

SAME-SEX MARRIAGE AND THE APOCALYPTIC
CONSCIOUSNESS OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM

Abstract

Arguments made for and against affirming same-sex marriage in Seventh-day Adventism rely on typical moral background presuppositions about immanent and transcendent goods identified by Charles Taylor in his philosophical genealogy of *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: apocalyptic consciousness focused on the immanent/imminent restoration of Eden by Jesus Christ following the second coming. Comparing marriage to the this-worldly and next-worldly benefits of divergent Adventist Sabbath-keeping practices foregrounds the availability of immanentized moral presuppositions to make sense of Adventist ethical hermeneutics. But practices that entail giving up immanent goods for the transcendent good of Eden restored can be authentically sustained through communal recognition. Adventism should develop practices of recognition both to alleviate losses incurred by those 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: Seventh-day Adventist, apocalyptic, presuppositions, Sabbath, same-sex marriage

Introduction

Seventh-day Adventists living in societies with high regard for self-expression values cannot be unaware—and, if they somehow are, should not be unaware—that a conversation has been opening up in their church and in the broader Evangelical tradition about the option of same-sex marriage (SSM) as a communal affirmation of LGB Christians as sisters and brothers in Christ.¹ At the same time, it is not unheard

¹Ronald Inglehart and Christian Wetzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 51, 55 identify support for SSM as strongly correlating with other self-expression values. I use “same-sex marriage” (SSM) to refer to the civilly and/or ecclesiastically recognized union of two women to each other or of two men to each other. Intersex traits and transgender phenomena complicate this definition and

of for Adventists who support traditional marriage (TM) to claim that those who have “come out” as LGB have in some way failed to yield to the converting power of God and that celibate Christians ought not be identified as such.² I will argue that this new social reality is an opportunity for Seventh-day Adventism to clarify both the nature of the Sabbath-keeping and what it means to minister healing to lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) people in preparation for the soon second coming of Jesus.³

To arrive at what is at stake in these arguments for the Adventist belief and practice, I will first clarify the relationship between theory and practice in philosophical terms, especially how the latter forms presuppositions that shape the sense made of the former. Then I will show how this relationship is expressed in a set of moral assumptions Adventists rely on to make sense of the ethical

that of traditional marriage in note 2 in ways that are beyond the scope of this research to address and merit full consideration in their own right (as explained in n. 3).

²By traditional marriage (TM) I mean the legally and/or ecclesiastically recognized union of an opposite-sex couple, including those in which both partners have a heterosexual orientation and also all the permutations of so called “mixed-orientation” marriages. 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>.

³Lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) 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 to accept those identifiers, but who openly acknowledge an ongoing, persistent experience of same-sex attraction. For an accessible introduction to the philosophy of identity, albeit with specific reference to racial identity, see Linda Martín Alcoff, *The Future of Whiteness* (Cambridge: Polity, 2015).

“T” for a “trans” or “transgendered” sexual identity, which maps onto the phenomena of gender dysphoria, as well as other sexual identity signifiers are often included in this acronym (e.g., LGBTQ+). I will bracket concerns arising from other sexual minority groups’ experiences for the purposes of minimally clarifying SSM vis a vis Adventism, because the experiences and ethical considerations that attach to those identities, while overlapping and in ways analogous to SSM for LGB people, introduce questions that are beyond the question of SSM. However, 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, queer (Q), asexual, etc. (+) people.

hermeneutics found in typical arguments for and against SSM. Finally, I will briefly touch on the relationship between identity, authenticity, and recognition by proposing the formation of sustainable, communal practices consistent with TM that can minister healing to LGB Adventists.

“Background”

I will approach the question of SSM in Adventism through selected categories developed by Charles Taylor in his acclaimed work, *A Secular Age*.⁴ I use Taylor’s thinking here because his categories are developed through philosophical reflection on the broader historic sources of the controversy over SSM and LGB identity in what used to be Western Christendom.⁵ Thus, his philosophy is well positioned to

⁴Charles 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* [2016], ed. Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2016/entries/communitarianism>). The announcement of his 2007 Templeton Prize anticipated that *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007) would become “the definitive examination of secularization and the modern world” (The Templeton Prize Canyon Institute for Advanced Studies, <https://web.archive.org/web/20070430180323/http://www.templetonprize.org:80/bios.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*,” *ibid.*: 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.

⁵Within 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) context. 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;” *ibid.*, 15). I will be using the expressions “Western” and “Global North” as broad equivalents for this milieu in its post-colonial, late-modern iterations including the present.

help us get to the bottom of widespread cultural and religious influences operating in the Adventist community.

