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## THE CHRISTIAN DEBATE ON SAME-SEX MARRIAGE AND TAYLOR’S IMMANENT AND TRANSCENDENT GOODS: LESSONS FROM ADVENTIST APPROACHES

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### *Abstract*

Arguments made for and against affirming same-sex marriage in Christian communities rely on typical moral background preconceptions about immanent and transcendent goods identified by Charles Taylor in *A Secular Age*. Arguments made only in terms of marriage’s immanent goods have the potential to diminish the plausibility of a uniquely Adventist way of imagining the transcendent good: apocalyptic consciousness focused on the imminent-immanent restoration of Eden by Jesus Christ following the second coming. Comparing marriage to divergent sets of Sabbath-keeping practices—those that provide benefits exclusive to this world and those that aim at goods beyond this world—foregrounds the availability of a moral background for Seventh-day Adventist ethics that is closed to transcendent goods. However, practices that entail giving up immanent goods for the transcendent good of Eden-restored can be authentically sustained through communal recognition. Adventism should develop such practices of recognition both to alleviate losses incurred by gay, lesbian, and bisexual Adventists who make sacrifices for traditional marriage as a transcendent good and to reinforce the fuller sense of meaning found in self-denial for the sake of the soon-coming Savior.

*Keywords:* apocalyptic, Sabbath, same-sex marriage, Seventh-day Adventist

### *Introduction*

Christians who live in societies with a high regard for “self-expression values” cannot be unaware—nor should they be—regarding the debate taking place in the church on the subject of same-sex marriage as a communal affirmation of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) Christians as sisters and brothers in

Christ.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, it is not unheard of for Seventh-day Adventists who support traditional marriage to claim that those who have “come out” as LGB people have in some way failed to yield to the converting power of God and that celibate Christians ought not be identified as LGB.<sup>2</sup> In the follow-

<sup>1</sup> Ronald Inglehart and Christian Wetzel identified support for “same-sex marriage” (SSM) as strongly correlating with other self-expression values (*Modernization, Cultural Change and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005], 51, 55). I will use SSM to refer to the civilly and/or ecclesiastically recognized union of two females to each other or of two males to each other, regardless of orientation. Intersex traits and transgender phenomena complicate this definition and that of traditional marriage given in footnote 2 in ways that are beyond the scope of this research to address, as explained below, and merit full consideration in their own right.

Lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB, as in LGBTIQ+) are identifiers that attach not only to the phenomena of same/bi-sexual attraction, but also to the identities that index how those experiences of attraction play out in social relations. For the sake of conciseness, clarity, and consistency of language, I will use LGB to refer to individuals who do not accept those identifiers, but who openly acknowledge an ongoing, persistent experience of same-sex attraction. For a concise introduction to the philosophy of identity, albeit with specific reference to racial identity, see Linda Martín Alcoff, *The Future of Whiteness* (Cambridge: Polity, 2015), 45–61; and for how LGB identities are socially imagined see Peter Hart-Brinson, *The Gay Marriage Generation: How the LGBTQ Movement Transformed American Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2018), 29–34, 129–152.

“Trans” or “transgendered” sexual identity (T), which broadly maps onto the phenomena of gender that is experienced or expressed as other than that assigned at birth on the basis of sexual anatomy; intersex (I) identity, which attaches to the certain traits on the spectrum of non-polar sexual anatomy; and other minority sexual identities can also attain a venue of recognition via access to marriage (n. 79). For the purpose of clarifying same-sex marriage in Adventism, however, I will bracket concerns arising from these identities, as the experiences and ethical considerations that belong to these identities, while overlapping with, and in ways analogous to, same-sex marriage for lesbian, gay, and bisexual people, introduce questions that are beyond the minimal question of same-sex marriage vis-à-vis traditional marriage. At the same time, I do believe that the general approach I take to the question of SSM in this research could also be applied to the urgent questions of how the church can best minister healing to trans, intersex, queer (Q), asexual people, and other sexual minorities (+).

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Gerry Wagoner, “‘Coming Out’ Is a Substitute New Birth Experience,” *Fulcrum7* (blog), 16 April 2017, <http://www.fulcrum7.com/blog/2017/4/16/coming-out-is-a-substitute-new-birth-experience>; and Wayne Blakely, “In the Mirror,” *ADVindicate* (blog), 7 June 2015, <http://advindicate.com/articles/2015/6/7/in-the-mirror>. By traditional marriage (TM) I mean the civilly and/or ecclesiastically recognized union of an opposite-sex couple (as qualified in n. 1), including both those in which both partners have a heterosexual orientation and also all the permutations of so-called “mixed-orientation” marriages.

ing research, I will submit that this new social reality is an opportunity for Seventh-day Adventism to clarify both the nature of our moral relationship with God and what it means to fulfill the church's divine *ministry of healing mandate* among lesbian, gay, and bisexual people in preparation for the soon second coming of Jesus.

To arrive at what is at stake in these arguments for the Adventist belief and practice, along with what can be done about it, I will first clarify the relationship between theory and practice in philosophical terms, especially with reference to how the latter forms preconceptions that shape the sense made of the former. Then I will show how this relationship is expressed in the moral assumptions that Adventists have relied on to make sense of typical arguments for same-sex marriage and traditional marriage. This will be in order to assert that what is at stake for Adventism on the question of same-sex marriage is the viability of an Adventist way of collectively imagining the future and what should be done in light of it. Finally, I will briefly touch on the relationship between identity, authenticity, and recognition by proposing the formation of sustainable, communal practices consistent with traditional marriage that can minister healing to lesbian, gay, and bisexual Adventists, thereby reinforcing the meaningfulness of their sacrifices for the soon-coming Savior.

#### “Background”

To begin, I will approach the question of same-sex marriage in Adventism through selected categories developed by Charles Taylor in his acclaimed work, *A Secular Age*.<sup>3</sup> I use Taylor's thinking here because his categories are developed through philosophical reflection on the broader historic sources of the controversy over marriage and sexual identity in what used to be Western

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<sup>3</sup> Charles Taylor (1931–) is a Catholic, Canadian philosopher associated with a communitarian turn critical of classical liberal political philosophy (Daniel Bell, “Communitarianism,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2016/entries/communitarianism>). Taylor's 2007 Templeton Prize was awarded for his work on *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), “a definitive examination of secularization and the modern world” (“Previous Prize Winners: Charles Taylor,” The Templeton Prize, no date, <http://www.templetonprize.org/previouswinners/taylor.html>).

*A Secular Age* has also elicited critical responses, including critiques of Taylor's categories of background and immanence/transcendence as they will be used in this research (respectively, Peter Woodford, “Specters of the Nineteenth Century: Charles Taylor and the Problem of Historicism,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 40.1 [2012]: 171–192; and William David Hart, “Naturalizing Christian Ethics: A Critique of Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 40.1 [2012]: 149–170). I do not judge that those critiques defeat the purposes for which I am using Taylor's thought in this research, but for the sake of space will not set forth my reasons here.

Christendom.<sup>4</sup> Thus, his philosophy is well positioned to help us get to the bottom of widespread cultural and religious influences operating in the Adventist community.

Put another way, Taylor's philosophy points to the "background" of these influences. Because, for Taylor, what is of interest is not so much the merits of arguments going back and forth between believers and unbelievers, but what those arguments rely on for them to make sense.<sup>5</sup> Taylor defines "background" as "that largely unstructured and inarticulate understanding of our whole situation, within which particular features of our world show up for us in the sense they have. It can never be adequately expressed in the form of explicit doctrines, because of its very unlimited and indefinite nature."<sup>6</sup>

To grasp the importance of background, recall or imagine playing the game where a small element of a picture is removed, expanded, and presented as a picture on its own. You must guess what it is, but with the background of the picture unavailable, you struggle and often fail to make sense of what's been isolated in the foreground. Similarly, there are the things that we are aware we are thinking about—ideas, arguments, doctrines, etc.—but these can only make sense (or fail to make sense) relative to a frame of reference that we are not thinking about; that is "against the background of things that matter."<sup>7</sup> Also, we can never escape our reliance on that background of pre-conceptions, because as soon as we bring one into the foreground to think about it, other pre-concepts in our background must make sense of that

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<sup>4</sup> Within the socio-cultural-religious lived experience and intellectual exchange of Western (post-) Christendom, Taylor is especially focused on Anglo-American, German, and French developments in Roman Catholic historical (and theological) contexts. It should be noted that the indefinite article in *A Secular Age* refers to this context such that Taylor does not attempt to address his thesis to secularities beyond "Latin Christendom" and certain of its descendants (i.e., "the modern West" and "[North Atlantic, or 'Western'] civilization;" [Taylor, *Secular Age*, 15]). I will be using the expressions "Western" and "Global North" as broad equivalents for this milieu in its late-modern, late-capitalist (without implying its demise), post-colonial, and especially post-sexual revolution iterations, including the present.

<sup>5</sup> Paul D. Janz, "Transcendence, 'Spin,' and the Jamesian Open Space," in *Aspiring to Fullness in a Secular Age: Essays on Religion and Theology in the Work of Charles Taylor*, ed. Carlos D. Colorado and Justin D. Klassen [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014], 44. Taylor cites Hubert Dreyfus, *Being in the World* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991) and John Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1995); "drawing on the work of Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and Polanyi," as his philosophical influences on the category of "background" (Taylor, *Secular Age*, 173n12).

<sup>6</sup> Taylor, *Secular Age*, 173

<sup>7</sup> Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 40.

conceptualization. Nevertheless, the task Taylor has taken up as a philosopher is to make us at least aware of some of the more significant assumptions that have been conditioning our thinking, even if we cannot articulate that conditioning entirely.<sup>8</sup> Thus, our thought shapes our practices, and our practices shape our lived experience, and our lived experience shapes our background, which, in turn, shapes our thought.<sup>9</sup>

Accordingly, Taylor devotes the majority of *A Secular Age* to tracing how changes in intellectual, social, cultural, and religious conditions shaped the range and weight of available background pre-conceptions in Western society over time, moving the Global North from a place where unbelief in God was inconceivable, to a place where both believers and unbelievers are inescapably aware of the other option.<sup>10</sup> What this means, then, is that to be secular in

<sup>8</sup> Note, as an explanation for incommensurate meaning-making traditions, the difference between “background” for Taylor and “worldview” as developed by certain Christian philosophers and thinkers, such as James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalogue*, 5th ed., (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009). As a function of lived experience, background cannot be adequately comprehended in terms of explicit or implied responses to a taxonomy of universally applicable, diagnostic questions that define the “essential characteristics” of religious, philosophical, and ideological systems of belief and practice (Tawa J. Anderson, W. Michael Clark, and David K. Naugle, in *Introduction to Christian Worldview: Pursuing God’s Perspective in a Pluralistic World* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017], 24). Rather, for Taylor, our backgrounds are embodied in the belief-informed practices of which they make sense, frustrating any attempt to categorize them according to ahistorical first principles (n. 10). Cf. Anderson et al., 58–63 for a brief response to James K. A. Smith’s Augustinian/Taylorian critique of Christian worldview philosophy.

<sup>9</sup> Taylor, *Secular Age*, 176. I take this to be a generally true account of how we think. Though, because of my commitment to the authority of Scripture in theology, I hasten to propose the availability of Bible study as spiritual practice that shapes Christian lived experience. Fernando Luis Canale, in the course of making an argument about a set of background preconceptions that make sense of theological reason and drawing on similar philosophical sources to Taylor, theorized a phenomenological method of Bible study, “targeted epoché,” with the de jure capacity to transform such presuppositions (*A Criticism of Theological Reason: Time and Timelessness as Primordial Presuppositions*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series 10 [Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1987], 296–299, <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dissertations/22>). For a description of the lived experience of this method as practiced, see John C. Peckham, *Canonical Theology: The Biblical Canon, Sola Scriptura, and Theological Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 248–249. Cf. Taylor on the “Jamsian open space,” where one “can feel the force of each opposing position” (*Secular Age*, 592). Cf. also the basic “ordo spiritualis”—“experience → interpretive practice → ideas”—which “provides a certain structure for Adventist spirituality” via a historical, “from within” methodology in Zoltán Szalos-Farkas, *A Search for God: Understanding Apocalyptic Spirituality* (Bucharest: Editura Universitară, 2010), 60.

<sup>10</sup> James K. A. Smith sees this as Taylor’s “Hegelian side—a deep appreciation for

the broadest Taylorian sense is to live with social conditions that form the background assumption that belief in God is optional.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, this space-time bounded cosmos we inhabit might, or might not, be all there is for us to live for. In other words, there is no way to adjudicate the questions about God that are part and parcel of living in *A Secular Age*—that is, the questions about ultimate reality, ultimate good, and whether or how we can come to knowledge of the same—which does not involve adjusting other background assumptions about those questions.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, no matter the answer given to these questions, we are always, to a greater or lesser extent, aware of and “cross-pressured” by the existence of other answers to them.<sup>13</sup> Thus, Taylor’s argument builds to the conclusion that “anticipatory confidence” is needed for one to acknowledge, or not, some source of meaning that is qualitatively fuller than and/or beyond ordinary humanity and the universe, as far as we are able to investigate it through extensions of ourselves. And that is, in religious terms, faith.<sup>14</sup>

#### *Conceptions of the Good*

To relate Taylor’s account of secularity to the question of same-sex marriage in the Adventist community, it is not necessary to retrace every step in its historical trajectory. Suffice it to begin with Taylor’s conclusion that one background pre-conception that makes the difference between belief and unbelief in God is moral. Taylor foregrounds the following moral divide: whether it is taken to be good that human beings should be regarded only in terms of what is good in the life lived in this world, or whether there are things that are good for humans that go beyond what can be demonstrated in this life to be good

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the contingencies of history. So we can’t tell a neat-and-pretty story of deduction from abstract principles. . . . we need to get close to the ground and explore all kinds of contingent twists and turns that are operative in the background of our present” (*How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014], 25).

