as the rule of faith and truth.

This study contributes to the discourse on spiritual growth and doctrinal integrity within the SDA Church, offering a detailed framework for pastoral care and members' education that could be instrumental in curbing DA and RS. It emphasises the role of informed theological education and personal spiritual discipline in combating fear and enhancing the resilience of communities of faith.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Fear Causes Compromise in DA and RS**

Since the fall of man, fears of all kinds have ruled the whole world and the entire life of the human race. It cannot be overemphasised that every living creature is full of fear of every kind. While Jesus has asked us not to fear and not to be troubled over food, clothing, or what will happen tomorrow, giving us the example of birds of the air (White, 1952), fears of all kinds have really been scary all through this life. Fears of sicknesses, accidents, hunger, being laid off from work, failure, being hated, about the future, poverty, death, and many more fears. On the flip side, there is an urge to seek the betterment of all those negative or threatening situations, and in so doing, looking for protection from any source has landed humankind in more danger than safety and protection. We argue that the main cause of all these fears is mainly because mankind is threatened by the fear of death or to die, and much more because mankind doesn't know what death is, what it means to die, and what happens when one dies, and then what happens after this. In view of this, mankind has become prone to looking for any kind of protection to the extent of consulting with Satan himself, the actual and real enemy of mankind, who brought about death through disobedience to God and who even now continues to propagate the same lies of protection which is no protection at all; but rather sinking into deeper depths into death itself. This section gives a brief look into

fear from a psychological perspective and several types of fears. Finally, it analyses death, the major cause of DA and RS.

From a scientific perspective in the field of Psychology, fear is a primal emotion that involves a universal biochemical response and a high individual emotional response. Fear alerts us to the presence of danger, threat of harm, whether the danger is physical or psychological, and thus, fear is our survival response (Sikora, 2020).

"Fear is experienced in your mind, but it triggers a strong physical reaction in your body," says Sikora (2020). He goes on to add that ". . . it prompts self-defence or run/escape for your life. Your body is preparing for fight-or-flight" (Sikora, 2020).

## First Mention of Fear

1 John 4:17 tells us that, "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love." This loaded text gives the very essence of fear as follows: (a) lack of love, (b) lack of perfect love, (c) fear and punishment have a correlation, (d) Love has already been replaced by a different thing whose origin is foreign and mysterious. This means that because God is love, and whoever lives in love lives in God, and thus God lives in Him. Conversely, whoever does not love, then God does not live in him, meaning that someone else who is not God and who does not love lives in this person: This other person is the "self" whose origin is Satan, the author of fear and death. Bubeck (1975) confirms this and asserts that when we understand spiritual warfare, we will not be afraid, for God has not given us the spirit of fear but of power, love, and a sound mind. He goes on to say that fearfulness is not of God. The Holy Spirit is not the one who makes us fearful; rather, He gives us spiritual power, a heart full of love and a mind that is sound and understanding. "Fear comes from another spirit. Satan and his demons are quick to author fear." (Bubeck, 1975). White (2003) observes that it is Godly love which constrains us to remain in His obedience with undivided loyalty; further, it will be the same love which works in our interrelationship with others; this same love in all of us will be the basis of our togetherness and harmony.

It is insightful to note how science has discovered this kind of emotional response to fear, an emotion which was experienced by the first parents and Eve (Gen 3:8-10). They not only took 'flight' from the impending danger of the seemingly looming death (Gen 2:17) but also from God (Gen 3:8, 10) and the situation of the whole experience. Additionally, in their 'fight' mood response, fear is evident by their act of hiding (Gen 3:8, 10), as well as evidence of their psychological torment of guilt. It was also physically felt, as can be seen in the behaviour of cutting leaves from the trees and making coverings for themselves.

This experience shows how syncretism shows up: tree leaves' aprons in replacement of their former and now lost robe of righteousness and innocence (Gen 2:25). Ironically, the nakedness couldn't go until God came and made skins from slain animals for them (Gen 3:21 New Living Bible-NLB). The skins also signify the robe of righteousness given by Jesus Christ to every sinner who denounces sin and accepts Him as the personal Saviour, Lord, and friend of their life. The slain animal represents ". . . The Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29; White, 1897). DA can also be seen here, for they had already given their allegiance to another being, yet they still thought of their intact relationship with their creator. This didn't work. They were expelled from their home, apart from the consequences of their compromise.

In the ministry context, "born again members" have issues of challenging situations where consultations from unorthodox sources are done, translating into DA and RS. In such kinds of activities, Ndisya (2014) states that those who go to consult with witchcraft and spirits are "committed, born-again, Bible-believing Christians who have most of the Christian message right but have, because of worldview, blindness, missed the spiritual power dimension of biblical Christianity." This kind of thinking process, namely; "missed the spiritual power dimension of biblical Christianity" is so generic and at some point an assumption of facts. This is because believers have personal responsibility to grow themselves spiritually, which comes from a deliberate interaction with the word of God. Lack of which would otherwise lead to slackness and a gradual slide back to earlier beliefs.