Or, put another way, 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.⁶ 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.”⁷

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, whenever we think about things, there are the things that we are aware that we’re thinking about—ideas, arguments, doctrines, etc.—but these can only make sense (or fail to make sense) against a background of pre-conceptions that we’re not thinking about. And we can never escape our reliance on

⁶Paul D. Jantz, “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 [South Bend, IN: 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*, 173 n. 12).

⁷*ibid.*, 173

that background of assumptions, 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 conceptualization.⁸ 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. 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.⁹

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,

⁸Note, 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; cf., *ibid.*, 58–63 for a brief response to James K. A. Smith’s Augustinian/Taylorian critique of worldview philosophy). 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.

⁹Taylor, *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 presuppositions 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 background presuppositions (“Toward a Criticism of Theological Reason: Time and Timelessness as Primordial Presuppositions” [PhD diss., Andrews University, 1983], 298–299, <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. 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.

moving the Global North from a place where unbelief in God was inconceivable, to a place where both believers and unbelievers cannot but be aware of the other option.¹⁰ What it means, then, to be secular in the broadest Taylorian sense is to live with social conditions that form the background assumption that that belief in God is optional.¹¹ Accordingly, 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.¹² And, at the same time, no matter the answer that we give to these questions, we are always to greater or lesser extent aware of and “cross-pressured” by the existence of other answers to them.¹³ Thus, Taylor’s argument builds to the conclusion that for one to acknowledge, or not, some source of meaning that is qualitatively fuller than and/or

¹⁰James K. A. Smith, *How [Not] to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014) sees this as Taylor’s “Hegelian side—a deep appreciation for the contingencies of history. So we can’t tell a neat-and-tidy 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” (25).

¹¹In 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).

¹²Janz, 60. Cf. Taylor, *Secular Age*, 565.

¹³“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” (ibid., 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” (141).

beyond ordinary humanity and the universe, as far as we are able to investigate it through extensions of ourselves, requires “anticipatory confidence,” which is, in religious terms, faith.¹⁴

Conceptions of the Good

To relate Taylor’s account of secularity to the question of SSM in the Adventist community, it is not necessary to retrace every step in the historical trajectory of secularity. 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. A moral divide Taylor foregrounds is whether we assume that what is good for human beings should be thought of only in terms of what is good for us in the life we live in this world, or whether we assume that there are things that are good for us that go beyond what can be demonstrated in this life to be good for us in this-worldly terms. In this research, by “this-worldly” I indicate the immanent, and by the “beyond” I indicate the transcendent.¹⁵

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.¹⁶ Any other conceptions of ‘the good’

¹⁴Ibid., 550–551.

¹⁵Ibid., 544–546. Cf. Janz’s call to nuance the later (67–68).

¹⁶There are two other options Taylor identified 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 this diminution of the heroic by providing the moral ground on which equalitarian mediocrity can be justified (*Secular Age*, 372–374). The

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 disciplined human beings more and more toward those ends, it became possible to question whether or not we need God to order our moral lives according to the standard of this-worldly “mutual benefit.”¹⁷ That does not necessarily make someone with this assumption an unbeliever, but it does mean that a Christian believer who shares this assumption will think of God as having no higher goals, in the here-and-now or in the hereafter, for human beings beyond those that contribute to our flourishing in

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, but at the same time 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 (ibid., 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 (ibid., 635–636). Indeed, humanism arguably relies historically on aspects of the Christian moral background to make sense of its universal ethic (ibid., 246–248). For, it is historical continuity with the late-medieval demand “that everyone be a *real, 100 percent* Christian,” that, in Taylor’s telling of his “Reform Master Narrative,” is the deep moral impulse of social reform makes possible our current secular condition (ibid., 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. But my subsequent analysis of how Adventist apocalyptic transcendence relates to immanence in the universal humanist mode could be applied to other immanentized Christian moral backgrounds, if Adventist arguments that relied on them were to emerge.

¹⁷Mutual 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 orientation to the transcendent (ibid., 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, deism and ultimately atheism (ibid., 362–364). 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 (ibid., 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). And 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 from one to the other.

this world.¹⁸ For such goals could come into conflict with our immanent flourishing and therefore must be opposed.¹⁹

What the other moral background assumption requires, for Christians, is the recognition of God as having purposes that go beyond well-being in this world. In this research, unless otherwise qualified, I will use transcendence to refer to Christian transcendence primarily in the this moral sense—God and his purposes for us that go beyond our well-being in this world—as opposed to immanentized Christian transcendence, which I will refer to as the immanent-only presupposition that accepts the reality of God but reduces his goals to ordinary flourishing.²⁰ This

¹⁸This immanentized 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 (ibid., 509). Michael S. Hogue, *American Immanence: Democracy for an Uncertain World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018) identifies a broader “dissenting tradition of American immanence, rooted in pragmatic naturalism, radical empiricism, and process philosophy” that includes the Chicago school of theology (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” (ibid., 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. 19), but in some way denies that God’s good purposes for us go beyond or could ever conflict with the universal well-being or flourishing of humanity in the here and now or on this-worldly terms.