<sup>11</sup> In Taylor’s typology, this is “secularity 3.” Secularity 1 is conceived as religion “retreating from the public space,” and secularity 2, as declining levels of religious belief and practice (Taylor, *Secular Age*, 4, 15–17).

<sup>12</sup> Janz, “Jamesian Open Space,” 60. Cf. Taylor, *Secular Age*, 565.

<sup>13</sup> “There has been . . . a mutual fragilization of different religious positions, as well as of the outlooks both of belief and unbelief. The whole culture experiences cross pressures, between the draw of the narratives of closed immanence on one side, and the sense of their inadequacy on the other” (Taylor, *Secular Age*, 595). Smith offers this brief gloss of “fragilization” as developed in *A Secular Age*: “In the face of different options, where people who lead ‘normal’ lives do not share my faith (and perhaps believe something very different), my own faith commitment becomes fragile—put into questions, dubitable” (Smith, *Be Secular*, 141).

<sup>14</sup> Taylor, *Secular Age*, 550–551.

in this-worldly terms.<sup>15</sup>

There are different ways to operate on this-worldly; moral assumptions, but for Christians, the most attractive is the position that there can be nothing better than alleviating human suffering and helping human beings live lives that maximize one another's well-being in the here-and-now.<sup>16</sup> Any other conceptions of 'the good' that get in the way of this universal immanent human flourishing must be opposed. This immanent-only moral assumption means that it is possible to imagine a universe for which God does not exist, because as modernity increasingly disciplined human beings toward the production of this-worldly goods, it became possible to question whether or not we needed God to order our moral lives according to the standard of this-worldly "mutual benefit."<sup>17</sup> That does not necessarily make someone

<sup>15</sup> In this research, by "this-worldly" I indicate the immanent, and by the "beyond" I indicate the transcendent (Taylor, *Secular Age*, 544–546). Cf. Janz's call to nuance the later ("Jamesian Open Space," 67–68).

<sup>16</sup> There are two other options Taylor identifies for orienting oneself toward the good on exclusively immanent moral assumptions. One strand, associated with Nietzsche, renounces the aim of universal human flourishing as that which diminishes or obliterates essential aspects of the good life that can only be attained through struggle, dominance and submission, and overcoming. In this strand, universal humanism is imagined as tending toward a diminution of the heroic by providing the moral ground on which equalitarian mediocrity can be justified (*Secular Age*, 372–374). The other strand, the existential humanist posture toward the good inspired by Taylor's reading of Albert Camus, accepts the closed immanent frame as fundamentally absurd and implacably defiant of our attempts to make sense of it. At the same time, it takes up a heroic, lost-cause revolt against this meaninglessness by attempting to forge whatever limited happiness can be attained in the face of the absurdity and rejecting the pretense of solutions to it (*Secular Age*, 582–586).

Both "anti-humanism" and the revolt against the absurd are difficult to harmonize with a traditionally Christian view of God's universal care and ultimate goal of pacific harmony for humanity (*Secular Age*, 635–636). Indeed, humanism arguably relies historically on aspects of the Latin Christian moral background to make sense of its universal ethic (*Secular Age*, 246–248). For, historical continuity with the late-medieval demand "that everyone be a *real, 100 percent* Christian," in Taylor's is telling of his "Reform Master Narrative," the deep moral impulse of social reform which makes possible our current secular condition (*Secular Age*, 774, emphasis original).

Anti-humanist and existential humanist assumptions have not, to my knowledge, been relied on to make sense of Adventist arguments over SSM, and therefore I will not be dealing with those options further. However, my subsequent analysis of how Adventist apocalyptic transcendence relates to immanence in the universal humanist mode could be applied to other immanentized Christian moral orientations (n. 20), if Adventist arguments that relied on them were to emerge.

<sup>17</sup> Mutual benefit, in Taylor's telling, emerges from Enlightenment theories of natural law associated with Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) and John Locke (1632–1704). This allows societies to be ordered in a way that does not require any particular orien-

with this assumption an unbeliever, but it does mean that a Christian believer who shares this assumption will tend to think of God as having no higher goals; for human beings beyond those that contribute to our flourishing in this world, either in the here-and-now or in the hereafter.<sup>18</sup> For such higher/further goals could come into conflict with our immanent flourishing and therefore must be opposed.<sup>19</sup>

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tation to the transcendent (*Secular Age*, 159–160). In fact, an interventionist deity might be a positive threat to our well-being in the here and now, to the extent that human flourishing is assumed to depend on our mastery of inviolable laws of nature. Hence, proceeded deism and ultimately atheism (*Secular Age*, 62–364). Of course, natural law did not *have* to result in atheism. Taylor’s argument is that secularity had to be intentionally constructed every step of the way (*Secular Age*, 255). But the possibility of atheism is entailed in religious liberty, a principle for which Adventism is historically indebted to Grotius and Locke (Nicholas P. Miller, *The Reformation and the Remnant: The Reformers Speak to Today’s Church* [Nampa: ID: Pacific Press, 2016], 40–43). Taylor’s extended reading of history through the philosophical categories he employs is intended to explain, among other things, how we in the Global North got got from ideas like natural law to modes of unbelief like atheism.

<sup>18</sup> This mode of Christian belief first emerges, in Taylor’s telling, among the Western intelligentsia at the end of the seventeenth century as “Providential Deism,” wherein “God’s goals for us shrink to the single end of our encompassing this order of mutual benefit he has designed for us,” that is, a depersonalized, rationally harmonious way of life in the here and now. (*Secular Age*, 221–222). In post-war America, Taylor associates this immanentized mode of Christianity with Norman Vincent Peale, the “power of positive thinking” preacher (*Secular Age*, 509). Smith, *Be Secular*, 50n3 sees this “immanentizing, anthropocentric shift” as having been “absorbed” into “contemporary evangelicalism, which is increasingly casting off its ‘otherworldly’ piety and becoming newly invested in the flourishing of this world.” Michael S. Hogue identifies a broader, more thoroughgoing “dissenting tradition of American immanence, rooted in pragmatic naturalism, radical empiricism, and process philosophy” that includes the Chicago School of Theology (*American Immanence: Democracy for an Uncertain World* [New York: Columbia University Press, 2018], 7–8, 123–124). It “honors nature as the sublime all-inclusive context and all-pervasive dynamic of being and becoming, meaning and value. . . . It rejects the symbol of God as a unitary, sovereign, supernatural, and transcendent, but clears the way for a diffused, vulnerable, natal, and immanent understanding of the sacred” (*American Immanence*, 8).

In this research, unless otherwise qualified, I will use immanence primarily to refer to the Christian mode of belief and practice that retains a transcendent deity (n. 20), but in some way denies that God’s good purposes for us go beyond, or could even conflict with, the universal well-being or flourishing of humanity in the here and now or on this-worldly terms.

<sup>19</sup> For example, while David L. Weddle sees value in sacrifice when it results in works of humanitarian benevolence, he is especially concerned with the historic propensity for the fuller meaning found in renouncing “natural,” “human” (i.e., immanent) goods to legitimate violence against other human beings when violence



What the other moral background assumption requires, for Christians, is the capacity to imagine God as having purposes that go beyond well-being in this world.<sup>20</sup> This kind of transcendent moral assumption does not exclude the recognition of this-worldly goods. Rather, it holds this-worldly goods relative to goods that go beyond this world, such as the worship of God as the supreme being. Thus, if a Christian believes in transcendent goods, she is willing to give up immanent goods, if not renounce them almost entirely (as with ascetics), in order to live into the higher purposes of God.<sup>21</sup> When these tradeoffs involve exchanging immanent for transcendent goods, I will refer to them as sacrifices in a stipulative sense while acknowledging that immanent tradeoffs for higher immanent goods are commonly called sacrifices and that such tradeoffs are also meaningful to those who make them.<sup>22</sup>

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is conceived as the form of sacrifice that is required to realize a transcendent moral vision (*Sacrifice in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* [New York: New York University Press, 2017], xi, 207–210). “Its usefulness as the justifying rationale for violence in religious conflicts and political contests is invaluable. For that very reason, sacrifice in defense of abstractions is as dangerous as sacrifice in service of concrete other creatures is admirable” (*Sacrifice in Judaism*, 208).

<sup>20</sup> In this research, I will use the category of transcendence to refer to Christian transcendence primarily in the moral sense (see n. 27 for further qualification on the epistemic sense), as opposed to immanentized Christian transcendence, by which I indicate modes of Christian belief and practice that make sense on the immanent-only moral preconception. By referring to God and his purposes for us that go beyond our well-being in this world, I mean to refer to what Taylor calls the “strong sense” of religious faith, which includes “both the belief in a transcendent reality, on the one hand, and the connected aspiration to a transformation which goes beyond ordinary human flourishing on the other” (*Secular Age*, 510). For non-Christians, this strong transcendent source of good could be any state of reality taken to exist in some way beyond this world, e.g., the Buddhist Nirvana (*Secular Age*, 17). Taylor’s weak sense can also include transcendence as theorized by those, like the philosopher, Martha Nussbaum (1947–), who reject transcendent reality, but accept a human need to transcend ordinary human flourishing. Taylor remains skeptical, however, of the degree to which distinguishing between “internal” and “external” transcendence, qua Nussbaum, can establish grounds for distinguishing between moral and immoral ways of moving beyond ordinary flourishing (*Secular Age*, 632; see n. 34 on “mutilation”).

<sup>21</sup> Taylor, *Secular Age*, 644–646. All attempts to achieve goods require tradeoffs against other goods. For Taylor, to believe otherwise is utopianism (*Secular Age*, 616). On this point, I take Taylor to have identified a logically exclusive disjunction in that these are two mutually exclusive moral background preconceptions between which there is no middle ground. Moral reasoning can make sense either in terms of one’s willingness to trade this-worldly goods off against other-worldly goods or in terms of one’s unwillingness to do so, but not both at the same time.

<sup>22</sup> “The closest we come to a common meaning of *sacrifice* is that of *giving up natural and human goods for spiritual benefits* (Weddle, *Sacrifice*, xi, emphasis original;

The problem on both sides is that one can fail to experience spiritual fulfillment based on one or the other of these assumptions, or at least have one's sense of fulfillment challenged by the fulfillment of those holding the other assumption.<sup>23</sup> Those on the immanent side can be troubled by a sense of a life flatter than it should be, full of superficial happiness and satisfaction, but lacking a height or depth of meaning that those on the transcendent side seem able to attain even when severely deprived of immanent goods. They may long for that capacity to transcend the limits of ordinary human flourishing. Conversely, those on the transcendent side may find their happiness so undermined by giving up the good things of this life for God that their sacrifices lose their sense of higher meaning, especially in view of those who seem to be living fulfilled lives for strictly immanent goods.<sup>24</sup> They may long for a grounded spiritual experience that fully appreciates the benefits God offers in this life. I will return to the question of how to handle fragilization and cross-pressures in my conclusion and recommendations.

*Making Sense of Adventist Arguments over Same-sex Marriage*

With the above philosophical framework in place, I will now briefly sketch how these two kinds of moral backgrounds—the immanent-only assumption and immanent-relative-to-transcendent assumption about what is good for humanity—are being relied on to make sense of Adventist moral reasoning in four typical arguments, one for same-sex marriage and three for traditional marriage.<sup>25</sup> That these backgrounds are relied on to make sense of moral reasoning suggests that they are associated with an implicit immanent or transcendent approach to knowledge, in this case, not as to knowledge of whether God exists, but as to how God's purposes for humanity may be

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cf. Weddle's theoretical definition of sacrifice, *Secular Age*, 22).

<sup>23</sup> Here, I extend Taylor's analysis of cross-pressures in society writ-large to the experiences of LGB Adventists in particular. The autobiographical sections of David Ferguson, Fritz Guy, and David Larson, eds., *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Adventist Perspectives* (Roseville, CA: Adventist Forum, 2008); and Roy E. Gane, Nicholas P. Miller, and H. Peter Swanson, eds., *Homosexuality, Marriage, and the Church: Biblical, Counseling, and Religious Liberty Issues* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2012) offer evidence that this is the case. Further research could identify features common to this form of cross-pressure in Adventism, but that is beyond the scope of this research.

<sup>24</sup> See footnote 13 on "fragilization."

