A Positive Case for the Continuation of Familial Structures into the Eschatological Age

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Abstract

The thesis of this paper is to present as best of a positive case as might be attempted for the possibility of the continuation of human familial structures in the eschatological age i.e. relationships similar to martial bonds and biological propagation. This topic clearly has pastoral significance to some. Due to the paucity of Biblical data, strong negative data against this thesis, the difficulty of this topic and my time and ability limitations, this study will be understandably short, fairly shallow, speculative and even silly-sounding on occasion, at times relying on arguments from silence. It will also rely on theological/philosophical arguments to augment the exegetical case. An exhaustive survey of scholarly literature related to this topic is quite difficult, and I have mainly concentrated my attention on scholarly NT literature. I hope that my handling of OT exegesis has been reasonably sound. This is a work in progress; as far as I know, this is the first "study" so far which tries to bring all relevant OT data to bear and examine the issue from a variety of angles. All Biblical quotations are from the NET Bible[1].

Nomenclature

AADP	Argument from Aesthetics and Degrees of Perfection
AEEC	Argument from Examples of Existing Continuity
AFA	Argument from Fulfillment by Archetypes
AFJ	Argument from Fairness and Justice
ASM	Argument from Soul Mates
BBSCF	Better than, but still bearing similitude/continuity to if not also foreshadowed by
ETA	Edenic Teleological Argument
ICR	Intimate Communal Relationships
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
P	Person
S	Spouse
UAG	Unmediated Access to God

1 Positive Old Testament Data

OT prophetic passages which are favorable to the thesis, have some (even small) significance to this topic and which might be understood unconditionally and eschatologically will be examined, and some implications will be drawn. It is presumed that these prophetic passages remain to be fulfilled (in whatever sense that they should be correctly interpreted) and that the eschatological age, which begins following the parousia or return of Christ, is thus to be identified with the resurrection age.

[1] http://net.bible.org/

Is 11:6-9

Is 11 is widely regarded as eschatological, presenting an overall picture of peace in God's future kingdom. Is 11:6-9 present a picture of non-violence and innocence in the animal kingdom where human children play in safety among even dangerous animals. Is 11:7 suggests animal birth. This passage may be interpreted metaphorically/poetically or symbolic of human society, but a literal interpretation would also be consistent with overall theme due to multiple imagery presented (peace among wolf, lamb, leopard, goat, ox, lion, snake, humans) and the parallel with Is 65:25 (see below).

Is 59:21

Starting at vs 19 this section appears to lead into the eschatological framework of Is 60, where God promises "children" and "descendants" to the repentant (presumably of Israel); these offspring will not have God's word depart from their mouths "from this time forward" (i.e. from now on and forever), hence the eschatological "flavor" and also possible implication of continued (generational) descent. However, the offspring may also (or simply) refer to "spiritual seed" (cf. Is 1:4; 14:20; 53:10; 57:3-4) rather than just biological descendants and hence more generally (and perhaps non-eschatologically) this passage refers to the continued existence of the God-fearing community.

Is 60:22

Not a very good example, but still possibly relevant. Set within eschatological framework of Is 60. 60:22 – "the least of you will multiply into [or become] a thousand; the smallest of you will become a large nation". Like Is 11 the splendor depicted seems ultimately fulfilled in eschaton rather than the present age (hyperbole notwithstanding). Suggests increase of population (of ethnic Jewry), although this might be prior to the eschaton (e.g. post-exilic period leading up to eschaton). Possibly symbolic of strength or prosperity.

Is 61:9

Set within eschatological context of Is 61:4ff on the restoration of presumably national and/or ethnic Israel, where righteous Jews will have "descendants ... known among the nations, their offspring among the peoples". However, similar considerations from Is 59:21 can be applied here where such descendants may also/only refer to spiritual seed e.g. believing Gentiles who could enter into God's community (previously accessible only to Jews or Jewish proselytes) with the coming of Jesus (Is 61:1-2). However, the biological and continued descent of such offspring in this Messianic age and the physicality of the restoration of geographic Israel/Zion and ethnic Jews don't seem to be ruled out by Isaiah's audience.

Is 65:17-25

Bears similarity to Is 11:6-11 (cf. Is 65:25), and understood to be eschatological. The idea is of a peaceful state in God's new Jerusalem (Is 65:17) with prosperity and longevity for God's people in that age. Is 65:20, 23 suggest existence of children and descendants in this era. As before, language may be simply overarching poetic description of peace and tranquility, although it also seems to me that Isaiah's audience would've had no problem with literal fulfillment of more minor details e.g. peace in the animal kingdom. Interestingly Is 65:20 also might hint at possibility (although perhaps not actuality) of death even in that age.

Is 66:22

Similar to Is 61:9, and set within a broadly eschatological context (though perhaps already inaugurated in part with the coming of Jesus). God promises Israel (presumably at Isaiah's time, but also perhaps ethnic Israel in general) that their "descendants will remain" (presumably even in the eschatological age). Similar considerations regarding Is 61:9 apply here, but also here it might be

only taken to mean that the descendants of current Israel (at Isaiah's time) will not die out, rather than that they'd keep propagating.

Jer 31:27

Jer 31 portrays the restoration of Israel to prosperity, joy and peace, beginning with the return from exile through to (apparently) ultimate fulfillment at the eschaton when Israel is "firmly planted" (31:28) and God makes a "new covenant" (31:33) with Israel. Thus 31:40 - "the city will never again be torn down or destroyed". 31:8 speaks of blind, lame and pregnant women being brought back to Zion/Israel, but this may be referring to the post-exilic regathering. However from 31:23 onwards the oracle appears to concern the Messianic age cf. 31:25 - "[God] will fully refresh the souls of those who are faint" (unless language is hyperbolic and poetic, referring to Second Temple period onwards). 31:27 speaks of people and animals "sprouting" up in those lands, most easily understood as repopulation – with biological population growth at least one of the presumed modes which Jeremiah's audience would have conceived.

Jer 32:39

Jer 32:36-44 speak of God's (apparently unconditional) promise regarding the post-exilic re-gathering of his people ultimately to a restored, peaceful, prosperous Israel. Possibly overarching hyperbolic and poetic description, maybe being fulfilled from the Second Temple period onwards, but still suggestive of ultimate fulfillment in the eschatological kingdom c.f. 32:37 "I will allow them to live here in safety", 32:40 "I will make a lasting convenant with them that I will never stop doing good to them ... they will never again turn away ...". Biological propagation of God's people in this Messianic age seems implied in 32:39 - "they will want to do that for their own good and the good of the children who descend from them".

Jer 33:11

Perhaps some (if not all) of the Jer 33 oracle might be already fulfilled in the Second Temple period onwards, but there is also an eschatological feel to this passage (which goes beyond the general poetry contained therein) suggesting ultimate eschatological fulfillment. Thus 33:6-9 seems inappropriate to refer just to the Second Temple period - "I will show them abundant peace and security ... restore Judah and Israel ... purify ... forgive all their sins ... the nations will tremble in awe at all the peace and prosperity that I will provide for it" refering to Jerusalem/national Israel.

Within this setting "there will be sounds of joy and gladness and the glad celebrations of *brides* and *grooms*" 33:11 (my emphasis). If these minor details of 33:10-11 are purely metaphorical/poetic, it's interesting that Jeremiah would single this marriage imagery out and/or additionally employ it – it seems somewhat superfluous given already the use of the imagery of "sounds of joy and gladness" and "happy sounds" 33:10, and it's also more specifically referential, depicting marriage in particular as contributing to the general atmosphere of joy. Jeremiah's audience might likely have had naturally thus envisaged marriage occuring in this age of peace/prosperity, or at least wouldn't have a problem with it occuring. An ultimate eschatological fulfillment wouldn't seem ruled out.

Ezk 36:10-11, 37

Ezk 36 ultimately pronounces blessings on Israel prophesying of the return to prosperity, repopulation and peace of the nation, probably beginning at the post-exilic regathering with ultimate fulfillment at the eschaton cf. 36:26-27 - "I will give you a new heart ... I will put my Spirit within you". 36:10-11, 37 speak of population increase; like Jer 31:27 (see above) presumably via biological propagation as one of the means to repopulation. It seems plausible Ezekiel's audience would've also envisaged (or had no problem with) these blessings (including population increase) also continuing in the eschatological age cf. 36:8 "You will know I am the Lord ...", 36:12 "No longer will you bereave them of children",

36:15 “no longer subject you to nations’ insults ...”, 36:29-30 “I will ... call for the grain and multiply it” which appears best fulfilled in the Messianic age.