¹⁹For example, while David L. Weddle is 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 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” (ibid., 208).

²⁰By God and his purposes for us that go beyond our well-being in this world I 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

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 supreme being. Thus, if a Christian believes in transcendent goods, she is willing to sacrifice immanent goods, if not renounce them almost entirely (as with ascetics), in order to live into the higher purposes of God.²¹ When these trade-offs involve exchanging immanent for transcendent goods, I will refer to them as sacrifices.²²

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.²³ Those on the immanent side can be troubled by a sense of a life flatter

transcendent source of good could be in any state of reality taken to exist in some way beyond the here-and-now, e.g., the Buddhist Nirvana (ibid., 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. But he remains skeptical of the degree to which distinguishing, qua Nussbaum, between "internal" and "external" transcendence can establish grounds for distinguishing between moral and immoral ways of moving beyond ordinary flourishing (ibid., 632; see n. 34 on "mutilation").

²¹*Secular Age*, 644–646. All attempts to achieve goods require trade-offs against other goods. For Taylor, to believe otherwise is utopianism (ibid., 616). On this point, I take Taylor to have identified a logically exclusive disjunction in that these are two mutually exclusive moral background presuppositions between which there is no middle ground. Moral reasoning makes sense either in terms of one's willingness trade this worldly-goods off against other-worldly goods or in terms of one's unwillingness to do so.

²²"The closest we come to a common meaning of *sacrifice* is that of *giving up natural and human goods for spiritual benefits* (Weddle, xi, emphasis original; cf. Weddle's theoretical definition of sacrifice, 22).

²³Here, 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

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.²⁴ They may long for a grounded spiritual experience that fully appreciates the benefits God offers in this life.

Making Sense of Adventist

Arguments over Same-sex Marriage

With that 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 assumptions about what is good for humanity—are being relied on to make sense of Adventist moral reasoning in four typical arguments, one for SSM and three for TM.²⁵ That these backgrounds are relied on to make sense of moral reasoning suggests that they are associated with an implicit immanent or

could identify features common to this form of cross-pressure in Adventism, but that is beyond the scope of this research.

²⁴See n. 13 on “fragilization.”

²⁵For 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 (cf. 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).

transcendent approach to knowledge, in this case, not as to knowledge of whether God exists but as to how God's will may be known.²⁶ 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, immanent-only moral reasoning, while not at all closed to transcendent sources and capable of taking a high view thereof, is more open to revising or validating Scriptural interpretation in light of, for example, the conclusions of contemporary social science research. 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 presupposition and the epistemological approach operating in the moral reasoning typical Adventist arguments about SSM.²⁷

²⁶In 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, 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" with which we are always coping and already inducted into traditions of coping (ibid., 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 ones "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" (ibid., 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 how one worked 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.

²⁷The 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.

Two of the typical arguments—what I will call the immanent-only affirming argument and the transcendent traditional argument—are consistent with what one might expect taking an immanent-only or a transcendent view of the good might lead an Adventist to conclude. 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.²⁸ Conversely, the male-female complementarity 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.²⁹

But the immanent-only assumption can also make sense of two other TM 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

²⁸Here, 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 (ibid., 253)—to the moral sources of gay marriage, which are part 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’” (ibid., 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 (ibid.). 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 Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992]).

²⁹This can make sense in terms of the Great Chain of Being for Medieval societies, or on what Taylor identifies as a “neo-Durkheimian,” assumptions about inextricable link between generically Christian faith and well-ordered society in the United States (idem, *Secular Age*, 528 n. 43).

on this question.³⁰ To argue that what is at stake in this question is a historically unique, Adventist way of holding immanent goods relative to transcendent goods, I will attempt to demonstrate how these immanent TM arguments, which make possible a slip toward the immanent-only assumption on the part of those who accept them, have the potential to obviate the transcendent meaning of Adventist practices by framing their good primarily in terms of the immanent, and that this has implications for how LGB Adventists can experience fulfillment in relation to marriage practices.