<sup>25</sup> For Taylor, to the extent that we employ "instrumental reason" and live in "secular time" (among other practices that are essential to orderly life in Western societies) these practices shape our backgrounds such that we all live in the "immanent frame," imagining our moral valence of our ordinary experience in this-worldly terms (see also n. 51 on "higher time"). But, "this can be lived in two ways. Some are open to transcendence, and some move to closure" (*Secular Age*, 566).

known.<sup>26</sup> In the typical arguments that follow, transcendent moral reasoning does not necessarily exclude sources of knowledge that derive from extensions of ourselves in the here-and-now (i.e., general revelation), but it holds those deliverances relative to conclusions derived from sources believed to originate beyond this world (i.e., special revelation). Likewise, Christian immanent-only moral reasoning, while not at all closed to transcendent sources and capable of taking a high view thereof, can lend itself to revising or validating Scriptural interpretation in light of, for example, the conclusions of contemporary social science research.<sup>27</sup>

Two of the typical arguments—what I will call the immanent-only same-sex marriage affirming argument and the transcendent traditional marriage (TM) argument—are consistent with what the reader, by this point, may expect having an immanent-only or a transcendent view of the good would lead one to conclude about marriage. For, as Taylor’s account of secularity hints, the acceptance of same-sex sexual practices in the West as viable paths to human flourishing is historically dependent on the formation of communities that shared the immanent-only moral assumption.<sup>28</sup> Conversely, the

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<sup>26</sup> In Taylor’s critique of epistemology qua “Descartes, Locke, and Hume,” he observes that from within the immanent frame “the inference to the transcendent is at the extreme and most fragile end of a chain of inferences; it is the most epistemically questionable.” But that story about how we accept, or not, the reality of God is contested in Heidegger’s account of “the divine” as one of “the focal points of our dealings, which therefore have relevance, meaning, significance for us, not as an add-on but from their first appearance in our world,” a world in which we are always coping and already inducted into traditions of coping (*Secular Age*, 558–559). Nevertheless, that epistemology story draws its power from the assumption that it is a virtue to approach reality from a cultivated awareness of one’s “independence, self-control, self-responsibility, of a disengagement which brings control; a stance which requires courage, the refusal of the easy comforts of the conformity to authority, of the consolations of an enchanted world, of the surrender to the promptings of the senses” (*Secular Age*, 559–560). Thus, for Taylor, conclusions about reality and how it is known can only make sense against the background of our reasoning, which includes assumptions about human goods. This gives lie to any story about working one’s way out from epistemology and ontology to morality and ethics, as if one could decouple a theory of knowledge from its moral background.

<sup>27</sup> Except when it is necessary to make a distinction, I will use the categories of “transcendent” and “immanent” at times in this research to refer to both the moral background preconception and the epistemological approach operating in the moral reasoning of typical Adventist arguments for SSM and TM. The categories of transcendence and immanence as they relate to theological sources could be clarified beyond these basic observations, but that is beyond the scope of this research.

<sup>28</sup> Here, I extend Taylor’s “subtraction stories” thesis—that modes of secular existence must be constructed and do not simply emerge fully formed once religion is subtracted (*Secular Age*, 253)—to the moral sources of gay marriage, which are part

male-female coupling of traditional Western marriage is historically justified, in part, on the ground that it is required for society to correspond to a transcendent moral order.<sup>29</sup>

Yet, the immanent-only mode of moral reasoning can also make sense of two other traditional marriage arguments. While these aim to augment the transcendent argument, they make sense on immanent moral terms in two distinct ways that, I will argue, have the potential to obscure Adventists' view of what is at stake for their faith community on this question.<sup>30</sup> To argue that what is at stake in this question is historically unique, the Adventist way of holding immanent goods relative to transcendent goods, I will demonstrate how these immanent TM arguments have the potential to obviate the transcendent meaning of Adventist practices. They make possible a slip toward the immanent-only assumption on the part of those who accept them by framing the good of Adventist practice in immanent terms. This

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of the broader story of secularity. In other words, LGB identities are not what had been suppressed all along, waiting to emerge once religious repression could finally be deconstructed. Rather, "homosexuals" arrive in *A Secular Age* with the Bloomsbury Group, which provided a venue of mutual recognition—amidst an inter-war, English society that criminalized such relations—in which "they all 'came out'" (*Secular Age*, 406). This was a part of what Taylor generally sees in Bloomsbury: a new step towards immanence where "the intrinsically valuable is identified with the inner, the mental, with experience and sensibility. . . . In this way, too, they anticipate an important shift in the later twentieth century," the sexual revolution (*Secular Age*, 406). Where the immanent human good was once recruited to motivate self-formation based on sexual self-control, now it could equally justify identities constructed around sexual self-expression in the name of authenticity (see Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992]).

<sup>29</sup> This can make sense in terms of the Great Chain of Being for Medieval societies, or what Taylor identifies as "neo-Durkheimian" assumptions about an inextricable link between generically Christian faith and well-ordered society in the United States (*Secular Age*, 528n43).

<sup>30</sup> Theoretically, there could also be a transcendent argument affirming SSM in Adventism, one that assumes the practice of marriage calls us to sacrifice immanent goods for transcendent ones, but that diverges from the transcendent TM argument on the question of whether Scripture only teaches male-female coupling in marriage as a transcendent good. It could be structured along the same lines as the "not our rights, but His" argument that has been made for women's ordination in Adventism (Kessia Reyne Bennett, "Women in Ministry: Not Our Rights, but His," *Moves and Removes* [blog], 15 October 2014, <http://www.moves-removes.com/home/2014/10/15/women-in-ministry-not-our-rights-but-his>; and Kessia Reyne Bennett, "Rights and Wrongs" [sermon preached at Loma Linda University Church, Loma Linda, CA, 24 January 2015], <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QdNGAn9HCrl>). However, as will be demonstrated in the following section, arguments against male-female coupling as essential to marriage within Adventism consistently appeal to the immanent-only moral imagination in their assumptions about harm, well-being, and flourishing.

has implications for how lesbian, gay, and bisexual Adventists can experience fulfillment in relation to marriage practices.

*Immanent-only Affirming*

In Adventism, the typical same-sex marriage (SSM) affirming argument assumes an immanent-only moral background by arguing that if heterosexual marriage is an immanent good for opposite-sex couples, it is unfair to deny same-sex couples marriage for reasons that make sense only against a transcendent moral background (e.g., that God requires this self-denial for his own reasons).<sup>31</sup> Making sense of marriage in immanent-only terms can also go along with conceptualizing other doctrines against an immanent-only moral background. For example, sin can come to be regarded in exclusively relational-therapeutic or social justice terms. This makes nonsense of sin as offensive to God apart from any this-worldly harm it causes human beings, that is, notions of sin as including that which incurs God's wrath for having thwarted his purposes for humanity that go beyond human fulfillment on this-worldly terms.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, the most direct way to resolve the question of SSM and biblical authority on immanent-only assumptions is to make sense of the Scriptures

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<sup>31</sup> "The ready availability of contraceptive measures means that [sexual] intimacy is far from a *sufficient* condition for procreation, and the possibility of artificial insemination means that it is no longer a *necessary* condition. Perhaps coincidentally, these scientific and technological developments have been accompanied both by a growing awareness of the positive role of sexual intimacy in marital relationships and mental health, and by an increasing openness to same-sex love" (Fritz Guy, "Same Sex Love: Theological Considerations," in *Christianity and Homosexuality*, §4 50, emphasis original).

"In the final analysis, the Christian moral life is not primarily a matter of obeying rules or achieving goals. These are important, but not ultimately so. To be a Christian is to respond favorably again and again to God's steadfast love, which endures forever. The gospel is first, the law second" (David R. Larson, "Christian Sexual Norms Today: Some Proposals," in *Christianity and Homosexuality*, §5 16).

"Most of the anguish imposed upon God's children who grow up LGBTIQ is rooted in a misunderstanding of what the Bible says. . . . For most heterosexuals, the teaching that homosexuality is a sin presents no problem, so they often see little reason to give the subject much thought. Many of them, due to widespread ignorance on the subject, believe that homosexuality is merely a difficult habit or temptation to be overcome. They fail to comprehend the extreme consequences and implications such a teaching has for the lives of Christians who discover they are LGBTIQ" ("Resources: What Does the Bible Say," Seventh-day Adventist Kinship [website], no date, <https://www.sdakinship.org/en/membership1/resources>).

<sup>32</sup> Taylor, *Secular Age*, 618–619. See, e.g., the dichotomization of ritual and moral in John R. Jones, "In Christ There is Neither . . .": Toward the Unity of the Body of Christ," in *Christianity and Homosexuality*, §4 27).

using an ethical hermeneutic informed by a view of God's love as exclusively concerned with our this-worldly good, so that, for example, Scripture's proscriptions against same-sex sexual coupling extend only as far as can be analogized to exploitative gay relationships in the ancient world.<sup>33</sup>

Let us call this the immanent-only affirming argument, because it makes sense on a moral background that assumes God does not ask humans to sacrifice immanent goods for transcendent goods.<sup>34</sup> That is not to say that those who make these arguments necessarily hold an immanent-only view of the human good in every respect, excluding all transcendent goods. However, when they argue for SSM, they trade on the immanent-only assumption about the human good implicit in the practices of life in the Global North that embody that assumption.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> For Christians, including Adventists, with a 'culture-critical' view of Scripture's authority, this could involve acknowledging that authors of the Bible express views incompatible with the affirmation of SSM, but maintaining that we know these views to be wrong for other reasons, whether internal or external to Scripture (see, e.g., William Loader, "Homosexuality and the Bible," in *Two Views on Homosexuality, the Bible, and the Church*, ed. Preston Sprinkle, Counterpoints: Bible and Theology [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016], 47).

Those with a more literal view of Scripture's authority can make sense of an immanent-only moral background by applying the historical-grammatical method in a way that limits the ethical scope of texts that speak to homosexual relations, whether by historicized distancing of the ancient and contemporary contexts or by attending to literary features that limit application (see, e.g., Megan K. DeFranza, "Journeying from the Bible to Christian Ethics in Search of Common Ground," in *Two Views on Homosexuality*, 90–92; and John R. Jones, "In Christ," §4 4–19).

<sup>34</sup> For example, a former Adventist pastor has reflected on the role that her lived experience as an "in" bisexual played in her decision to resign from the Adventist ministry and affirm SSM, concluding that she arrived at her position through a "solid, conservative hermeneutic," but offering the "caveat" that "when our theology seems to be causing harm, or when a minority group claims it is harming them, we should be willing to re-examine our theology" ("Q&A: Is LGBT-Affirming Theology Based on Experience or Scripture?" *Alicia Johnston* [blog], 25 August 2017, <http://aliciajohnston.com/2017/08/25/hermeneutics-vs-experience>).

On an immanent-only moral background, the sacrifice of sexual fulfillment can register as what Taylor calls "mutilation," by which the practitioner of self-denial has cut themselves off from an integral part of their humanity that would otherwise have afforded them much good (*Secular Age*, 631). Not that there are no limits to sexual gratification on this view, but they must be in some way justifiable in terms of our immanent well-being (see, e.g., Loren Seibold, "The Ordinary and the Dangerous: Sex in the Christian Community," *Spectrum* 36.1 [2008]: 21–27).

<sup>35</sup> See footnote; 25.

*Immanent Traditional*

In response, there are those advancing a kind of argument for TM within Adventism that also makes sense on the basis of immanent-only moral background assumptions. This immanent traditional argument typically augments the transcendent argument for TM, but makes exclusive reference to immanent goods in an effort to undermine the affirming immanent-only argument on its own terms.<sup>36</sup> For example, some argue that certain sexual acts are inherently harmful to physical health.<sup>37</sup> Appeals to a procreative goal of sexual activity or other natural law arguments can also be made by appealing to the good of the individual or society without any reference to God.<sup>38</sup> By disputing that SSM is an immanent good, the immanent traditional argument disputes the premise on which the immanent-only, affirming argument makes sense of marriage.

However, the immanent traditional argument, while not unpersuasive, fails to defeat the affirming immanent-only argument. This is because, once marriage is justified on this-worldly terms, it does not have to be good in that it entails no major tradeoffs against other, even arguably more basic, immanent goods (like physical health), or in that it fulfills an unavoidable natural function (like child-rearing). Instead, marriage may be ordered based on our collective, provisional assessment of the value of the mutual benefits it affords those who share that bond, along with their community, relative to any other tradeoffs.

One example of immanent traditional argumentation proceeds from evidence that same-sex couples may often not be in ideal circumstances to raise children.<sup>39</sup> However, this argument against SSM does not hold where child-rearing is no longer conceived as the optimal mode of human flourish-

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<sup>36</sup> The immanent traditional argument arose in Adventism, in part, to fulfill the need for Adventist advocates of civil TM to translate their normative claims into Rawlsian public reason. "One cannot defend traditional marriage as a proper public policy just because it is taught by Christian scripture. But neither should the fact that it is taught by Christian scripture be allowed to obscure the very important empirical, civil arguments that exist for it" (Nicholas P. Miller, "Should Adventists Care About Protecting Traditional Marriage?" in *Marriage and the Church*, 213). However, this public reason, by virtue of utilizing widely accepted modes of reason in the immanent frame, has naturally returned to the intra-church conversation because we all 'live' in the immanent frame (n. 25).

<sup>37</sup> See, e.g., Robert A. J. Gagnon, "The Scriptural Case for a Male-Female Prerequisite for Sexual Relations: A Critique of the Arguments of Two Adventist Scholars," in *Marriage and the Church*, 135.

<sup>38</sup> Miller, "Traditional Marriage," 221.

<sup>39</sup> Miller, "Traditional Marriage," 223–225.

ing through marriage.<sup>40</sup> In late-modern liberal democracies, the tradeoff of losing the fecund marriage as the primary child-rearing venue can be justified as necessary to open up a wider range of possibilities for human flourishing via marriage, which should then be offset by the state and society providing access to and support for child-rearing in non-fecund marriages. As long as non-TM, child-rearing configurations remain directed toward immanent, mutual benefit in some plausible way, they will be available to make sense of human reproduction as a part of the larger human predicament on immanent moral terms.