In total, responsibility should go to both parties, the missionaries on their part, who need to have a solid foundation, and the concerned members should do their due diligence on a daily and regular basis, prayerfully interacting with the word of God. This gives daily power and optimism to face any situation with confidence. The opposite is true. Deep scrutiny of many scholars' views on the missionaries' failure to lay a firm foundation for their dissemination of the Gospel truth can be looked at from a different viewpoint than failure. In the critical situation, they found that some of the Africans' beliefs probably might not have allowed them to do more than they did, as it can objectively be viewed. The urgent need was to give the non-believers an opportunity to receive Jesus as a personal Saviour, after which other teachings could follow. In the process, some of the believers could disappear immaturely and slide back to their former animistic beliefs. It should be appreciated equally that even among the disciples, we have Judas, who remained unconverted and eventually betrayed the Saviour after all the time being with Him in the Ministry.

The Israelites lived a rebellious life, not because they did not have a firm foundation, but because they were not converted among unbelief, murmuring, and complaints. Peter, among the disciples, had to receive the rebuke from Jesus that when he was converted, he could strengthen his brothers. It can be argued that conversion is key and a major turning point for any believer to turn away from DA and RS and other ungodly vices. This kind of situation in the ministry context is not a matter of ignorance but a question of personal relationship with Jesus as the Saviour, friend, and Lord of one's life, like the life of Nicodemus (White, 2001). When this is arrived at, anyone can say, as Paul said, "I know whom I believe" (2 Tim 1:12).

## **Ignorance about Death: The Main Cause of All Contributing Factors to DA and RS**

Both Koech (1991) and Eni (1988), in their books *Snatched from the Claws of Satan* and *Delivered from Powers of Satan*, agree that the devil-Lucifer fears the Name of Jesus to the extent that when the name is mentioned and rightfully invoked, the power in the name renders him (Satan) and his demons powerless and helpless. They further say that if only Christians would know this secret, they'd never be teased or fear him or his demons. In agreement with the power in the Name of Jesus-Word of God, The Truth, Kraft (2010) says that "... we confront allegiance with allegiance, truth by truth, and power with power. . . he talks more of this same power dimension and truth in the rest of the referred articles." This statement is empowering to any human mind who has received Jesus as Saviour and Lord because they become loaded with all the same three (allegiance, truth, and power) to enable the believer to face any different evil forces at different levels.

To allow Christ's allegiance to take effect in a believer's life, the believer must let go of the false allegiances so that the legitimate allegiance can take root and start to grow to maturity. The same must happen to both truth and power; before the real truth is embraced, false truths have to be let go so that conducive ground is allowed for the gospel truth to take root and get established, hence permeating all areas of individual life's activities, leading to a real lifestyle in Christianity. The power dimension follows the same trend: All other powers must be rendered powerless when the power of the gospel in Jesus Christ is espoused in any believer's life. The Christian life gradually changes into a Christ-like lifestyle which always seeks to do the will of God (White, 1985, 2008).

Further, scholars agree that the African Worldview of animism, spirits, demons, the dead, and witchcraft, all of which cause fear about death and the state of the dead, the ignorance of what really happens when a person dies, are all great contributing factors to DA and RS (Onongha & Bauer, 2019; Idowu, 1973; Mbiti, 1969). In a defensive mood for their safety and or welfare, the affected, and indeed others who have fear, seek 'treated' protective devices from witchcraft (Onongha & Bauer, 2019). Ahirka (2000) says that some born-again Christians do more of this, all in the name of trying to run away from death. It is on this premise that an exploration of death will help us to dispel all fears of all kinds and empower Christians in the freedom which Jesus Christ promised in Himself: All who believe in Him will never die, and if they die, they will live again, as it is evident in the case of Lazarus. He was raised by Jesus in a miraculous, conspicuous, and dramatic way, which eventually caused a division in the leadership, which eventually led to a plot to kill Jesus (John 11:1-57) (White, 2001; Akpa et al., 2013). Batchelor (2001) gives an analysis of the death of Lazarus and calls it an experience of sleep despite having died four days earlier before Jesus came to resurrect him. But in the process, Jesus unveils that, indeed, Lazarus was actually dead, but to all who believe in Jesus, though they die, they will live again. He gives deep lessons of both spiritual death and physical death, first death and second death, first resurrection and second resurrection, the millennium and the life after the millennium, and the world made new, where there will be no more dying and thus all fear will forever be gone.

Van der Westhuizen (2010) says, ". . . The truth will set you free; or simply, the truth will enhance your brain to escape from the normal way of thinking. . ." However, the truth about death has been a puzzle that is really not hidden by the word of God; therefore, there is an urgent need to know and differentiate between what death is and what it is not. This seemingly puzzling has been used as a bit by the evil one to create fear about death and intimidate mankind. This ignorance pushes mankind to look for defence mechanisms of all kinds, hence being enslaved by Satan into witchcraft, believing in demons and ancestral spirits, and living in perpetual fear. Clarke (1837) tells us that "... thus the word of God is a double-edged sword, it smites the sinner with judgment or compunction and the sincere inquirer after truth, with conviction of truth of its own worth and excellence." To know the truth about death, we must go to the creation of mankind and establish the essence of life and its subsequent loss, which ends in death and eternal loss.