Immanent-only Affirming

In Adventism, the typical SSM affirming argument assumes an immanent-only moral background by 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 the Bible says not to).³¹

³⁰Theoretically, there could also be a transcendent argument affirming SSM in Adventism, one that assumes the practice of marriage calls us to sacrifice immanent for transcendent goods, but that diverges from the transcendent TM argument on the question of whether Scripture teaches male-female complementarity in marriage as a transcendent good. It would be structured along the lines of the “not our rights, but His” argument that has been made for women’s ordination in Adventism (Kessia Reyne Bennett, “Rights and Wrongs” [sermon preached at Loma Linda University Church, Loma Linda, CA, 24 January 2015] reported in “Sabbath Word: The Problem with the Argument for Women’s Ordination,” *Spectrum* [blog], 27 March 2015, <https://spectrummagazine.org/article/2015/03/27/sabbath-word-problem-argument-womens-ordination>; and idem, “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>). However, the arguments against male-female complementarity (with or without gender hierarchy) as essential to marriage within Adventism consistently appeal to the immanent-only moral imagination in their assumptions about harm, well-being, and flourishing.

³¹“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).

Making sense of marriage in immanent-only terms can also go along reconceptualizing other doctrines against an immanent-only moral background, for example, conceptualizing sin exclusively in relational-therapeutic or social justice terms and making non-sense of sin as offensive to God apart from any this-worldly harm it causes human beings or, put another way, sin as that which incurs God's wrath for having thwarted his purposes for humanity that go beyond human fulfillment on this-worldly terms).³² 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 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.³³

"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 *ibid.*, §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>).

³²Taylor, *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 *ibid.*, §4 27).

³³For 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 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 [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016], 47).

Those with a more literal view of Scripture's authority can make sense of it on 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

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.³⁴ 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. But 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 the immanent frame.³⁵

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.³⁶

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 *Views on Homosexuality*, 90–92; and John R. Jones, "In Christ," §4 4–19).

³⁴For example, reflecting on the role that her lived experience as an "in" bisexual played in her decision to resign the ministry and affirm SSM, a former Adventist pastor concluded that she had arrived at her position through a "solid, conservative hermeneutic," but offered 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).

³⁵See n. 25.

³⁶The 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

For example, some argue that certain sexual acts are inherently harmful to physical health.³⁷ 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.³⁸ 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.

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

For example, same-sex couples may often not be in ideal circumstances to raise children.³⁹ But this argument against SSM does not hold where child-rearing is

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 *Homosexuality, Marriage*, 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).

³⁷See, 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 *Homosexuality, Marriage*, 135.

³⁸Miller, "Traditional Marriage," 221.

³⁹Ibid., 223–225.

no longer conceived as the optimal mode of human flourishing through marriage.⁴⁰ In late-modern liberal democracies, the trade-off of losing the fecund marriage as the primary child-rearing venue can be justified as necessary to open up a wider range 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 immanent arguments for or against SSM cannot be more or less correct 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 issue 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 both as profound social change and as a conservative notion.⁴¹ In distinction to the expressive, libertine so-called ‘lifestyle’ for which

⁴⁰N. 28; see n. 42 on the “red” and “blue family” habitus.

⁴¹Here 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

queer culture was (in)famous from the 1960s through to the late twentieth century, the prospect of same-sex civil marriage 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.⁴² Thus, SSM

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” (ibid.).

⁴²Taking, again, the American context as representative the social context of Adventism in the Global North, this tension between the immanent goods derived from discipline vs. expressiveness was present from the earliest, mid-twentieth 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, 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/full>; 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, 283). “If one side embraced marriage’s symbolic power to assimilate gay couple 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), 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” (xiv).

“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 they establish their moral qualification to rule the lower classes based on the superiority of their vision for the American family—the “blue family” (ibid., 80–87, 159–163). The blue family makes sense of marriage—against the background of elite lived experience (or from within that Bordieuan “habitus”)—as a stable coupling of adult equals, regardless of gender, 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

recognizes same-sex relationships as equal to those of opposite-sex couples, which satisfies egalitarian political impulses, 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.⁴³ But 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.

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. (ibid., 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 family).

⁴³N. 39.

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.⁴⁴ In this way, an argument intended to augment the Adventist transcendent argument for TM holds the potential to eclipse it.

Pagan Traditional

⁴⁴Jon Paulien, "Homosexuality and the Church: Seeking a Way Forward" (audio recording of presentation at the Adventist Theological Society, 2015 Fall Symposium, Atlanta, GA, 18 November 2015), 23:48f, 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: 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" (771–772). Taylor also seems to affirm, 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" (36).

Finally, there is another kind of 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.⁴⁵ 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.⁴⁶ Taking that for its starting premise, the argument against

⁴⁵The 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.

⁴⁶"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," *The Act of Marriage* by Tim and Beverly LaHaye (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), as part of an "aggressive" and "colorful" conservative Protestant push to "shore up the rules on sexuality" (289). 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).

