QUEERING THE QUEER: AN EXPLORATION OF HOW GAY CELIBATE ASCETICISM CAN RENEW AND INFORM THE ROLE OF DESIRE IN CONTEMPORARY ANGLICAN THEOLOGY

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'The entire life of a good Christian is a holy desire.' – Augustine, *ep. Io. tr.* 4.6

'Chastity does not mean abstention from sexual wrong; it means something flaming, like Joan of Arc.' –G.K. Chesterton, *Tremendous Trifles* (ed. Dodd Mead and Company, 1920).

'*Nondum amabam, et amare amabam...quaerebam quid amarem, amans amare*.' –Augustine, *Conf. III*, i

'Realities signified are to be valued more highly than their signs.' –Augustine, *De Magistro*, 9:25

'God cannot give a creature any created good without first giving uncreated good… God can give nothing to a creature without giving grace, and cannot give grace without giving the Holy Spirit.' – John Wyclif, On Civil Lordship, I, vii, 16c

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GCA	Gay Celibate Asceticism
LLF	*Living in Love and Faith*
STANDS	St Andrews Day Statement

Works by Augustine

Conf.	*Confessiones*
DBC	*De Bono Coniugali*
DCD	*De Ciuitate Dei*
DDC	*De Doctrina Christiana*
DSV	*De Sancta Virginitate*
De Trin.	*De Trinitate*
De Ord.	*De Ordine*
Retract.	*Retractationes*
Serm.	*Sermones*

Sarah Coakley

GSS	*God, Sexuality, and the Self*
TNA	*The New Asceticism*
P&S	*Powers and Submissions*

Richard Hooker

Lawes	*Of the Lawes of Ecclesiasticall Politie*

Gerard Loughlin (Ed.)

QT	*Queer Theology: Rethinking the Western Body*

Arthur S. McGrade (Ed.)

RHCCC	*Richard Hooker and the Construction of Christian Community*

Martha Nussbaum

Upheavals	*Upheavals of Thought*
TOD	*Therapy of Desire*

Oliver O'Donovan

ACWTB	*A Conversation Waiting To Begin*

COL	*Common Objects of Love*
EIR	*Entering Into Rest*
F&S	*Finding and Seeking*
PSL	*The Problem of Self-Love*
RMO	*Resurrection and Moral Order*
SWT	*Self, World and Time*

Robert Song

CC	*Covenant and Calling*

Sarah Stewart-Kroeker

PMAF	*Pilgrimage as Moral and Aesthetic Formation in Augustine's Thought*

Linn Marie Tonstad

G&D	*God and Difference*

Adam Tretell

DIP	*Desires in Paradise*

Graham Ward

C&C	*Christ and Culture*
Cities	*Cities of God*

* Scriptural references are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) unless otherwise marked.
* References to *De Ciuitate Dei* (*DCD*) are from *The City of God Against the Pagans* trans. Dyson, R.W. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) unless otherwise stated.
*References to *De Doctrina Christiana* (*DDC)* are always from *On Christian Teaching* trans. Green, R. P. H. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997 (ed. 2008)).
* I use 'OUP' and 'CUP' for Oxbridge presses in footnotes as well as a similar shortening for other well-known university presses.
* Referencing style: Chicago (www.chicagomanualofstyle.com).
*I capitalize certain theological terms: Church when referring to the universal church body, Christology, Pneumatology, Trinity, Incarnation, Resurrection, Ascension, etc.
*Word Count: 99,998 (not including front matter and bibliography).
*Side B and Side A terms are common among gay Christians and refer to the different positions (Side A referring to gay-marriage affirming and Side B as affirming the traditional Christian understanding of marriage between a man and woman)

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SHORT ABSTRACT

Being gay and celibate are together intensely queer realities. They are, however, curiously side-lined in queer and contemporary Anglican theology. This thesis explores gay celibate asceticism (GCA) as an essential witness in the contemporary Anglican discussion of human sexuality. Through a constructive theological analogy between holy virginity and GCA in Augustine's theology of desire, I explain how it both differs from and is like holy virginity as an instantiation of peregrine oddity or queerness. This queerness uses creation in enjoyment of God and invents a new 'category' of erotic martyrdom which Augustine leaves space for in *De Sancta Virginitate*. Through Oliver O'Donovan's theology of moral order, I proffer a theological basis for GCA as i) a Christ-like exclusion from the created good of marriage, and ii) a form of sacramental existence that, due to its exclusion, enjoys greater erotic intimacy and inclusion with Christ in his death and resurrection. By interrogating Christ's prayer in the Markan Gethsemane, I retrieve Coakley's trinitarian ascesis and argue that GCA is a 'new asceticism' which calls gay affectivity to a pneumatocentric, christological renewal. Finally, I examine Ward's erotics of redemption, agreeing with his queer diagnosis of the Fall on gender and sexuality but differing on the solution he provides. Rather than suspending sexual difference through trinitarian analogy, gay celibates understand sexual difference as an essential part of created order in the manner of Augustine and O'Donovan. By revisiting Richard Hooker's *Lawes*, GCA is described as a *via media* between innovationist accounts like Robert Song, Graham Ward, and Rowan Williams, and ascetical theologies like O'Donovan and Coakley.

The thesis argues that gay celibacy is a robustly Hookerian way forward from the *Living in Love and Faith* project. GCA needs to inform *LLF* in that it faces the theodicean and ethical dilemma of same-sex desire through scripture, reason, and a distinctly Augustinian erotics of redemption. Finally, I conclude that GCA queers the queer by synthesising queerness and holiness in a hope-filled and pneumatocentric/christological ascesis that affirms and relativizes the created order through Christ's resurrection in the foretaste of the Spirit's transformation of our bodies.

LONG ABSTRACT

The intense queerness of being gay and celibate and their intersection in moral and queer theology have largely been side-lined. This thesis argues that gay Christian celibacy powerfully queers the mainstay of queer and contemporary Anglican theology. Through a distinctly erotic celibacy which throws off oppressive discourses which cover over the intense queerness of being gay and celibate, my account of GCA emerges as a queer subjectivity. For queer theology to remain robustly queer, gay celibates must, therefore, be heard. Like Augustine's *peregrinus* who was a stranger from outside the borderlands of the Roman *ager,* city, and civic belonging, the gay celibate echoes Augustine's understanding of Christian witness as alien to the *civitas terrena*, drawn by a different, celestial order of love; a peregrination undergirded by Christ and toward Christ.

In chapter one, I outline how GCA brings the distinction between *eros* and sexuality sharply into focus through the two domains of affective life defined in Augustine's two cities. I draw a theological and historical analogy between GCA today and the holy virginity of Augustine's time to provide a foundation for the discussion of O'Donovan, Coakley, and Ward's accounts of asceticism in the latter chapters. Akin to Augustine in *De Ciuitate Dei (DCD)*, I contend that GCA requires a new articulation of how one might imagine, conceive, and live out desires in the *tertium quid* between Augustine's two cities or bodies of desire. The Church finds itself confronted by many other *ordines amores* which do not stem ultimately from the *amor dei.* The *amor sui* is divided against itself, distracts the aliens of God's city from their pilgrimage, and endangers a collective evangelical witness which arises from creation's goods through the joy of living as one is fashioned by God. Like virginity in Augustine's thinking, this asceticism, as rightly ordered to the city of God, has power to remind the Church of how it is not fully able to live as members of this current city. This queer world-weariness restores the eschatological longing of Augustine's vision, and thus, a vision of human flourishing which is alien, cruciform, and prizes resurrection existence. If the Church rejects such a witness, it rejects itself, the self-same aliens and citizens of the city of which it is comprised.

In chapter two, I explore O'Donovan's ethic of created order and affectivity, and how GCA represents a robustly Augustinian ascesis drawing from O'Donovan's discussion of being a gay Christian. In particular, I focus on how it adjudicates the role of sexual difference and epistemology of desire in moral deliberation and gay self-consciousness through the hermeneutic task of reading the erotic body. I extend this to the gay celibate who undergoes an exclusion from a created good in order to honour the epistemic authority of created order. I critique

O'Donovan's asceticism on account of its theodicean and aesthetic deficiencies in order to proffer a greater account of gay affectivity in the political order through celibate ascesis. I argue that GCA is a sacramental existence, which brings creation and redemption back together in the contemporary Anglican conversation about sexuality and desire. It, therefore, represents a vital instantiation of the Church of England's ethic which has been insufficiently understood.

In chapter three, I draw this distinctly Augustinian account into Sarah Coakley's recommendations for a new asceticism and erotic transformation through the Trinity in the Church. Through an exegesis of the events in Gethsemane and Romans 8, I critically link Coakley's new asceticism and GCA. Through a christological adaptation of Coakley, I explore how GCA challenges sex's primacy as a source of transcendence instead of the origin of all desire in God, where one prays, 'not my will, but yours be done.' I argue that, instead of the false choices (whether 'bad' or repressive celibacy or simplistic treatments of gay marriage as the path for gay Christian *eudaimonia*), GCA represents an integration that moves beyond the false choices of repression and libertinism. It charts a path through Coakley's erotic asceticism which responds lovingly in obedience to the Word of God.

In chapter four, the thesis probes Ward's work on erotics and desire and the parodies of the Church's love. It argues that gay celibacy can achieve many of the redemptive effects against the counterfeits of gender and intimacy in (post)modern cities, without losing the sacral importance of physical sex difference. I explore Ward's Augustinian insights in conversation with GCA highlighting it as an alternative vision of erotics and *eudaimonia* that focuses on the socio-political, aesthetic, and theological elements of living on the pilgrim pathway with and toward Christ.

In chapter five, I provide a theological treatment of *LLF* and Hooker's theology of desire and law. I reveal lacunae in contemporary Anglican thinking to ground GCA as a Hookerian *via media* and innovation that respects laws of desire, reason, and nature and moves between the ethical positions. Often, celibate gay Christians face intense and harmful marginalisation by being misunderstood as harbingers of harmful 'practices of distinction' because of their rupturing of normative discourses in the ideological space of the Church and society.[1] I reveal how gay celibates have not been considered as their own minoritized population with an important witness and role in the Kingdom of God for Anglican moral and queer theology.

[1] Tonstad, L. M. *Queer Theology: Beyond Apologetics* (New York: Cascade, 2018), 3.

