

= Bart Sells His Soul =

" Bart Sells His Soul " is the fourth episode of The Simpsons ' seventh season . It first aired in the United States on the Fox network , on October 8 , 1995 . In the episode , while being punished for playing a prank at church , Bart declares that there is no such thing as a soul and to prove it he sells his to Milhouse for \$ 5 in the form of a piece of paper with " Bart Simpson 's soul " written on it . Lisa warns that Bart will regret this decision , and Bart soon experiences strange changes in his life . Thinking he has really lost his soul , he becomes desperate to get it back . Lisa eventually obtains it and returns it to a relieved Bart.

" Bart Sells His Soul " was written by Greg Daniels , who was inspired by an experience from his youth where he had purchased a bully 's soul . Director Wesley Archer and his team of animators visited Chili 's for examples to use in Moe 's family restaurant . The episode includes cultural references to the song " In @-@ A @-@ Gadda @-@ Da @-@ Vida " , by Iron Butterfly , Chilean poet Pablo Neruda , and a parody of the book Are You There God ? It 's Me , Margaret . , by Judy Blume .

Writers from the fields of religion , philosophy , popular culture , and psychology cited the episode in books discussing The Simpsons and the show 's approach to the nature of the soul . The episode was positively received by the media , and is regarded as one of the seventh season 's and the series ' best . The creative team of The Simpsons puts the episode among the top five best episodes of the series , and series creator Matt Groening cited " Bart Sells His Soul " as one of his favorite episodes . It has been used by secondary schools in religious education courses as a teaching tool . This episode is considered by many fans and critics as one of the darkest episodes from The Simpsons .

= = Plot = =

During a church service , Bart tricks the congregation by distributing the lyrics to a hymn titled " In the Garden of Eden " by " I. Ron Butterfly " , which is actually the psychedelic rock song " In @-@ A @-@ Gadda @-@ Da @-@ Vida " by Iron Butterfly , that the unwitting parishioners and organist proceed to perform for 17 minutes , after which the elderly organist passes out from exhaustion . Reverend Lovejoy demands that the perpetrator step forward , with threats of fire and brimstone , at which Milhouse snitches on Bart. Lovejoy sentences Bart (as well as Milhouse for tattling) to clean the pipe organ . Bart is indignant with Milhouse , who apologizes but was fearful of losing his soul . Bart proclaims that there is no such thing as a soul and for \$ 5 agrees to sell his to Milhouse in the form of a piece of paper saying " Bart Simpson 's soul " . Lisa warns that Bart will regret selling his soul , but he dismisses her fears . However , Bart soon finds that Santa 's Little Helper and Snowball II seem hostile towards him , automatic doors fail to open for him , when he breathes on the freezer doors at the Kwik @-@ E @-@ Mart no condensation forms , and he can no longer laugh at Itchy & Scratchy cartoons . Suspecting he literally lost his soul , he sets out to retrieve it .

Bart attempts to retrieve his soul from Milhouse , who agrees to sell it ... for \$ 50 , then laughs at Bart for being the fool . That night , Bart has a nightmare about being the only child in Springfield who does not have a soul . Lisa torments Bart with a dinnertime prayer leading him to make a desperate , all @-@ out attempt to get the piece of paper back . Bart crosses town to where Milhouse and his parents are staying with his grandmother while their house is being fumigated . The visit turns out to be fruitless ; Milhouse had traded the paper to Comic Book Guy at the Android 's Dungeon . A frustrated Bart runs off into the night . He encounters Ralph Wiggum in his father 's police cruiser and attempts to buy his soul . When Ralph refuses he hisses and disappears in a vale of smoke and haze .

The following morning , an annoyed Comic Book Guy tells Bart that he no longer has the piece of paper but refuses to reveal to whom he sold it . Bart walks home in the rain , then in his room he prays to God for his soul . Suddenly , a piece of paper with the words " Bart Simpson 's soul " floats down from above . Bart discovers that Lisa had purchased the piece of paper . While she explains philosophers ' opinions on the human soul , Bart happily devours the piece of paper . Realizing how

uninterested Bart was in about her lecture about the human soul , Lisa tells him that she hoped he learned his lesson from this . At night when Bart goes to bed , he and his soul are having fun with their quirks , proving that Bart did learn his lesson in the consequences of selling his soul .