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 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 tentatively, 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 a transcendent reality, the Christian God, and is derived exclusively from a transcendent source, 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 grants 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. Yet it is the explanation on which many Adventists have come to justify the traditional sexual ethic in our secular age.⁴⁷ And, as Taylor points

⁴⁷"In this respect, [that Divinity's benign purposes are defined in terms of 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*, 150–151 quoting Mill, *On Liberty*, in idem, *Three Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 77; see also Taylor, *Secular Age*, 610–613). "If they could become holy by their own efforts

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. And 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.⁴⁸

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 TM on the Adventist transcendent background is twofold. The first is to demonstrate that alignment with God’s purposes, as Adventists understand them, in fact exclude participation in marriage configurations other than TM, regardless of whether TM can be demonstrated to be the best practice on this-worldly terms. The second is to demonstrate that this restriction is good, which involves showing how Adventist

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)], egwwritings.org).

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

believers within the immanent frame can find spiritual fulfillment in making sacrifices for that transcendent moral vision. I propose that responses to this 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.⁴⁹

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 trade-offs between the transcendent good of Sabbath rest and other immanent goods. But, crucially, those Adventists who view the Sabbath as a transcendent good take the Scriptures as divine guidance on which trade-offs 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

⁴⁹“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 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 spaces where we, whose faith is fragilized by the imminent frame’s negating 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)” (ibid., 117).

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 presuppositions are not doctrines but the rather 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?

Adventist Apocalyptic Consciousness

I submit that what is operating in the background of sacrificial, Adventist Sabbath practice is a consciousness of the imminent/immanent⁵⁰ restoration of Eden

⁵⁰In both senses of immediacy: soon and this-worldly. In Adventist eschatology the earth is soon to be destroyed at the second coming and will lie desolate for the millennium while the resurrected and living saints reign with Christ in Heaven. At the conclusion of the millennium, the saved return with Christ to judge the resurrected wicked, and Eden is restored following the final annihilation of evil.

following the second coming of Jesus.⁵¹ 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.⁵² From the beginning it was linked to their expectation of the imminent/immanent restoration of Eden in radical discontinuity with the fallen world.⁵³ This formed a significant part of the moral background

⁵¹In 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 (*ibid.*, 58; n. 25), such as those embodied in sacrificial Sabbath-keeping, for example.

⁵²By “apocalyptic” I mean a view of the transcendent 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 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. idem 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 a different but related question about what background presuppositions were formed in Adventism by that early experience and how they might continue make sense of Adventist doctrines and practices as they relate to the question of SSM. Where Knight offered answers the objections of “apocalyptic doubt” (*ibid.*, 61), I want to clarify, using Taylor’s account of secularity, where those doubts come from and what that means for how Adventists can respond to them.

⁵³The vision of Heaven in Ellen White’s seminal exhortation, “To the Little Remnant Scattered Abroad,” 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 (6 Apr 1846, egwwritings.org). This vision of Eden restored was published 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 *A Word to the Little Flock*. 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

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.⁵⁴

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

Adventism from 1844 to 1849” [PhD diss., Andrews University, 2002], 324, <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dissertations/19/>).

⁵⁴Burt, 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” (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, 254; 279–281). For further representation of Eden in arguments for the seventh-day Sabbath in the formation of Seventh-day Adventism see also *ibid.*, 124, 340–341, 400.

For this group of Adventists, one step in arriving at an explanation for Christ’s delay in terms of Miller’s prophetic interpretation was O. R. L. Crosier’s view of the second coming as the anti-type of marriage (*ibid.*, 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*, April 1846, 12, quoted in Burt, 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 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, 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 a soon second coming based on Millerite prophetic interpretation. These would form the movement that resulted in the founding of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (*ibid.*, 342–346).

fallen world.⁵⁵ Therefore, the Edenic moral imagination is not only able 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.⁵⁶ It also makes sense of an ethical 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.⁵⁷

Now, 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.⁵⁸ There are Adventists for

⁵⁵In 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" (Manuscript 84, 1886, egwwritings.org, emphasis mine).

⁵⁶Hence, 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, a literal example of religion defined as "what people will sell the farm for" (ix).

⁵⁷ 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.

⁵⁸During my ten years of full-time, Adventist pastoral ministry in the Global North, I observed that the following 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 argued for either in Adventist theological books and journals or in the print and online publications of independent,

whom the seventh-dayness of the Sabbath, when necessary, can be reconfigured, so that any trade-offs 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. There are Adventists who attempt to justify traditional Adventist Sabbath-keeping in terms of the immanent benefits of the Sabbath (health and psychological benefits). And there have always been Adventists who kept the Sabbath out of what are basically pagan assumptions, strictly keeping the rules of Sabbath in exchange for the blessing of God. But 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 now return to the subject of SSM in Adventism by way of comparison to the Sabbath.⁵⁹ What sacrificial Sabbath-keeping and TM have in common is that, for LGB people, practicing TM—for whom, in the absence of

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*, comment, 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>).