The motivation of this thesis is to bring the imagination of the Church back to Christ's celibate life and the future horizon of resurrection it represents. This brings us beyond the exhausted dialectic of repression and libertinism to real liberation and love-enflamed obedience. Gay celibate Christians, distinguished from bad forms of celibacy, are hyper-queer aliens that have a saintly, erotic power to remind us that ascetical self-giving is not a denial of human flourishing. However, gay celibacy arises from a distinctly christological motivation in loving self-gift and a renewed moral conscience for gay bodies – a good celibacy. Such a distinction between good and bad celibacy is yet to be made in the Church of England's moral and pastoral theology. My account of GCA parses Anglican theology of desire to open up a non-repressive space for the Church to prize and be freed into the even greater glory or fullness which exposes attachment to natural idolatries, and understands *eudaimonia* in terms that honour and yet move beyond certain goods of the created order.

INTRODUCTION: A DIFFERENT WAY IN – GCA & CONTEMPORARY ANGLICAN THEOLOGY OF DESIRE

The question of same-sex desire within the Anglican communion and the Church of England has reached an impasse. To begin discussing it requires a particular mode of enquiry that can identify lacunae in the complex morass of the conversation, and its theological and pastoral complexity. Additionally, it requires some level of personal involvement (there is no 'neutral position' or 'unaffected' reason from which one can proceed), and *mutatis mutandis*, the capacity to take a certain critical or rational distance from experience, while valuing its importance.[2] As a Pentecostal convert to Christianity after experiencing the Spirit in a pub in my late-teens in the gay quarter of Sydney, the question of how to respond to grace with my body and its same-sex desires meant that many of the piecemeal answers I found lacked sufficient depth.[3] This need, among other reasons, has motivated me to examine contemporary Anglican theology, which provided my own questioning with fascinating insight.

What I also found was that those who chose to bravely come out as gay or LGBTQI+ but live according to the Church of England's teaching were part of a precarious group who have received little attention from the mainstay of the theological and queer academy. The celibate gay Christian walks upon the scene as a new and hyper-queer figure, and yet one that is subaltern, and sometimes rejected by those who claim to welcome the queer.[4] This rejection is another factor that drew me to write this thesis as a careful pastoral examination. Such care, I hope, can take the conversation from ethical debate to a systematic wrestle with theodicy, asceticism, and the body as troubled gift. This thesis' impetus is not solely to plumb the *magna quaestio* of this ecclesiastical moment, or ask the ethical question of how gay disciples are called to live faithfully in service and love for Christ. I rather intend to interrogate how Gay Celibate Asceticism's (GCA) witness provides a crucial moment of moral learning for queer and moral theology, and the broader Church alike.[5]

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[2] 'Hooker regards experience as an immensely important factor in the moral development of the individual,' (Joyce, A. *Richard Hooker and Anglican Moral Theology* (OUP: Oxford Scholarship Online: 2012), 99).
[3] *A War of Loves: The Unexpected Story of a Gay Activist Discovering Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018).
[4] Lloyd, V. W. 'Radical Celibacy: Towards a Christian Postmodern Sexual Ethic,' *New Blackfriars* 84, no. 987 (May 2003): 241.
[5] Toomey, M. & Dickinson, C. 'The continuing relevance of queer theology for the rest of the field,' *Theology & Sexuality* 23, no. 1-2, (2017): 6-7; *Witness*: The Faith and Order Commission (London: Church House Publishing, 2020).

In gratitude to both traditionalist and progressive streams of enquiry in Anglican moral and queer theology, I pose the present question because of a perceived lack of scholarly work regarding the theology behind GCA.[6] A large corpus of work is dedicated to the historical study of celibate asceticism and queer theological explorations of gay marriage. I detected, however, a silent gap in recent literature regarding GCA as a distinctly queer and erotically-motivated form of asceticism.[7] The House of Bishops' working group on human sexuality, article 131/132 states that:

> The Christian tradition has much to say about… celibacy, although the Church of today has not always been very articulate about… its own inheritance. As is well known in the history of the Church, celibacy has been upheld as a superior vocation to marriage. As that understanding has, in effect, been reversed over centuries, it is important that the case for celibacy is made afresh.[8]

In line with this acknowledgment, GCA has an integral and salient role to play in forming a richer theology of desire for today's culture and Church. The church that worships a celibate messiah is strangely void of discussions of renewing celibacy for our time. Celibacy has not been much revisited by the Church of England due in part to how celibacy has often been co-opted as an ex-gay means of controlling bodies or treating homosexual desire as a perversity to be hidden.[9] To fill in this lacuna, I intend to show how celibate gay witness can renew and inform moral and pastoral approaches with great moral learning to be drawn from this form of Christian self-consciousness.

The Church of England is deeply important in that it provides a space of nuance needed for gay celibates to flourish in a cultural landscape where it is difficult to find a temporary pilgrim home. Most mainstream denominations either reject identifying as gay or have affirmed gay marriage as the main way forward. While being celibate and gay are respectively queer experiences, gay celibates are often perceived as anti-queer, and excluded from mainstream queer discourse. As Linn Marie Tonstad intimates, 'The other of the queer theologian, then, becomes the queer.'[10] I

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[6] I have chosen to use the word 'gay' to delineate those who are primarily attracted to the same sex. Many, however, may prefer to use other identifiers like same-sex attracted or queer. I use GCA and 'gay celibacy' interchangeably reflecting O'Donovan's use of 'gay Christian' in *ACWTB*.

[7] Isherwood, L. *The Power of Erotic Celibacy: Queering Heteropatriarchy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006).

[8] *House of Bishops Report*, 2013.

[9] Gerber, L. "Queerish' Celibacy: re-orienting marriage in the ex-gay movement', in *Queer Christianities*: *Lived Religion in Transgressive Forms*, (eds *Talvacchia, Larrimore, Pettinger), (*New York: NYU Press, 2014)*,* 26; *cf.* Johnson, G. *Still Time to Care: What We Can Learn from the Church's Failed Attempt to Cure Homosexuality* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021), 32-50.

[10] Tonstad, L. M. 'The Limits of Inclusion: Queer Theology and Its Others,' *Theology & Sexuality* 2, no. 11 (2015): 18.

contend that GCA is *differently* queer, working backward to undo many of queer theology's assumptions that either tacitly ideologize or reject it without due consideration and recognition of its erotic resistance to libertinism and repression.[11] The gay celibate Christian arrives on the scene as a queer pilgrim, driven by grace, to undo the binary polarity between established traditional or revisionist Christian discourses, and the academy's extant responses.

Tonstad examines the way in which queer theology has often been limited to a theological defence of gay marriage which has limited its inclusivity. She suggests that queer theology must embrace Marcella Althaus-Reid's dictum: 'Queer holiness … is always the holiness of the Other.'[12] I contend that the Anglican conversation needs to hear a witness beyond *mere* apologetics to the holiness of an other already in its midst and springing up from its recent ecclesiastical teaching.[13] As Tonstad states, 'queer theology is not about apologetics for the inclusion of sexual and gender minorities in Christianity, but about visions of socio-political transformation that alter practices of distinction harming gender and sexual minorities as well as many other minoritized populations.'[14] Patrick Cheng defines queerness as a form of (religious) life, especially one that is 'transgressive or opposed to societal norms, particularly with respect to sexuality and gender identity.'[15] In this sense, what is queer elides a static definition adapting to the reconstruction of norms, and contesting protological retrievals of the human that exclude certain groups and deny bodily trouble.[16] Whilst one cannot move beyond apologetics entirely, as Tonstad intimates, a treatment of the theology of desire underpinning GCA requires revisiting the role of desire in our knowledge of God and ourselves.[17] Behind and constituted within GCA is, then, a theology that considers a way of being that is marked by a queer alterity associated with celibacy in our late post-postmodern culture.

I define 'queering' in homage to Judith Butler as the act of resisting certain performative norms which omit affective or bodily realities. I explore queerness in an Augustinian sense as the political and social subversion resulting from the peregrine oddity of God's city oriented by the

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[11] *TNA*, 121.
[12] 'The Limits of Inclusion', 18; Althaus-Reid, M. *The Queer God* (London: Routledge, 2003), 134.
[13] *Ibid*, 11; *God and Difference: The Trinity, Sexuality and the Transformation of Finitude [G&D]* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 54.
[14] Tonstad, *Queer Theology,* 37.
[15] Cheng, *Radical Love: An Introduction to Queer Theology*, (New York: Seabury Books, 2011), 21.
[16] C.f. Patterson, D. 'A Theological Reading of Judith Butler's Gender Theory: Towards a Chastened Christian Ethics of Gender' (*PhD Diss*., University of Aberdeen, 2017), 21; cf. Cornwall, S. *Controversies in Queer Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2011), 1.
[17] Tonstad, *Queer Theology,* 3; cf. Belgau, R. 2018, , 'In Defence of Spiritual Friendship and Revoice', The Public Discourse, Accessed: November 14, 2019, https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2018/06/21927/; this article defines the central debates around through Augustine, Freud, and concupiscence from a Side B perspective.

amor dei.[18] To queer the queer, then, is to uncover the bodily practices, affects, and realities of queer pilgrims (i.e. non-repressive gay celibacy) which have been missed by mainstream (queer) norms and apologetics. Unlike Judith Butler who defines 'queering' as always having to 'remain that which is, in the present, never fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage and in the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes', I will suggest that the gay celibate seeks to redirect their queerness in the cruciform pattern of Christ's bodily asceticism which meets resurrection in God's love.[19]

Same-sex desire and celibacy have a long history of intersection. Timothy Wilhelm Jones observes within early twentieth century Anglicanism that 'by the 1920s even sympathetic understandings of clerical celibacy understood it as a sexual identity [often] associated with a lack of heterosexual desire, if not explicitly with homosexuality.'[20] Homosexuality arrived into the mid-twentieth century consciousness through medical, psychoanalytic or pseudo-Freudian lenses. As Foucault genealogised, homosexuality was viewed pathologically as an innately disordered perversity worthy of criminal punishment or psychiatric treatment.[21] This bifurcation between what was seen as natural and unnatural sexuality (i.e. heterosexuality vs. homosexuality) was ossified into an essentially heterosexist understanding of LGBTQI+ people in the Church and society more broadly. Celibacy was seen as a way of punishing homosexuality.[22] I hope to reveal that an erotic celibacy freely chosen by gay Christians today as a response to the theodicean wrestle of same-sex desire in their faith is very different and not to be confused with the harmful suppression which originated from this pathologizing discourse.