## **The Creation of Adam and Eve**

John 1:4 gives a profound statement that shows us the essence of life that God imparted to the first man, and even after the fall, Jesus, again the same creator, recreated man afresh in Himself. (White, 1912) gives a detailed emphasis on the essence of this life from Christ the Life-Giver, although the world did not see divinity in the humble man of Nazareth. In Him was eternal life, not physical life, as specified here. It is not eternal or immortal life which each individual receives, but physical. But Christ's life is unborrowed. This life

is not inherent in man, but he can only possess it through Christ. Man cannot earn it but can only receive it through Christ through obedience and receiving Him as the personal Saviour.

"How was man brought into existence?" response, "And the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul, (Genesis 2:7)." (White, 2014) emphasises in "(2 Peter 1:4), man is a partaker of God's Nature. The Lord created man out of the dust of the earth ("God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." ". . . we are to behold the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." . . .). He made Adam a partaker of His life and His nature. There was breathed into him the breath of the Almighty, and he became a living soul. Adam was perfect in form: strong, comely, pure, bearing the image of his Maker. And that through God's power, ". . . The heart beats, pulse succeeds pulse, breath succeeds breath, but the entire being is under the supervision of God. "Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." In God, we live and move and have our being. Each heartbeat, each breath, is the inspiration of Him who breathed into the nostrils of Adam the breath of life, the inspiration of the ever-present God, The Great I AM (White, 1898). But this did not last forever because there crept misguidance from one of the creatures, Satan"(John 8:44; Genesis 3:4). "Seeds of Death Satan's Work: Christ never planted the seeds of death in the system" (Nichol, 1953).

The fruit of knowledge meant disobedience to God, and the end resulted in eternal death. The delayed immediate execution of the death penalty was because God had already made a substitutionary provision of the same. White (1898) adds that in "(Revelation 13:8): Death Penalty Not Enforced at Once: . . . Why was the death penalty not enforced in his case? Because a ransom was found. God's only begotten Son volunteered to take the sin of man upon Himself and to make an atonement for the fallen race. There could have been no pardon for sin had this atonement not been made. Had God pardoned Adam's sin without an atonement, sin would have been immortalised, and it would have been perpetuated with a boldness that would have been without restraint." What happens for death to occur is still a puzzle, and we need to unravel it.

There are many beliefs about death which create different perspectives of death. These perspectives and worldviews range from mythological, philosophical, medical, religious, cultural, and biblical, to mention but a few; for purposes of this article, the parameters will be explored within biblical worldview where religious and cultural beliefs will interface, hence getting to be guided by the thus says the word of God for either, "to be judged or get compunction as sinners or to be convicted of truth of its own worth and excellence and be freed from the chains of perpetual fear of the long defeated foul-death." Clarke (1837).

## **The first Mention of Death, but What Is It?**

Death, like sin, is an intruder from mysterious quarters that came to complicate God's plan for His creation. It came as a result of sin, whose emergence and origin are also a mystery. It cannot be excused or overlooked because neither would give satisfactory contentment as to what it really is. It can simply be expressed as the result of sin (Rom 5:12, 6:23). Wheeler's explanation and exposition on death as a mysterious sleep argues that Jesus is the only one who ever died the Biblical death, which is the wages of sin, and subsequently gives His life to those who truly believe in Him (Wheeler, 2009). In concurrence, Rodriguez (2019) asserts that there is a direct correlation between sin, natural death, and end-of-the-world death. Adam and Eve experienced death as a result of their rebellion against their creator. After the fall, sin and death found an entrance into the world, and consequently, all sinned, and all will die. Death, like sin, is

universal and inescapable by any human effort. It is, in fact, the wages of sin (Rom 6:23). The primary emphasis between sin and death is that spiritual death is eternal separation from God, as rebellious sinners are eliminated from the universe. For repentant sinners, natural death is not final, but it is only to sleep in Christ until the resurrection. The bodies of believers have not been redeemed from the power of death, but they will be at the coming of Christ (Rodriguez, 2019). Batchelor (2001) agrees with this and gives the same concept.

Rodriguez (2019) further says, in reference to Gen 2:17, "... the Serpent denied not the concept of death but the phenomenon of actually dying; there, lies were pronounced by a creature in an attempt to raise all creatures to the level of divine." (Who alone does not die and is not subject to death). It is evident that when humankind is trying effortlessly to stay relevant and without dying, fear always permeates.

According to the Islamic religion, "bereavement represents a significant life event, often resulting in major social, psychological and spiritual transitions. . . death marks the passing to the Hereafter – the ultimate destination. For the bereaved, comfort is found in this endurance through prayers (Dua) and a motivation to 'get on with life' at a deeper spiritual level of faith in order to reunite in Paradise (Stroebe et al., 2007)." This belief shows that the dead are already in heaven, a worldview that supports the initial lie of Satan that 'man shall not surely die.' It is contradictory to the initial God's verdict (Gen 2:16-17), and instead, it presupposes a lifelong state of sinfulness, which is the evil one's initial lie (sinning without dying Gen 3:4). All world religions offer a false continuous life after death in support of the same Satan's propaganda. Reincarnation is mainstream teaching in Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Jainism. However, fewer than half of Indians in each of these groups say they believe in reincarnation. For example, 40 per cent of India's Hindus believe in reincarnation, according to an article authored on June 29, 2021 (Wikipedia, n.d.). Celtic paganism author Alexander Cornelius Polyhistor wrote, " The Pythagorean doctrine prevails among the Gauls' teaching that the souls of men are immortal, and that after a fixed number of years, they will enter into another body" (Wikipedia, n.d.). This is one of the sources from which Roman Catholicism anchored the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Gaius Julius Caesar wrote that the druids of Gaul, Britain, and Ireland had metempsychosis as one of their core doctrines as follows: "The principal point of their doctrine is that the soul does not die and that after death it passes from one body into another... the main object of all education is, in their opinion, to imbue their scholars with a firm belief in the indestructibility of the human soul, which, according to their belief, merely passes at death from one tenement to another; for by such doctrine alone, they say, which robs death of all its terrors, can the highest form of human courage be developed (Wikipedia, n.d.). DA and RS are the instruments that the evil one uses to propagate his lies so that, through them, mankind can be trapped in snares of ignorant blindness until they die within his territory and in sin.