⁵⁹I do not intend to compare Sabbath and marriage across every possible dimension. There are questions of interpretation that raise the potential for disanalogies 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). And it may also be impossible to mount an immanent argument for the seventh-dayness of Sabbath. Regardless of how those questions are settled (or not), 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 as plausible.

miraculous/instantaneous or gradual orientation change, TM entails either indefinite celibacy or mixed-orientation marriage—is the sacrifice.⁶⁰ This suggests that the Adventist debate over SSM could be clarified on transcendent terms by relating marriage to the apocalyptic consciousness. This comparison will foreground how the apocalyptic moral background makes sense of a uniquely Adventist, transcendent TM argument that emerged in response to the immanent affirming argument.⁶¹ I will now outline its typical structure.

Male-female complementarity in marriage is just as much an aspect of the moral order described in creation as is the seventh-dayness of the Sabbath.⁶² As with Sabbath rest, Scripture records divinely authorized post-fall, immanent trade-offs against the transcendent goods of exclusivity (monogamy) and indissolubility (non-divorce) in Edenic marriage. But those trade-offs were, in some-cases,

⁶⁰In 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 unique challenges whether practicing celibacy or mixed-orientation marriage (see, e.g., Winston King [pseudonym], “‘Born that Way’ and Redeemed by Love,” *Homosexuality, Marriage*, 492–495). The same is true of sacrificial Sabbath-keeping, which requires greater sacrifice from more economically vulnerable Adventist populations relative to their better capitalized co-religionists.

⁶¹“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 ethical hermeneutics that do not attach the same moral significance to Eden as Adventists do. See, e.g., the evaluation of 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 *ibid.*, 214 where Gane proposes a “Creation–Fall–New Creation” ethical hermeneutic.

⁶²“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” (Davidson, “Homosexuality and the Bible: What Is at Stake in the Current Debate,” in *Homosexuality, Marriage*, 196). Davidson’s argument here is the converse of that of the early Sabbatarian Adventists, who argued from the perdure of Edenic marriage to that of the Edenic Sabbath (n. 48).

temporary concessions, and God never sanctioned any such trade-offs against the transcendent good of male-female complementarity.⁶³ Therefore, Adventism must be a community in which the all 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.⁶⁴ And the gospel affirmations by Jesus of Eden as a moral ideal are interpreted to confirm the thick application thereof, when viewed in this light.⁶⁵

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.⁶⁶ On the other hand, to the extent that Adventists hold the

⁶³Moskala, "Adventist Hermeneutics," 18.

⁶⁴See, 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.

⁶⁵Gane, 208.

⁶⁶Adventist apocalyptic consciousness is not the only way to make sense of Eden as a source of transcendent norms. Stephen R. Holmes, "Listening to the Past and Reflecting on the Present," *Views on Homosexuality* argues that an Augustinian, sacramental conception of TM as reflecting the creation order is embedded in traditional Western Christian practice (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 eschatology 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

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 and replacement of 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 trade-off 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 SSM for Seventh-day Adventists: apocalyptic consciousness.⁶⁷ Because a moral background focused on Eden-restored is readily available to make sense of TM, where the practice of SSM is 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

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).

⁶⁷This is related to but distinct from what is argued by Davidson, 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 the 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. (n. 28). 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.

order of Eden-restored.⁶⁸ On the other readily available moral background in Western Adventism, that of mutual benefit and this-worldly flourishing, interpreting