Ezk 37:25-26

A stronger example than the previous Ezk 36 oracle. Touches on apparently similar themes to the Ezk 36 prophecy; a post-exilic regathering of the people ultimately ending with apparently eschatological blessing from at least 37:22 onwards. 37:22-24 - “One king will rule over them all. They will never again be two nations ... I will purify them; they will become my people and I will become their God. My servant David will be king over them ...”. It seems, given the context, that there would be a presumption in the promise of the reunification of Israel into a single national entity that it would remain permanently this way, especially given the reference to rulership by a restored Davidic monarchy. The chronology of 37:25-26 suggests that these restored people (in the Messianic age) would continue biological propagation, but possibly this has already begun in the post-exilic period. Like with all such prophecies, may simply paint a broad poetic picture of eschatological blessing without fulfillment of minor details, but this is presumably not ruled out even to Ezekiel’s audience.

Zech 8:4-5

At least some of Zech 8 has an eschatological portrayal of a restored and blessed Israel/Jerusalem (cf. footnotes to the NET Bible), probably 8:3-5. 8:3 - “The Lord says, ‘I have returned to Zion and will live within Jerusalem. Now Jerusalem will be called “truthful city”, ”mountain of the Lord ...”, ”holy mountain” ... ”. Minor details may again be glosses in an overall poetic description, but 8:4-5 suggests longevity (“old men and women leaning on a cane because of advanced age”) and playing children. Possibly (in lieu of NT eschatological data not available to Zechariah’s audience) 8:4 is simply a metaphor for longevity (as it may be strange for those cognizant of NT data that people will “grow old” even in the immortal resurrection age). Thus 8:5 may be metaphorical for joy and innocence characterizing that age, but it is presumed that Zechariah’s audience wouldn’t have had qualms with the existence of real children in that either (the NT appears silent on this aspect of the resurrection age).

Zech 13:3-6

Not directly germane to the discussion, but nonetheless instructive. Zech 13 appears eschatological in theme, but seems to portray certain activities occuring in this age that appear inappropriate given the general eschatological notion of peace, joy and absence of sin in God’s restored kingdom. So 31:3-6 suggests the possibility of false prophets and their execution even in this age. Perhaps an overall poetic/graphic depiction of righteousness, holiness, purity and abhorrence to sin is all that’s suggested rather than implying that such negative incidents would actually occur.

1.1 Conclusions

Given the (hopefully adequate) analysis of the above OT data, it appears there’s at least an eschatological OT echo which supports the existence of children and continuing human descent in the Messianic age amongst the clearer teaching of general blessing, peace, righteousness and joy for Zion/Israel (or more generally, the people of God). At the very least, it seems that the OT audience wouldn’t have had a problem with it (and may have even presumed it as part of God’s blessings of prosperity to the nation). In any case, this notion was also affirmed (albeit exaggerated) by some Jews in the first century e.g. R. Gamaliel [33]. It seems reasonable to me that the OT audience would presume that this aspect of eschatological life implies biological propagation and child rearing within a traditional and ideal familial structure where husband-wife relationships still exist.

How the OT prophecies are to be understood (or even harmonized) in light of the NT witness is a very large and complex topic which I cannot go deeply into here. It is likely that no warrant can be found in the NT for special eschatological blessings on ethnic Jews and that the church (consisting

of grafted-in gentile believers and Jewish believers) has largely superseded ethnic Jewry (or national Israel) as the people of God [4]. There is however, the general assurance of Rom 11:25-26 that ethnic Jewry (not necessarily limited to any geographical locale) will as a whole turn to God prior to the eschaton. It thus appears that more explicit pronoucements of eschatological blessings on Jews and/or the wider sociopolitical entity of the nation of Israel can only be garnered from the OT.

Suffice to say, I believe a post-tribulational, historic premillennial view [4] view of eschatology is the best means by which these apparent eschatological promises in the OT can be harmonized with (and understood against) the NT data. A premillennial view seems to be the view of many Messianic Jews (see reference [5] for more information). The OT prophecies might sometimes appear to conflate the Millennial period with the new heaven and the new earth due to their similitude.

One of the reasons for the millennium occurs is for God's OT promises concerning national Israel (now the Millennial or Messianic kingdom with Jerusalem as its capital) to be fulfilled. This kingdom will then consist of a large number of ethnic, believing Jews (including the same Jews who en-mass turned to God in Rom 11:25-26) and also perhaps an even larger number of in-grafted gentile saints. However, there may also exist some non-resurrected and non-redeemed tribulational survivors who thrive and grow in this new age, thus explaining the OT prophecies which suggest the apparent existence of mortality and dormant-to-minimal evil in this period. Evil and death would then be only finally vanquished in the new heaven and new earth cf. Rev 21:4 where prophecy of "no more death" takes place within the narrative of the new heaven and the new earth.

2 Positive Philosophical/Theological Arguments

A number of cumulative philosophical/theological arguments (there may be some overlap) can be given which support the existence of familial structures even in the resurrection age, which on a very minimal level means something akin to the marital bond of husband-wife relationships (which thus probably includes aspects like the unique love, romance, spiritual and even physical intimacy associated with such relationships). However other, nearly essential, aspects of familial structures would also conceivably include offspring, parenthood and general human descent. These arguments are presented (somewhat pleonastically) below, but note that I won't attempt to defend these arguments too thoroughly or refute every conceivable rebuttal to them.

2.1 The Edenic Teleological Argument (ETA)

This is probably the strongest of the arguments. Humans were originally created (seemingly as part of their essential nature) to form ideal familial structures consisting of a loving, self-giving monagmous (and exclusive) husband-wife pair presumably sharing a unique, intimate (at times romantic) love that has a physically consummated dimension. Thus in Genesis, Eve was created to "correspond" to (or complement) Adam (Gen 2:18) paradigmatic of all husband-wife relationships ("the two become one flesh" Gen 2:24), and together man and woman reflect God's image (Gen 1:27). Within this setting this familial unit produces, raises and rears offspring to continue the process. If there had been no fall, then presumably there would've been no physical death, but biological propagation would've still continued at least indefinitely ("be fruitful and multiply" Gen 1:28).

The eschatological age is regarded (to some degree) as a reverting/restoration back to this ideal state "as it was meant to be" of the pre-Fall Edenic paradise, which seems at least partly suggested by the OT data in Sec 1 (if true), and also with the general tone of (at least) the Millennial age, which to some degree exists as vindication of God's *initial plans* for the world [4]. Thus within this context it's only fitting that such relationships and activities continue, either as they were meant to continue in pre-Fall Eden, or even if in an "improved and elevated" context BBSCF pre-Fall Eden. There may be a sense of "incompleteness" if humanity in general didn't engage in such relations, given that such structures seem part of the essential nature of being a human.

Possibly, procreation in the pre-Fall world would cease once its creatures have "filled the earth" (Gen 1:28). Similarly there may already be an optimum number of people in the resurrection age

(e.g. consisting of resurrected and translated saints) which precludes the necessity of procreation. However, at the very least, marital bonds and love still seem possible in this situation. In any case, it seems rather limiting on God's power to think that he must disallow further propagation instead of finding new ways to accommodate an increasing population. However, it's realized that the decreeing of a permanent cessation of population increase is completely God's prerogative.

2.2 The Argument from Aesthetics and Degrees of Perfection (AADP)

Familial structures and their associated activities are all "very good" things (as per God's declarations during the Creation week Gen 1:21 and the ETA), and there's no reason why they can't continue even in the resurrection age, even in some "new and improved" form BBSCF present-day familial structures (the burden of proof is on those who insist these structures don't or can't continue). This pattern of argument is similar to Blomberg's response[2] where the possibility of animal "resurrection" (e.g. of a beloved dead pet) is acknowledged[3]. The reasoning is, if the resurrection age is to be "perfected to the nth degree", why *shouldn't* it include plant and animal life, especially a beloved pet, if this is what it takes for "no more tears" (Rev 21:4).

2.2.1 For marital relations

A common view is that in the resurrection age, biological propagation is unnecessary and interpersonal and communal bonds (both with other people and with God) are transcended to a new inclusive level of intimacy not even approached in (and superseding) present-day marital relationships. The transcendental joys of this new state of existence somehow necessarily exclude/replace the earthly way of life and there will no longer be desire for marital relationships (and/or whatever is involved in such structures e.g. romance, physical intimacy, procreation etc). Whilst recognizing the primacy of the divine-human relation, it still seems unclear why within this eschatological context familial structures should have to be *a priori* ruled out, given their inherent goodness.