This is not to say that immanent arguments for or against SSM cannot be more or less correct based on immanent terms. It is only to say that once the immanent moral background has been successfully appealed to, we are able to make sense of other arguments around the moral issues that rely on it. Thus, the immanent traditional argument can have the simultaneous effect of making the immanent-only argument for SSM seem more plausible. For, without appealing to an inviolable transcendent norm, SSM is simply another experiment in coping with reality, running its course among others.

To grasp the extent of this plausibility, consider that civil SSM arrived in the Global North, paradoxically, as both a profound social change and as a conservative notion.<sup>41</sup> In distinction to the expressive, libertine so-called 'lifestyle' for which queer culture was (in)famous from the 1960s through to the late twentieth century, the prospect of civil SSM not only offered the legal benefits of marriage to same-sex couples, it also promised to apply the disciplining restrictions of TM to same-sex couples through the legal burdens of civil marriage.<sup>42</sup> Thus, SSM recognizes same-sex relationships as equal to

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<sup>40</sup> See footnote 42 on the "red" and "blue family" habitus.

<sup>41</sup> Here I mean "conservative" as a politics concerned with immanent goods organized around discipline, order, and stability (see, e.g., Dale Carpenter, "The Traditionalist Case for Gay Marriage," *South Texas Law Review* 50.93 [2008]: 93–104); and not in the sense that the American legal recognition of SSM was a project associated with conservative opinion leaders, politicians, or political organizations, though the latter is also to some extent the case, especially at the inception of the movement. "For many years gay marriage was considered too conservative a goal for the left-leaning gay movement" (Nathaniel Frank, *Awakening: How Gays and Lesbians Brought Marriage Equality to America* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017], 9). Frank attributes the early moves toward legal recognition of SSM to "a handful of gay conservatives," who "began to champion gay marriage;" "grassroots gay marriage champions," who tested the legality of such marriages, and "professional legal advocates, who joined together—often uneasily—to push gay marriage to the center of the LGBTQ movement" (Frank, *Awakening*, 9).

<sup>42</sup> Taking, again, the American context as representative of the social context of Adventism in the Global North, this tension between the immanent goods derived from discipline versus expressiveness was present from the earliest, mid-twentieth



those of opposite-sex couples, which satisfies egalitarian political impulses,

century proposals for “homosexual marriage” through to debates over its merits in the American LGB community during the 1990s and late 2000s. (R. Marie Griffith, *Moral Combat: How Sex Divided American Christians and Fractured American Politics* [New York: Basic, 2017], 281–282; and Frank, *Awakening*, 94; see, e.g., Ann Ferguson, “Gay Marriage: An American and Feminist Dilemma,” *Hypatia* 22.1 [2007]: 39–57, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2007.tb01148.x/>; and William N. Eskridge, Jr., *The Case for Same-sex Marriage: From Sexual Liberty to Civilized Commitment* [New York: The Free Press, 1996]). “For those who did prioritize marriage rights for same-sex couples, this priority was often closely linked to religious faith” (Griffith, *Moral Combat*, 283). “If one side embraced marriage’s symbolic power to assimilate gay couples into the mainstream of American life, another side resisted it as an assimilationist retreat from the radical aspirations of gay liberation. . . . By making marriage seem a real possibility for the first time and by provoking a massive conservative reaction, the court decisions intensified the gay debate, but also shifted its center of gravity. More and more activists and non-activists came to believe that both the security and recognition that marriage provided were worth fighting for” (George Chauncey, *Why Marriage: The History Shaping Today’s Debate over Gay Equality* [New York: Basic, 2004], 121–122). According to gay rights activist and historian Martin Duberman (1930–) in his rhetorically titled *Has the Gay Movement Failed?* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2018), xiv, only a few “grumblers,” “overrepresented among gay academics and public intellectuals, but scarcely represented at all in the LGBTQ population at large,” currently question the “movement’s recent ‘assimilationist’ agenda.”

“*Why* has a conservative view of LGBT persons as ‘normal’ rather than a liberationist ‘queer’ image triumphed?” (Darel E. Paul, *From Tolerance to Equality: How Elites Brought America to Same-Sex Marriage* [Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2018], 11, emphasis original). Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu’s social theory, Paul argues that the fight for SSM was taken up as an act of class warfare by American professional and business elites, because it offered them a symbol of an upwardly-mobile diversity by which they could establish their moral qualification to rule the lower classes based on the superiority of their vision for the American family—the “blue family” (Paul, *From Tolerance to Equality*, 80–87, 159–163). The blue family makes sense of marriage—against the background of elite lived experience (or from within that Bourdieuan “habitus”)—as a stable coupling of adult equals, regardless of gender/sex, for the purpose of the adults’ mutual fulfillment and, optionally, as the optimal site of child rearing. From the American lower classes’ lived experience, the family emerges either as built on the stable union of a male and a female under symbolic male leadership for the purpose of raising children (the “red family”) or as stable support of dependent children by their mother, while men move in and out of sexual relationships with her in a “Creole family” arrangement. Unlike the blue family, these lower-class family practices do not make sense of SSM or only of same-sex sexual relationships, respectively. (Paul, *From Tolerance to Equality*, 96–99, 104, 111–112, 129–132; see Naomi Cahn and June Carbone, *Red Families v. Blue Families: Legal Polarization and the Creation of Culture* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010] and Göran Therborn, *Between Sex and Power: Family in the World, 1900–2000* [London, Routledge, 2004] for Paul’s sources on the “red,” “blue,” and “Creole” models of the

but on the condition that, going forward, both will be disciplined and stabilized on the same terms, which appeals to concerns about maintaining a clear social order.

This expansion of civil marriage was opposed within Adventism on immanent moral grounds. Returning to a previous example, an argument was made that stabilizing same-sex couples as families available for child-rearing is unwise, because they are more prone to instability due to infidelity.<sup>43</sup> Yet, even if it turns out to be the case that higher levels of same-sex infidelity are not caused by their historic lack of access to a disciplining legal regime in the first place, it does not necessarily follow that in a free, post-industrial society—one in which there are diverse means of acquiring parental responsibilities—it is not good to stabilize such relationships to the greatest extent possible when they do occur. Thus, the immanent traditional argument against Adventists endorsing civil marriage for same-sex couples calls on an immanent moral background assumption that, for conservatives, can also make sense of SSM as a proposal that aims at the ordering of same-sex relationships for mutual benefit.

Therefore, immanent traditional arguments against SSM as tending toward a libertine gay lifestyle can have the simultaneous effect of throwing open the question of whether TM, because it is unable to discipline the same-sex relationships that will inevitably occur, is a notion to which conservatives ought to cling. In the church community, this move is cast as a transcendent concession to immanent exigency. For example, one could make sense of SSM by analogy to the way the church in the Global North has made marriage available to stabilize the relationships of divorced opposite-sex couples who have fallen short of the church's ideals.<sup>44</sup> In this way, an argument intended

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family). Hart-Brinson, *Gay Marriage Generation*, 36–95, traces the historical steps by which cultural elites normalized LGB people, resulting in a generational social shift from imagining homosexuality as a behavior to imagining it as an identity, making it difficult for young people, thus socialized, including those who believe in TM for religious reasons, to make sense of denying civil marriage to LGB people (Hart-Brinson, *Gay Marriage Generation*, 112–116, 152). The exceptions are those socialized in traditional religious communities, who retain the previous generation's understanding of homosexuality as behavior (Hart-Brinson, *Gay Marriage Generation*, 196–200).

<sup>43</sup> Miller, "Traditional Marriage," 223–225.

<sup>44</sup> Jon Paulien, "Homosexuality and the Church: Seeking a Way Forward" (paper presented at 2015 Fall Symposium of the Adventist Theological Society, Atlanta, GA, 18 November 2015, [http://www.atsjats.org/site/1/podcast/2015-fall-03\\_Jon%20Paulien%20Presentation.mp3](http://www.atsjats.org/site/1/podcast/2015-fall-03_Jon%20Paulien%20Presentation.mp3)). See also Timothy R. Jennings, *The God-Shaped Heart: How Correctly Understanding God's Love Transforms Us* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), 234.

Taylor's normative conclusion to *A Secular Age* is similar: "The urge to reform has often been one to bring all of life under the sway of a single principle or demand:

to augment the Adventist transcendent argument for TM holds the potential to eclipse it.

*Pagan Traditional*

There is one other immanent argument in Adventism against church recognition of SSM that less obviously depends on immanent-only moral background assumptions to make sense. It comes from the earliest responses of pro-TM conservatives to emerging LGB sexual identities, but over the last ten years has come to be rejected by educated proponents of TM in Adventism.<sup>45</sup>

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the worship of One God, or the recognition that salvation is only by faith, or that salvation is only within the church. . . . Different gods—Artemis, Aphrodite, Mars, Athena—force us to respect the integrity of different ways of life: celibacy, sexual union, war, the arts of peace, which life according to a single principle often ends up denying. . . . Our Christian life has suffered a mutilation to the extent that it imposes this kind of homogenization. The church was rather meant to be the place in which human beings, in all their difference and disparate itineraries, come together” (*Secular Age*, 771–772, see n. 34 on “mutilation”). Taylor also seems to have affirmed, though not explicitly, opening a space for accommodating the social reality of SSM within his own faith community to some extent: “The fateful feature of the early-modern Catholic Counter-Reformation, which erects such a barrier between the church and contemporary society, is not its animating spirituality: our world is if anything drowned in exalted images of sexual fulfillment and needs to hear about paths of renunciation. The deviation was to make this take on sexuality mandatory for everyone, through a moralistic code that made a certain kind of purity a necessary condition for relating to God through the sacraments. There are more ways of being a Catholic Christian than either the Vatican rule-makers or the secularist ideologies have yet imagined” (“Sex and Christianity: How Has the Moral Landscape Changed?” *Commonweal*, 24 September 2007, <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/sex-christianity>). On the other hand, Darel E. Paul observes that, in the case of American mainline denominations, “while the explicit intent of normalizing homosexuality has been to bring same-sex couples into marriage, the implicit effect has been to denormalize marriage for everyone” (*Tolerance to Equality*, 36).

<sup>45</sup> The 2009 symposium at Andrews University that resulted in the volume, *Marriage, Homosexuality, and the Church*, marked a decisive turn away from this argument. The General Conference sponsored “In God’s Image: Summit on Sexuality,” Cape Town, South Africa, 17–20 March 2014 gave official endorsement to the notion that LGB Christians should not be expected to experience change in their sexual attractions or orientations (Adventist Review/ANN, “Reality of Fallen World Calls for Nuance, Humility, Adventist Behavioral Scientist Says,” *Adventist Review*, 19 March 2014, <http://www.adventistreview.org/cape-town-bulletins/2014-03-19-reality-of-fallen-world-calls-for-nuance,-humility,-adventist-behavioral-scientist-says>). This affirmation of the relative immutability of a persistent and exclusive experience of same-sex attraction has rendered the argument over its etiology moot for the question of affirming SSM in Adventism: It matters not what causes same-sex attraction if its causes cannot be expected to hold the key to changing it in many, if not most, cases.

Nevertheless, it is still present in lay Adventism and easily grasped without the aid of philosophy or social science.

As America transitioned from an age of sexual discipline to an age of sexual expression, Adventists responded by resuscitating an early Protestant response to medieval asceticism: that it is God's will for believers to have mutually fulfilling sexual relationships.<sup>46</sup> Taking that for its starting premise, the argument against sexual fulfillment for same-sex couples adds another: God has arranged the human condition and/or intervenes in it such that sexual relationships that adhere to the parameters God established to regulate them will be more fulfilling on this-worldly terms than those that do not. Therefore, if one cannot imagine oneself enjoying a maximally fulfilling sexual relationship within those parameters, that is, a TM, they are 'doing sanctification wrong.' This argument negates the problem of unfulfilled sexual/relational longings to which SSM is the solution by ruling out the possibility of LGB Christians by definition.

This argument makes sense against an immanent-only moral background, but in a different way than the aforementioned immanent traditional argument. Let me tendentiously, given that it is now by-and-large rejected by Adventism's intellectual elites, call this the pagan traditional argument. For, while it relies on the transcendent reality of the Christian God, and is derived exclusively from the transcendent source of Christian Scripture, it reverses the Christian relativization of immanent goods to transcendent goods by justifying sacrifices for the transcendent exclusively in terms of the immanent benefits God may grant in exchange. Charles Taylor and the Adventist visionary and co-founder, Ellen G. White (1827–1915), both recognize this *quid pro quo* mode of relating to God as the form of worship associated with paganism.<sup>47</sup> Yet, it is the explanation on which many Adventists have come

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<sup>46</sup> "Where the link between disciplines and civilizational order is broken, but that between Christian faith and the disciplines remains unchallenged, expressivism and the conjoined sexual revolution has alienated many people from the churches" (Taylor, *Secular Age*, 493; see n. 1 on "self-expression values" and SSM). Griffith understands the publication of "the first evangelical sex manual," as part of an "aggressive" and "colorful" conservative Protestant push to "shore up the rules on sexuality" (*Moral Combat*, 289; a reference to Tim and Beverly LaHaye, *The Act of Marriage* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976]). Against Adventist health reformer John Harvey Kellogg's (1852–1943) view of birth control as "conjugal Onanism," Adventist seminary professor and counsellor Charles Wittschiebe wrote: "For the Lord to place the nerves and muscles in the sexual organs the way He had, with their tremendous capacity for sensation and expression to give a man and wife exquisite pleasure and unique delight, and then to expect us to use them only a minute fraction of the time spent in marriage [just for reproductive purposes] is cruel" (*God Invented Sex* [Nashville: Southern Publishing, 1974], 122–123).