⁶⁸This 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 20 years varies widely by region and tends to be negatively correlated with age. Beliefs and attitudes about sexuality and marriage were not surveyed (A. Barry Gane, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Member Research: South Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* [Cooranbong, Australia: Avondale College of Higher Education, no date], <http://www.adventistresearch.org/sites/default/files/files/SPD%20Church%20Member%20Research%20Report.pdf>, 37, 43; Elizabeth Role, *Spiritual Life Patterns, Beliefs, and Attitudes Of Ordinary Seventh-day Adventist Church Members in East-Central Africa Division* [Eldoret, Kenya: The University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, 2014] <http://www.adventistresearch.org/sites/default/files/files/ECD%20Church%20Member%20Research%20Report.pdf>, 13, 82, 85, 88; idem, *Spiritual Life Patterns, Beliefs, and Attitudes Of Ordinary Seventh-day Adventist Church Members in Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division* [Eldoret, Kenya: The University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, 2014], <http://www.adventistresearch.org/sites/default/files/files/SID%20Church%20Member%20Research%20Report.pdf>, 13, 82, 85, 88; idem, *Spiritual Life Patterns, Beliefs, and Attitudes Of Ordinary Seventh-day Adventist Church Members in West-Central Africa Division* [Eldoret, Kenya: The University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, 2014], <http://www.adventistresearch.org/sites/default/files/files/WAD%20Church%20Member%20Research%20Report.pdf>, 11, 74, 77, 79; *2013 Church Member Survey: Division Report for Southern Asia-Pacific* [Riverside, CA: Hancock Center for Youth and Family Ministry, 2013], <http://www.adventistresearch.org/sites/default/files/files/SSD%20Church%20Member%20Research%20Report.pdf>, 244, 275; *Church Member Research* [Berkshire, UK: Newbold College of Higher Education, 2013], <http://www.adventistresearch.org/sites/default/files/files/TED%20Church%20Member%20Research%20Report.pdf>, 14, 38; *North American Division of Seventh-day Adventist Church Member Research Regarding: Faith, Values, Commitment* [Silver Spring, MD: Seventh-day Adventist Church Research, Hancock Center for Youth and Family Ministry, 2013], <http://www.adventistresearch.org/sites/default/files/files/NAD%20Church%20Member%20Research%20Report.pdf>, 35; *Seventh-day Adventist Church Member Research, South American Division* [Riverside, CA: Hancock Center for Youth and Family Ministry and NUMCI (Brazilian Mission and Church Growth Institute), no date], <http://www.adventistresearch.org/sites/default/files/files/SAD%20Church%20Member%20Research%20Report.zip>, 232–233; *A Study of the Faith, Beliefs, Perceptions, Attitudes and Actions of Seventh-day Adventist Church Members in the Inter-American Division* [Silver Spring, MD: Seventh-day Adventist Church Research, Hancock Center for Youth and Family Ministry, Inter-American Division, Montemorelos University, 2013], <http://www.adventistresearch.org/sites/default/files/files/IAD%20Church%20Member%20Research%20Report.pdf>, 88, 109). 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.

male-female complementarity in marriage and the seventh-dayness of the Sabbath as open to trade-offs 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.”⁶⁹ This program for ministering healing can make sense on an immanent-only moral background as needing to be followed 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.⁷⁰

⁶⁹As set forth in Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1905), <https://egwritings.org>. “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, 301). On the world-affirming dimensions of Adventist apocalyptic identity see Ante Jerončić, “Inhabiting the Kingdom: On 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.

⁷⁰Knight, 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

Held relative to transcendent goods, the ministry of healing allows less room for reevaluation and replacement based on immanent trade-offs, 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 both accept arguments for affirming SSM and apocalyptic Adventist doctrines.⁷¹ Rather, arguments for SSM in Adventism rely on the imminent-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.⁷² And because the backgrounds against which our thought makes sense are embodied in practice, promoting SSM as acceptable for the Adventist community is likely to dilute its apocalyptic consciousness as Eden would

terms and of exceptions based on immanent exigencies (Loren Seibold, "Pork," *Spectrum* 35.1 [2007]: 41).

⁷¹E.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, comment, 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>).

⁷²The example in n. 71 is the only case of which I am aware of an Adventist arguing for affirming SSM by using apocalyptic terms. But this is not the same as arguing on a transcendent moral background, the presupposition that immanent harm and well-being can be traded off for transcendent goods (see n. 30 for the form a hypothetical transcendent affirming argument might take).

come to be imagined no longer as an immanent/imminent reality, but one Adventist lifestyle alternative among others.⁷³

Conversely, where Adventism on the whole rejects SSM as a legitimate trade-off of immanent against transcendent goods, the preceding analysis suggests it will likely not be because of any immanent goods afforded by TM (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 complementarity 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 TM on this moral background will likely require that Adventists explain, shape, and develop the practices that embody their apocalyptic consciousness in renewed or fresh ways. And it is to the question of how we might accomplish this task that I now turn.⁷⁴

⁷³These 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.

⁷⁴Here, 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" (*ibid.*, 87) is hinted at in

Conclusions and Recommendations

Reinforcing Adventist apocalyptic consciousness as it relates to sexuality and marriage would require, or at the 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 would entail placing immanence and transcendence as moral categories under the “targeted *epoché*” of phenomenological Bible study to determine the presuppositions entailed in Scriptural beliefs and practices that hold immanent goods relative to transcendent

Ronald E. 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” (ibid., 13). Instead, Adventists would be encouraged to recover “an apocalyptic social ethic” (ibid., 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 (ibid., 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 immanent/imminent restoration of Eden at the second coming (ibid., 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 (ibid. 18–19, see the concessive approach in n. 44) 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. But 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 we are aware of Christ’s second coming as ushering in an immanent/imminent 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).

goods.⁷⁵ On the other hand, 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, 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 from the immanent side, 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

⁷⁵N. 9.

on this point and make sense of TM on an immanent-only moral background. For, if TM is the only good marriage on immanent terms, the here-and-now—a moral background on which SSM is also plausible—is all that is needed to make sense of the practice.