## **The Enemy's Deception about Death**

Death is the most subtle deception, which the evil one uses to trap people into his sinfulness of unbelief. This subtlety started in the Garden of Eden, as discussed in Gen 3:4, that is, "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. The unbelief and denial that man does not actually die at death, but rather continues to live in some other realms as a soul, and that others are still being punished in hell.

The enemy of God uses all instruments at every level of the society's fabric to achieve his goal of netting his prey, the children of God, without mercy. All these arguments are some of the defence mechanisms that the evil one has devised so that he can continue to quieten the consciences of God's people lest they

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are pricked by the Holy Spirit into conviction unto repentance and be saved. Nichol (1953) says that in relation to this kind of deceit, "... The fig leaves (which Adam and Eve sought after they sinned and covered their nakedness) represent the arguments used to cover disobedience. When the Lord calls the attention of men and women to the truth, the making of fig leaves into aprons will begin to hide the nakedness of the soul. But the nakedness of the sinner is not covered. All the arguments pieced together by all who have interested themselves in this flimsy work will come to nought."

One more illustration of deceit is quoted from the Catholic Catechism: "Do not weep, for I shall be more useful to you after my death and I shall help you then more effectively than during my life," and "I want to spend my heavenly life doing good on earth" (Ratzinger, 1994). In such a situation where the worldview of animism holds that the deceased are not really dead but are referred to as the living dead (because they recently died), they will remain in the darkness of deceptive lies of ignorance for a long time before their spiritual eyes are opened. Instead of the truth correcting the error and the light illuminating to expel the darkness of ignorance, the light bearer becomes blind. Note should here be taken from a renowned university ATR Done; the dead are not really dead, so says the animistic view of the Kamba culture, but they are "the living dead..." (Mbiti, 1969). Mbiti goes on to assert that these living dead (who recently died) are in a better position to be the intermediaries of the living because they have been in this world and now they have the opportunity of being in heaven, hence being better placed to present the needs of their living relatives before God (paraphrase and emphasis mine) (Mbiti, 1960; du Preez, 1993). This kind of teaching is so contradictory and completely inconsistent with the Bible's teaching. Such people's consciences are quietened by false Satanic views' teachings and consequently fail to have an opportunity to seek the truth as it is in the Bible.

Even with this elaborate explanation of what really happens or how everything that relates to sin and death works, the evil one still creates confusion and comes with the same false doctrine as from the beginning: that people do not actually die when the breath of life leaves them: But instead they are either born or reincarnated in different forms in the next world, the soul does not die, the spirit goes back to God, ancestral worship, demons worship, spirits appeasing, and evil spirits consultation etc. It was very challenging on social media in the last month of 2019 when a "Hindu Man Marries A Rat, Claiming It Is the Reincarnation of His Dead Wife." "Mr Chidhatma Basu, 41 years old, who had lost his wife in a tragic fatal road accident in January 2017, and a father of four young girls, consulted temple officials about the mysterious animal and was assured that the rat was, indeed, his reincarnated first wife. The rodent had a nose and eyes, ate and liked his late wife's cookies, and was as affectionate as she was. Although this was controversial all over, it was conducted, and the source says it was legal. The Hindu priest who performed the ceremony said Mr Basu was lucky to have... found his wife reincarnated in the family farm" (Nseyen, 2017). Yet, a woman named Hang, 76 years old, who lives in Kratie province of Cambodia, was struck by the similarities between a cow and her late husband; she claimed to marry a cow because it looked like her late husband. She asserts that the calf did everything (I believe behaviours, emphasis mine) as her late husband used to do. (Baker, 2023). Satan has mysteriously concealed and blinded humankind in his initial lie in several ways so that he will confuse them and continually keep them under his control in perpetual ignorance of what death really is and consequently keep them in eternal captivity of fear. But what exactly happens when someone dies is a serious question. To come into the light of this question, we had better go to the rudimentary stages of creation, which will give us the composition of man.