<sup>47</sup> "In this respect, [that Divinity's benign purposes are defined in terms of

to justify the traditional sexual ethic in our secular age. And, as Taylor points out, there is a tendency toward unbelief in this moral background when people are aware of the option to ask how well their God is doing at his job of providing immanent goods in exchange for our sacrifices when compared to other available modes of attaining those goods without relying on a deity. In addition, many LGB Adventists who believed the pagan traditional argument and attempted to ‘pray the gay away,’ have found that ‘paganized’ Christianity was not the only way to interpret Scripture against an immanent-only moral background, and then went on to accept the immanent-affirming argument.<sup>48</sup>

#### *Adventism’s Transcendent Moral Background*

For Adventists holding a transcendent moral background, Christianity is imagined to be good for people on immanent terms; it just cannot be reduced to only that. It is also good for them spiritually, in ways that go beyond this-worldly goods and sometimes exclude them. Therefore, the challenge of justifying traditional marriage on the Adventist transcendent background is twofold. The first is to demonstrate that alignment with God’s purposes, as Adventists understand them, in fact excludes participation in marriage configurations other than TM, regardless of whether TM can be demonstrated to be the best practice in this-worldly terms. The second is to demonstrate that this restriction is good. This requires theorizing how those Adventist believers who have access to multiple avenues toward attaining the immanent goods of marriage and are socialized into practices that inculcate the immanent-only assumption can find spiritual fulfillment in making sacrifices for that transcendent moral vision.<sup>49</sup> I propose that responses to this

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ordinary human flourishing,] early religion has something in common with modern exclusive humanism; and this has been felt, and expressed, in the sympathy of many modern post-Enlightenment people for ‘paganism’; ‘pagan self-assertion’, thought John Stuart Mill, was much superior to ‘Christian self-denial’” (Taylor, *Secular Age*, 151 quoting Mill, *On Liberty*, in John Stuart Mill, *Three Essays* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975], 77; see also Taylor, *Secular Age*, 610–613). “If they could become holy by their own efforts they would have something in themselves in which to rejoice, some ground for boasting. This idea of prayer is an outworking of the principle of self-expiation which lies at the foundation of all systems of false religion. The Pharisees had adopted this pagan idea of prayer, and it is by no means extinct in our day, even among those who profess to be Christians” (Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* [Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 2016 (1896)], 86.1, in EGW Writings, [egwwritings.org](http://egwwritings.org)).

<sup>48</sup> Such stories abound; see, e.g., Sherri Babcock, “Learning to Spin the Coin of Truth,” in *Christianity and Homosexuality*, §1 7–9.

<sup>49</sup> “To assume that you can stand in Secular 3 [the period of the immanent frame], put your ear to the floor, hear the faint echoing song of transcendence, and slowly follow its vibration until you find the path out is impossible. . . . We may have

twin challenge can best be appreciated by analogy to how many Adventists already understand and practice what they believe to be a transcendent good, the seventh-day Sabbath.

*The Seventh-day Sabbath as a Transcendent Good*

The Adventist practice of putting freedom, livelihood, family, even life on the line for the value of the Sabbath as indispensable to their relationship with God cannot be justified exclusively in terms of what is good for us in this world. The this-worldly benefits could just as easily be attained by resting on another day or traded-off against perceived exigencies as the need arises. Of course, the Bible legitimizes certain tradeoffs between the transcendent good of Sabbath rest and other immanent goods. However, crucially, those Adventists who view the Sabbath as a transcendent good take the Scriptures as divine guidance on which tradeoffs do not violate the transcendent goods of the Sabbath (e.g., the proverbial “ox in the well,” [Matt 4:11, Luke 14:5]) and which do (e.g., operating a business [Jer 17:21, Neh 3:15]). Thus, they identify a place for sacrificial Sabbath keeping in their interpretation of Scripture. To be sure, willingness to sacrifice for the Sabbath does not negate the immanent goods of Sabbath keeping, but it does hold them relative to the transcendent purpose of Sabbath.

What are the moral background assumptions about transcendent reality and transformation beyond ordinary flourishing against which Adventists make sense of the Sabbath in this way? It bears repeating that, as defined by Taylor, moral background preconceptions are not doctrines, but, rather, the pre-cognitive moral assumptions that make sense of doctrines. While one could explain sacrificial Sabbath-keeping as arising from a matrix of beliefs about creation, the law of God, the covenants, church history and prophecy, and the end times; I am asking a different question about the kind of consciousness or awareness, the kind of lived experience that shapes the imagination so that these beliefs and practices become plausible. How do Adventists who sacrifice for the Sabbath imagine their existence in distinction to those who do not?

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experiences of echoes of transcendence and encounters with divine actions, but as much as we want to believe them, we doubt them because the cultural system contests anything outside the immanent frame.” (Andrew Root, *Faith Formation in a Secular Age* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017], 115–116, 109–110). Root concludes that those life experiences in which the immanent good is least available to us are the moments where we, whose faith is fragilized by the immanent frame’s tilt away from transcendence, are most open to transcendent goods. “Perhaps the only way to imagine faith and faith formation in the age of authenticity, where Secular 3 reigns, is to explore it through the very zone Secular 3 gives us—to seek an understanding of faith in and through negations (by ‘negation’ I mean experiences of loss, brokenness, and death, but also the liminality of joy and transformational hope that seeks for the negated to be made new)” (Root, *Faith Formation*, 117).

*Adventist Apocalyptic Consciousness*

I submit that what is operating in the background of sacrificial, Adventist Sabbath practice is a consciousness of the imminent-immanent<sup>50</sup> restoration of Eden following the second coming of Jesus.<sup>51</sup> This “apocalyptic consciousness” is historically rooted in Millerite, millenarian expectation and is basic to the “apocalyptic vision” George R. Knight has identified as the historic doctrinal core of the Seventh-day Adventist movement.<sup>52</sup> From the beginning it was

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<sup>50</sup> In both senses of immediacy: soon and this-worldly. In Adventist eschatology, the Earth is soon to be destroyed at the second coming and will remain desolate during the millennium while the resurrected and living saints leave the Earth and reign with Christ in Heaven. At the conclusion of the millennium, the saved return with Christ, who executes judgment on the resurrected wicked. Then, Eden is restored following the final annihilation of evil.

<sup>51</sup> In Taylor’s categories, this would be a transcendent background preconception shaped by a connection to a kind of “higher time,” specifically that story of a “time of origins” or a “Great Time” which is the source for the “Judeo-Christian apocalyptic” (*Secular Age*, 57, 208). In an etymological genealogy of the “secular,” Taylor locates a key source of immanentization in practices that inculcate a sense of time as “homogeneous” instead of filled with meaningful resonances (*Secular Age*, 58n24), such as those embodied in sacrificial Sabbath-keeping, for example.

<sup>52</sup> By “apocalyptic” I mean a view of the conditions of human, temporal existence focused on a future, epoch-defining, break with history that is not reducible to human causes and reveals the true condition of humanity. Nathan R. Kerr, *Christ, History, and Apocalyptic: The Politics of Christian Mission* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 11–16, offers a five-point overview of the category of “apocalyptic” as it has re-emerged “in the theological disciplines over the past half-century:” (1) “the contrast between God and the world,” (2) “the concrete, flesh-and-blood reality of that crucified Jewish peasant of Nazareth,” (3) the “reality . . . that God, in Jesus Christ, has inaugurated a new cosmos” and that “history is inscribed or encoded” between Christ’s second and first comings, (4) “Christ the Lord” as “a reality to be embodied amid the *here and now* of our own contingent localities,” and (5) “the . . . existence of a people who celebrate Christ’s lordship by sharing in his mission” (emphasis original). For a brief history of that re-emergence, see Joshua B. Davis, “The Challenge of Apocalyptic to Modern Theology,” in *Apocalyptic and the Future of Theology: With and Beyond J. Louis Martyn*, ed. Joshua B. Davis and Douglas Harink (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012), 1–48.

In *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism: Are We Erasing Our Relevancy?* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2008), George R. Knight builds outward from the early Adventist experience to the doctrinal content at the heart of Adventism’s apocalyptic vision of transcendent reality, which he goes on to defend historically and exegetically. In this research, I am exploring different, but related, questions about what background preconceptions were formed in Adventism by that early experience, and how they might continue to make sense of Adventist doctrines and practices as they relate to the question of SSM. Where Knight offered answers to the objections of “apocalyptic doubt” (*Apocalyptic Vision*, 61), I aim to clarify, using Taylor’s account of secularity, where those doubts come from and what that means for

linked to their expectation of the imminent-immanent restoration of Eden in radical discontinuity with the fallen world.<sup>53</sup> This formed a significant part of the moral background against which the earliest Sabbatarian Adventists were able to make sense of, and sacrifice for, a Bible-based relocation of the Sabbath day away from the ‘Christian Sabbath’ justified by the resurrection of Christ on Sunday, and back to the seventh-day Sabbath grounded in Eden, imagined as a moral order soon to be restored by Christ.<sup>54</sup>

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how Adventists can respond to them.

<sup>53</sup> The vision of Heaven in Ellen G. White’s seminal exhortation, “To the Little Remnant Scattered Abroad,” 6 April 1846, broadside 1, in EGW Writings, [www.egwwritings.org](http://www.egwwritings.org) is shot-through with biblical imagery connecting Eden and the New Earth, from the tree of life, to the vocation of gardening that the saved will enjoy. This vision of Eden restored was published in the tract, *A Word to the Little Flock*, the following year, along with a collection of other short works by Adventist co-founders James White (1821–1881) and Joseph Bates (1792–1872) narrating the Millerite Great Disappointment experience in light of the Sabbath and Heavenly Sanctuary, in the tract. This manifesto brought together for the first time both the “leadership and a clear doctrinal foundation” on which “the fledgling Sabbatarian movement was ready to grow” (Merlin Burt, “The Historical Background, Interconnected Development and Integration of the Doctrines of the Sanctuary, the Sabbath, and Ellen G. White’s Role in Sabbatarian Adventism from 1844 to 1849” [PhD diss., Andrews University, 2002], 324, <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dissertations/19>).

<sup>54</sup> Burt, “Sabbatarian Adventism,” 340. Burt found that, for a brief time “Seventh Day Baptists were active and,” in contradistinction to their efforts with other Christian groups, “fairly successful in convincing many Adventists to accept the seventh-day Sabbath.” The Seventh Day Baptists argued for the “validity and perpetuity of the Sabbath as a *creation institution* and connected it to the moral law” (Burt, “Sabbatarian Adventism,” 119, 47–48, emphasis mine; see also 279). Adventists who argued for the Sabbath in apocalyptic terms formed a line of interpretive transmission that stabilized with Joseph Bates. The case for the Sabbath as a sign of Eden restored was consistently made by J. B. Cook, who proclaimed that “God’s law of Eden—God’s type of Paradise restored was not nailed to the cross.” (J. B. Cook, “Letter from Bro. Cook,” *Day-Star*, 7 March 1846, 3, quoted in Burt, “Sabbatarian Adventism,” 254; 279–281). For further representation of Eden in arguments for the seventh-day Sabbath in the formation of Seventh-day Adventism, see also Burt, “Sabbatarian Adventism,” 124, 340–341, 400.

For this group of Adventists, one step in arriving at an explanation for Christ’s delay within the framework of Miller’s prophetic interpretation was O. R. L. Crosier’s view of the second coming as the anti-type of marriage (Burt, “Sabbatarian Adventism,” 249). Cook also connected the Sabbath to marriage: “He [Jesus] did *not* abolish the Sabbath, which was ‘made for man’—for the good of man. From the dreadful wreck, occasioned by ‘the fall’ in Eden, there have been two institutions preserved; the Sabbath and Marriage. Both were ‘made for man.’” ([J. B. Cook], “The Sabbath,” *Advent Testimony*, 12 April 1846, quoted in Burt, “Sabbatarian Adventism,” 256, emphasis original). “As God rested, kept Sabbath, at the end of his mighty achievement—the creation: so ‘the bride, the Lamb’s wife,’ will rest (sabbatize) with her



This implies that, for Adventists today whose apocalyptic consciousness is embodied in practices like Sabbath-keeping, Scripture's description of creation is readily imagined as a moral paradigm that is about to overthrow and remake our world. For those who live in anticipation of this transcendent reality, the commands and stories of Scripture serve as instructions and examples for how to live out the transcendent goods of the world-to-come in relation to the goods that remain in this fallen world.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, the Edenic moral imagination is not only able to make sense of sacrificial practices that relativize the immanent goods available in the post-fall world, to the transcendent goods of the world-to-come.<sup>56</sup> It also makes sense of an ethical

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heavenly Bridegroom, at the termination of this world's great week" (J. B. Cook, "The Sabbath," *Bible Advocate*, 9 December 1847, 129, quoted in Burt, "Sabbatarian Adventism," 339). Cook would later renounce these arguments, and they held their force only among the small group of "Bridegroom" Adventists that retained an apocalyptic expectation of the soon, second coming based on Millerite prophetic interpretation. These would form the movement that resulted in the founding of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (Burt, "Sabbatarian Adventism," 342–346).