This natural-vs-unnatural dialectic 'baptised' postlapsarian heterosexuality as the normative paradigm; a 'successful' retrieval back to the Garden in the Church's sexual ethics. Such a dialectic wrongfully attempted to define heterosexuality as the originary paradigm of a creation-based ethics that could easily repristinate Eden. This woefully evaded the noetic effects of the Fall, and idolatrously grasped onto the good of marriage as the normative paradigm for all bodies. This harmful dialectic led to the pathologizing of gay bodies and othering them out of

[18] Butler, J. *Bodies that Matter* (London: Routledge, 2011), 173.
[19] Ibid.
[20] For discussions of repressive celibacy which differ from the erotic celibacy I distinguish, see Wilhelm Jones, T. 'The Stained-Glass Closet: Celibacy and Homosexuality in the Church of England to 1955', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 20, no.1, (2011), 140; Cornwall, S. *Un/familiar Theology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 19.
[21] *Cities*, 12; Sigurdson, 'Desire and Love' in Thatcher, A. *The Oxford Handbook of Theology, Sexuality and Gender* (Oxford: OUP, 2014), 526.
[22] For sources which give accounts of how homosexuality specifically was controlled and 'punished', see Foucault, M. *The History of Sexuality,* (Penguin Classics*:* London, 2020)*;* Waring and Martin, 'Realising governmentality: pastoral power, governmental discourse and the (re)constitution of subjectivities', *The Sociological Review* 66, no. 6 (2018): 1292-1308.

the church body.[23] It not only (idolatrously) enshrined heterosexism but also impoverished the Church's theology of desire. As seen in the HIV/AIDS crisis, this heterosexism oppressively covered over, and made a whole human population beloved of God abject.[24] This undermined the innate worth and dignity of those with this difference of desire.[25] Instead of conceiving of all bodily realities and sexualities as both sacred, and yet somehow differently troubled by sin, same-sex desire regrettably became stoicised as the antithesis to the 'natural' in human identity-formation and participation in the good, holy or sacrosanct. I hope to show through my account of GCA that this was an unnecessary and evangelically deficient history that the Church has often sadly enshrined. The present thesis aims to queerly resist this narrative at every turn.

Queer theory arrived as a response to this difficult history through figures like Michel Foucault and Judith Butler. Celibate gay subjectivity has been able to emerge with credit to the destabilising effects queer theory had on attempts to naturalise heterosexuality and oppressively spurn homosexuality.[26] Today's Side B movement arises as a form of Christian resistance to this harmful dialectic and a representation of a new and alternate form of gay self-consciousness which seeks to renew orthodoxy through a robustly Trinitarian anthropology.[27] I argue that gay celibates queer this history by reaching forward to the Resurrection. They look to the recreation of the human that happened in Christ which according to Augustine's vision is the goal of desire-transformation in the city of God.[28]

I pose the question of the gay Christian who seeks to live out their desires in an erotic celibacy reminiscent of Coakley's new asceticism and the holy virgins of Augustine's time. Such an erotic celibacy represents a different subjectivity and non-repressive rechannelling of desire. They are those who understand Romans 1 as involving the effects of sin on all of humanity. Like Paul in Romans 1, they recognise the effects of sin on the Judaizers who were pridefully excluding gentiles as well as same-sex attracted people as a sign of creation's fall and human alienation

[23] Martin, G. (ed.) *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar With Michel Foucault* (Hutton Tavistock Publications, London, 1989), 16-50; Agamben, G. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* trans. Hellier, R. (Stanford: SUP, 1998), 4-6; Frost, T. 'The Dispositif Between Foucault and Agamben,' *Law, Culture and the Humanities* 15, no.1 (2019): 151–171; Lakkimsetti, L. 'Challenging 'Bare Life' in *Legalizing Sex* (New York: NYU Press, 2020), 53-81.
[24] McCord Adams, M. *Christ and Horrors: The Coherence of Christology* (Cambridge: CUP, 2006), 53-79.
[25] *Cities,* 61.
[26] Sawiki, J. 'Queering Foucault and the Subject of Feminism', in Gutting, G. *Cambridge Companion to Foucault* (Cambridge: CUP, 2006), 392.
[27] Examples of the Side B movement are *Revoice* conference in the US (revoice.us), and *Living Out* (livingout.org) in the UK; Zizioulas's concept of the physical nature and hypostasis of the human person in Cortez, *Christological Anthropology in Historical Perspective*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 177-181.
[28] *DCD XIV*, xxii, 607-608.

from God and the created order.[29] This gay Christian does not simply arbitrarily submit to church teaching or a traditionalist framework. Instead, they use their celibate queerness to challenge normative assumptions which prevent a far more expansive moral imagination and eschatological horizon for the Church that has focused mainly on debating sex and marriage.[30] I will show that the Church's natural idolatries have meant there is little room to imagine body-positive, alternative vocations for those citizens of God's city who are gay other than gay marriage. Instead of adopting sexual norms built on the neo-romantic notion that sex is essential to human flourishing, gay celibates perceive that this notion is in conflict with the Christian scriptures and tradition's high view of celibacy, and therefore, seek a *queerer,* robustly christological understanding of human flourishing.

Queer theory, especially in the guise of Judith Butler, can be interpreted as radically diagnosing the Fall's effects on our noetic capacity to discern created ends or originary *teloi*.[31] As Cornwall summarizes Butler: 'as soon as queer is defined or claimed by one group to the exclusion of others, it loses part of its capacity to critique and resist normativity.'[32] In a similar vein, Daniel Patterson defines Butler's understanding of queering as an act where 'there is a certain departure from the human that takes place in order to start the process of recreating the human.'[33] Luce Irigaray similarly describes the need to move beyond sexual difference in the structure of desire itself: 'Desire occupies and designates the place of interval. Giving it a permanent definition would amount to suppressing it as desire. Desire demands a sense of attraction: a change in the interval, the displacement of the subject or of the object in their relations of nearness or distance.'[34] Christian asceticism, then, generates a kind of eschatological impulse to move beyond sexual difference while maintaining its goodness. The Resurrection, as understood by O'Donovan, provides a recreation of the human that has already been done in the person of Christ instead of centring gender on the radicalisation of the individual subject who must assert their own queer performativity of sex and gender.

In line with Daniel Patterson's reading of Butler, my account of GCA helps us detect that the doctrine of redemption has been underdetermined when it comes to sex and gender, and yet

[29] *Cf.* Hays, R. B. *A Moral Vision of the New Testament* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1999), 286; Menéndez-Antuna, L. 'Is There a Room for Queer Desire in the House of Biblical Scholarship?', *Biblical Interpretation* 25 (2015): 399-427.
[30] Patterson, 'A Theological Reading', 175.
[31] Ibid, 170.
[32] Cornwall, *Controversies,* 15.
[33] Patterson, 'A Theological Reading', 33.
[34] Irigaray, L. *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* Trans. Burke & Gill (London: Althone Press, 1993), 7.

wrongfully pitted against the created order through the distinct, conflicting nature-based idolatries of heteronormativity or queer erasure of sexual difference:

> Perfect images of prelapsarian bodies are internalised messiahs that signify not only the loss of the present self's unity (fallenness), but also the hollow means of regaining that unity (redemption). Those who perpetuate the idolatry of Adam and Eve hold up static images of the dead people called Adam and Eve, who cannot bring life, but only death in life and death. The worship of the images of Adam and Eve appear to be life-giving because they are what God created in the beginning as good, thus signifying God's divine desire for humanity. However, our desire for them represents a death drive, something akin to Rees' observation of the bind of pursuing innocent sex for coherence.[35]

Instead, GCA seeks a deeper integration of creation, fall, and redemption which can renew the sexual and communitarian ethics of the Church and avoid over-realised protologies or eschatologies of sex and gender.[36] In Chapter 5, I aim to resolve these tensions for GCA through Richard Hooker's theology of interdependent laws in the participle order of creation. We see that the goal of a Christian sexual ethic is not a return to Eden or a natural theology without Christ but the sacramental liminality of living in the city whose foundation was Eden, and yet exceeds Eden through Christ in the union of the new Heavens and Earth. GCA seeks to retrieve sex and gender through the 'life drive' of Jesus' love and resurrection, and thereby: i) renegotiates the authority of scripture and tradition; and ii) locates an appropriate moral and pastoral theology for the Church that is fed by Jesus as the central theological basis and ascetic exemplar for the transformation of human desire as God's incarnate Word.

Rather than 'recreating the human through disrupting the norms of gender'[37], GCA queers sex with the renewing effects of Christ's love in the Christian body's resurrection-based hope. This hope awakens a re-enchanted perception of the sexual body. GCA disrupts an understanding of the old order which ossifies procreation as the ultimate good (and with it, those who cannot directly access it as somehow defective), and from this, marriage as the default or potential idol of the Church.[38] As Augustine himself says, 'I should undertake... to trace the careers of the two cities from the moment when the two human beings first produced offspring up to the time

[35] Ibid, 131.
[36] Patterson, 'A theological reading…', 175.
[37] Ibid, 3.
[38] *DBC*, 2001; xxi, 28-30.

when procreation will come to an end.'[39] In this Augustinian vein, gay celibate Christians seek a new way through the problem of same-sex desire and the politics of sex and marriage within the Church which prizes the *amor dei* as the necessary condition for human flourishing, not sex. I focus the answer to the present question through this Augustinian understanding of created good and desire in the work of three contemporary Anglican theologians of the erotic body: Coakley, Ward, and O'Donovan. These theologians all have work which importantly touches the theology and ethics of desire. They represent important emphases with differences in conclusion related to same-sex desire in their thinking. My aim is to draw out the differences and the places of commonality or overlap when considering the evangelical witness of celibate gay Christians. This will give the second aspect of the thesis in the conclusion chapter and the treatment of each thinker in earlier chapters, a decisive goal.

As explored in chapter four, Ward proffers a way forward by describing how desire sits at the heart of the Augustinian vision of political and affective belonging in the Church as an alternative erotic community:

> Divine *eros*, the love of God, and human *eros*, the love of human beings for God possess far greater dynamics, operating across greater domains, than just sexuality. But since the nineteenth century, with the development of medicine, and the increasing erotification of our culture post-Freud, *eros* and sexuality have come to mean the same thing.[40]

The methodology underpinning this thesis will adopt this broader definition of *eros* as something beyond mere sexuality. I argue that there is a problem with most contemporary Anglican treatments of desire in that they fail to understand the full gamut of gay or queer subjectivity. Gay Christians who have adopted the Church's current moral theology of celibacy play an important prophetic role strengthening the Church's resolve and critically speaking from the pastoral application of its teaching.