## 3.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### The distinction between Breath of Life, Spirit, Soul, and Body

The magnitude of this lesson demands a whole dissertation, but because of the limited space, only highlights will be provided so that a glimpse of the truth can be appreciated. Biblical perspective distinguishes between the 'breath of life, the spirit, and the body.' "... the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being (Gen 2:7). Breath of life plus the dust of the ground gave a living being (soul). Bacchiocchi (1997) says in confirmation of, and reference to this text, "... At creation, man became a living soul when the body made of the dust of the ground began to breathe as a result of the divine inbreathing of the breath of life. At death, a person ceases to be a living soul when the body takes the last breath and returns to the dust. . ." At death man breathes his last and he is no more (Job 14:10-12). Where the breath of life goes is another question and the Bible guides us again through Ezekiel, God says, "... Prophecy to the breath; and say: '... Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'" So, I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet, a vast army (Ezekiel 37:5, 9-10). At death, the breath of life vanishes into the atmosphere. Certainly, it cannot return to God because He is not in need of it anymore. For illustration, when water is drawn from some source- a tap, river, well, spring or from wherever, after use, the concerned do not take the used water back into the source, but rather, the water is disposed away (Here, for purposes of emphasis, ignoring the science study of evaporation, gathering of clouds, and rain falling again back to us, though this is the scientific water cycle) and not taken back to the place from which it was initially sourced.

Thus, when one dies, and the last breath is taken, the breath does not go back to God, who gave it. This can be illustrated further by using a car tyre, bicycle tube, balloon, etc.; when any of these sustains a puncture, the air from the inside does not go back to the pump which was used to fill the air into the tyre or balloon, but rather it vanishes in the atmosphere in the thin air. Likewise, when a person breathes their last, the same thing happens, and consequently, life stops. Burnett (2000) asserts that, "... Protestants have generally taken the view that the Bible exposes death as being a radical break with life. This is further expounded in the Bible, which states that when one dies, the body returns to the ground from where it came, and the spirit returns to God who gave it (Eccl 12:7). For the body and where it goes, there is not much confusion, although there are some people who for a fact do not understand because of the way the preachers put it, who dramatically paint a continued life after death. Viz., '... Our departed are very disappointed to see us mourning for them because they are very happy with God, the angels, and those who went before them.' Others would confusingly say, for example, 'We are laying so and so in the grave to rest... but all of a sudden, the same person says, 'Our departed is enjoying fellowship with the angels in heaven, and they are very disappointed that we are crying while they are happy and peaceful.' Others will even talk to the departed and say, 'We ask you to pray for us and prepare a good place for us; you have gone before us, but we will find you there.' etc. on the other hand, the 'spirit' is not anything tangible or quantitative but rather it is the "life-giving principle" which belongs only to the Sovereign God. Burnett (2000) argues in an interesting and confusing way that, "... At death, the soul is free to travel along the Hanging Road to dwell thereafter in the proximity of the Greater Wise One. Only those who commit suicide are barred from this peace.

When these souls travel the Hanging Road, they are diverted along a fork in the road which leads not to heaven, but to nothingness . . ." This is a complete distortion of the Biblical truth and foundation already established about the unconscious state of our departed loved ones; it is also an explicit portrayal of

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misunderstanding of the subject of the unconscious state of the dead and collusion with the false teachings of the enemy to the first pair by Satan; '... You will not surely die...' (Gen 3:4). Burnett, however, introduces another interesting part of the discussion about the 'soul' which he says wonders, travels, etc., etc., suffice it to say, the 'soul' is a non-living entity and it cannot be dealt with in this single article. However, as earlier mentioned, dust plus breath of life is equal to a living soul (Gen2:7). This would also explain to us that without the breath of life then it will be a dead soul, hence translating the 'soul' to be a separate entity and a living thing outside the body or apart from the body will be tantamount to total confusion and a misunderstanding of the Biblical principle of what really happens after death and we do not want to get into the unbiblical teaching.

Bacchiocchi (1997) confirms this argument, asserting that the 'breath of life' is not an immaterial, immortal soul that God implanted into the material body; it is the animating principle of both human and animal life, "breath-neshama of life" is the life-giving power that is associate with the breath of God, The Spirit as Life Principle-manifested in the creation of human life and of the universe as a whole (Ps 104:24, 29-30), vivifying power of God's Spirit-ruach, Ezek 37:5, 6, 9-10, God's breath is more than moving air. It is the creative power of life manifested through the spoken word of God (cf. John 6:63, emphasis mine). Thus, God's breath should be understood not as moving air but as the life-giving power manifested through His spoken word. When God speaks, things happen because His word is not empty speech but life-giving power. As the animating principle of His life left Him, the Lord died and sank into unconsciousness; ... No one will argue that the spirit - ruach that God takes away from the fish at death carries consciousness and personality; [Job 34:14-15; Ecc 12:7]; notice; (a) nowhere in the Bible is God's breath or spirit identified with the human soul. (b) The existence of the soul depends upon God's life, which gives breath [neshama] or spirit [ruach]. And when the life-giving spirit is withdrawn, a person ceases to be a living soul and becomes a dead soul. Thus, the Psalmist says, "His breath [ruach] goes forth, he returneth to his earth; in the day his thoughts perish" (Psalm 146:4 KJV) (Bacchiocchi, 1997).