<sup>55</sup> In a sermon preached at Grimsby, England, on 26 September 1886, Ellen G. White dwelled on these themes at some length: "The light from heaven descending upon Jesus Christ acknowledges that He is accepted as our Substitute, and *through faith in Him and obedience to God's commandments we shall be brought back again to our Eden home.*"

Now we want to appreciate the great advantage that is given us through Jesus Christ. We want to know what price He paid for us in order to ransom us from the hands of Satan. In order to know this we must search the Scriptures and place ourselves in right relation to God. *We must not transgress God's law as did Adam and Eve, but we must be obedient to all of God's requirements. It is when bending our footsteps heavenward that we are pointing others to our Eden home.*

We are to overcome as Christ overcame. And how did Christ overcome? It was by perfect obedience to His Father's commandments. He says, "I have kept My Father's commandments," and therefore *through obedience we are to be brought back to our Eden home.*

Now I appreciate this home. I appreciate it more highly than everything else in this earth, and I am bending my steps heavenward that I may have a home in the city whose builder and maker is God. I want the heavenly home. It is true we have trials and sorrows here: we have disappointments and afflictions here: but what of this? I forget all this in considering the eternal weight of glory." (Ellen G. White, "Sermon/At Grimsby, England," 26 September 1886 [Manuscript 84, 1886], Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, MD, §§4–7, <https://m.egw writings.org/es/book/3834.2000001#3>, emphasis mine).

<sup>56</sup> Hence, the early Advent rallying cry: "Hallelujah, heaven is cheap enough" (Ellen G. White, "To the Little Remnant"). Weddle's opening illustration of sacrifice in his book-length treatment of the topic is the story of the Millerite Adventists, whom he takes to be a literal example of religion defined as "what people will sell the farm for" (*Sacrifice*, ix).

hermeneutic that interprets the moral message of Scripture through the lens of God's loving purposes that go beyond our well-being in this world.<sup>57</sup>

Note that this explanation of the background embodied in Adventist Sabbath practice does not entail that there are no Adventists keeping the Sabbath on immanent terms. In fact, the immanent options available to make sense of Sabbath-keeping correspond to the immanent TM arguments. There are Adventists for whom the seventh-dayness of the Sabbath, when necessary, can be reconfigured, so that any tradeoffs necessary to attain Sabbath's this-worldly benefits are not outweighed by the costs so as not to amount to a sacrificial self-denial for the sake of God's holy day.<sup>58</sup> There are Adventists who attempt to justify traditional Adventist Sabbath-keeping in terms of the immanent benefits of the Sabbath (health and psychological benefits), as well as those who have always kept the Sabbath out of what are, basically, pagan assumptions, strictly keeping the rules of Sabbath in exchange for the blessing of God. However, those who practice the Sabbath this way are making sense of it on a different moral background than the apocalyptic consciousness that rendered sacrificial, seventh-day Sabbath-keeping plausible for the early Adventists.

#### *Transcendent Traditional Argument*

At this point, we can return to the subject of same-sex marriage in Adventism by way of comparison to the Sabbath.<sup>59</sup> For lesbian, gay, and bisexual

<sup>57</sup> See, e.g., the broad application of this ethical hermeneutic in Jiří Moskala, "Toward Consistent Adventist Hermeneutics: From Creation Through De-creation to Re-creation," in *Women and Ordination: Biblical and Historical Studies*, ed. John W. Reeve (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2015), 17–18. René Gehring, *The Biblical "One Flesh" Theology of Marriage as Constituted in Genesis 2:24: An Exegetical Study of This Human-Divine Pattern, Its New Testament Echoes, and Its Reception History Throughout Scripture Focusing on the Spiritual Impact of Sexuality* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013) develops this ethic with reference to divorce in light of the "Edenic ideal" for marriage (see pp. 310, 337).

<sup>58</sup> During my ten years of full-time, Adventist, pastoral ministry in the Global North, I observed that the such Sabbath-keeping practices are a part of the Adventist lived experience in that context. These practices, to the best of my knowledge, are not being advanced either in Adventist theological books and journals, or in the print and online publications of independent, Adventist media. Evidence for how the lived experience of these practices makes sense on immanent-only moral background assumptions is, however, available in the comment forums of independent, Adventist media websites (see, e.g., intrinsa's comment on 25 May 2017 on "Why You're Not a Cultural Adventist, or, 'It Was Never About the Fri-Chick,'" Spectrum [blog], 22 May 2017, <https://conversation.spectrummagazine.org/t/why-youre-not-a-cultural-adventist-or-it-was-never-about-the-fri-chick/13547/7>).

<sup>59</sup> I do not intend to compare Sabbath and marriage across every possible dimension. There are questions of interpretation that raise the potential for disanalogies

Adventists, what sacrificial Sabbath-keeping and traditional marriage have in common is that practicing traditional marriage—which, in the absence of miraculous/instantaneous or gradual orientation change, entails either indefinite celibacy or mixed-orientation marriage—is the opportunity for higher meaning via sacrifice for a transcendent good.<sup>60</sup> This implies that the Adventist debate over same-sex marriage can be clarified on transcendent terms by relating marriage to apocalyptic consciousness. The comparison can thus foreground how this apocalyptic moral background makes sense of a uniquely Adventist, transcendent TM argument that emerged in response to the immanent affirming argument.<sup>61</sup> I will now outline its typical structure.

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between the two. For example, it may be that the purpose of marriage will be fulfilled in the eschatological union of Christ and his people such that the ongoing practice is not needed in Eden-restored (as could be argued according to the transcendent moral logic of marriage sketched in n. 87). It may also be impossible to mount an immanent argument for the seventh-dayness of Sabbath. Regardless of how, or whether, those questions are settled, the following analogy is intended to illuminate what Adventist, apocalyptic moral assumptions render plausible, and not to resolve the questions that become significant once the transcendent TM argument becomes plausible.

<sup>60</sup> In fact, TM can also be sacrificial for opposite-sex, heterosexual couples, when exclusivity and indissolubility are practiced as transcendent goods. But TM requires a further sacrifice from LGB people, who, all other things being equal, face greater or additional challenges whether practicing celibacy or mixed-orientation marriage (see, e.g., Winston King [pseudonym], “‘Born that Way’ and Redeemed by Love,” in *Marriage and the Church*, 492–495). The same is true of sacrificial Sabbath-keeping, which, e.g., requires greater sacrifice from more economically vulnerable Adventist populations relative to their better capitalized co-religionists.

<sup>61</sup> “Uniquely Adventist” in that other Christians who do not practice the seventh-day Sabbath can, and sometimes do, judge that the option of seventh-day Sabbatarianism requires them to adopt an ethical hermeneutic that does not attach the same moral significance to Eden as Adventists do. E.g., Karen R. Keen, *Scripture, Ethics, and the Possibility of Same-sex Relationships* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 63–66, argues by analogy from the Sabbath to marriage, on an immanent-only moral background, in which natural, human needs such as freedom and relief from suffering always take priority over practices that gesture toward transcendent realities. She holds that NT examples of immanent tradeoffs against the transcendent good of Sabbath-keeping imply that the reverse tradeoff is not necessarily required, so that, by analogy, “creation ordinances,” such as marriage, need not necessarily be practiced sacrificially. See also the evaluation of the weight given to the Edenic order in the pro-TM argument made by William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 125–126 in Roy E. Gane, *Old Testament Law for New Testament Christians: Original Context and Enduring Application* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2017), 193; and page 214 where Gane proposes a “Creation–Fall–New Creation” ethical hermeneutic.

Male-female coupling in marriage is just as much an aspect of the moral order described in creation as is the seventh-dayness of the Sabbath.<sup>62</sup> As with Sabbath rest, Scripture records divinely authorized post-fall, immanent tradeoffs against the transcendent goods of exclusivity (monogamy) and indissolubility (non-divorce) in Edenic marriage. However, those tradeoffs were, in some cases, temporary concessions, and God never sanctioned any such tradeoffs against the transcendent good of male-female coupling.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, Adventism must be a community in which all the sacrifices required to maintain TM are practiced, including that of abstaining from same-sex sexual relationships.

Further, both the seventh-dayness of the Sabbath and procreative male-female coupling are reaffirmed in the Ten Commandments, which can be readily interpreted as divine prohibition of other Sabbath-keeping and marriage arrangements, if one makes sense of the fourth and fifth commandments on the Adventist apocalyptic background assumption that the moral order of Eden is soon to be restored.<sup>64</sup> The gospel affirmations by Jesus of Eden as a moral ideal are interpreted to confirm the thick application thereof, when viewed in this light.<sup>65</sup>

By appealing to Eden as the transcendent norm of an ethical hermeneutic, the transcendent traditional argument in Adventism relies on apocalyptic consciousness as the moral background assumption that best makes sense of the practice of TM.<sup>66</sup> On the other hand, to the extent that Adventists hold

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<sup>62</sup> “Only two institutions have come down to us from the Garden of Eden: the Sabbath and marriage. It is not surprising that in the last days both of these divine institutions, the divine gifts to humanity from the Creator’s hand, are under attack” (Richard M. Davidson, “Homosexuality and the Bible: What Is at Stake in the Current Debate,” in *Marriage and the Church*, 196). N.B. Davidson’s argument here is the converse of that of the early Sabbatarian Adventists, who argued from the perdurance of Edenic marriage to that of the Edenic Sabbath (n. 54).

<sup>63</sup> Moskala, “Adventist Hermeneutics,” 18.

<sup>64</sup> See, e.g., “An Understanding of the Biblical View on Homosexual Practice and Pastoral Care” (position paper, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, August 2017), <https://www.andrews.edu/sem/about/statements/seminary-statement-on-homosexuality-edited-8-17-jm-final.pdf>, 1–3.

<sup>65</sup> Gane, *Old Testament Law*, 208.

<sup>66</sup> Adventist apocalyptic consciousness is not the only way to make sense of Eden as a source of transcendent norms. Stephen R. Holmes argues that an Augustinian, sacramental conception of TM as a reflection of the creation order is embedded in traditional Western Christian practice, (“Listening to the Past and Reflecting on the Present,” in *Views on Homosexuality*, 171–173). While both the Adventist, apocalyptic and the Augustinian, sacramental consciousnesses of the transcendent can make sense of TM, they diverge on the seventh-dayness of Sabbath for reasons that are beyond the scope of this research, but which I suspect are not unrelated to Augustine’s eschatol-

the assumption that God's purposes for us do not go beyond our well-being in this world, they can expect to find themselves morally repulsed by Adventist apocalyptic consciousness. The imminent-immanent restoration of the Edenic order entails the destruction of much that we value in this-world, a world in which such Adventists assume it is God's sole purpose to enable humanity to flourish. For such Adventists, TM may or may not make sense as a tradeoff with other immanent goods, but they will not be able to make sense of it as a sacrificial practice, which requires so much from LGB Adventists.

### *Apocalyptic Consciousness at Stake*

We have now arrived at the place where I can propose what is at stake in the question of same-sex marriage for Seventh-day Adventists: apocalyptic consciousness.<sup>67</sup> Since a moral background focused on Eden-restored is readily available to make sense of traditional marriage, in those spaces where the practice of same-sex marriage may be affirmed in Adventism, the preceding analysis suggests it will generally be where Adventists have little awareness of the soon, second coming in their lived experience and, thus, are not sacrificing for the moral order of Eden-restored.<sup>68</sup> On the other readily available

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ogy in general and interpretation of the millennium in particular (see Jacob Taubes, *Occidental Eschatology* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009 (1947)], 80–82; and Richard Landes, “The Silenced Millennium and the Fall of Rome: Augustine and the Year 6000 AM I,” in *Augustine and Apocalyptic*, ed. John Doody, Kari Kloos, and Kim Paffenroth [Plymouth, UK: Lexington, 2014], 151–175).

<sup>67</sup> This is related to, but distinct from, what is argued by Davidson, “Homosexuality,” 187–208. Davidson addresses the question at the level of doctrinal and theological systems, making the case that key principles like *tota scriptura*, and core teachings like the Three Angels' Messages would be undermined by affirming SSM in Adventism. I am arguing that Adventist apocalyptic consciousness, as the transcendent moral background against which those doctrines and principles make sense, is what is at stake, and that the immanent-only moral background is also available to make sense of those principles and doctrines. For example, on an immanent-only moral background, one can plausibly argue from a high view of Scripture, including *tota scriptura*, for SSM (see n. 33). And the Three Angels' Messages can be taught exclusively with reference to this-worldly power relations (see, e.g., Reinder Bruinsma, “The Babylonian Temptation: Making a Name for Ourselves,” *Ministry* 79.4 [2007]: 9–11). That these immanent-only arguments are not plausible or persuasive to those who argue out of apocalyptic consciousness does not diminish their plausibility to those who, by their own account, hold them sincerely against an immanent-only moral background.

<sup>68</sup> This hypothesis could be tested by quantitative research. A recent survey of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of Seventh-day Adventists around the world found that belief that the world will end within twenty years varies widely by region and tends to be negatively correlated with age. Beliefs and attitudes about sexuality and marriage were not reported (A. Barry Gane, “Seventh-day Adventist Church Member Research: South Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church,” no date,

moral background in Western Adventism, that of mutual benefit and this-worldly flourishing, interpreting male-female coupling in marriage and the seventh-dayness of the Sabbath as open to tradeoffs based on the exigencies of this-worldly concerns; makes sense.