The bond and love between husband and wife involving a uniquely (and exclusive) romantic and physically intimate expression not seen in other interpersonal relationships, seems to be a different quality of love compared to (and not mutually exclusive with) a communal love. It's regarded by many to be an inherently good and pleasurable thing, even celebrated in the Song of Songs (and, as per the ETA, what humans are made for). It'd seem natural to carry over the positive aspects of such familial structures into the resurrection age inasmuch as positive aspects in communal relations are also carried over and elevated to a new level. The inclusion of this unique intimacy in the resurrected life would seem to augment the state of bliss and perfection further[4].

One might conceive of these structures being transformed/improved into or replaced by a "transcendent eschatological version" BBSCF present-day structures, similar to the eschatological com-

[2]In his talk available from http://www.tnl.org/resources/media/Talks/PlayerShells/Series-SummerSchool.html

[3]See also http://www.reasonablefaith.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=6775

[4]One may also go so far as to argue that marital love has elements that *necessarily* don't occur in divine-human love. Divine love is still the greatest quality of love possible, and God's mercy is manifest most supremely in Christ's sacrificial death. Although God's love presumably doesn't compel him to redeem us in this manner, nonetheless God is necessarily loving, whilst the decision to love another uniquely and exclusively (as part of the marital relationship) is apparently voluntary/volitional.

The parent-child love may also have less volitional elements for many parents (who are naturally compelled to care for and love their children). It is due to this volitional aspect that marital love has its distinctive and meaningful quality e.g. it might mean more to a person if their spouse said they looked handsome/pretty than if their mother said it. This special, volitional aspect of marital love – which, as per the AADP, ought to be included in the resurrected life – seems well-captured well to an extent in Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Sonnet 14 –

If thou must love me, let it be for nought, except for love's sake only. Do not say
I love her for her smile–her look–her way
For these things in themselves, Beloved, may
Be changed, or change for thee, –and love, so wrought,
May be unwrought so ...
But love me for love's sake, that evermore
Thou may'st love on, through love's eternity.

munal bond BBSCF present-day communal relationships within the Church. Call such familial structures "familial structures^{++}". There nonetheless need not in that age be an exclusion of the possibility of a more beautiful, profound, spiritual and intimate love-bond between a man and a woman. However, at the very least, the nature of this "transcendental and improved relationship" appears BBSCF present-day marriages. Call this relationship a "marriage^{++}" and this love between man and woman "marital love^{++}". However dissimilar "marriages^{++}" might be from earthly marriages, it'd still seem natural to use existing terminology to characterize the man in this relationship a "husband" (call him a "husband^{++}") and the woman a "wife" (or "wife^{++}").

Marriages^{++} would seem further enhanced (if not completed) if they can incorporate a romantic love dimension (or again, at least something BBSCF romantic love), which can be argued philosophically to be a necessarily different (but also good) quality of love only shared by man and woman (and different from communal/brotherly/sisterly love). Given the resurrection, it'd also seem natural that an erotic love dimension (possibly yet another different kind of love) would exist in this context. Thus some form of physical intimacy would also exist within marriages^{++}, which also involve a sexual aspect or at least BBSCF sexuality. However, romantic and erotic love appear by their very nature to be exclusive, and any form of love BBSCF these forms of love would likewise retain an exclusive element or would appear too dissimilar/discontinuous/different.

2.2.2 For parental relations

Similarly the raising and rearing of offspring seems to be an inherently good thing (possibly Ps 127:3-5 can be used), and there is aesthetic quality in the looks of children and the process of rearing and developing them into mature adults and members of the community. There seems to be no reason why it'd be inappropriate or somehow "wrong" for biological propagation and parenthood (both inherently good things) to continue within this age of immortality. Given the ETA, one would expect this to continue (if it does) within the context of a familial structure^{++} (i.e. a husband/wife familial unit) . There is a unique aspect to children (or generally young people) not observed in more mature members of the community.

Children require a special form of nurture, love, care and education in their formative stage when their minds and personalities are still being formed. Many regard observing their innocence, immaturity, wonder and developing self-consciousness as they're exposed to the world as delightful (not seen in mature, self-aware adults). There is also a very unique process of conceiving and giving birth to them (the joy, anticipation and excitement at being responsible for bringing new human life into the world). There's no reason why this particularly special form of nurture/care/love between an adult and child/younger person (and whatever activities are involved in such nurture) shouldn't be carried over into the resurrection age in addition to a communal love/caring between peers and also marriages^{++}.

This unique, good relationship between adult and child might also exist in a more "transcendent" manner in the resurrection, but it'd seem at least to involve those aspects described above or it'd be too similar to the general "communal" relation. But as with the "marriage^{++}" relationship, the nature of this parental relationship appears BBSCF present-day parental relationships. This relationship (call it "parental relationship^{++}") is different again in quality to the marriage relationship^{++} and, to retain uniqueness, continuity and similarity to existing parental relationships, would again seem to need to have a special level of intimacy (including physical, though non-erotic intimacy) with an almost exclusive feel to it. Part of the essence of the parental bond would appear to be this exclusivity in the unique imprinting of a parent's character in the life, development and experience of a child, besides the exposure and upbringing in the wider community.

Thus in the resurrection age the parental relationship^{++} may or may not actually involve biological descendants or physical procreation (although there's no reason why this should be ruled out). The person nurtured in this relationship (the "child^{++}") may not necessarily begin from a biologically infantile state. Nonetheless there's still enough similarity in this parental relationship^{++} for it to be BBSCF present-day parental relationships.

2.2.3 Conclusion

Essentially the AADP claims that the existence of familial structures^{++} in the resurrection age is an inherently good thing and would only enhance and augment the state of perfection and goodness. These structures involve aspects and qualities that seem to be necessarily different from a communitarian or human-divine relationship. It might be asked why shouldn't there be an intimate and exclusive love relationship between man and woman or parent and child within the framework of a deep inclusive one with the resurrected community and with God. The ETA would argue that humans were created to be related to each other in such a manner, and these relations would've been preserved at least to some degree in a world without the Fall[5].

Regardless of how the familial structure might be "transcended" in the resurrection age, one would still expect some degree of similarity and continuity with the earthly structure. Possibly, the reason why these structures are "transcendent" is due to the unique presence of God and his glory in the next age that suffuses all relationships with a deeper meaning and intimacy. If the exegetical case from the OT eschatological prophecies is sound, it would only serve to accentuate the AADP i.e. all the good material things promised to the Israelites need not be "transcended" by other heavenly or eschatological goods; the material blessings (which were couched in terms that the Israelites could relate to) can still be given, though maybe not entirely as the Israelites would've evisaged it (but continuity would exist).

The AADP can also apply to less profound but also pleasureable activities like eating. To minimize awkwardness and for purposes of simplicity, I will still refer to the eschatological "marriage^{++}" relationship as "marriage" (similarly "marital love^{++}" as "marital love"), fully acknowledging the possibility that marriages^{++} might be transcendent and dissimilar in some respects from earthly marriages, whilst realizing that marriages^{++} would be BBSCF present-day marriages. Similarly, eschatological "familial structures^{++}" will still be termed "familial structures".

2.3 The Argument from Examples of Existing Continuity (AEEC)

2.3.1 Bodily/physical continuity

Christ's glorified resurrection body appears to exhibit some continuity with his earthly human body. He most probably appeared human and male, with similar facial features and also with a reasonably youthful body (since Jesus died fairly young), although apparently bearing the stigmata. It also seemed capable of engaging in functions not thought essential in the resurrected state e.g. in eating fish (Lk 24:42). It does seem strange however to think however to think that this body, having such continuity and capabilties with the earthly functions, would have completely lacked any reproductive organs or functions, especially given a commonsense view that such organs seem almost necessary (or strongly associated) to the essential male or female nature of a person.

If this understanding of Christ's resurrection body is paradigmatic of our immortal (if not youthful) resurrection bodies [26] (except perhaps for the stigmata aspect), it seems strange that biological propagation would never occur in that age (for the human race *as a whole*) and yet the bodies of all resurrected saints would still have such apparently pointless features. Bodily gender distinctions likely continue into the resurrection age, and a metaphysical case can be given that gender itself is an essential property possessed by a human person. Thus one might note that this continuing (and eternal) gender differentiation in the resurrected population seems strangely out-of-place, redundant or even incomplete in this age unless it somehow (for many, if not all humans) still serves the unique purpose of complementarity for which humans were originally designed (the ETA), but this would

[5]Blomberg, in his 2005 sermon on http://www.scumoftheearth.net/v2/resources_sermons.html appears to subscribe to a version of the AADP when he states in the next life "we can have it all" and the new earth will be a "garden of earthly delights" where "all of our natural bodily appetites will be satisifed in the most wholesome of ways", which among other things might include "eating all our favourite foods, never eating too much and never getting sick".