Wesley Hill, an episcopal priest, is one prominent voice in the celibate gay or Side B movement who embodies this good celibacy.[41] He outlines why he decided to sublimate his desires in an erotic celibate ascesis:

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[39] *DCD XIV*, LCL (Cambridge: CUP, 1966), 213.
[40] *Cities*, 76.
[41] *TNA*, 14.

> Marriage, I argued, was intended in God's plan to be "male and female"—Jesus says as much when he reaffirms the teaching of the book of Genesis—and any sexual intimacy outside of that marital bond missed the mark of God's design for human flourishing. But, as I also made clear in that book, I didn't harbour that theological belief because I had experienced any diminishment of my longings for same-sex love... That seemed to be the clear teaching of Scripture, and I wanted to be faithful to it. But God, I believed with equal conviction, was not—could not possibly be—asking me to live without love.[42]

What Hill refreshingly highlights is that GCA is really about a renewed metaphysic of love that is 'propulsively erotic', reminiscent of Coakley's new asceticism.[43] A greater vision of what love is leads toward union with God, not repressive lack. As John Burnaby postulates, the *eros* of the creature can work in tandem with *agape*: 'man is dear to God because he is by nature a child of God... and what prevents such a communion is the defilement of sin – a barrier which is not insuperable, but which *eros* itself can remove through the cleansing process of asceticism.'[44]

In order to proffer an account of GCA, I appeal to a distinctly Augustinian theology of rightly order loves: 'divine grace must now call us out of this world of self-making... where God in Christ comes near again to the creation making possible a life of *caritas* through faith.'[45] The Church cannot accept forms of flourishing that do not emerge from the love of God and are forms of self-making. I hope to show how GCA revivifies the notion native to the Christian tradition that sexual intimacy is only a contingent good for human flourishing. Celibacy is also central to forming the Church as an eschatologically peregrine group reminding us that the love of God has a different erotic make-up to the world's orders of love. The subversion and reaffirmation of this ontology of love is derived from Jesus' celibate life. By considering Augustine, O'Donovan, Coakley, Ward, and Hooker's theologies of desire, I will explain the profound erotic impetus behind GCA. I aim to reveal GCA's power to inform our understanding of love in our late romantic culture by renewing our knowledge of the divine and human love without which any asceticism is a clanging cymbal and resounding gong.[46]

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[42] Hill, W. 'Love Again', *Comment Magazine*, 2018, accessed July 2022 https://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/love-again/.
[43] *GSS*, 14; 261.
[44] Burnaby, J. *Amor Dei: The Religion of St Augustine* (London: Wipf & Stock, 1938), 17.
[45] Gregory, *Politics*, 232.
[46] 1 Cor. 13:1.

CHAPTER ONE: AUGUSTINE, PILGRIMAGE, AND GCA

1.0 Introduction

To begin, it is important to delineate why I chose Augustine as a primary conversation partner from the patristic authors on offer. It would seem intuitive to choose other patristic authors who generally considered celibacy the original, 'angel-like' state of humanity before the Fall. As Peter Brown observes regarding patristic authors other than Augustine: 'ascetic exegesis of the Fall of Adam and Eve tended to preserve, at the back of the minds of its exponents, a lingering doubt: society, marriage, and if not those, certainly sexual intercourse, were fundamentally alien to the original definition of humanity. They had come as an afterthought.'[47] Augustine, spurred on most likely by anti-Manichean sentiment, (i.e. Manichean rejection of the good of marriage) is one of the rare church fathers who refused the narrative that the goods of desire, sexuality, and marriage were the result of 'a sad decline from an angelic state into physicality.'[48]

Augustine importantly internalises the Fall, focusing its effects on the human will and the weight of the body's love.[49] I define desire (*dilectio*) along Augustine's lines as a weight of love (*amor* or *caritas*) or a substructure of love which can either be disordered, pulling the desirer away from God, or be drawn by God through grace.[50] I also agree with Graham Ward and Sarah Coakley that human desire is undergirded and must be sanctified by the greater desire of God in love for one's created nature.[51] Augustine sees sexual intercourse, sexual difference, and desire not only as good features of the original creation, but an integral part of the creature's gift in God.[52] When the will and desire were once aligned, desire could be enjoyed

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[47] Brown, P. *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: CUP, 1988), 399; Hunter, D. 'Augustine on the Body' in *A Companion to Augustine* ed. Vasey, M. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2012), 354.
[48] Brown, ibid, 401; Clark, E. 'Adam's Only Companion: Augustine and the Early Christian Debate on Marriage', *Recherches Augustiniennes XXI,* (1986): 142.
[49] *Conf. IX,* xl*, 314.*
[50] For Augustine, desire is a substructure of love: 'When one kind of body gravitates to its proper place by its own weight it calls other bodies to its loves… Troubled bodies are not at rest as long as they are disordered, but once brought to order they find their rest. Now, my weight is my love, and wherever I am carried, it is this weight that carries me.' (*Conf. XIII*, xii, 278) As Augustine opines, 'Takeaway death, and the body is good. Let death, the last enemy, be removed, and my flesh will be forever my friend,' (*Serm.* 155.15 in *Sermons 151-183*, trans. Hill, E. *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century* (New York: New City Press, 1992), 93). For Augustine, there is little differentiation between love and desire and the words *amor*, *dilectio*, and *caritas* (cf. Trettel's analysis of Augustine's use of desire and love as synonymous in *DIP*, 60-66). See also O'Donovan's commentary on how they are similar and slightly different in *PSL*, 11-18: 'the ordering imposed upon things by individuals pursuing their private ends from the order that things have in themselves' where desire (positive love) needs to meet with rational love that seeks the true end of the created order in God (*finis bonorum*)' (p.16).
[51] TNA, 96; GSS, 309; *Cities,* 76.
[52] *DCD XIV*, xxii, 621.

without fear of misuse or the disturbance that the entry of sin had caused for the will and desire.[53] The soul and body were in *apathaeic* harmony.[54] Such a protology or originary scene offers a quite different canvas for interrogating gay experience than one which pits sexual desire against a 'better' asexual angelic or prelapsarian state. Within such a frame of reference, same-sex desire can be mapped in relation to an original good (namely sexual desire) and the privation of this good in the Fall (*privatio boni*).[55] The *discordium malum* generated from a privation of the good finds multiple forms of manifestation which require careful consideration rather than the simple glad acceptance that humanity's original state would have elicited.

Augustine also affirms sexual difference as an essential feature of the created order: 'We, however, do not have in the least doubt... that God instituted marriage from the beginning, before man's sin, in creating male and female; for the difference of sex is quite evident in the flesh.'[56] The affirmation of sexual difference as a created good Augustine gives is recognised in homosexual desire which proceeds from a recognition of the sexed body, and the innate desire for a bodily other. Gay celibacy is not directly discussed in Augustine's thought. However, various ascetical elements from the aesthetic and theodicean dimensions of desire are richly present for our exploration. These include: i) Augustine's doctrine of creation and unique view of the protology of sexual desire and difference when compared with the rest of the patristic authors; ii) a robust account of how desire has been drastically impacted by the Fall and yet is an essential aspect of the redemption of human nature and its eternal destiny in God. The christological thread between right use of creation and eschatological transformation of creation is the bridge through which Augustine's ascetical theology of holy virginity and martyrdom provides a rich background to articulate the particularities of GCA.

In this chapter, I examine Augustine's exploration of desire in Book 1 of *DDC* and *DCD XIV* with reference to *DSV*. I consequently construct a historical and theological analogy between the Anglican gay marriage crisis and that which surrounded holy virginity in Augustine's time.[57] As Eric Gregory observes: 'exegesis and normative theorising are distinct, albeit related tasks. Conflating them has a strong tendency to produce a misreading in the guise of scholarship. I am

[53] Brown, *The Body*, 400.
[54] Ibid.
[55] *DCD XII*, 8, 508; Wetzel, J. *Augustine's City of God: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: CUP, 2012), 170.
[56] *DCD XIV*, 22, 621.
[57] Hunter, D. *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity* (Oxford: OUP, 2009), 269-279.

to be clear about what should be attributed to Augustine and what should be attributed to me.'[58] In order to achieve this balance, the present retrieval of Augustine's ascetical theology will be constructive, especially as it pertains to holy virginity, and consists in a mixture of exegesis and normative theorising. Gregory's reflexivity is wise for any exploration of a patristic author for constructive theology. I seek to avoid simply attempting to capture what the historical Augustine thought, while constructing insights from his works and his system of erotics in the two cities for the present question. I move beyond reconstructing the 'historical' Augustine, and extend aspects of his theology to reflect on the Anglican conversation on human sexuality.

From this Augustinian vantage point, I hope to construct a theopolitical vision from his theology of desire in the two cities to interrogate GCA in light of Book 1 of *DDC* and 14 of *DCD*. These two texts will provide the christological hermeneutics required to pose the present question. By extrapolating Augustine's thought to the particular case study of celibate gay Christians, I proffer an Augustinian ethic to reveal that GCA is best understood as an eschatological asceticism that privileges the *amor dei,* and its right use of the cosmic order on its way toward resurrection.[59] I explore how such GCA is a reasonable continuation of Augustine's thinking. This chapter further considers the peregrination of gay wayfarers, who, in having their desires reordered by the *amor dei*, belong as participants 'in the life of the angels and a foretaste of perpetual incorruption in the corruptible flesh,'[60] reminiscent of Augustine's holy virginity. Gay celibates, are, I contend, analogous and disanalogous to the holy virgins of Augustine's epoch. The gay celibate exists as a 'hyper-queer' pilgrim, a new subject, a heavenly alien with a disruptively queer witness among the *civitas terrena* and the natural idolatries which threaten the *civitas dei.*

GCA as an instantiation of holy virginity needs to heed the important anti-Pelagian warning Augustine gives to the holy virgin Demetrias' mother in *Epistle 188 to Juliana*:

> God is at work in both man's willing and acting… through the inspiration of love (*caritas*) which is the only thing that enables him to turn to God and to put into practice what he has learned from scriptural revelation. Mere knowledge of God's law is not

[58] Gregory, *Politics*, 7.
[59] For Augustine, virginity is the post-resurrection version of pre-fall marriage. For further exploration see Bennett, J. M. *Water is Thicker Than Blood: An Augustinian Theology of Marriage and Singleness* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), 88-91.
[60] *DSV* 12.13 (CSEL 41,245): '*angelica portio est et in carne corruptibili incorruptionis perpetua meditatio.*'

> enough to bring it into effect. Only love that God bestows… helps… to walk in that direction.[61]

Like Augustine's *peregrinus*, gay celibates have a provenance which is beyond the borderlands of the conventional sphere of political and ecclesial discourse and (post-)secular or modernist sexual ethics. I argue that gay celibates are, therefore, among those particularly intense examples of Augustine's *peregrini* in that their witness is tied to their alterity or otherness, both inside the general pilgrim community of Christians but more intensely outside of it. They are, paradoxically, among those who are most at home in the *civitas dei*, embodying and sharing in the earthly celibate and celestial life of Christ, and yet among the queerest of the alien *peregrini* in the *civitas terrena* living out an alternative citizenship in God.[62] The queerness or 'oddity' of being both gay and celibate works to resist compromising belonging to God's city and must be lived out in Christ-like humility. I will show that such resistance disrupts the bounds of normative discourses related to sex and desire which emerge from other orders of love.