Similarly, Adventists with and without transcendent apocalyptic consciousness can relate to immanent goods through the vision delivered by the Adventist tradition for the betterment of humanity in this world; namely, the integrated practices of wholistic health and education aimed at human well-being and flourishing called the “ministry of healing.”<sup>69</sup> The need to

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37, 43; Elizabeth Role, “Spiritual Life Patterns, Beliefs, and Attitudes Of Ordinary Seventh-day Adventist Church Members in East-Central Africa Division,” released 2014, 13, 82, 85, 88; Elizabeth Role, “Spiritual Life Patterns, Beliefs, and Attitudes Of Ordinary Seventh-day Adventist Church Members in Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division,” released, 2014, 13, 82, 85, 88; Elizabeth Role, “Spiritual Life Patterns, Beliefs, and Attitudes Of Ordinary Seventh-day Adventist Church Members in West-Central Africa Division,” released 2014, 11, 74, 77, 79; Hancock Center for Youth and Family Ministry, “2013 Church Member Survey: Division Report for Southern Asia-Pacific,” released 2013, 244, 275; Hancock Center for Youth and Family Ministry, “North American Division of Seventh-day Adventist Church Member Research Regarding: Faith, Values, Commitment,” released 2013, 35; Hancock Center for Youth and Family Ministry, Inter-American Division, Montemorelos University, “A Study of the Faith, Beliefs, Perceptions, Attitudes and Actions of Seventh-day Adventist Church Members in the Inter-American Division,” released 2013, 88, 109; Hancock Center for Youth and Family Ministry and NUMCI (Brazilian Mission and Church Growth Institute), “Seventh-day Adventist Church Member Research, South American Division,” no date, 232–233; Newbold College of Higher Education, “Church Member Research,” released 2013, 14, 38; [http://www.adventistresearch.org/research\\_reports](http://www.adventistresearch.org/research_reports)). In the two majority Global North church regions surveyed, almost two-thirds of church members in North America agreed or agreed more than they disagreed with this apocalyptic prediction, while in parts of Europe (the Trans-European Division) about two-thirds disagreed or disagreed more than they agreed. This may indicate that apocalyptic consciousness in Adventism negatively correlates with secular-rational values in society (as researched by Inglehart and Wetzel); it may reflect regional variations on how apocalyptic consciousness is imagined relative to a specific time horizon; or it may best be explained by some other factor(s). Future research could combine ethnographic with sociological methods to identify major variations on how Adventists narrate their existence relative to the second coming before attempting to formulate questions that assess beliefs about the timing of the end of the world.

<sup>69</sup> As set forth in Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1905). “The writings of Ellen White can be considered as being an asset to help Seventh-day Adventism in widening the apocalyptic horizons of its spirituality so as to embrace the outlook of a more world-affirming Protestant apocalyptic spirituality” (Szalos-Farkas, *Search for God*, 301). On the world-affirming dimensions of Adventist apocalyptic identity, see Ante Jerončić, “Inhabiting the Kingdom: On

follow this program for ministering healing can make sense on an immanent-only moral background only to the extent that it is deemed to promote this-worldly flourishing better than its alternatives. And the immanent-only moral background renders many alternatives plausible.

On the other hand, practicing the ministry of healing on immanent-relative-to-transcendent assumptions is made sense of as the way this-worldly flourishing can best gesture toward the Edenic moral order that will soon overthrow this world.<sup>70</sup> Held relative to transcendent goods, the ministry of healing allows less room for reevaluation and replacement based on immanent tradeoffs, because it is taken to embody transcendent meaning. Thus, moral background assumptions will shape the options available to Adventists for ministering healing to LGB people, so that they can flourish in this world. Not that there is an inherent contradiction between Adventist apocalyptic teachings and SSM, such that one could not, in principle, both accept arguments for affirming SSM and apocalyptic Adventist doctrines.<sup>71</sup> Rather, arguments for SSM in Adventism rely on the immanent-only background to make sense, and thus can be expected to gain more traction where apocalyptic consciousness of Eden as a transcendent moral order is diminished in Adventism.<sup>72</sup>

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Apocalyptic Identity and Last Generation Lifestyle,” in *God’s Character and the Last Generation*, ed. Jiří Moskala and John C. Peckham (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2018), 122–139.

<sup>70</sup> Knight, *Apocalyptic Vision*, 101. For example, Adventist apocalyptic consciousness shapes the background assumption embodied in the practice of abstaining from unclean meats as a sign of “respect for the Creator”—rather than putting the “stress on health”—by making sense of a “Creation-Fall-New Creation” ethical hermeneutic as applied to Leviticus 11 (Jiří Moskala, *The Laws of Clean and Unclean Animals in Leviticus 11: Their Nature, Theology, and Rationale, An Intertextual Study*, Adventist Theological Society Dissertation Series 4 [Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 2000], 345). Cf., the argument that because “every group has something that symbolizes belonging, in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, for at least a century, belonging has been marked by eating the right foods,” which makes sense of abstinence from unclean meats on immanent-only terms and of exceptions based on immanent exigencies (Loren Seibold, “Pork,” *Spectrum* 35.1 [2007]: 41).

<sup>71</sup> E.g., one gay Adventist defended his attempts to convert his male partner and integrate into their local Adventist church as a married couple by appealing to Adventist eschatological categories: “Satan focuses the Church on controversial issues of the day (gay marriage for example) so it becomes more like the Pharisees Jesus disliked so much, and ignores and places at near [*sic*] the bottom of the list the Beast and his very public consolidation of power and influence” (Leon King’s comment on 8 April 2014 on “Longings and the Same-sex Attraction Discussion,” *Jennifer Jill Schwirzer* [blog], 3 April 2014, <http://jenniferjill.org/longings-and-the-same-sex-attraction-discussion/#comment-6971>).

<sup>72</sup> The example in footnote 71 is the only case of which I am aware of an Adventist arguing for affirming SSM by appealing to Adventist apocalyptic sensibilities. But

Additionally, because the backgrounds against which our thought makes sense are embodied in practice, promoting same-sex marriage as acceptable for the Adventist community is likely to dilute its apocalyptic consciousness, as Eden would come to be imagined no longer as an imminent-immanent reality, but one Adventist lifestyle alternative among others.<sup>73</sup>

Conversely, where Adventism on the whole rejects same-sex marriage as a legitimate tradeoff of immanent-against-transcendent goods, the preceding analysis suggests it will likely not be because of any immanent goods afforded by traditional marriage (though that does not exclude the appreciation of such goods), and not for the purpose of receiving this-worldly blessings for following God's law (while not denying God's ability to grant such blessings). Rather, it will be because male-female coupling in marriage is able to be imagined as a practice that aligns Christians with Christ's purposes in restoring the Edenic moral order. The ongoing ability to make sense of the sacrifices entailed in traditional marriage on this moral background will likely require that Adventists explain, shape, and develop the practices that embody their apocalyptic consciousness in fresh and renewed ways. It is to the question of how we might accomplish this task that I now turn.<sup>74</sup>

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this is not the same as arguing on a transcendent moral background that allows for immanent well-being to be sacrificed for transcendent goods (see n. 30 for the form a hypothetical transcendent affirming argument might take).

<sup>73</sup> These reciprocal effects of practice and theorizing in *A Secular Age's* implicit social theory are modeled by Germán McKenzie, *Interpreting Charles Taylor's Social Theory on Religion and Secularization: A Comparative Study* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2017), 138–148.

<sup>74</sup> Here, I acknowledge myself as an Adventist who believes the transcendent TM argument and will conclude this research accordingly. Those who are committed to affirming SSM in Adventism may develop that approach according to Taylor's categories at greater length than I will outline in the following excursus.

Because diminishing apocalyptic consciousness as an obstacle to SSM would require dissociating Adventist identity from a profound explanation for its existence, my analysis suggests that an affirmation of SSM in Adventism would best be accomplished by theorizing an alternative apocalyptic consciousness that could make sense of Adventist doctrine and practice on an immanent-only moral background. In Cyril O'Regan's analysis of apocalyptic theology, he notes the availability of justice to supply meaning to apocalyptic theologies that minimize or elide the "eidetic" content of the apocalyptic as a "disclosure of divine reality and its relation to the world and history and how directive that is of specifically Christian practices and forms of life." (*Theology and the Spaces of Apocalyptic* [Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2009], 27–29)

How Adventist apocalyptic consciousness could be immanentized along those lines such that Adventist eschatology would come to be "concerned with epistemic issues only to the extent to which they assist the ethical agenda which . . . is socially and politically indexed" (O'Regan's, *The Spaces of Apocalyptic*, 87) is hinted at in Ronald E.



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*Conclusions and Recommendations*

Reinforcing Adventist apocalyptic consciousness as it relates to sexuality and marriage would require, or at the very least be bolstered by, replacing the pagan traditional argument with an understanding of providence that accounts for a wider range of biblical data (e.g., both Luke 18:29–30, which promises divine recompense for sacrifice, and Dan 3:16–18, Matt 19:12, which emphasize the absolute commitment and difficult demands entailed in sacrifice). This could involve placing immanence and transcendence as moral categories under the “targeted *epoche*” of phenomenological Bible study, by which Fernando Canale theorized how an interpreter can bracket their preconception in order

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Osborn’s astute application of Adventist apocalypticism to contemporary theopolitical concerns in *Anarchy and Apocalypse: Essays on Faith, Violence, and Theology* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2010). First, those who practice the transcendent goods of Eden-restored can be, in immanent terms, portrayed as self-centeredly seeking after “freedom from ‘this-worldliness,’” “motivated by narrow perfectionism or pious idealism” (Osborn, *Anarchy and Apocalypse*, 13). Instead, Adventists would be encouraged to recover “an apocalyptic social ethic” (Osborn, *Anarchy and Apocalypse*, 61). This re-theorizing of apocalypticism could then re-focus the apocalyptic imagination away from a break in history at the second coming and toward a break with the present socio-political order, casting Adventists as the suffering vanguard of an alternative community that realizes the Yoderian politics of Jesus (Osborn, *Anarchy and Apocalypse*, 41–43). Finally, as those theopolitics are put into practice, the moral valence of Adventist apocalyptic consciousness would become a particular awareness of God-ordained resistance to the this-worldly powers that is rooted in the Adventist experience, and be only optionally an awareness of the imminent-immanent restoration of Eden at the second coming (Osborn, *Anarchy and Apocalypse*, 52). By that point, this alternative, immanent-only, Adventist apocalyptic consciousness could either make sense of SSM, weakly, as a practical exception necessitated by this-worldly exigencies, (Osborn, *Anarchy and Apocalypse*, 18–19, see the concessive approach in n. 43) or, strongly, as a mandate of egalitarian justice.

Note that none of the preceding implies that Osborne’s arguments about the theopolitical vision inherent in apocalyptic Adventism cannot make sense on immanent-relative-to-transcendent terms as congruent with a ministry of healing practiced in anticipation of Eden-restored. However, his theory of how Adventist apocalyptic practices embody certain immanent goods also makes sense absent transcendent apocalyptic consciousness; i.e., apocalyptic Adventism can be about making this world a better place regardless of whether or not we are aware of Christ’s second coming as ushering in an imminent-immanent restoration of Eden. On this question, Osborne argues that “Adventist apocalypticism has become a degenerating theological research program, I would suggest, because in their efforts to preserve unmodified what theological talents they received from the pioneers, contemporary Adventists have actually lost sight of their own tradition’s deeper spirit and, at its best, its theopolitical relevance and critical urgency” (“The Theopolitics of Adventist Apocalypticism: Progressive or Degenerating Research Program?” *Modern Theology* 30.2 [2014]: 247).

to discern a feature of the background assumed in Scripture.<sup>75</sup> On the other hand, reinforcing apocalyptic consciousness would benefit from a modification to, not a renunciation of, the immanent traditional argument.

An immanent traditional argument is needed because Adventists, after having established the transcendent meaning of marriage, will still need to address themselves to immanent-only believers and non-believers on the question of whether their transcendent view of marriage has a viable path to the immanent good. This includes translating, where possible, the Adventist transcendent view of marriage into immanent terms that can be appreciated as a contribution to debates in the public square over civil marriage. The immanent traditional argument is also needed to develop the relationship of those transcendent and immanent goods within the faith community, so as to properly order the practice of marriage.

But because the immanent-traditional argument makes immanent justifications of other marriage practices plausible, Adventists should not use it to argue that TM is the only form of marriage that can be ordered toward the immanent good. When Adventists fail to acknowledge the immanent goods associated with other marriage configurations, as if TM were the only kind marriage that could plausibly make sense as oriented toward our immanent good, we imply that the transcendent is redundant to the goods needed to interpret TM as a necessary practice in a fallen world. This allows Adventists to dispense with Eden on this point and make sense of TM on an immanent-only moral background. For, if traditional marriage is the only good marriage on immanent terms, the here-and-now—a moral background on which same-sex marriage is also plausible—is all that is needed to make sense of the practice.