It can therefore be argued that the spirit which "goes back to the giver" is the life-giving principle that alone comes from God, as He is the only one capable of enabling life to flourish or diminish. In other words, the power of giving life still exists in God. The Bible clearly states that the dead know nothing at all (Ecc 9:5, 6). In addition to this very important teaching, Wheeler expounds in support of this argument and observation in a whole chapter about death and how Christ has defeated it, changing this death into sleep for all those who believe in His death and resurrection as the first fruit of all who sleep in Him. Those who do not believe in Jesus and His death, burial, and resurrection still carry the eternal death penalty, which is the wages of sin, but they still have an opportunity to get eternal life in Jesus Christ Before they die and as far as they are conscious; they have an opportunity to adhere to the gospel truth and repent, surrender themselves to Jesus Christ for both forgiveness, salvation, and receive the gift of eternal life. Wheeler (2009) further expounds on what the soul is, and in concurrence, he points out in support that the soul translated nephesh in the OT Hebrew is used interchangeably with human beings. He further says that some people use (Ecc 12:7) to support the idea that when a person dies, "the body returns to dust and the spirit of life returns to God who gave it"

Thus, when one dies, the soul goes instantly to God (which is not a true argument because it contradicts the soul with the spirit). Note should here be taken that spirit is the life-giving principle, and the soul and body are one and the same thing. The difference is at death. When it is alive, it is a living soul, while at death (without the breath of life), it is a dead soul/lifeless body-emphasis mine (Wheeler, 2009). The

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argument that 'when one dies, the soul goes straight to God is not consistent with the Scripture narrative because there is a difference between the spirit and the soul. The body goes back to the dust from where it was taken. While the body and the soul are one and the same thing as referred to in Gen 2:7, after God breathed His breath of life into the formed body from the dust, it became a living soul. Equally, without the breath of life at death, it is, therefore, a dead soul/a dead body/lifeless body. It cannot be a spirit. Equating the breath of life to the spirit (life-giving principle) contradicts the Biblical text, which is categorical: 'the spirit goes back to the giver' and not the breath of life, which goes back to the giver. Earlier, this was dealt with where this same idea was expounded, showing the difference between the two, namely, breath of life and spirit; thus, the spirit is the life-giving principle, whereas the breath of life is simply that, and at death, it vanishes in the atmosphere. Smith sheds more light in support of this observation and says the following: "The passage may not be saying anything other than death is God's withdrawal of His 'spirit' or 'life force' from a person." Further, Schmidt and Davidson also "see death as the point when God's 'vitality' or 'life force' departs from a human being." In a further, deeper emphasis, Murphy (1992) says that "this is a picture of dissolution, not of immortality, as if there was a *reditus animae ad Deum*, 'the return of the soul to God.'

There is no question of 'soul' here, but that of the breath of life is a totally different category of thought" (Smith, 1993). In these ideas, the concurrence is clear, thus meaning *nephesh* is not just part of the person, but it is the person himself. Further, Robert Jr. observes that the death of a *nephesh* means a loss of personhood; thus, it is not what God had put in Adam but what he was (Wheeler, 2009; Bromley, 1982). After surveying how Scripture uses *nephesh*, Richards (1991) concludes that "'soul' in the OT... does not indicate some immaterial part of human beings that continues after death. *Nephesh* essentially means life as it is uniquely experienced by personal beings." The Bible confirms this and guides that both animals and men have the same fate; i.e., both are in the world and both go to the dust at death from where they were gotten, and both have their breath of life which leaves them at death, and thus it vanishes in the atmosphere and also, who knows where their spirit goes, whether that of the animal goes down to the earth or that of man goes up? This view is clarified by the Bible, their (man's and animal's) "spirit goes back to the giver" In other words, the power to live or to die is in the prerogative of God Himself alone (Ecc 3:18-21; 12:7). The NT (Greek) gives *psyche* for the soul as the like of *nephesh* in the OT (Hebrew) basically meaning the same thing as the whole human being (Wheeler, 2009). The Bible categorises every part of possible arguments for the purposes of expelling any further doubts and says, "... If it were his intention and He withdrew His spirit and breath, all mankind would perish together, and man would return to the dust. This distinction helps us to understand it deeply.

Bacchiocchi (1997) further deepens this understanding, where he sheds more light, especially on the seemingly grey line between the two: 'breath of life' and the 'spirit of God.' He says, "Breath of Life. . . . In Scripture, the 'breath [*neshamah*] of life' is the life-giving power that is associated with the breath of God. Thus we read Job 33:4: "The spirit [*ruach*] of God has made me, and the breath [*neshamah*] of Almighty gives me life." The parallelism between the "spirit of God" and "the breath of the Almighty" suggest that the two are used interchangeably because they both refer to the gift of life imparted by God to His creatures. Another clear example is found in Isaiah 42:5: 'Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, . . . who gives breath [*neshamah*] to the people upon it, and spirit [*ruach*] to those who walk in it.' Here, again, the parallelism shows that breath and spirit denote the same animating principle of life that God gives to His creatures. . . The connection between the "breath of life" and "the living soul" becomes clear when we remember that, as Atkinson (1969) points out, "man's soul is in his

blood and indeed his blood is his soul. Thus, he is kept in being [*alive*] as a living soul by the inhalation of oxygen out of the air, and medical science today knows, of course, a great deal about the connection between this intake of oxygen and the blood."