To resource this argument, I refer to the terms *peregrinatio (*pilgrimage*)* and *peregrini (*pilgrims*)* and how these terms describe the political liminality which can elucidate GCA inside and outside the Church.[63] The question of how to comprehend same-sex desire within both cities has brought the Anglican communion to this moment where the pressure is being placed on the *civitas dei* to respond. This must be in a way that is evangelistically accessible to the *civitas terrena*

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[61] Ogliari, D. 'An anti-Pelagian 'Caueat': Augustine's 'Ep'. 188 to Juliana', *Augustiniana* 1, no. 4 (2004): 213.

[62] I am not arguing that gay celibates are the only instantiation of queerness nor the only pilgrims who receive a reward for their intensified asceticism in the kingdom of God. There are many others that could be suggested and which are instantiated differently in individual lives. For instance, in the case that the possibility of marriage is not realised in the heterosexual celibate life before death, then, there is a much closer relationship to the gay celibate, only without the theodicean grief of knowing the misalignment of one's desires with the created order. Such a closeness, is not, however, internal to the asceticism, but largely circumstantial and individualised, and may involve the complexity of other sacrifices, theodicean burdens, or griefs. Asceticism is always pluriform and individually complex.

[63] In Greco-Roman antiquity *peregrinato* and *peregrinus* were derivatives of the adverb *peregre peregri*, which translates as outside home frontiers. *Peregrinus* was the one who travels abroad i.e. the foreigner, stranger. Its earliest use had a legal meaning as 'the free person who is not a Roman citizen.' Roman citizens were tied to a residence on the Roman fields. A *peregrinus* is, therefore, one who is 'outside the field', namely the rural area of Rome. Until the *Constitutio Antoniniana*, which conferred Roman citizenship on almost all free inhabitants of the Roman Empire, a distinction was made between Romans and foreigners (*peregrini*). Up to the 2nd century BC, Roman citizenship was tied to (one's having) a residence on the *ager Romanus*. The term later lost its hostile connotation and was simply used as an antonym to a Roman *ciuis* or citizen. Augustine's use of the term in his writings adds a theological texture and richer meaning as part of the leitmotif of the two cities. As Stewart-Kroeker opines: 'The *peregrinatio* image is both pervasive and diffuse. Its boundaries are porous... I use a range of terms to discuss *peregrinatio,* including pilgrimage, journey, sojourn, wayfaring, voyage and exile. I refer to *peregrini* as pilgrims, travellers, aliens, and wayfarers. This captures the lexical range of Augustine's own writing. The Augustinian pilgrim is an exile from the homeland on earth who desires to return to God. The state of directionless wandering in which all human beings find themselves as a result of sin must shift to a purposive spiritual journey home, even as the earthly peregrination ends only in the *eschaton*.' (*PMAF*, 17) I focus here on the alien nature of Augustine's pilgrim on the border lands as an apt metaphor for the queer subjectivity of gay celibates in the contemporary Anglican context.

and yet does not compromise its calling of fidelity to God and Christ's vindication of the cosmic order.[64] The pressure to rush on and abandon the created order is a central issue that threatens the Anglican conversation. I illustrate how Augustine's theology of desire can help articulate GCA's pursuit and how it is crucially instructive for the Church's discussion of human sexuality. I posit that gay celibacy represents a profoundly evangelical attempt to account for the reality and experience of being gay to which the Church is aiming to listen, and morally learn in recent discussions like *Shared Conversations* and the *LLF* project.[65] Into such conversations enters the gay celibate Christian as a challenging gift that reinterprets the gay body through the transforming power of grace in the world.

1.1 Loving the Same-Sex Other and the *Uti-Frui* Distinction: Moral and Aesthetic Formation in Augustine

By probing deeper into Augustine's affective *peregrenatio* and the use of creation's goods we can see that same-sex desire is neither entirely good nor an evil to be extirpated. In *DDC 1-2*, Augustine presents the essence of his theology of desire through the notion of *usus* (use) in *fruitio* (enjoyment) of God.[66] He connects the dilemma of human desire after the Fall to our capacity to understand scripture and the created order: 'All teaching is teaching of either things or signs, but things are learnt through signs... These are things, but they are simultaneously signs of other things.'[67] In his semiology, the 'thing' or '*res*' is not always a sign.[68] There are two kinds of things: things that are to 'be enjoyed' (*frui*), which are not signs (i.e. the Trinity) and things which are to be 'used' (*uti),* and which are or become signs; created things including the neighbour or lover we desire.

According to O'Donovan, this bridge between love for the sake of another/love for its own sake (*diligere propter aliud–propter se*) and use-enjoyment (*uti-frui*) was a mistake, mired with instrumental associations, and unable to accommodate an ontological framework in which 'human beings are not problematically reduced to instruments.'[69] When it comes to loving other human beings, Augustine is often accused of pitting the ontological against the eschatological. Along similar lines to Stewart-Kroeker's critique of O'Donovan, it is more apt to speak of the ontological and

[64] *ACWTB*, 13.
[65] *LLF,* 14.
[66] *DDC*, 9.
[67] Ibid, 8.
[68] Ibid, 9-10.
[69] *PSL*, 37; *PMAF,* 222.

eschatological threads of Augustine's theology of desire working 'reciprocally together.'[70] Without the eschatological, one risks misusing the creation and without the ontological, the eschatological loses its foundation or alignment to the created order and opens itself to an idolatrous vision.

Desire, then, is a power within the time-bound human person, which by the capacity of faith given in Christ is able to hold both elements together. As Augustine states: 'our minds must be purified so that they are able to perceive that light and then hold fast to it... but human beings, assimilated as they were to this world [Rom. 12:2] because of their desire to enjoy the created order instead of its actual creator... did not recognize it.'[71] For Augustine, desire either drives us towards or hinders us from discovering creation's ontology, delighting in it through its correct use in God.[72] In this subsection, I explore how Augustine's use-enjoyment distinction can be applied to same-sex desire, and GCA can be understood as a distinctively Augustinian expression of love toward God.

1.1.1 A Therapy for Desire: Use and Enjoyment in *DDC*

In Book 1, we re-discover the stronger light of love and faith which enjoyment of the Trinity produces. This light procures righteous participation in the created order of signs and things through new sight.[73] This participation brings forth right use of created goods like sexuality by relativizing created goods in pilgrimage to happiness or blessedness in God, 'the safe harbour.'[74] The paradox of Augustine's theology of desire is that by 'using' something properly according to enjoyment of God, we can truly know and appreciate it as it has been created, including for the gay disciple, the same-sex other.[75] The love of God frees the desirer from a false instrumentalization in self-worship or desire threatened by static enjoyment of things. Augustine defines the misuse of something as 'holding fast to it in love for its own sake. To use something is to apply whatever it may be to the purpose of obtaining what you love – if indeed it is something that ought to be loved.'[76] I suggest that in Augustine's system of reading creation, for same-sex desire to delight in another human rightly it needs to be assisted by grace through the

[70] Ibid, 223.
[71] *DDC*, 12.
[72] Ibid, 14.
[73] Ibid, 16.
[74] *DDC*, 9; *PMAF,* 225.
[75] *PSL*, 121; Stewart-Kroeker, S. 'Resisting Idolatry and Instrumentalization in Loving the Neighbour: The Significance of the Pilgrimage Motif for Augustine's *Usus–Fruitio* Distinction', *Studies in Christian Ethics* 27, no 2 (2014): 202-221.
[76] *DDC, 10.*

Holy Spirit. Furthermore, this sanctifying grace assists desire to use created goods in enjoyment of God. For Augustine, grace, the effect of God's love, is the power which moves the body and the weight of its love through the soul from concupiscence or misaimed desire to right use of creation, unencumbered by the flesh.[77] The transformation of desire is a wayfaring journey, not a static point, dependent on divine grace for sanctification.[78]

In Book 1, Augustine employs the metaphor of the already happy wayfarer or pilgrim on the way to their homeland in order to describe the dilemma at the heart of human desire.[79] If the traveller, saddened by absence of their homeland and the sense of love it begets, becomes fascinated by the journey's delights and the actual travelling, then, they are drawn to 'perversely' enjoy things that should be used for enjoyment of God.[80] This enjoyment of creation *in se* ensnares the wayfarer from God's love by the wrong kind of pleasure. This alienation from God's love estranges wayfarers from the homeland whose pleasures make them veritably happy according to their created nature, and exposes them to other orders of love.[81] As Carol Harrison opines: 'Book 1 is an uncompromising statement of the love whose source is God; the love to which every movement of our heart is a return, in and through his grace; the love by which God loves himself through us.'[82] For Augustine, the thing alone to be enjoyed *in se* is the Trinity.[83] The worship of the Trinity infuses our desires with transforming grace so that we can righteously participate in the created order and use its goods with ordinate delight.

God's love protects us from misusing our neighbour according to a different order of desire as God loves God's self through us.[84] As Augustine states:

> And we, placed as we are among things of both kinds, both enjoy and use them; but if we choose to enjoy things that are to be used, our advance is impeded and sometimes even diverted, and we are held back or even put off, from attaining things which are to be enjoyed, because we are hamstrung by our love of lower things.[85]

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[77] *DDC*, 11; *DCD XIV*, vi, 590.
[78] *DDC,* 32, 41, 75; PAMF, 71-121.
[79] *DDC,* 9.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Harrison, C. 'Doxology and Loving Knowledge in Augustine's De Doctrina Christiana', *Journal of Religion and Society* 15, no. 9 (2018):152.
[83] *DDC*, 26.
[84] Harrison, 'Doxology…', 154.
[85] *DDC*, 9.

Human ascetical challenge involves having the right mode of desire for lower things, like sexuality, especially since they can become an impediment to pursuing desire for God or higher, eternal things. Desiring things above in turn gives a renewed perception of the pilgrim pathway and created world that truly leads home by maintaining sight of Christ, the way home.