In the subplot , Moe attempts to expand his customer base by converting his tavern into a family restaurant called " Uncle Moe 's Family Feedbag " , after numerous unhelpful concept ideas from Homer . The restaurant turns out to be a T.G.I. Friday 's @-@ style restaurant full of tacky decorations and gimmicks , including one where a special French Fries dish is served with the basket strapped to Moe 's head . However , the stress of running a family restaurant by himself ultimately starts to drive him unhinged , especially his ill @-@ conceived policy of voiding the bill for anyone he does not smile for when he gives it to them . Finally , driven over the edge , he yells at a little girl who complained that the soda was too cold . The family patrons are outraged and abandon the restaurant , forcing Moe to return the restaurant to the run @-@ down tavern .

= = Production = =

" Bart Sells His Soul " was the second episode to have Bill Oakley and Josh Weinstein as executive producers . Oakley and Weinstein wanted to start the season with episodes that had an emotional bias in an effort to center the Simpson family . The episode was written by Greg Daniels , who originally had an idea for a plot that dealt with racism in Springfield . The writers did not think The Simpsons was the right forum for it , so Daniels suggested the idea of selling someone 's soul , which originated in his childhood . In high school , Daniels encouraged a bully to sell him his soul for 50 cents , and then convinced classmates to frighten the bully into buying his soul back for an inflated price . Daniels repeated this ploy , but stopped when he realized that the only other person in history who has profited off others ' souls was Satan , and that " scared " him . In the opening scene of the episode , the congregation of the First Church of Springfield are tricked into singing " In a Gadda Da Vida " by Iron Butterfly . Daniels had originally intended for the song to be " Jesus He Knows Me " by British rock band Genesis , but the producers were unable to obtain the rights for it to be featured in the episode .

The episode was directed by Wesley Archer . Archer and his team of animators went to the restaurant chain Chili 's to get inspiration for the background designs of Moe 's family restaurant . He said it was " quite a task " to transform Moe 's Tavern into a family @-@ oriented establishment . Archer added that he was not " quite happy " with the result , and that they could have designed it " a little better " . Weinstein recalled that there was contention between the animators about the way Moe looked in the episode . Moe 's original design includes a missing tooth , but Weinstein and Oakley felt that it did not " look right " because Moe was such a prominent character in the episode . Archer showed the original design of Moe from the first season to the show runners , and said : " Here , look . He 's got a missing tooth ! " , but the scenes that had Moe with a missing tooth in them were still reanimated . Archer was disappointed with the dream sequence in which Bart sees his friends playing with their souls . Archer said that he had forgotten to tell the animators to make the souls transparent , so they were painted blue instead .

In the American version of this episode , in the segment where Moe has an outburst and Todd says , " Ow ! My freakin ' ears ! " , Flanders says that he expects to hear bad language at Denny 's . In the German dub , " Denny 's " is replaced with " McDonald 's & Burger King " , since McDonald 's & Burger King are known more in other countries than Denny 's is . Similarly , in the Italian dub Ned mentions Burger King instead of Denny 's .

= = Themes = =

Kurt M. Koenigsberger comments in Leaving Springfield that " a good deal of enjoyment " is to be had from the episode , due to " the exposure of the hypocrisy behind ' the finance of salvation ' and the ambivalent operations of the commercial world " . Don Cupitt , a fellow of Emmanuel College , Cambridge , believes that when Lisa lectures Bart about the soul , she " shows a degree of theological sophistication which is simply not tolerated in Britain . " Paul Bloom and David Pizarro

write in *The Psychology of The Simpsons* that although Lisa does show " healthy religious skepticism " she still believes in an eternal soul . However , Lisa tells Bart at the end of the episode , " some philosophers believe that no one is born with a soul , you have to earn one through suffering " . Bloom and Pizarro acknowledge " Indeed , some philosophers and theologians say that without belief in a soul , one cannot make sense of the social concepts on which we rely , such as personal responsibility and freedom of the will . "

M. Keith Booker cites the episode in *Drawn to Television* , while discussing The Simpsons treatment of religion . Booker cites a scene from the episode where Milhouse asks Bart what religions have to gain by lying about concepts such as the existence of a soul ? and then the scene cuts to Reverend Lovejoy counting his money ; Booker believes that this implies that religions create mythologies so that they can gain money from followers . He juxtaposes this with Bart 's realization later in the episode that " life suddenly feels empty and incomplete " without a soul , which suggests " either that the soul is real or it is at least a useful fiction " . Mark I. Pinsky and Samuel F. Parvin discuss the episode in their book *The Gospel According to the Simpsons : Leader 's Guide for Group Study* , and use examples from it to stimulate discussion among youth about the nature of the soul . Pinsky and Parvin note Bart 's statement to Milhouse from the beginning of the episode : " Soul ? come on , Milhouse , there 's no such thing as a soul . It 's just something they made up to scare kids , like the Boogie Man or Michael Jackson , " and then suggest questions to ask students , including whether they know individuals that agree with Bart , and their views on the existence of a soul .