It is uncertain if he also means to extend this to include appetites like sexual appetites (within the context of a holy, loving, monagomous male-female bond) or perhaps other more general deep and wholesome desires like that for romance etc. relevant to this paper. However, his statement doesn't appear to rule these things out.

seem to imply that unique male/female bond commonly characterized by a marriage relationship.

A tenuous case can be made given the imagery of a Messianic banquet in the NT (Mt 8:11; Lk 13:29; Rev 19:9), abovementioned eschatological OT blessings involving plenteous food, previous examples of angels eating (e.g. Gen 18:8), Christ's own example with the eating of fish (Lk 24:42) and possibly the Tree of Life imagery (Rev 22) that eating could continue to occur in this age[6]. Given the immortality of the resurrection body, this seems superfluous, implying eating for pleasure only. There will likely be other pleasures too e.g. sports, exploration etc. Given the AADP, why can't other more profound and deeper pleasures also exist in that age – like those gained from the familial structures envisaged by the ETA that appear exclusive (marital love, romance, physical intimacy and propagation).

2.3.2 Soteriological/Theological Continuity

Possibly other relevant examples of continuity can be found from observing the progression of God's dealings/relationship with humankind. This is a very large topic and it won't be possible for me even to begin to detail every aspect of continuity and discontinuity; the analogical application to continuity of familial structures may not necessarily be warranted anyway. Suffice to say, the uniting of Jews and Gentiles by God together into one spiritual family in the Church dispensation [6] might be seen to bear some continuity with God's previous relation with Israel. Ethnic/national Israel is not completely cast aside, and there're still elements of continuity (between the old and new dispensations) in how we relate to God and enter into and/or belong in the community of God's people e.g. in exhibiting repentance, reverence/obedience to God and his commands etc.

The Law/Torah is likewise viewed from a different perspective in light of the inbreaking Messianic era [6], but it is not nullified or abolished. Rather, it points to (and is fulfilled by) Christ, the eschatological goal of the Old Testament, who provided unique and deeper spiritual insights into the Torah, investing it with a new meaning and bringing it to a fuller expression [6]. The basic moral principles contained in the Torah (e.g. the Great Commandment cf. Mk 12:29-31 and perhaps also the Decalogue) would still also characterize the Christian life. Nonetheless there is still observable continuity between the Torah and the Gospel [6], and life under Christ can be seen to be foreshadowed by life under the Torah.

2.3.3 Mental/character continuity

Another facet of the AEEC relies on the seemingly natural continuation of romance, marital love and intimacy in the eschaton between a husband and wife, at least for those persons who never experienced earthly remarriage. The AADP argues that such a good, wholesome and exclusive martial relationship need not be terminated by death if it can be renewed (in a more intimate, profound, transcendent though still similar manner) following the resurrection - it'd seem rather sad in fact for this relationship to be somehow terminated utterly.

It seems strange that such attitudes and feelings among such persons will cease (e.g. the desire for romantic reciprocation, exclusivity, marital reunification with deceased spouse etc) following death and the resurrection (especially immediately after resurrection), since for many this may already be a substantial part of their character/identity, and in the resurrection the positive and distinctive character/personality traits (if not also all or substantial portions of the memory) of a saint might be expected to continue though God may alter/excise sinful/deficient/improper traits. Also strange for a hypothetical couple about to marry prior to the parousia; romantic feelings and some exclusivity in their relationship would be expected to continue (at least for a while) into the resurrection age.

2.3.4 Relational continuity

Another aspect of the AEEC is to highlight the seemingly natural continuity in at least some relationships even in the resurrected life e.g. expressed in statements like "I long to see my mother

[6]See also Blomberg's 2005 sermon on http://www.scumoftheearth.net/v2/resources_sermons.html where he also states he's open to this possibility

or grandmother again". It seems natural that parent-children or ancestor-descendant relationships persist regardless of how loving, intimate or transcendent the interpersonal bond with other members of the community of the resurrected are. It'd seem natural that we'd continue to be uniquely, intimately (and to some degree, exclusively) related to our immediate family (parents, siblings) in the resurrection different from others. Then it might be asked why shouldn't husband-wife relations also persist. But if true, this seems to imply some aspect of familial structures on some very minimal level e.g. marital love and intimacy and probably romance (biological propagation is an open question).

2.3.5 Conclusion

The examples and themes of continuity described above might serve as further demonstration that one would also expect some continuity in human relational structures like the familial structure/institution (along with the divine/human relation) in the eschatological age. At least for the examples of Sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2, perhaps the principle is that when God replaces something, it's replaced by something better, but still retaining continuity with the older thing.

2.4 The Argument from Fairness and Justice (AFJ)

It seems only just and fitting that those saints who missed out on (and desired) such inherently good joys (the AADP) experienced in familial structures (e.g. marital love and intimacy, romance, physical intimacy, offspring, parenthood etc) due to circumstances in life (e.g. being forced to be a eunuch, choosing to forgo marriage due to missionary concerns cf. Mt 19:15 etc) or premature death should finally be given the opportunity for such experience in the resurrection age, especially given the ETA.

This reasoning is also the basis for those suffering from physical illnesses and disabilities e.g. amputees or quadriplegics who look forward not only to the Beatific Vision, relationship with God and other people, but also a renewed, healthy and fully functional body in addition to the other pleasures of the resurrected life. It seems just/fair to finally obtain the satisfaction of one's desire for such good things, although one may allow for the possibility that God might not give it in exactly the form evisaged by the earthly person. Nonetheless, for the sake of justice, what God gives would still presumably be sufficiently BBSCF the earthly form.

Although it can be argued that all such joys are moot given the bliss of the Beatific Vision and relation with God, the AADP again asserts that these aspects of the life to come only serves to enhance this state of joy (if not also innate sense of justice and recompense). Although the Beatific Vision is indeed the superlative joy and sufficient for our full, eternal, joyous fulfillment, nonetheless many might believe that the resurrection itself and the intimate corporate fellowship within the community of the redeemed are also great joys in themselves (both seem almost irrelevant given the sufficiency of the Beatific Vision). Similar in concept to Solomon's blessings (1 Kgs 3:10-14) where God gives Solomon many other blessings which were not requested, but Solomon's original request for wisdom was nonetheless also provided.

So given the AADP it might be asked why shouldn't familial structures (which would be another aspect of resurrected life) also exist in that age, especially for those who desired it but weren't given the opportunity to share in or even fully appreciate such joys in the earthly life e.g. a couple who died on their honeymoon, married very late or (hypothetically) are about to marry when the parousia occurs. It seems most fair for those who missed out on these goods associated with familial structures in the present age to finally experience it in that age (along with other blessings).

The AFJ can also be applied in case it is argued that only some people in the resurrected age (e.g. non-resurrected tribulational survivors in the Millennial kingdom, or people who were married in their earthly life) will experience the pleasures of familial structures which others will not be able to experience. It would seem unfair for any of those belonging to the latter group who desired but missed out on such experience just because of sad circumstances in this life and then resurrection. This reasoning obviously assumes that there might even be such people in this latter group or if the Beatific Vision and/or some other reward wouldn't already more than compensate for the earthly

pain. However the combined force of the ETA ("it is finally as it is meant to be") and the AADP would strength the case of the AFJ in claiming that such persons in this group (if existent) could or should be rewarded/recompensed in this manner too.

2.5 The Argument from Soul Mates (ASM)

If there're such things as God-ordained "soul mates" between husband/wife (the unique, intimate, even romantic and physical bond shared by two finite people "made for each other") then it'd seem difficult to see why such a bond should be terminated (or be disbarred from initiation – perhaps not everyone who marries in this life marries their soul mate) in the resurrection age (given the AADP). The notion of a soul mate seems to at least cohere with the ETA, in which Adam and Eve appeared to be "made for each other", and also perhaps the themes from the Song of Songs.

It might be argued that the sense of intimacy and fellowship in the resurrected community would be so transcendent that everybody will be like "soul mates" with each other and with God, but this would violate the concept of a "soul mate" (which seems like a necessarily exclusive bond between finite beings). One might even allow for such "soul mate" bonds between two close friends/siblings (not necessarily of opposite gender), but it would seem obvious that also many soul mate pairs consist of husband-wife couples. Thus even if some aspects in the concept of a "soul mate" bond aren't necessarily exclusive, nonetheless there still seem some apparently essential aspects which are i.e. those associated with marital love, romance, physical intimacy etc. But this seems to imply the minimal familial structures enunciated above.