In the loving knowledge of God, we are given a new perception and affection for how created goods are not just to be used but how they exist according to God's moral ordering and their beauty within it. Ascetical failure, then, for Augustine, is to enjoy a created good *in se* or on our own terms, and not as a sign that reflects Christ and the beauty of God's order of love. Ascetical failure of this kind compromises Christians' peregrination as citizens of God's city, dividing our hearts on 'a journey not for the feet but for the affections.'[86] This misappropriation of the created good disrupts our witness and faithful living by drawing us away from God's love which undergirds our capacity to be well-directed on the pilgrim pathway.[87] By both expounding and relativizing the system of signs in creation through God's love, Augustine builds his ascetical theology to undo the philosophies of desire around him through a Christian notion of love.[88] GCA, like Augustine, seeks not to be hamstrung by the world in same-sex desire, but to re-channel it according to a renewed vision of Christ at the heart creation.[89]

Augustine's understanding of desire sheds light on the particularities of same-sex desire. Augustine concludes in *DCD* 5.19.19–20 and 16:30 that same-sex desire is inevitably concupiscent. Unlike in, for example, 19th century England where many gay or queer authors like Oscar Wilde and E.M. Forster could start to read Plato and the Phaedrus for the first time in connection with the experience of same-sex desire, Augustine most probably never had access to these classical texts,[90] likely informed by the view of homosexuality common in middle to late Platonism and Greco-Roman stoicism which took a negative view of same-sex desire.[91] As Mark Jordan concludes:

> In Augustine the sin of the Sodomites is not merely same-sex desire. That desire is a symptom of the madness of their fleshly appetites. [...] The root sin of the Sodomites is

[86] Harrison, 'Doxology', 153.
[87] *PMAF,* 224-244.
[88] Harrison, 'Doxology', 155.
[89] Williams, R. *Christ The Heart of Creation*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 78.
[90] Van Riel, G. 'Echoes of Phaedrus in Augustine's Discussion with Porphyry' in *The Reception of Plato's Phaedrus from Antiquity to Renaissance*, ed. Delcomminette, *et al.* (Berlin, Bostin: De Gruyter, 2020), 119.
[91] *DIP,* 151.

> not the desire for same-sex copulation. It is rather the violent eruption of disordered desire itself.[92]

Jordan's analysis highlights how homosexuality is understood as part of the larger problem of *luxuria* (the loss of control in excess) brought about by the Fall. Such a view, however, is only one side of the coin of Augustine's concern about same-sex desire.

Augustine's theology of desire, *de novo*, distinct from stoic or neo-platonic notions, is also involved in understanding homosexuality and its relationship to created goods according to a distinctly Christian ontology of love. He saw it as an attempt to 'use' the goods of creation through a desire which, alongside all sexual desire, is epistemically unstable and needs purgation in the love of God.[93] Tradition has spoken about same-sex desire along Augustinian lines albeit with little distinction from heterosexual desire or same-sex desire's relation to an originary good. To demand pastoral treatment of same-sex desire from Augustine is anachronistic because of the pejorative attitudes toward homosexuality within his Greco-Roman context which was highly influenced by Neo-Platonism and stoicism. Tradition and scripture provide little direct guidance to the specificities of same-sex desire other than it being a sign of misuse or wrong enjoyment.[94] For Augustine, same-sex desire controverts the creation of sex difference and the eschatological future of creation's union with God which sex difference is created to reflect.[95]

For this reason, the dilemma of misuse is more complex in one sense for gay people. The gay disciple has an intense ascetical burden on their hands when it comes to the created ordering of marriage. The gay celibate accepts that they are not afforded the same sacramental sign for desires in marriage accepting the exclusion from the sign which would promise potential fulfilment. This differentiates them from the gay Christian who refuses the default gift of celibacy and who denies the created inordinacy of a same-sex union. For the gay celibate, gay marriage would represent a denial of the difference of being gay and its relationship to creation. For the celibate, accepting this difference requires a different sacrificial demand than being straight and thereby requires a particular impartation of grace on account of the difference and volitional narrowing which it incurs. The call of desire is not first to gifting but to the worship of God, and due to injustice of the *discordium malum*, this requires great ascetical sacrifice. Grace

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[92] Jordan, M. *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology* (Chicago: UCP, 1998), 35.
[93] Anagnostou-Laoutides, E. 'Luxuria and Homosexuality in Suetonius, Augustine, and Aquinas', *The Mediaeval Journal* 5, no. 2 (2015): 1-32.
[94] *DIP*, 210.
[95] *DBC/DSV*, 3-4.

meets this sacrifice resisting a license to sin and move beyond God's created order. Celibacy is the default for gay Christians except where the rarer grace of a mixed orientation marriage is extended by God. If erotic love in marriage for Augustine is an image [*sacramentum*] of the divine love, then it might seem paradoxical that a gay person should remain celibate (or wait for the grace to be married in the traditional sense [a mixed-orientation marriage]) and not seek a gay marriage or union.

Eugene Rogers argues it would be better to live an erotic life 'to the full' in such a union to most completely signify the transcendent love of God.[96] Such a conception draws from the Christian tradition which sees marriage as a sacrament or a holy sign. This approach, however, misses the particular dilemma of gay celibate pilgrims (those who choose life-long celibacy). What Augustine's use and enjoyment distinction reveals about the first tier of asceticism, common to all people in the life of celibacy or virginity, is that loving God involves forgoing or using the sign precisely in order to show that it is merely a sign, and the stability of the sign involves sex difference. The problem with trying to enjoy marriage *in se*, rather than in reference to enjoying God is that, *mutatis mutandis*, such direct enjoyment either elevates the sign above the signified or severs it from God's act of creation: 'Man's attitude to Creation… should… be dictated by the order he finds there; since it is divinely ordained, it will lead him who follows it to God, its Creator and Orderer. Later on, Augustine will describe the order of love (*ordo amoris*) and delight in man's attitude towards creation as ordering the soul that uses it properly.'[97] Augustine's schema describes the way in which God's love bridges between created order and its transformation. Such a bridge, which we will explore later, is vital for celibate gays to be capable of true delight in the same-sex other as God created them in their sexually-differentiated nature.

From this Augustinian distinction, I argue that the immediate intensity of erotic passion for embodied creatures is so great that there is a danger of staying with the sign, and not being led to that which is signified by it. For the gay celibate Christian to take the pathway of a gay marriage would be not only to stay with the sign, but with a simulacrum of it. Gay celibates rather desire to both point to the signified but also repair the breach between the sign and the signified in their own desiring. By honouring the created order and the sacral meaning of sexual difference, they work in the economy of signs God has provided in creation. At this point, the unique calling of gay celibates can be described as a two-tier asceticism that their heterosexual peers do

[96] Rogers, E. *Sexuality and the Christian Body* (Oxford: Blackwells, 1999), 126, 271; *Cities*, 273.
[97] Harrison, C. *Beauty and Revelation in the Thought of St Augustine* (Oxford: OUP, 1992): 24-25 (*De Ord.* 1. 27 cf. *De Mus.* VI. II. 29).

not experience in an identical way. Following this reading of Augustine's thought, a *different* second tier of possessing an affective disposition or orientation to the same-sex either: i) pushes the gay disciple into a gay marriage which grasps hold of the sign from a wrong order of love which departs from created order, or ii) requires them to chart a new path of wisdom which respects what is signified in sexually-differentiated marriage.

The theodicean reason(s) for why God would allow this extra burden in a gay disciple's life is an integral, secondary aspect of the sacramental signification of sexuality, which does not apply identically to heterosexual desire. Heterosexual desire, whilst (often) concupiscent, can still use the created order by enjoying God in the sacrament of marriage. Christ becomes the overcomer of this mysterious affliction. It requires profound trust and grace amidst the current cultural representations of desire to offer it celibately.[98] Augustine expands his exegesis of the *uti-frui* problem: 'How happy the first human beings, neither troubled by any disturbance of mind or of any disorder of the body!'[99] Brown comments on this passage: 'Like death, the onset and culmination of sexual sensation mocked the will. Its random movements spoke of a primal dislocation. It betrayed a *discordium malum*, an abiding principle of discord lodged in the human person since the Fall.'[100] The cure to this *discordium malum* is the light of Christ, the Word, which reinterprets these signs toward God's identity thereby allowing the creature to delight in creation through God.[101]

As Brown intimates, the *discordium malum* is the trace of the Fall that affects each of us differently with its random movements, producing different consequences, even if the malady's cure is the same love of God.[102] The movement of the *discordium malum* has left gay disciples in a particular state, distinct from and yet universally related to heterosexual pilgrims and one which the church must learn to delineate and comprehend. They are both different to and yet carried back (*referre*) to their peers through the love of God and shared humanity. Gay disciples, therefore, can be said to share: i) in a co-humanity with Christ in the Church; ii) the state of being a desirous creature affected by the *discordium malum* alongside heterosexual or differently-oriented pilgrims (e.g. asexuals). Gay pilgrims are distinguished by their particular instantiation of the *discordium malum* which produces a theodicean dilemma in the created order. That is not to say that heterosexual desire is not prone to misuse but that there is something distinct happening in homosexual

[98] McCord Adams, *Christ and Horrors*, 121.
[99] *DCD XIV*, x, 602-603.
[100] Brown, *Augustine,* 408.
[101] *DDC*, 15.
[102] Brown, *The Body*, 404-408.

desire. The right use and order of creation is re-discovered through grace and ascetical purgation. This leads to recognising sex difference as a *sign* to God within marriage reflecting the thing *signified:* the eschatological mystery of union between bride and bridegroom, Church and Christ. Adjudication of same-sex desire, then, involves two levels of virtue, where: i) creation is enjoyed in an ordered way according to renewed use, and; ii) desire is called to participate in the created order as it reflects that signified from God through sexual difference within marriage.[103]

As we have briefly outlined, Augustine's theology of desire does not directly envisage GCA. It does, however, provide foundations to understand the dilemma of the gay wayfarer and the dis/continuities between homosexual and heterosexual desire. Within gay identity is a shared solidarity across bodies, which have a related, and yet distinct burden and gift. Side A Christians embrace reinterpreting the tradition to expand redemptive, rightly-ordered desiring, emptying or altering the sign of sexual difference in marriage to include same-sex marriage. Side B Christians uphold the sign of sexual difference in marriage with a default toward celibate ascesis. Side A and Side B positions share the same theodicean burden including the demands of being gay in the Church even if their approaches differ and at points, irreconcilably clash. Such a solidarity is important for the Church's current conversation in avoiding sinful divisions but also clarifying the deep significance of what is at stake. Such an engagement between the two different approaches requires humility which can help regulate the pride either approach could produce. Augustine wisely warns that pride cancels out the reward and virtue of asceticism and so, pride must be avoided at all costs in GCA (or in a gay union or marriage).[104]

Augustine's theology of desire greatly assists us in seeing that the gay celibate does not engage in 'stoical' extirpation of desire as is often mischaracterised. Confronted with the dilemma and mystery of same-sex desire, the gay person who desires to marry does not simply throw off the ascetic burden of loving in an ordered or virtuously ascetical way. The centre of the difference between both positions concerns how one comes to right use of creation through loving grace and relational knowledge of God. What gay celibates, however, seek is not to extirpate their innate *eros*. Conversely, along the lines of Augustine's ascetic vision, they seek to channel and reorient their sexual orientation around the ultimate *res*, God thereby interpreting creation according to its destiny in God as signified through sex difference in marriage.[105]

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[103] *DSV, 56; DCD XIV*, xxii, 621-22; 626, 628.
[104] *DSV*, 51.
[105] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body* (Liverpool: Pauline Books and Media, 2006), 20-41; 88-90.