In *Planet Simpson* , Chris Turner quotes Bart 's revelation to Lisa that he sold his soul to Milhouse for five dollars and used the money to buy sponges shaped like dinosaurs . After Lisa criticizes Bart for selling his soul , Bart responds : " Poor gullible Lisa . I 'll keep my crappy sponges , thanks . " Turner comments " Here Bart is the epitome of the world @-@ weary hipster , using the degraded language of modern marketing to sell off the most sacred parts of himself because he knows that some cheap sponge is more real , hence more valuable , than even the loftiest of abstract principles . "

= = Cultural references = =

On the DVD audio commentary for the episode , writer Greg Daniels cited Martin Scorsese 's 1985 film *After Hours* as an influence on Bart 's night @-@ time trek to retrieve his soul from Milhouse , only to experience a series of unusual encounters . Reverend Lovejoy leads his congregation in a hymnal version of the song " In @-@ A @-@ Gadda @-@ Da @-@ Vida " , by Iron Butterfly , titled " In the Garden of Eden " , by " I. Ron Butterfly " . The version of the song in The Simpsons episode lasts for 17 minutes ; and Reverend Lovejoy inspects the music and states that it " sounds like rock and / or roll . "

During an argument between Lisa and Bart , while discussing the relationship between laughter and the soul , Lisa quotes Chilean poet Pablo Neruda , and Bart responds " I am familiar with the works of Pablo Neruda . " Kurt M. Koenigsberger comments in *Leaving Springfield* " While Bart may be familiar with the canon of Chilean poetry , the joke takes its force in part from the probability that The Simpsons ' viewers are not . " Bart begins a prayer to God with " Are you there , God ? It 's me , Bart Simpson " . This is a parody of the book *Are You There God ? It 's Me* , Margaret . , by Judy Blume .

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast , " Bart Sells His Soul " finished 43rd in the ratings for the week of October 2 ? 8 , 1995 , with a Nielsen rating of 8 @. @ 8 , equivalent to approximately 8 @. @ 4 million viewing households . It was the fourth highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network that week after *The X @-@ Files* , *Melrose Place* and *Beverly Hills , 90210* .

In July 2007 , an article in the *San Mateo County Times* notes that " Bart Sells His Soul " is seen as one of " the most popular episodes in ' Simpsons ' history " . Noel Holston of the *Star Tribune*

highlighted the episode in the paper 's " Critic 's choice " section . The Intelligencer Journal described " Bart Sells His Soul " as " a particularly good episode " of The Simpsons . The Lansing State Journal highlighted the episode in the season seven DVD release , along with the conclusion of " Who Shot Mr. Burns " and " The Simpsons 138th Episode Spectacular " . The Sunday Herald Sun called it one of the " show 's most memorable episodes " , as did The Courier Mail .

The Aberdeen Press & Journal described the episode as " one of the darkest episodes of the Simpsons " . In their section on the episode in the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood comment : " Undoubtedly the most disturbing episode of the series , with Bart 's nightmare of losing his soul ? illustrated by a macabre playground where all the souls of his playmates are visible , and his is tagging along with Milhouse ? more frightening than funny An illustration of just how far the series could go by this point . "

In April 2003 , the episode was listed by The Simpsons creative team as among the top five best episodes of the series , including " Last Exit to Springfield " , " Cape Feare " , " 22 Short Films About Springfield " , and " Homer at the Bat " . In a 2005 interview The Simpsons creator Matt Groening commented " I don 't have a single favorite . There 's a bunch I really like , " but cited " Bart Sells His Soul " and " Homer 's Enemy " as among episodes he loves . Bart 's voice actress Nancy Cartwright stated " Bart Sells His Soul " is one of her top three episodes together with " Lisa 's Substitute " and " Bart the Mother " .

The episode has been used in church courses about the nature of a soul in Connecticut , and in the United Kingdom , and was shown by a minister in Scotland in one of his sermons . A 2005 report on religious education in secondary schools , by the United Kingdom education watchdog group Office for Standards in Education , Children 's Services and Skills (Ofsted) , noted that the episode was being used as a teaching tool .