2.6 The Argument from Fulfillment by Archetypes (AFA)

Not the best argument, but possibly relevant. One might speculate that the "Bride of Christ" imagery in Rev 21:2,10 (and possibly OT depictions of God as a "husband"), which symbolizes an ultimate, fulfilling (eternal) relationship between the Church and Christ, was chosen also to be paradigmatic of ultimate human relationships (martial bonds) in the resurrection age; in any case, at least the concept of marital bonds and love might not seem so alien in that age given this imagery. One might also argue (although tenuously) from the example of the Trinity that if the Godhead exists in an intimate eternal fellowship, there's no reason to think that God would abolish the most intimate relationships known to humans too (which he also created for us, vis-à-vis the ETA) i.e. marital relationships. However, the analogy with the Godhead is not the best; it is triune, more resembling a community than a couple, and it would seem inappropriate perhaps for certain aspects of marriage relationships to characterize the intra-Trinitarian relationships e.g. romance, physical/erotic intimacy.

Another, perhaps stronger example is observe that a parental aspect to God's relationship with humans does exist – he is our "Father", and can probably still be thought in such terms even in the resurrection. It would thus seem natural, if we are image-bearers of God, that humans could also be related to each other in this manner. Thus possibly in the resurrection the continuing existence of some form of "parental relationship" between one individual and another (i.e. "parent" and "child") that's BBSCF earthly parent relationships. And it'd seem natural given this parental relationship that it could also occur within the contex of a familial structure like a marriage.

3 Negative Evidence from the NT

Evidence against the notion of continuing eschatological familial structures (notably the martial bond or marital love aspect) comes from a single NT pericope (there seems to be no explicitly negative OT data) narrating Jesus' debate with the Sadducees on the resurrection in Mk 12:18-27, with parallel accounts in Mt 22:23-32 and Lk 20:27-38. This pericope is widely regarded to be an authentic historical Jesus saying [10, 21, 26, 31, 33] although there are a few detractors [26, 30] (Evans thinks it has authentic roots but was reworked and recontextualized [13]).

This papers assumes authenticity in the wording and context of the pericope. It has been argued that the additional content in Luke's version (especially Lk 20:36) not found in the other synoptics may even be a later near-Gnostic redaction [1] but I will take the view that Luke's addition might come from another source or simply be clarification [26, 33], which would help his readers better understand Jesus' meaning.

It is usually understood that this pericope deals with the question of Levirate marriage [10, 13, 31, 33], but marriage in general as a means of propagation (to ensure survival of the species or even continued "existence" of the individual [11]) is irrelevant in the resurrection age [7, 11, 12, 13, 21, 25, 35]; at least one of the reasons (if not the only one) being that the resurrected are now immortal (hence the comparison with angels [15, 33]). Presumably sex is unnecessary, which was largely thought of as a means for procreation (not pleasure, seen as indulgent [10]).

The marital bond is "transcended" [10, 25, 29, 33] or even (along with the marriage institution) abolished/dissolved [12, 13, 16, 23, 35] as there is discontinuity betwen earthly and resurrected life (with regards to at least some earthly relationships). Marshall says that men and women will now be related only as brothers and sisters [25]. Presumably in this new quality of life the inclusiveness and intimacy of the interpersonal relationships in the resurrected community would surpass or transcend or supersede even present-day marriage relationships [15, 33].

Clearly this single pericope appears to constitute very strong negative evidence against the existence of familial structures of the sort envisaged in Sections 1 and 2. It might first be helpful to examine two seemingly puzzling aspects of Jesus' answer to the Sadducees in more detail. I will interject on occasion my own thoughts to these scholarly responses in footnotes.

3.1 Did Jesus Actually Answer Them?

First, note that the Sadducees' question was "whose wife will she be" whilst Jesus' response was that there'd be *no more* marriages occuring in the resurrection, which is not a direct answer as this seems on the surface to mean only that *acts of marrying* no longer continue [33]. The Sadducees' question would then seem to have gone unanswered [30, 31] if it's assumed that the state of marriage persists i.e. "whose wife will she [still] be".

One approach (seemingly taken by the majority of commentators [7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 23]) is that Jesus' words "neither marry nor are given in marriage" (note that men take the initiative and "marry"; women are "given in marriage"), though not an explicitly direct answer (which would be like "she'd be married to none of them"), are still a sufficiently clear response to the Sadducees, who would've simply understood it to mean the dissolving of the marriage bond or institution. Witherington suggests that Jesus didn't directly answer the question (of persisting marriage bonds) but simply worded his response to show the Sadducees that their question was meaningless and built on false assumptions due to the discontinuity of the resurrected life with the earthly life [33].

Jesus may have been directly addressing the issue of Levirate marriage only [33, 34]. Given Jesus' response - "they are like angels" (thus immortal according to Lk 20:36), Jesus implies that there is no longer any need for the "survival" and "immortality" of a man (the preserving of the family name and legal succession) via children, which was seen by the Sadducees as the reason for Levirate marriage[7] [7, 11, 15, 33].

The above views don't assume that death annuls a marriage (or that the Sadducees thought so). However it's possible, as Trick thinks [31], that death does indeed terminate a marriage (citing Rom 7:1-3 and 1 Cor 7:39), and the Sadducees *misunderstood* the nature of the marriage convenant, assuming it wouldn't end at death and would continue into the next life (so none of the woman's marriages dissolved upon the death of a brother). Thus Jesus addresses them (and corrects them)

[7] Presumably the reasoning is this – in the resurrection circumstances that precipitate Levirate marriage won't exist anymore, thus no need for Levirate marrying ("neither will they marry"), hence (possibly) no need for the Levirate marriage *institution*, hence possibly Jesus (indirectly) answers their question (i.e. she won't stay in a Levirate marriage to any of the brothers). This reasoning however, might also be conceivably used to support the idea of the abolition of marriage in general too.

in terms of *remarriage*, which is what the woman must do to be wife of the brothers[8].

3.2 Jesus' Example of the Angels?

It might appear puzzling that Jesus would use an argument from the nature of angels in this pericope, since the Sadducees didn't believe in angels (Acts 23:8) [15]. However, not all commentators see a problem with this, since the Sadducees may have been trying just to prove an internal incoherencey in the concept of the resurrection rather than refute every aspect of Jesus' views they thought wrong. Thus the Sadducees might have allowed Jesus to use the example of angels even if they didn't believe in them.

Another solution is proposed by Gundry [17] who says "that the Sadducees denied the existence of angels lends sarcasm to Jesus' comparing the absence of marriage in the society of the resurrected with the absence of marriage among angels". I think Gundry means that Jesus is basically saying to the Sadducees – "marriage in the resurrection is non-existent (or irrelevant) just like marriage between imaginary angels is non-existent (or irrelevant), as you don't believe they exist anyway."

Another solution is to challenge the face-value understanding of Acts 23:8, which appears unlikely given the repletive reference to angels and their activity in the Pentateuch [9, 10, 32]. Bamberger [2] argues that the "angels" of Acts 23:8 are really a unique type of being, namely an agent of revelation like in Acts 23:9 (a divinely appointed soul/spirit sent to reanimate a body or endow a man with prophetic insight). Daube [9] has given a very interesting and well-argued case that these "angels" in Acts 23:8 may in fact be the spirits of deceased humans. Another, probably less likely solution is that adopted by Viviano and Taylor [32], who reexamine the translation of the text, which is thus more accurately rendered to mean that the Sadducees believe there's no "resurrection" either in the form of an angel or the form of a spirit.

4 A Response to the Negative Evidence

4.1 Existing Scholarly Responses

This NT pericope has had a significant influence on early Christianity with its exhortations to asceticism and belief in the superiority of virginity which seemed to be quite prominent in the first millennium of its history [10]. However, many commentators believe that Jesus' remark about the similarity of the resurrected saints to the angels doesn't preclude differentiation of the sexes, given that many angels were thought to be male who don't need to reproduce [10, 15, 33] (Jews only later entertained the notion of female angels).