The cessation of breathing results in the death of the soul because the blood, which is equated with the soul, no longer receives the oxygen that is so vital for life. This explains why the Bible refers about 13 times to human death as the death of the soul (Lev 19:28; 21:1, 11; 22:4; Num 5:2; 6:6, 7, 10; 19:11, 13; Hag 2:13) (Bacchiocchi, 1997)." It means, therefore, that the prophesying to the breath, which came from the four winds and breathed into the dead bodies, is the command of air, which, of course, contains oxygen and which caused the resurrection of all the bodies. This further means that the word of God is the substance of the whole activity. In the OT, there are 19 other passages in which [*nephesh*] is applied to animals. Two of them will be used as examples of "living soul" in (Gen 2:7). The passages associate *nephesh* with blood, Lev 17:11. . . "For the life of the flesh is in the blood." "Life" is a translation of the Hebrew *nephesh*, so the passage reads: "The soul of the flesh is in the blood." Lev 17:14 reads: "For the life of every creature it is in the blood of it; . . . You shall not eat the blood of the creature, for the life of every creature is in its blood." The word life is used to translate the Hebrew [*nephesh*], so the passage should actually read, "For the [soul] of every creature is its blood" note also Deut 12:23, (. . . because the blood is the life, and you must not eat the life with the meat). The phrase "every creature" indicates that the reference to blood applies to both man and animals. Therefore, as Atkinson (1969) points out, "We have here a most important insight revealed into the essence of human nature. Soul and blood are identical." With life in regard to the soul and blood, further clarification is given by both Hoff (1978) and Atkinson (1969) to confirm that blood is life, holy from God, and nobody should meddle with it. The clarity of the Scriptures gives light to enable the willing to walk in it. The reason for and source of the many mix-ups is the next consideration.

## From Where Did the Tares Come Amidst the Wheat?

Satan, in the person of the serpent, said, ". . . You shall not surely die . . ." "Ye shall be as gods," he said to Eve," if you eat of the fruit from the tree forbidden by God, (Gen 3:4). He takes the form of an angel of light (2 Cor 11:3-4). Satan gained an advantage over God's people in many ways; his acts were artful, clothed and masterly, employed with sophistry and fraud; his power to deceive was great, using deceit and flattery while disguising himself with a cloak of falsehood, he had gained advantage even the loyal angels could not fully discern his character or see to what his work was leading. God, in dealing with sin, could only use righteousness and truth, but Satan could use what God could not use: flattery and deceit (White, 2013).

Thus, he can take the forms of an animal, a departed loved one, an angel of light, a servant of God, or anything to disguise himself. This enables him to lure many into deception and to even the worshipping of demons themselves; as he used the serpent as an instrument, he does it all the time. ". . . He has the power to bring before men the appearance of their departed friends (this is one of the most deceitful lies-emphasis). The counterfeit is perfect; the familiar look, the words, the tone, are reproduced with marvellous distinctness. Many are comforted with the assurance that their loved ones are in the bliss of heaven, and without suspicion of danger, they give ear to seducing spirits and the doctrine of devils." When they have been led to believe that the dead actually return to communicate with them, Satan causes those who went into the grave unprepared to show up. This makes it appear that there is no difference between the righteous and the wicked" (White, 2013). Further, White (2009) asserts that during such hidden delusions, there requires a special keenness to withstand. ". . . Only those who are founded firmly

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on the truth of the word of God are able to withstand his woes, deceits, and cunningness of subtleness of the evil one, hence withstanding all weathers. . . " (paraphrased). Thus, the Bible advises that we test all spirits because not all spirits are from God (1 John 4:1-3).

The scale is the word of God. To the law and to the testimony if they speak not according to these, there is no light (Isaiah 8:19-20). All of these machinations fail this test because they follow fables and traditions to give translations and interpretations of the Bible truth; hence, they falter in their understanding of the truth. White (2013) does expositions in these areas where the falsehood of the evil one is mostly based, "The origin of sin; Enmity between Man and Satan; Agency of Evil Spirits; Snares of Satan; The first Great Deception; and Can the Dead Speak to Us." Jesus Christ alone is capable of uprooting the tares and conquering both Satan and death by His own death on the cross. In His death, burial, and, above all, resurrection, hope came alive to the ever-tormented, suppressed, and bound human race. This dispelled all the fears, even the fear of the greatest feared death. Ironically, humankind is resistant and hesitant to take this gift (Heb 2:14-15). Christ vanquished Satan in the same nature (of Adam), over which in Eden Satan obtained the victory over man. The enemy was overcome by Christ in His human nature. The power of the Saviour's Godhead was hidden. He overcame human nature, relying upon God for power. This is a privilege for all. In proportion to our faith will be our victory. Christ was nailed on the cross, but He gained the victory. The whole force of evil gathered itself together in an effort to destroy Him, who was the light of the world, the truth that makes men wise unto salvation. However, no advantage was gained by this confederacy. With every advance move, Satan was bringing nearer his eternal ruin. Christ was indeed enduring the contradiction of sinners against Himself. But every pang of suffering that He bore helped in demolishing the foundation of the enemy's kingdom. Satan bruised Christ's heel, but Christ bruised (KJV) (crushed-NIV-emphasis mine) Satan's head. Through death, the Saviour destroyed him that had the power of death (Heb 2:14-15).