This conclusion applies to Taylor's general observation that in the post-sexual revolution Global North, "once again, the eighteenth-century identification of God's will with certain supposed human goods," that is, "with certain models of the 'natural,' even in the medical sense," "is operating as a great engine of secularization." For, the immanent terms on which these arguments make sense also make them "contingent and questionable." Taylor goes on to argue that "people who have been through the upheaval [of the sexual revolution] have to find forms which can allow for long-term loving relations between equal partners," forms which "can't be simply identical to the codes of the past" given "how little of it can be justified as intrinsically and essentially Christian." However, I have argued here that for the community of those whose practices embody Adventist apocalyptic consciousness, the transcendent purpose of marriage goes beyond what can be encompassed by "certain models of the 'natural.'"<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> See footnote 9.

<sup>76</sup> Taylor, *Secular Age*, 502–503.

Thus, for the Adventist community, male-female coupling as essential to the sacrificial practice of marriage need not be as fragilized by the immanent goods afforded by other marriage configurations, at least insofar as that sacrificial quality is not obviated by arguments within the community attempting to demonstrate that traditional marriage is the only configuration that can orient humans toward immanent flourishing. Such arguments imply that lesbian, gay, and bisexual Adventists who renounce same-sex marriage have not really given up anything of value. To avoid fragilizing TM and undermining the apocalyptic consciousness it embodies, those advancing the immanent traditional argument should limit themselves to arguing that TM is, depending on what the data allows, at most, the preferable or, at least, a viable way to promote universal human flourishing, but not the only viable way to discipline sexual relationships toward mutual benefit in this world.<sup>77</sup>

Apocalyptic consciousness can also be undermined by failure to find fulfillment in making the sacrifices required to live in the soon-to-be-restored moral order. This can happen in a number of ways, including individual choice. Many who hold an Adventist apocalyptic consciousness; evade responsibility for fostering it by reducing all failure to attain or retain it to individual choice. However, the mandate to minister healing within this fallen world as a token of the moral order of the world-to-come implies that awareness of the imminent-immanent restoration of Eden depends, in part, on how Edenically Adventists treat their fellow human beings.

In this regard, Adventists who make sense of marriage against the background of the Edenic moral vision ought to frankly acknowledge and repent of the fact that they have too often collectively not lived out that vision in their treatment of lesbian, gay, and bisexual Adventists making sacrifices for that same vision.<sup>78</sup> Instead, they have by-and-large denied LGB Adventists the

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<sup>77</sup> See footnote 13 on “fragilization.”

<sup>78</sup> “The gospel affirms that every committed Christian life involves costly self-sacrifice. It follows from this that whenever I find myself in the position of asking other Christians to make a sacrifice for which I am ineligible—if I as a heterosexual ask homosexual Christians to give up the possibility of committed sexual relationship—then I should feel the inherent vulnerability of my position, because my ‘proclamation’ of the gospel is costing others more than it costs me. That vulnerability does not in itself mean that the demand is misguided, but it should cause me to regard my own position with healthy self-suspicion. At the same time, it should deepen my respect and compassion for the others whom I am calling to make such a costly sacrifice” (Ellen F. Davis, “Reasoning with Scripture”, *ATHR* 90.3 [2008]: 517).

For recent research into the extent of this failure and recommendations for care providers and parents, see Curtis J. VanderWaal, David Sedlacek, and Lauren Lane, “The Impact of Family Rejection or Acceptance among LGBT+ Millennials in the Seventh-day Adventist Church,” *Journal of the North American Association of Christians in Social Work*, 44.1–2 (2017): 72–95; and Bill Henson, *Guiding Families of*

experience of transcendent spiritual fulfillment through meaningful sacrifice by demanding that they find meaning in traditional marriage on immanent-only terms. I will identify three ways this failure to minister healing to our LGB sisters and brothers has occurred.

1. Adventists have asked their lesbian, gay, and bisexual brothers and sisters not to live sacrificially by holding out false hope. The pagan traditional argument has suggested that no sacrifice is necessary on the part of LGB Adventists, if only they would pray harder and/or hold out longer for the miraculous blessing of a sexually and relationally fulfilling traditional marriage. This not only ignores the biblical possibility that God might not effect a miraculous transformation to remove believers from the need to sacrifice for transcendent goods, it also discourages LGB Adventists from accepting the reality of the sacrifices God is calling them to make in the same way that believers who make sacrifices for the Sabbath are encouraged to experience meaning and find spiritual fulfillment in exchanging immanent for transcendent goods.<sup>79</sup> Instead of demanding a particular sexuality of them in the here and now, the church community should encourage lesbian, gay, and bisexual Adventists to focus their ultimate hope on Jesus and, “the joy set before” us (Heb 12:2), eternal life in Eden-restored.

2. Adventists have encouraged their lesbian, gay, and bisexual sisters and brothers not to live sacrificially by demanding that sexual self-denial must go along with denying the lived experience of one’s sexuality. Some LGB Adventists find it helpful not to identify as LGB, preferring to speak of the phenomena of their “same-sex attraction” rather than accepting social identifiers, that they do not believe correspond to their identity in Christ, yet even these have had to struggle for recognition as fellow believers simply for having expressed the ongoing reality of their sexuality.<sup>80</sup> When LGB Adventists are encouraged

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LGBT+ Loved Ones: Adventist Edition (Columbia, MD: North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, 2018), a popular resource informed by the research of VanderWaal, et al.

<sup>79</sup> Commenting on Taylor’s Hegelian philosophy of recognition in *Ethics of Authenticity* (cited as *Malaise of Modernity*), Robert Joustra and Alissa Wilkinson note that, in Western society, marriage is a major (and perhaps overly relied on) means for authenticating the individual. This has given rise to an identity politics around marriage (*How to Survive the Apocalypse: Zombies, Cylons, Faith, and Politics at the End of the World* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016], 110–111; see also Charles Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994], 23–35). Where sexual identity politics are operative in the church (that is, in the Global North), same-sex church marriage can be argued for as an indispensable venue of recognition, especially where the church does not recognize the sacrifices celibate people and married couples make to uphold the transcendent goods of TM.

<sup>80</sup> As evidenced by the repeated and ongoing efforts to distinguish temptation

to keep their sexuality a secret, the sacrifices they make for the Edenic moral order cannot be recognized and supported in the same way as those who practice other modes of self-denial and are not asked to deny any ongoing conflict between their social identity and their identity in Christ.<sup>81</sup> Instead of demanding a silent ambiguity, Adventists should make it a practice to personally, and publicly, affirm and support the social identity of lesbian, gay, and bisexual Adventists, according to whatever identifiers they may choose, and to recognize the distinct witness of their sacrifices for traditional marriage.

3. Adventists have asked their lesbian, gay, and bisexual brothers and sisters not to live sacrificially by teaching that forgoing same-sex sexual relationships is entirely in their immanent best interest.<sup>82</sup> This erases the line between fulfilling sacrifice for transcendent goods and self-interested self-discipline for immanent goods, which is the essence of the Christian immanent-only moral background. While there may be harmful aspects to same-sex sexual relationships, including same sex-marriage, disregarding their potential immanent, relational, and sexual benefits amounts to a denial of the potential for fulfillment to be found in giving them up for a higher purpose. Adventist local churches should freely acknowledge relational costs to lesbian, gay, and bisexual Adventists who have denied self (Matt 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23) to follow—not only the recommendation of Paul the Apostle for those living in imminent expectation of an apocalyptic crisis (1 Cor 7:26)—

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from sin on the part of openly LGB, celibate Adventists (see, e.g., Wayne Blakley, “No Longer Hiding Under a Church Pew: Breaking the Silence about Homosexuality in the Church,” *The Compass Magazine* [blog], 6 May 2016, <https://thecompassmagazine.com/blog/no-longer-hiding-under-a-church-pew-breaking-the-silence-about-homosexuality-in-the-church>).

<sup>81</sup> For example, in my experience of apocalyptic Adventism in America, it has never been the case that patriotic Adventists were asked to deny their civic identity as Americans in order to be seen as fully committed to an Adventist eschatology that is incompatible with conceptions of America as the “last best hope of earth” (Abraham Lincoln, Second Annual Message, 1 December 1862 in *This Fiery Trial: The Speeches and Writings of Abraham Lincoln*, ed. William E. Gienapp [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002], 150). A similar situation could be the case on the problem of white identity and anti-racism (see Martín Alcoff, *Future of Whiteness*, 105–109, 188–189).

<sup>82</sup> “As Tillotson put it: ‘And nothing is more likely to prevail with wise and considerate men to become religious, than to be thoroughly convinced, that religion and happiness, our duty and our interest, are but one and the same thing considered under different notions.’

“An observer today looks with stupefaction on this pre-shrunk religion, anticipating the root and branch rejection from both sides, by Wesley from one direction, and later secular humanists from the other.” (Taylor, *Secular Age*, 226, quoting John Tillotson [1630–1694] as quoted in Gerald Robertson Cragg, *Puritanism to the Age of Reason: A Study of Changes in Religious Thought Within the Church of England, 1660–1700* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950], 78n2).

but also the earthly example of Christ in celibacy, in order to respect the “heavenly” example of Christ in traditional marriage. Such congregations can then openly celebrate the faithfulness of their LGB members in having done so, and can learn from their example of sacrifice.

As the church alleviates the costs of sacrificial Sabbath-keeping by the provision of employment opportunities and legal services, the church can also alleviate the sacrifices LGB Adventists make for the soon-coming Savior by providing them with recognition and companionship. For, if I may return to Taylor for one final insight into our late-Modern condition, the recognition of our identity by peers is part of what allows us to see ourselves as living authentically “against the background of things that matter.”<sup>83</sup> Lesbian, gay, and bisexual Adventists who renounce same-sex marriage renounce a readily available mode of authentically making sense of their sexual attractions through an intimate relational practice that combines sexual self-expression and self-discipline. In recognition of this sacrifice, local churches should immediately begin to partner with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and other single Adventists to develop burden-bearing practices through which they can authentically integrate their sexuality with their stance on traditional marriage through intimate, non-sexual relationships of mutual recognition and spiritual up-building before God (Gal 6:2).<sup>84</sup>

Finally, the moral logic behind male-female coupling in the Edenic order of marriage will need to be elucidated for Christians in the same way as Adventists have recently undertaken to expound the transcendent moral logic of the seventh-dayness of the Edenic Sabbath.<sup>85</sup> This task is necessary

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<sup>83</sup> Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity*, 40. In a way, what I will recommend here is for the Adventist local church to be an alter-Bloomsbury (n. 28): a fellowship in which LGB Adventists can be openly recognized as authentically practicing their sexuality relative to their transcendent moral commitments in the midst of a society that often fails to appreciate how this mode of self-denial can be directed toward human flourishing (cf. Hart-Brinson, *Gay Marriage Generation*, 196–203 on “orthodox interpretive communities” and “subcultures of inclusivity”).

<sup>84</sup> See the Hauerwasian critique the “Marriage Mandate Movement” in Christiana S. Hitchcock, *The Significance of Singleness: A Theological Vision for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 8–28. In contrast to the practices of singleness among Christian women in the ancient church in the nineteenth century Chinese mission field, she suggests that contemporary “American evangelicals are afraid of being single because we are afraid of what it means theologically: that God might not give us everything that we want” (Hitchcock, *The Significance of Singleness*, 93). With respect to SSM, Hitchcock concludes that “if we are willing to take seriously that God may call heterosexuals to singleness, then we have more credibility when we ask it of others as well” (*The Significance of Singleness*, 27).

<sup>85</sup> James V. Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church’s Debate on Same-Sex Relationships* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 35, writing in affirmation of

because the moral logic of mutual benefit is embodied in the Western way of life, and therefore the immanent-only moral background assumption is positioned to potentially make sense of the entire system of Adventist beliefs and practices, beyond simply the Sabbath and marriage.<sup>86</sup> Thus, further research into the biblical sources of a transcendent moral logic of traditional marriage is urgently needed.<sup>87</sup>

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SSM, found “the most common attempts to explain the underlying moral logic that shapes this [gender complementary] outlook inadequate and unhelpful.” See, e.g., Sigve K. Tonstad, *The Lost Meaning of the Seventh-day* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), 27–38.

<sup>86</sup> See footnote 67 on the Three Angels’ Messages. A systematic move in this direction might begin by making sense of the great controversy over the moral character of God, the narrative horizon of Adventist theology, on immanent-only moral background assumptions. This could be accomplished by theorizing an apocalyptic break between sin as inherently self-destructive on this-worldly terms and God’s character as ultimately non-destructive on this-worldly terms (see, e.g., Sigve K. Tonstad, *God of Sense and Traditions of Non-Sense* [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016], 394–401).

<sup>87</sup> A starting hypothesis for a project to fill that gap could develop the conclusions of Gehring, “*One Flesh*” *Theology*, 52, 310–318, to the effect that the transcendent purpose of marriage is to tell a story about how God loves his people (Eph 5:25). This transcendent narrative can be identified through a typological study of marriage in the Scriptures (Gehring, “*One Flesh*” *Theology*, 311n1). The transcendent moral logic of male-female coupling for TM could thus be minimally structured according to the threefold frame of (1) the union Adam and Eve in Eden following creation (Gen 2:22–25), (2) the rupture of their relationship with each other and with God at the fall (3:7–12), and (3) the consummation of redemption as the union of the Second Adam and the New Jerusalem in Eden-restored (Rom 5:14, Rev 21:2–3; cf. n. 70 on Moskala’s “Creation-Fall-New Creation” ethical hermeneutic).