Though the Sadducees address the issue of Levirate marriage, there's also the wider issue of those who experienced remarriage in their earthly life and who may encounter previous spouses (who they may have loved equally) in the resurrection [15] (thus the issue of "competing relationships" in the afterlife). However, both France and Witherington postulate the continuing state of marriage (and

[8] I'm motivated to list these other possibilities regarding Jesus' specific choice of words (if intentional) – **(i)** The Sadducees may actually have thought that death did end the marriage convenant, but maybe implicitly assumed that the woman would *remarry* some (if not all) brothers in the resurrection since they would be reunited, leading to unacceptable polyandry. Hence Jesus' response in terms of new acts of marrying. **(ii)** Perhaps the Sadducees rather thought that what terminated the woman's previous marriage bonds was her *remarriage* to the next living brother, not death. As before, the Sadducees maybe assumed that the woman would remarry all brothers due to reunification with them, hence Jesus' response.

Perhaps on all views the Sadducees wouldn't see any dilemma with a husband and wife who had only known one earthly marriage (which produced children). Given the Sadduceean desire to prove the absurdity of the resurrection, this situation (unlike the one described to Jesus) wouldn't demonstrate this absurdity, as the Sadducees might've assumed that this couple naturally would stay married (or remarry) in the resurrection.

Moreover, possibly they might've recognized that if she did have a child from her Levirate marriage to the second brother then her marriage with the first brother (which might have more primacy than her Levirate marriages) would've persisted into the resurrection (or perhaps she'd have remarried him), given their comment that "none of the seven had children". However they may have simply said this to emphasize the fact that she had to marry successive partners.

thus the marriage institution) at least for those who do not experience remarriage [15, 33] given that Levirate marriage alone might be the issue in this pericope. Witherington has formulated the most detailed defence of this position [33, 34].

Witherington's view has already been articulated to an extent in the previous section. He claims that Jesus did not necessarily preclude the *continuation* of *existing* marriage bonds, since he had grounded them in an indissoluble union and in the creation order plan [33] and also because elsewhere Jesus recognizes non-Levirate marriages as more substantial (the brother in the Levirate marriage is not obligated to treat the wife in the same way as the deceased brother). There is continuity and discontinuity between this life and the next, and Jesus may have only been arguing against a certain view of continuity (i.e. the patriarchal ordinance of Levirate mariage). Because there is no longer any death, there is no need for Levirate marriage, and Jesus may thus not be directly dealing with the woman's first marriage or, more generally, "normal" marriages [33].

However both France and Witherington seem to exclude the possibility of new marriages ("normal" or Levirate) initiated in the resurrection age [15, 33]. Kilgallen [22], echoing Witherington, proposes the Sadducees' question should be understood as asking which of the seven resurrected brothers would be required to fulfill the Levirate marriage law and produce an heir, to which Jesus responds that this law will become obsolete [22].

Nonetheless, Belo [3] and possibly France [15] (who cites Belo without comment), while excluding procreation and marriage, does not "see why sexual love should be *a priori* exluded". Myers and Fiorenza [14, 27] go further and see in Jesus' words a subversion of the patriarchal ideology of marriage structures (e.g. the notion that marriage is a social contract), presumably at least in the abolishing of Levirate marriage. However, Jesus is not speaking of a world without sexuality or even new marriages; the Sadducees don't "know the power of God" in transforming the marriage institution this way. Note that Belo, Fiorenza and Myers aren't exactly what we'd call "conservatives".

Trick [31] appears to be open for the possibility that the notion of "resurrection" entertained by Jesus and the Sadducees might be a reference to the incorporeal (thus intermediate) heavenly life, and thus their debate may leave open the question of marriage in the physical resurrection age. Trick cites scholars who apparently do not think physical resurrection is being described here [18, 19, 28]; instead a more generic "immortality" is the idea. This seems to me to be a minority view and not the most credible [31, 35]. Keener [20, 21] also appears to have made this mistake in his comments on "Jesus' statement about the lack of marriage and procreation *in heaven* [my emphasis]", which to me must surely be an oversight unless the "resurrection" state here really means a more generic "immortality" in heaven, which is unlikely.

R T France admits that this pericope is a hard saying for those for whom marriage is a great joy in this life [15], and despite his comments on the positive aspects of the new resurrected life, he says this "may leave readers less than satisfied", being "based on a theology of angels and heaven", which "for us is a matter of faith rather than experience" [15]. Davies and Allison remark that given the general modern inability to sympathize much with asceticism, it'll be interesting to see if this verse has an exegetical future [10].

4.2 My Own Addenda

Leaving aside for the moment the wider pastoral and practical difficulties involving "competing relationships" for those persons who experienced multiple remarriage (Levirate or not) and encountered their spouses in the the resurrection (Sec 4.1), I believe I can further augment the existing scholarly response for the continuation of familial structures with more cumulative philosophical/theological/exegetical arguments. Note again I won't bother to defend my arguments in too much detail.

4.2.1 The Nature of Jesus' Riposte

This pericope is set within the wider context where Jesus encounters the ruling religious authorities (Pharisees and Sadducees) and demonstrates his intelligence, honour and authority over them by

answering their questions and leaving them "stumped" and amazed, especially given the brevity of his responses. Jesus' silencing of his opponents is a way of shaming them [21]. Thus Jesus' riposte to the Sadducees may have been chosen to be the fastest, easiest and/or most effective way to stump and silence them and demonstrate his authority/intelligence (and also have the proper effect on the crowd cf. Mt 22:33). There may be more to this topic of marital relations (or the lack thereof) in the resurrection than Jesus would've revealed at this time, place and circumstance which may have nuanced his apparently universal negative statement concerning familial structures (cf. Jn 16:12?). If this consideration is true, this can help "soften the blow" of this pericope somewhat.

4.2.2 The Existing Positive Case and Scholarly Response

The existing exegetical, philosophical and theological positive case for eschatological familial structures detailed in Sections 1 and 2 can be levelled against (and counterbalance to an extent) the negative case (Sec 3), especially given the consideration of Sec 4.2.1. If not for this one pericope, Scripture would be seemingly completely silent on the question of familial structures existing in the resurrection, but given the existing positive case, it might be conceivably answered in the affirmative (especially given that Jesus had otherwise very positive things to say regarding marriage). Whilst (i) the primary, deepest, most intimate and joyous relationship would be the human-divine relation and (ii) an intimate, transcendent and inclusive relationship between everyone is surely expected, the AADP argues that there's no reason within the context of these close relationships that there should be exclusion of an equally transcendent, loving, intimate (if not romantic and erotic) bond between a man and woman BBSCF earthly marriages i.e. a marriage^{++} (Sec 2.2).

The reason Jesus gives for no more marrying i.e. "they will be as angels", thus immortal, thus presumably no need to procreate, seems to only render the procreative aspect of marriage unnecessary, but it's unclear why this should further rule out in general the entering by people into non-procreative but uniquely intimate, loving, romantic, erotic and exclusive bonds with each other (another aspect of the marriage relationship). Regardless of how transcendental this bond between the couple might be, his sort of relationship seems to at least be BBSCF earthly marriages due to its very nature. Jesus' use of the "power of God" may also be a veiled reference to God's ability to transform and improve/elevate martial relationships to a new level (like Fiorenza's reasoning [14]). This new relationship is in a sense similar to the Mormon idea of a "celestial marriage".

Hence Jesus might've been referring to "no more marriages" *as the Sadducees conceived of the term*. At least some aspects of the scholarly response seems credible (Sec 4.1), and as per Witherington [33, 34] Jesus may indeed have only been referring to Levirate marriages; the marriage institution can still continue[9]. So perhaps marrying for love (or entering the "super-marital" relationship that Adam and Eve enjoyed in pre-Fall paradise – see Sec 4.2.3) is not ruled out.

This "perfected" or "purer" sense of marriage may not have been the view of the Sadducees, who may've only thought its purpose was for procreation (and thus continuity or "immortality" of

[9]There might be some problems with Witherington's argument of continuing marital bonds [33, 34] if we bring Trick's considerations [31] into the discussion, which concern the cessation of the marriage bond upon death. It might be granted that the Levirate marriage institution is indeed dissolved even if the man's first wife was from a Levirate marriage. However, if **(a)** Trick is correct, then even "normal" earthly marriages aren't exempt from termination at death. If **(b)** Trick is wrong and the marriage state *does continue* into the resurrection, it would still seem that it cannot continue for persons who experienced multiple remarriage (Levirate or not) as this would constitute unacceptable polyamory.

I think however, it might be possible to adjust or append Witherington's argument somewhat. We must first show that the Rom 7:1-3 and 1 Cor 7:39 passages are either irrelevant to Witherington's case (if Trick is wrong) and/or (if Trick is right) don't preclude the *resumption* of marriage bonds (which might not be technically *remarriage* as the former doesn't necessitate vows or ceremony) in the resurrection. It even be possible to say the wording of Rom 7:1-3; 1 Cor 7:39 is compatible with the marriage bond being only truly terminated only when a person remarries; a spouse's death permits one to remarry without necessarily dissolving the (current) marriage bond.