In the very act of grabbing his prey, death was vanquished; for by dying, Christ brought to light life and immortality through the gospel . . . By becoming the sin-bearer, He lifted from the human race the curse of sin. In His own body, He paid the penalty of that on which the power of Satan over humanity is founded. This is the simple reason why many are deceived because they lack knowledge and understanding of the whole lessons of what happens to our loved ones when they die: what is death and what caused it, what God has done for us in Jesus Christ, and what is our individual part to play in the whole affair; these are the major questions which everyone needs to master and get adequate answers so that we are all freed from the bondage of the evil one, that of ignorance. It is the greatest challenge because man doesn't know, not because knowledge or information is obscured, but because he has refused it. Then, in return, God sends a delusion, and thus, man believes lies instead of truth (2 Thes 2:10-11). The hope is in His providence in the revealed truth, as it is both in the Bible and in Jesus Christ- The objective truth and the subjective truth.

Prophet Hosea says that "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. . . and because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you as my priests . . . because you have ignored the law of your God, I will also ignore your children" (Hosea 4:6). White (2003), on this subject, says the following, ". . . None are in greater danger from the influence of evil spirits than those who, notwithstanding the direct and ample testimony of the Scriptures deny the existence and the agency of the devil and his angels. So long as we are ignorant of their wiles, they have an almost inconceivable advantage; many heed their suggestions while they suppose themselves following the dictates of their own wisdom. This is why, as we approach the close of time, Satan is to work with the greatest power to deceive and destroy; he spreads everywhere the

belief that he does not exist. It is his policy to conceal himself and his manner of working,"... There is nothing that the great deceiver fears than that we shall become so acquainted with his devices. The more he disguises his real character and purposes, the more he has caused himself to be so represented as to excite no stronger emotion than ridicule or contempt. He is well pleased to be painted as a ludicrous or loathsome object, misshapen, half animal and half human. He is happy to hear his name used in sport and mockery by those who think themselves intelligent and well informed... and he masks himself in such a manner that people ask boldly whether such a being really exists:" knowledge of the gospel truth is power, but without which we are rendered powerless, thus Jesus tells us that "... You shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free. And if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. . ." (John 8:32, 36). It is very important that we know not only how the devil disguises himself, but also, much more, what he is like and the many ways he uses to cover himself up. This is because, when he covers himself up, people will stay in total darkness, hence remaining his forever captives of ignorance and fear of death. It is equally important to know that he is powerless in contrast to the power of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who defeated him on the cross when He died and shed His blood. White (2003) asserts, ". . . And it is because Satan can most readily control the minds of those who are unconscious of his influences that the word of God gives us so many examples of his malignant works, unveiling before us his secret forces and thus placing us on our guard against his assaults. The power and malice of Satan and his host might justly alarm us were it not that we may find shelter and deliverance in the superior power of our redeemer . . . those who follow Christ are ever safe under His watch-care. Angels who excel in power are sent from heaven to protect them. The wicked one cannot break through the guard which God has stationed about His people." Anderson (2000) sheds light that, in knowing the exact truth about Jesus and how He has dealt with the foul author of death, he says, "Satan has no right of ownership or authority over us. He is a defeated foe, but he is committed to keeping us from realising that." No one needs to stay in the darkness of ignorance, hence perpetual fear. All should get out of the prison of fear of death, which is caused by ignorance of the truth about what death is, what happens at death and what is in store for all mankind guided by individual choice.

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Conclusion:** DA and RS are challenges that existed before the creation of mankind. For this reason, God forewarns mankind on the same and alerts him so that he can make an informed decision on whether to adhere to God's, thus says the Lord, or if he would follow other alluring, seductive deceptions. This means that there is no reason whatsoever that anyone can possibly give in to getting involved in vices. This is because anybody's choice is entirely dependent on their personal relationship with God. The relationship of free will obedience is motivated by the love of the indwelling Christ in the person of the Holy Spirit.

This concludes every false argument by both Satan and his followers about the alleged inconsiderate demands of full allegiance to God because God has provided for human beings a way of escape by depending on Jesus Christ's enabling grace. The love relationship developed by God and exemplified on the cross when He gave Christ, His only Son, to die for sinful human beings speaks volumes and shuts every accusing mouth against any false allegation about God. This did not only slum any false accusations against God but also defeated the greatest enemy of all enemies-death and the fear which comes with the ignorance of what death really is and what it is that happens at death, and above all what will eventually happen to death after all when Jesus comes a second time, it will be the last enemy to be vanquished (1 Cor 15:26).

This article does not purport to have exhausted the causes of DA and RS but asserts that fear of death and the ignorance of what death really is all about, what happens at death and what lies ahead of the grave are the major causes of DA and RS; hence enticing believers who have not been firmly founded on the Biblical truth foundation to be swayed into Satanic delusions. It is our sincere plea that the lesson of the immortality of the soul be taught and re-taught to believers at all levels. This, among other causes, needs to be seriously inculcated in every believer's fundamental teachings before and after baptism. As other scholars have suggested and made their recommendations, these lessons should be included in the institutional curriculum so that the source of demonic entries in the Church can be curtailed and evil spirits of seducing demons cast out in the Mighty Name of Jesus Christ. This is possible as (Kraft, 2010) says, "... we confront allegiance with allegiance, truth by truth, and power with power..." He talks more of this same power dimension and truth in one of his articles.

The power and authority of Jesus Christ, which He gives to the believing disciples in their commissioning, is still available to all who at this time and age take and believe in the Name of Jesus as personal Saviour, Lord, friend, and soon coming King. This works by faith in all He has promised and made available to all the believers of His Biblical Truth.

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