This conclusion applies to Adventism Taylor’s general observation that in 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.” But 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.’”⁷⁶

And thus, for that 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 that community attempting to demonstrate TM

⁷⁶*Secular Age*, 502–503.

is the only configuration that can orient humans toward immanent flourishing, arguments which imply that LGB Adventists who renounce SSM 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.⁷⁷

Apocalyptic consciousness can also be undermined by failure to find fulfillment in making the sacrifices required to live into 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 duck 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 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 have to frankly acknowledge and repent of the fact that they have collectively by and large not lived out that vision in their treatment of LGB Adventists making sacrifices for that same vision.⁷⁸ Instead, they

⁷⁷See n. 13 on “fragilization.”

⁷⁸“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

have by and large denied LGB Adventists the experience of transcendent spiritual fulfillment through meaningful sacrifice by demanding that they find meaning in TM on imminent-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 LGB 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 TM. 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.⁷⁹ Instead of demanding restored sexuality of them in the here and now, the

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,” *Anglican Theological Review* 90.3 [2008]: 517).

For some sense of the extent of this failure, as regards the very lives of our children, and specific recommendations, 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 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.

⁷⁹Commenting 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

church community should encourage LGB 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 LGB sisters and brothers not to live sacrificially by demanding that sexual self-denial go along with denying the lived experience of one’s sexuality. While many 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 they do not believe correspond to their identity in Christ, even these have had to struggle for recognition as fellow believers simply for having expressed the ongoing reality of their sexuality.⁸⁰ When LGB Adventists are encouraged 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 others who practice self-denial and are not asked to deny any ongoing conflict between their social identity and their identity in Christ.⁸¹ Instead of demanding a

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 (1992)], 23–35). Where sexual identity politics are operative in the church (i.e. 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.

⁸⁰As evidenced by the repeated and ongoing efforts to distinguish temptation 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>).

⁸¹For 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). A similar situation could be the case on the problem of white identity and anti-racism (see Martín Alcoff).

silent ambiguity, Adventists should make it a practice to personally and publically affirm and support the social identity of LGB Adventists, according to whatever identifiers they may choose, and to recognize the distinct witness of their sacrifices for TM.

3. Adventists have asked their LGB brothers and sisters not to live sacrificially by teaching that forgoing same-sex sexual relationships is entirely in their immanent best interest. 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 LGB Adventists who have denied self (Matt 16:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23) in order to follow not only the recommendation of Paul for those living in imminent expectation of an apocalyptic crisis (1 Cor 7:26) but also earthly example of Christ in celibacy, in order to respect the “heavenly” example of Christ in TM,⁸² and celebrate their faithfulness in having done so.

As the church alleviates the costs of sacrificial Sabbath-keeping by the provision of employment opportunities and legal services, and the church can also alleviate the sacrifices LGB Adventists make for the soon-coming Savior by

⁸²As typologically represented in the relationship between God and his people (n. 87).

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.”⁸³ LGB Adventists who renounce SSM 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 LGB Adventists to develop burden-bearing practices through which they can authentically integrate their sexuality with their stance on TM through intimate, non-sexual relationships of mutual recognition and spiritual up-building before God (Gal 6:2).⁸⁴

Finally, the moral logic behind male-female complementarity in the Edenic order of marriage has yet to be explained in the same way as has been undertaken to expound the transcendent moral logic of the seventh-dayness of the Edenic Sabbath.⁸⁵ This task is necessary because the moral logic of mutual benefit is clear within the immanent frame, and therefore immanent-only moral background assumptions are positioned to potentially make sense of the entire system of

⁸³Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity*, 40.

⁸⁴The recommendations in *Guiding Families* are incipient examples of such practices. In a way, what I have recommend here is for the Adventist local church to be an alter-Bloomsbury (n. 23): 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.

⁸⁵See, e.g., Sigve K. Tonstad, *The Lost Meaning of the Seventh-day* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), 27–38.

Adventist beliefs and practices, beyond simply the Sabbath and marriage.⁸⁶ Thus, further research into the biblical sources of a transcendent moral logic of TM is urgently needed.⁸⁷

⁸⁶N. 32. 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., idem, *God of Sense and Traditions of Non-Sense* [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016], 394–401).

⁸⁷James V. Brownson, *Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church's Debate on Same-Sex Relationships* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 35, writing in affirmation of SSM, found "the most common attempts to explain the underlying moral logic that shapes this outlook [gender complementary] inadequate and unhelpful." A starting hypothesis for such a project could be that the transcendent purpose of marriage is to tell a story about how God loves his people (Eph 5:25). This transcendent narrative might be identified through a typological study of marriage in the Scriptures. The transcendent moral logic of 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* (Gen 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).