Possibly, Witherington might concede Trick's argument, but only applying it to Levirate marriages and allowing for continuity of "normal" marriages. However if Trick's argument applies universally to all marriages, on scenario **(a)** maybe a "normally" married couple who don't experience further remarriage may naturally "resume" marriage to each other in the resurrection (perhaps without the need for a "remarriage"). On scenario **(b)** it would be the case that a person's marriage to all his/her previous spouses will be dissolved (possibly except one – perhaps the last one).

individual and human existence "through" the descendants [7, 11, 15, 33]) and not really a relational or social function. This view of the purpose of marriage and procreation seems to be pervasively held in ancient Judaism [24, 32] where individual death was equivalent to the absence or loss of descendants cf. Is 56:3-5 where it seems that the eunuch's greatest concerns were being unable to obtain immortality (Is 56:5), which is apparently through having sons and daughters.

If it's suggested that no new "marriages" can be initiated, the AFJ can then be additionally levied against the view that those who desired but missed out on marriage due to premature death or tragic circumstances should find themselves unable or disallowed from marrying (in whatever "new" sense it might be understood) in the resurrection (whilst the previously married can continue in that state) if Jesus' statement "they will neither marry" is taken in the strong, universal sense understood by most commentators.

If France and Belo [3, 15] are already willing to grant sexuality in the resurrection, it may be further asked why reproduction should completely stop in that age. As discussed in Sec 2, it also doesn't necessarily follow that just because resurrected and couples are immortal ("like angels") that reproduction and human descent cannot continue (this isn't explicitly ruled out by Jesus in this pericope any case). Unlike the angels (which probably were not created that way), it seems part of the nature of humans to propagate. It may be indeed unnecessary to procreate (especially if the resurrected community is already quite large), but there's a difference between what is unnecessary and what is incapable/disallowed.

Biological propagation and parenthood seems to be an inherently "good" and enjoyable thing (the AADP) and in that age might be done for pleasure only. The unique status of such persons born in the resurrection age (whether they could/would sin etc – maybe not) is another topic which doesn't appear too problematic to this discussion. But reproduction most naturally implies childbirth within the scenario of a husband-wife unit, implying familial structures. Other alternatives to this scenario might seem strange and dissonant with the ETA.

4.2.3 The Nature of Adam and Eve's Relationship

To reinforce the argument of Sec 4.2.2 it might be worthwhile to analyze the relationship between Adam and Eve to determine if it might be a "marriage" in the Sadduceean, patriarchal understanding. This broaches on the vast subject of ancient Jewish views on marriage, which I cannot go into here. The assumption is that Adam and Eve were real, historical people, although this analysis might still be possible even if the Genesis narrative uses poetic imagery to describe the apparently first "marriage" in history.

Genesis doesn't explicitly state (and perhaps its readers wouldn't have presumed) that Adam "initiated" this marriage or Eve was "given in marriage" by an earthly father in the patriarchal sense; God specfically creates the woman for Adam and "brings" her to him (Gen 2:22) and they simply become a family. Likewise, there's no official marriage ceremony explicitly recorded (possibly except for Adam's poetry in Gen 2:23), no apparent exchange of vows by anyone (possibly, in a sinless world, there's no need to promise), no contract (either between the man and woman, or between the man's family and woman's family - because there're no other people) and no transfer of property associated with patriarchal (or even modern-day) marriages. Nonetheles, Adam and Eve were still husband and wife.

The marriages envisaged by the Sadducees may thus be quite different to this more "primitive" if not also transcendent and pre-Fall marital bond, and Jesus might have simply be referring to the Sadduceean concept of marriage; "marriages" of the sort experienced by Adam and Eve may thus occur in the resurrection. As to why Jesus simply didn't allude to this information in his response to the Sadducees, the considerations of Sec 4.2.1 might be brought to bear; in addition, the Sadducees' problem was complicated with the issue of multiple spouses in the resurrection.

4.2.4 General considerations regarding a matter of definition

It might be worth developing a bit more some considerations in the previous section, for perhaps it's in fact *right* to say that there *should* be no marriages in the resurrection simply because of a certain philosophical definition of "marriage". Jews in the first century (and perhaps throughout history) may have implicitly understood that "marriage" was for *this* world and between *mortals* e.g. in the "to death till us part" clause in the marriage vow (or whatever its equivalent wording was in antiquity, if in fact existent).

Perhaps more intriguingly, marriage was also understood to be a "legal contract" between two parties. But a case can be made that the state of moral perfection in the eschaton (like the pre-Fall state) will be such that there will not technically be any "laws" given to or binding on people. For presumably all would love each other naturally and thus be rightly related to each other (and God), and there won't technically be a need to give laws like the Decalogue[10] since people will naturally follow the requirements of the law. Similarly, "promises/contracts" will be non-existent because people will be so righteous/faithful that promises will be unnecessary/superfluous. Hence without laws/contracts, there cannot "marriages" in the eschaton (according to the above definition).

If these considerations have merit, "marriage" won't technically exist in the resurrection, but then this doesn't necessarily preclude the "core" aspects of this type of relationship e.g. love, intimacy, romance, exclusivity, sexuality etc carrying over (now between two immortals) into the eschaton (which in any case can be understood easily without reference to the presumably more peripheral "pre-eschaton/post-Fall aspects" of the the marriage definition described above). This relationship is essentially "marriage^{++}".

4.2.5 Scope of Jesus' Statement

Assuming the more standard view that the marriage institution will be abolished, nonetheless it might still be possible for people who wish for it to experience marital love again (or for the first time) and all that it entails i.e. familial structures. It's possible that this abolishing will only occur in either the Millennial age (thus temporarily) or the new heavens and new earth (thus permanently, but after people experience marriage in the Millennial age). Additionally Jesus may also have been referring to the normative situation in which marriage no longer occurs *for the most part*, without excluding it still occuring from time to time (or on a case-by-case basis) for those who really desire it; even reproduction thus need not be excluded on this view (as it's not explicitly ruled out by Jesus), but (like marriage) it possibly may not be the norm in that world.

This interpretation does not seem ruled out, considering the remarks in Sec 4.2.1. Also it's not the only time where Jesus (or others) appeared to conflate eschatological events or used "all" (hyperbolically) when in reality it should be "most" cf. Olivet discourse and Mt 24:2 "not one stone here will be left" (in reality maybe some stones might still stand e.g. Wailing Wall). If Luke's addition "but those who are regarded as worthy to share in that age and in the resurrection from the dead" (Lk 20:35) is in fact not authentic, perhaps the "*they* neither marry nor are given in marriage" refers only to the specific example of the woman and brothers, not about resurrected saints in general.

4.2.6 (Re-)Marriage in the Intermediate State?

Assuming Witherington's notion of continuing marriage bonds (but no more new marriages) is correct [33, 34], it might still be possible for those who wish it to marry or remarry even after death if marriages can occur in the intermediate state (i.e. in heaven). This seems allowed in Mormonism, but the Bible is silent on this subject. It'd seem that such "marriages" would involve a "bonding of souls", certainly different from the normal mode but still possible if understood in this sense (awaiting "consummation" in the resurrection). This way, no one will miss out on a fulfilling (presumably eternal) marriage relationship in the resurrection if this is their desire. However, propagation and

[10] Prof. Don Carson makes this point in his sermons on Romans 3:21ff found on http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/about/da_carson/topic/Justification#Justification&t=resources

generational human descent in the resurrection may be curtailed unless reproduction can occur outside a marriage relationship (as the people born in the resurrection age cannot marry).

5 Conclusions

Ultimately, what God chooses to do with and for his people in the resurrection age is his prerogative. The majority view of NT commentators is still that the marriage institution (and corresponding familial structures) would be abolished and presumably transcended into an all-inclusive, intimate communal one with the resurrected community. Personal relationship with God will still be the highest and ultimate good and joy.

However if the arguments of Sections 1 to 4 do have some substance and if we believe in God's goodness in lavishing gifts, recompense and rewards to his resurrected community, an exegetical/philosophical/theological case can be made for the possibility of continuing familial structures (of the sort envisaged in this paper) even in the resurrection age. If the accusation of exegetical/theological "wrangling" is made of this paper, I submit that it is no more convoluted than that claimed to occur (by either camp) in the complementarian/egalitarian debate. In any case, this paper has merely tried to present as good of a positive case as might be attempted.