1.1.2 Embracing a Re-Oriented Eros: Loving the Same-Sex Other Rightly

I have now begun to show how the *uti/frui* pairing in Augustine's thought provides a plausible hermeneutic for describing the concomitant theodicean and ethical burden of GCA. By contrast, Nygren has generated a deficient understanding of *eros* in the Protestant church which can explain why gay celibacy has struggled to find footing. Nygren's bifurcation of *eros* and *agape* leaves little space for GCA and has prevented the notion of an erotic, bodily asceticism which can meet the theodicean challenge of same-sex desire. To begin to proffer an account of same-sex desire and celibacy, it is important to discuss *eros* as a broader category than just sexual desire. For Augustine, *dilectio* (desire) and *amor* (love) are conceptually synonymous and yet subject to postlapsarian trouble where the weight of our loves leans toward inordinacy and sin.[106] Nygren argues against Augustine in *Agape and Eros* that his continued adherence to Platonist *eros* undermines both his own and a wider Christian account of 'higher' divine agape and the human response to this 'higher' love[107]: 'On Nygren's reading, *eros*, which is self-fulfilling love that originates in the soul's movement toward God, stands in contradistinction to *agape*, which is self-denying love that originates in God and condescends to us through the sacrifice of Christ.'[108]

Nygren denies the protological good of erotic desire from Eden, instilling a competitive relationship between creation and the divine which Augustine, through *DDC*, denies. For this reason, Nygren's dualism between *eros* and *agape* risks a return to a proto-stoicised view of same-sex desire in the Church. As Sigurdson argues:

> It is only in the last two or three centuries that a theological erotics has fallen into disrepute. This might, at least in part, be the consequence of the modern association of *eros* with sexuality, but such an association is not typical for the ancient Christian tradition: to Augustine or Gregory of Nyssa, *eros* or its Latin equivalent, *amor* stood for the love of God.[109]

For Augustine, *eros* becomes the 'means for a more profound understanding of *agape*.'[110] The anthropology of desire and love which sees a reordering and yet high value in theological *eros* is vital to GCA. Augustine's insistence on the erotic power of God's love means it is capable of

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[106] *DCD XIV*, vii, 591.
[107] Nygren, A. *Eros and Agape* (London: SPCK, 1932), 210.
[108] Drever, M. 'Loving God in and through the self: Trinitarian love in St. Augustine', *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 78, no.1 (2017): *7-22*.
[109] Sigurdson, 'Desire and love', 528.
[110] Ibid, 528.

meeting the double-tiered dilemma of same-sex desire. A rejection of *eros* spurns the attempt to re-channel same-sex desire through the love of God leading to self-repression, and our late romantic rejection of the virgin or celibate.[111] Without an affirmation of *eros* in the patristic tradition's terms, celibate gay or Side B Christians are harmed by denying the importance and gift of desire altogether. A healthier, non-dualist view of the body embraces *eros* and desire as a gift to be redirected and healthily sublimated rather than extirpated or repressed.

Now I turn to provide a fuller account of what is involved in GCA in light of our discussion of *DDC*. Same-sex desire as a form of *eros* consists of two elements: i) a fallen misdirection from the created order as reflected in marriage; and ii) the gift of original desire that recognises the beauty of the desired other. Gay celibates aim to hold the two together, rather than separate them. This account is focussed on the way that GCA aims in an Augustinian way to undo the bifurcation between *eros* and *agape* and reorder desire in God's love through right use of creation. *DDC* provides the foundation of the relationship between creation, the creature, God, and a Christian epistemology of how love reads creation.[112] These are essential elements which underpin gay celibacy as an Augustinian, love-charged, and body-positive asceticism.

As John Thiel observes, Augustine grounds his anthropology in a disjunctive desire, which ever threatens right worship of God, and therefore, weighs down on the body's grace to participate easily in God's love:

> Augustine does not use the language of desire to describe the experiential motivation that chooses God, portraying virtuous choice instead as guided by the natural inclination of reason toward the Creator. Nevertheless, he could have used the language of desire to describe virtuous inclination, and by doing so he could have valorised another kind of desire rooted in the mind, in the heart, and if we really imagine wildly, in the body too. In his anti-Manichean work, Augustine makes every effort to affirm the goodness of all physical being, including of course the human body, and so might have affirmed a more holistic and integrated portrait of desire that did not deny the passionate body but instead claimed its natural desires as divinely created goodness.[113]

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[111] *TNA*, 33.
[112] *DDC*, 12.
[113] Thiel, J. E. 'Augustine on Eros, Desire and Sexuality' in ed. Kamitsuka, *The Embrace of Eros: Bodies, Desires and Sexuality in Christianity* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press: 2010), 80.

Here lies the knife's edge for understanding the complexity of same-sex desire. The gay wayfarer identifies this way because they recognise how their desires emerge from the created goodness of desire. Their good created humanity and the way their desires are at odds with the cosmic order postlapsus (marriage, procreation, sacrament) produce a greater stress than heterosexual desire. They choose the ascetic path Augustine lauds because they recognise the Fall's affliction on the good of being a desirous creature 'subject to futility... and its bondage to decay,' without, as per Richard Hooker, erasing such goodness entirely.[114] Gay celibacy maintains the goodness and power of *eros* along similar lines to Burnaby's reading of Augustine by embracing rather than denying the human-centric movement of the creature toward God energised by revelation, grace, and love.[115] Gay celibates, then, illustrate to other orders of love how to submit same-sex desire to ultimate dependence on God's grace in their bodily lives which, though troubled by sin, are moved by redeemed *eros*.

Nygren's bifurcation defined *eros* as the egoistic desire antithetical to *agape* alongside the eschatological 'horizon of modernity that tends to reduce sexuality to reproduction', and now, in the apologetics of various factions of the Church, marriage.[116] This may explain in part the low place celibacy has taken in Anglican Church's contemporary practice where the broader notion of *eros* beyond sex has been narrowed. Such an anti-erotic understanding of friendship in turn has led to the stoicisation of celibacy with no place outside of marriage to find erotic fulfilment of desire for relationship and intimacy. Marriage represents an easy and safe remedy to concupiscence rather than the more thickly ascetic *remedium concupiscentiae* Augustine offers (or the new asceticism we will visit with Coakley in chapter 3).[117] What endangers GCA is this stoical extirpation, which privileges marriage and spurns the ecstatic reorientation of desire to the eternal good in worship and, as Coakley corroborates, prayer to the Trinity. A renewed asceticism, whether marriage or celibacy, resists this by testing, redirecting, and freeing *eros* when delighting in creation through enjoyment of God. Such enjoyment in GCA inevitably challenges idolatrous erotic cultures. A new hope is derived for the gay Christian that revalorises the theologically erotic. Such a hope proceeds with a wise awareness of the other orders of love that must be resisted to free *eros* from being innately self-oriented and corruptive to obedience on the terms of God's identity as Creator and Redeemer.

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[114] Rom. 8:21.
[115] Burnaby, *Amor Dei*, 187, 213.
[116] Nygren, *Eros and Agape*, 47-70; Sigurdson, 'Desire…', 531.
[117] *DIP,* 45; Patout Burns, 'Marital Fidelity…', 27.

1.1.3 Countering Dualism: 'Loving not hating the Body'

Augustine's theology of love in *DDC* offers an important foundational understanding of desire that helps to explain the phenomenon of gay celibacy as an asceticism driven by loving God in Christ. From Augustine's theology of desire, gay celibate disciples do not arise from a stoical motivation to apprehend the true and the good *in se*, but from the greater love of God. As Burnaby states:

> The bodily creation, [Augustine] says, which is good in itself though a good of lowest rank, if it usurps the love which the soul owes to God, 'becomes penal to its lover' loved with the love which would enjoy instead of use, 'it becomes corruptible, disintegrates and deserts its lover, because he by such love has deserted God'…. [punishment] is rather to be found in the resulting confusion of ethical motive [rather than original sin].[118]

For Augustine, grace removes this 'ethical' confusion through a renewed sight of these lower goods, including the love of the same-sex other. The gay disciple is freed from the penal consequences of usurping God's order of love, and is embraced as an exemplary worshipper.

Through the loving knowledge of God, GCA appears as a new way to recover right use of creation through the beloved and beautiful Christ who is its foundation and goal. As Augustine states, citing Paul:

> No one hates himself... neither does anybody hate his body. What the apostle said is true: 'no one ever felt hatred for his own body' [Ephesians 5:29]. Some say that they would prefer not to have a body but they are mistaken. For what they hate is not their body, but its imperfections and dead weight... they are misled by their reading of the words 'the flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh; for these are in conflict with each other' [Gal. 5:17].[119]

Augustine frames the struggle to love God and the higher things first, whilst equally loving our body ceding the weight of love for created goods according to these higher goods.[120] Rather than directing our loves from above, we are tempted mistakenly to start from below. Our identities are shaped in this *discordium malum* where the higher goods do not interpret the lower goods, but

[118] *DCD XIV*, 9, 600-601; Burnaby, *Amor Dei*, 213.
[119] *DCD XXIII* xxii-*XXIV* xxiii, 621-625.
[120] *DSV*, 121.

contrariwise. As Augustine states: 'The time is going to come when we shall enjoy each other's beauty for itself alone, utterly without lust.'[121] We think because our bodily desires correspond to an originary good we can easily enjoy those things in competition with the greater eternal goods on which they depend. Through an eschatological vision of the future unthreatened by lust, Augustine calls all desire to reorient lower delight through the soul where desire for a sexual beloved is contingent, and secondary to loving God.

