

Psychopannychy, motivation for belief

What does your ministry think is the main reason(s) why some people are motivated to believe or advocate a doctrine of psychopannychy/soul sleep?

It is undeniable that a main influence guiding the adoption of psychopannychy/soul sleep is the effect that Darwinian evolution and materialism has had on Biblical Studies, which is steadily being adopted by some notable parts of evangelical Christianity. Once a human being is thought to just be an advanced form of animal, then individuals quickly tend to forget that they have a unique supernatural imprint upon themselves—and think they will die a death the same way as any cat, dog, or ape.

This is problematic because Believers are certainly to have a spiritual connection to a God who resides in a dimension outside of the time and space of this universe (cf. Ephesians 1:20; 2:6). Even though theistic evolution advocates that God directed the process of natural selection, many who go from believing that humans were created *ex nihilo* and that there is a disembodied afterlife between death and resurrection, to believing in evolution and psychopannychy, are prime targets for atheism. In this case, denying an intermediate afterlife can be only one stage on the road to apostasy.

In the case of a group like the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, which is well known for advocating psychopannychy, the adoption of this view may have been in response to the growth of spiritism and séances in the Nineteenth Century. Overreacting to the trend practiced by some Christians who attempted to contact their deceased relatives, but most of all how popular Christian preaching often fails to emphasize the future resurrection of the body and just talks about “going to Heaven”—it would instead be taught that the deceased is simply unconscious in the grave. The SDA doctrine of “soul sleep” would later influence groups like Hebert W. Armstrong’s Worldwide Church of God, and the Sacred Name movement.

It would seem doubtful that the common SDA emphasis on monism, meaning that the human person is entirely a physical being—closely associated with “soul sleep”—has anything to do with their Sabbatarianism. The First Century Jewish Pharisees were far more stringent in their observance of *Shabbat* and the Torah than the Adventists, and they believed in an intermediate disembodied afterlife attended by future resurrection. Instead, the adoption of “soul sleep” by the SDA Church, WWCOC, and other offshoots is probably more guided by wanting to reject what is thought to be a mainline Protestant Christian doctrine. Messianic groups which tend to advocate complete unconsciousness between death and resurrection are guided by a similar impetus, but they often irresponsibly connect it with a disembodied afterlife being some form of “paganism.” Quite contrary to this, liberals and those various conservatives in contemporary theology, who believe in psychopannychy, do so on the basis of their position that the human being is an entirely physical creature, something that they believe modern science and Darwinian evolution have proven.

Those who believe in psychopannychy ultimately are confronted with a great deal of discomfort and dread when a loved one passes away, or when they are facing their own deaths. What does a pastor who is comforting a grieving family—who believes in “soul sleep”—have to offer? *That the deceased will only be steadily decomposing in a gravesite*, until some far off and distant resurrection? Rather than with Believers being with the Messiah in some kind of Paradise after death, that it will only be a matter of time before the casket seal breaks and maggots and parasites get to have their way with their father, mother, or dear friend?

It is easy to see how the traditional view of the deceased saints waiting in Heaven until the future time of resurrection, firmly based within the Scriptures, brings much comfort. A cemetery gravesite is actually an

encouraging place of solace to visit—as a grave will one day be reopened with the deceased consciousness returning to a reanimated body at the Second Coming! Decomposition, regardless of how fast or slow it may be, should not frighten us—because the essential person of memory, emotion, and experience has not been buried. The one who placed his or her trust in the Messiah Yeshua is consciously in His presence, yet is most eager to return to Earth as salvation history progresses ahead. We only run into problems when we fail to emphasize the intermediate state as only temporary, and that it will be attended by a future resurrection.

Ultimately, why do some people adopt psychopannychy—a view essentially shared by atheists and agnostics that when a person dies, he or she falls into endless unconsciousness? **Is it a fear of what lies beyond?** Is it a failure to really contemplate the 100 billion galaxies in our known universe, and consider the multiple dimensions of existence and paralleling universes, and humans' place within the cosmic scheme? Is it a phobia of recognizing that outside of all of these spheres sits a great and everlasting God to whom all must give account, and that death is the means by which the mysteries of the cosmos *begin* to be revealed to us? We may never know the final answer; the key is to know Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) as Lord and Savior and in being prepared for eternity at all times.