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A The Multilemma of Multiple Spouses

The more general dilemma of what occurs if a remarried person P encounters multiple spouses $S_1 ... S_n$ in the resurrection has still to be addressed, which is sad and seemingly insurmountable (and which likely wouldn't have surfaced if the Fall didn't occur). It is likely though that this situation would not be experienced by most people who have married. The simplest answer is that to an extent the effect or influence of the "old life" is reduced in this renewed life, and the joys of the Beatific Vision, perfection of the saints and the intimate, transcendent bond within the resurrected community will ensure no awkwardness, bitterness, resentment or discomfort between any of P and $S_1 ... S_n$ who will all be overjoyed to meet each other again.

This after all, would be more or less the view espoused by the standard view which holds that marriage doesn't occur in that age. But rather than ruling out familial structures, the resurrection

also marks a "new beginning" in the life of each saint, and in this blissful existence P might stay "married" to S_n, or be free to "remarry" (in the new sense of the word) any of $S_1...S_n$ (without any jealousy), stay single indefinitely or choose to marry someone else (perhaps the "soul mate" P is meant to marry, who may already be one of $S_1...S_n$), given the passing of the "old life".

The same could be said of couples who've only known each other as spouses in their earthly life (likely the largest demographic of people who have married); however it may seem natural to at least some of them (given the absence of any complication resulting from earthly remarriage) to continue in such a married state to each other (especially if they're "soul mates"). Even on the standard view, God will make the resurrected life inconceivably better and preferrable to the earthly life anyway (1 Cor 2:9). At worse, it may not be possible this side of the resurrection to resolve such dilemmas on the view that familial structures and "marriage" continue. Nevertheless, we can still trust God to resolve such problems involving the hypothetical $P, S_1...S_n$ individuals and "wipe away every tear from their eyes" so that there will be no "mourning, or crying, or pain" (Rev 21:4).

B Pastoral Issues

It might be argued that it is comparatively more difficult to comfort one who is troubled by Mk 12:18-27 than if one were troubled by other, equally serious and deep concerns common to humanity. In many cases, eschatological hope is usually one's last (if not greatest and only) hope, and theodicies which are crafted to address the problem of evil (e.g. by Craig [8]) usually do incorporate some eschatological version of the AFJ that tangibly addresses and/or corresponds to certain negative worldly issues in this life. For example, people troubled by a more general form of loneliness and isolation and desire for friends might find appealing the eschatological promises of "intra-resurrectional" deep, eternal ICR with other saints and UAG. Similarly, those who lost Christian friends and/or relatives can look forward to reunification after death. Those who are/were victims of injustice can await the day when all wrongs are righted and evildoers finally get their just deserts.

People afflicted by poor health and ailing bodies (amputees, quadriplegics etc) can look forward to healthy, fully functioning and immortal resurrection bodies. People troubled by poverty, financial and work-related problems (e.g. job satisfaction or stress) might gain some comfort in the abundance, immortality and peace/rest of the next life. Also, a case can be made that work will continue into the next life (e.g. in ruling/reigning duties cf. Rev 20:14) that will be fulfilling and wholesome. Also, a case was made earlier that eating for pleasure can continue into the next life. Those who desire to travel, adventure and explore can speculate that among other activities in the resurrection life there will be opportunity to travel, adventure in and explore many locations in the new heavens and new earth[11]. In Section 2.2, discussing the AADP, it was said that there's no reason why even one's beloved pet cannot once again be reunited with its owner in the resurrection (and man-pet relationships surely pale in comparison to marital ones). Other, more trivial desires usually do not concern people as much.

A concrete, tangible eschatological hope can be addressed to many of these common, deep (and even not-so-deep) afflictions/desires in addition to the joy of ICR and greatest joy of full UAG. Similarly, those who sacrifice their life for God and his work and/or achieve few apparent results whilst doing Gods' work can look forward (amongst other things) to rewards in the next life (in this case however, most people apparently seem adequately content with the intangibility of the nature of such rewards).

However, for many of those who already deeply enjoy or desire married life and romance, no greater desire would probably exist than for the continuation (or initiation) of the marriage relationship (at least BBSCF) in the eschaton. There may be an eschatological hope for this if one might say marriages continue or are even transformed (whilst retaining continuity), but Mk 12:18-27 (at least according to the commentators discussed above) appears to be stronger than this and might be taken to imply an abolishment of this relationship altogether. This fact also appears to rule out corollative

[11] Blomberg again seems to affirm this possibility in talk "What would Jesus say to a Hedonist" available from http://www.soundliving.org/summer2007.asp

desires like having children (e.g. for a childless couple who desire a second chance), which is another common, deep desire (and for many, not just for the sake of securing "immortality of name" through descent etc. but as an end in itself i.e. the sheer joy of having children).

As far as other eschatological issues are concerned, perhaps only the traditionalist view of hell (eternal, conscious punishment) might be more troubling. However, the troubling issues with this view can be nuanced. C.S. Lewis and Craig [8] argue that hell is self-perpetuating, so although God does desire all persons attain full joy (and never enter hell), nonetheless the damned continue in their state of rebellion and sin and so increasingly isolate themselves from God (and thus joy/bliss) and accrue punishment which God in his justice must dispense (and God honours their free will).

It appears to be more difficult to find a similar nuance especially if the traditional view of commentators on marriage and the resurrection is correct. For in this case, it seems more within God's power to create a new world where familial structures can continue in the manner argued in this paper, and given the arguments of Sec 2 like the AADP and AFJ it seems there's no reason for God not to to this. It can be difficult to look forward to this "celibate" aspect of resurrection life despite intellectual assent to its bliss and the promise of ICR and UAG. Unlike other tangible eschatological hopes that can be seen to address/correspond to a certain negative/deficient wordly issue (e.g. even on the subject of reunification with pets in the resurrection), it can be harder to be convinced of or encouraged by arguments $\widehat{A}$ which state to the effect that these other eschatological joys somehow "replace" or "render unnecessary" the marriage relationship. This is hard to envisage given arguments like the AADP and AFJ and hence harder to encourage.

The force of the AADP and AFJ might be better felt if the $\widehat{A}$-type arguments are applied to other tangible, eschatological joys. For example, if one stated to a quadriplegic that knowledge about the resurrection body is impossible and irrelevant since the existence of ICR and UAG is already sufficient for eternal bliss. Similarly, stating to a bereaved person that the desire for reunification with a specific lost beloved Christian friend is irrelevant since in the next life, one will fulfill even greater, deeper desires given the existence of ICR (with other people) and UAG. Or saying that it's probably impossible for pets to exist in the resurrection, but ICR and UAG more than compensates for this "loss". Or a more crass, worldly example (further emphasizing the force of the AADP and AFJ) – imagine saying to such persons that their grief will soon be forgotten as they will soon be hooked to a machine which will produce intense sensations of pleasure.

It seems apparent with such arguments that the quadriplegic or bereaved friend would not be strongly comforted or encouraged with such words (this side of eternity) despite intellectual assent to their truth, and clearly the AADP and AFJ can be used to argue that the resurrection body will be whole and healthy and one will reunite with all of one's Christian friends in the next life. In like manner, given the AADP and AFJ, it seems good and fair to encourage the bereaved spouse, happy couple, lonely single and/or unhappily childless couple with a similarly non-ethereal, tangibly-grasped hope they can look forward to on matters relating to marriage and children. Since theodicies are more succesful and usually do affirm something tangible to address deep, unfulfilled desires and/or injustices in their treatment of the problem of evil, it seems somewhat strange and sad that such an avenue is not even apparently open to such theodicies if the traditional view of commentators on marriage and the resurrection is correct.

However, it may be part of a theodicy that God chooses *not* to reveal some aspects of the resurrection life fully, even if they leave important, deep and emotional issues regarding eschatology (like marriage and the resurrection) unaddressed [8]. In this area, it may in fact not be possible to obtain complete encouragment, comfort, intellectual/emotional satisfication and hope this side of eternity (unlike other eschatological hopes). More can be discussed on an appropriate pastoral response to persons who are troubled over this aspect of eschatology, but in short, there is still a call to obey and be faithful to Christ. In any case the Christian should still be thankful to God for Christ's supreme sacrifice. One can still give intellectual assent to and trust that God will make the future life more wonderful than this, and this can have some emotional affect as there will also be other eschatological joys to look forward to. It will be useful for such persons to have or attain good knowledge of the field of apologetics to edify their faith in this situation.