Gay celibates avoid the pitfall of a stoicised or semi-Pelagian celibate enthusiasm (i.e. one that seeks to repress creaturely *eros* resulting in a dualistic denial of the desiring body's goodness). Instead, GCA welcomes the gay body into the trinitarian delight through a Spirit-driven asceticism that stretches forward to enjoy the beauty of God in the other, resisting concupiscence. For Augustine, God's beauty draws the *uti-frui* problem onto another plane, where utility only serves a temporary purpose. Beauty (*decus*) plays a role in the divine-human relationship that endures for eternity. As Harrison states regarding Augustine's view of love:

> Love is not the result of human, rational deliberation and judgement; it cannot be intellectually cognized, evaluated, or chosen; it is rather the result of God's inward, mysterious, ineffable, and irresistible inspiration within us. Augustine's use of the terminology of signs and things, use and enjoyment, in *De Doctrina Christiana* Book 1, is... one of the ways in which he counters and subverts the classical tradition of philosophical reflection in which Pelagianism stands, that is, one based on human ability to apprehend the true, and the good, and to act upon it.[122]

GCA can be profoundly understood when forged with Augustine's account of use and enjoyment, which rejects this harmful dualism latent in his stoic and neo-platonic forbears and peers. As Harrison highlights, grace is essential to good action which cannot be easily read in creation by human beings without Christ's intervention and grace. Celibacy like other forms of Christian ascesis is driven by an aesthetic motivation in understanding creation through the new sight given by the beautiful Christ.[123] Augustine's theology of desire helps to theologically thicken an account of gay celibacy as a love-driven, aesthetic longing for God which lives into the beauteous frame of the cosmic order without falling into stoical and libertine excesses.[124] From

[121] *DCDXXII,* xxiv, (trans. Hill, 1993).
[122] Harrison, 'Doxology…', 154.
[123] 'You gave a shock to the weakness of my sight by the strong radiance of your rays and I trembled with awe and love,' (*Conf. VII*. xvi, 123).
[124] *DSV*, 78.

this exploration of a distinctly Augustinian theology of desire, I turn to examine how the affective power of grace for gay celibate Christians enables them to become hyper-queer pilgrims.

1.2 Locating A Third Way: GCA and Holy Virginity in Augustine's Time of Ascetic Crisis

Following David Hunter's argument that holy virginity was queer in Augustine's time, I argue that by disrupting certain natural idolatries and the politics of desire in the life of the terrestrial city, gay celibates are a queer gift of God's love. They are capable of renewing and reforming theology of desire in a time of ascetical crisis. I establish through this constructive analogy between GCA and holy virginity how grace works in asceticism as a 'holy' power not only to morally awaken God's city from the compromise of misaimed loves but also, to renew an ethic of the *amor dei* that witnesses evangelically to Earth's city.

Gay celibates appear on the scene in a way that is uncannily like the holy virginity of Augustine's time. Unlike Jerome who, against Roman disdain for virginity, encouraged aristocratic women (and sometimes men) to become holy virgins and display their ascetic virtue, Augustine instructed holy virgins to be celibate by humbly devoting themselves to their beloved Christ.[125] Unlike their peers who faced the burdensome challenges of marriage as Christians in the Roman Empire, they could enjoy a particularly intense heavenly *eros* directly with Christ.[126] Gay celibate Christians can be fruitfully likened to the eschatologically-oriented and humble virginity conceptualised by Augustine. Like holy virginity, GCA entails: i) affirming desire as an originary but troubled good (*privatio boni*); and ii) retrieving an eschatological horizon of theological erotics that saves the body from the temptation of misuse. By being imitators of Christ in their willingness to cede their will toward another order of love, gay celibates are among those most at home with heaven's citizens. Their reformed love heralds the eschatological future that vindicates the good order of creation and yet moves beyond it by radically valuing the Resurrection where love will be all in all and sex will be eclipsed by what it was created to signify.[127]

1.2.1 Is Celibacy 'Queer'?

[125] *DSV*, 119-127.
[126] *DCD XIV* xxviii, 632-633; Harrison, *Beauty*, 159; Hunter, *Marriage,* 172-176.
[127] *De Magistro*, 9:25.

David Hunter provides a window into the present analogy in his article on celibacy in Augustine's time, 'Was Celibacy Queer?':

> Celibate Christians find themselves embraced in a "heavenly eros," as Eusebius put it; by dying to earthly life, they anticipate the life of the Resurrection... In a number of ascetic writings, one finds the notion that the celibate man or woman has entered into a spiritual marriage with Christ. For example, we find the erotic imagery of the Song of Songs transformed into an ascetic romance between Christ (the royal bridegroom) and the individual celibate Christian (the bride). By the late fourth century, this biblical motif found liturgical expression in a ritual of virginal consecration in which young women were "married" to Christ in a ceremony modelled on a Roman wedding. Augustine, for one, hoped that the virgin's spousal union with Christ might result in a more intense love of Christ.[128]

By offering up same-sex desire to the 'heavenly *eros*' of loving Christ, gay celibates can free sexual desire from mere extirpation or libertine embrace to be rechannelled into other forms of *eros* or desire (i.e. worship and friendship). GCA involves the same redirection of *eros* and its energies toward the beloved Christ so that human *eros*, otherwise threatened by disorder, can be set free in God rightly using and delighting in creation.

In line with Hunter's queer virginity, gay celibacy proceeds from 'heavenly' or eschatologically-oriented *eros* which prizes the love of God and others in friendship as the centre of life in the *civitas dei*. The central difference we will focus on between the holy virgin in Augustine and the gay celibate relates to the role of sexual difference in the created order. Augustine can help us to move synthetically beyond the false alternatives of libertinism or stoical repression to a place where the gay body can be set free to enjoy the love of God and redirect the weight of the body according to the Creator's will.[129]

1.2.2 Asceticism and Holy Virginity in Augustine's Context: Jerome and Jovinian

Similarly to Augustine's Roman context where virginity was not just looked down on but often socially marginalised, gay celibates are likely to be perceived as repressed strangers or self-betraying queers.[130] Re-orienting same-sex desire provides a challenge to political discourses

[128] Hunter, 'Was Celibacy Queer?', 231.
[129] Burnaby, *Amor Dei*, 121; *DIP,* 57.
[130] Holland, B. *Self and The City in the Thought of St Augustine* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 271.

based on other orders of love that fight over and have a tendency to elevate marriage above celibacy in both the city of God and Earth.[131] Unlike and yet similarly to the holy virgin in Augustine's theology, gay celibates adjudicate both the complexity of same-sex desire and the conflictual and often harmful politics of love in the mixed body of the two cities. Responding to this dilemma by ascetically straining ahead towards Christ among the city of God where sex itself is transformed constitutes a response few in the Church have duly considered. Such an eschatological asceticism, found within God's city, stands in contrast to Earth's city with its largely naturalistic or self-oriented frame for desire. As we see in Augustine's apologetic to Rome, the *civitas terrena* fails to understand an ascesis derived from these kinds of 'metaphysical' assumptions, let alone the affective power of loving Jesus Christ.[132]

In the Church, this strain forward generates a strangeness or queerness from beyond the created order and the married or sexual life tethered to it. This involves the challenge of being complexly situated as members of the largely heteronormative pilgrim city which often fails to understand this kind of saintly queerness. To a great extent the throng of pilgrims concerned with a more heteronormative existence can even risk rejecting a vital part of the city of God to conform to another order or politics of love. In order to flee political pressure, GCA requires ceding noetic control of the fleshly mind to (the mind of) the Spirit, which rules the celestial city.

From the mind renewed according to the Spirit, an alternative order of love (*ordo amoris*) is grasped in the body where erotically desiring the same-sex as a marital or sexual counterpart begins to be perceived as incompatible with loving a person of the same-sex. Same-sex sexual erotics are perceived as possessing an inordinate relationship to the sacramental significance of God's act of creation. Such a sexually-erotic relationship is understood to undermine the created order which is a secondary foundation of the *civitas dei*, inhabited and vindicated by Christ. This is where the gay celibate is often accused of self-betrayal. Interpreting one's desire transcendentally is held against them from a naturalistic frame resisting the implication of God's being in faith, hope, and love (as we will explore in Nussbaum's critique of Augustine below).

Drawing an analogy between holy virginity and gay celibacy sheds further light on the queerness of gay celibates. From the biblical anthropology of the words *sarx* (flesh), *soma* (body), and *pneuma* (spirit), Augustine constructs two intermingled, politico-theological domains or bodies of people which characterise human life shaped either by the Spirit or the flesh, *civitas dei* or *civitas*

131 *PMAF*, 267.
132 Burnaby, *Amor Dei,* 184-185.

terrena.[133] In Augustine's *DBC* and *DSV,* he poses the question of how marriage and celibacy work to deal with the problem of postlapsarian desire and human sexuality in the city of God, especially the flesh (*sarx*) and its desires present in the body characterising the city of Earth with its conflicted affective paradigms.[134] In Augustine's Rome [390-394AD], marriage and celibacy were being contentiously fought over along analogous lines to how marriage and homosexuality have been debated in the Church's contemporary conversation. Augustine's own experience with the Manicheans' doctrine contributed to his own history of failed asceticism.[135] Questioning the ascetic debates of Augustine's time, particularly the legacy he received from Jerome who highly praised virginity as an angelic prolepsis, led him to a profound pastoral enquiry into a Christian anthropology of marriage and celibacy.

Drawing an analogy of the sort proposed may come across as anachronistic for Augustine's epoch where same-sex acts were often associated with a moral loss of control and the immorality of a pagan, imperial past (i.e. Suetonius' account of the evils of Nero who frequently engaged in same-sex erotic parodies and relationships).[136] A stoically negative view of same-sex desire is reflected in the reception of middle Platonism and the stoic tendency of Roman laws against same-sex activity, which were instituted to punish male prostitutes contemporaneously with the composition of *DCD*.[137] This stoic tendency toward desire and the body was reflected in the imperial pressure placed on women of the time to marry and procreate, against which Augustine contends in *DSV*.[138] He resists this stoical Roman tendency by putting forward marriage as more than a moral concession, contract, or covenant but a form of discipleship and remedy for fallen desire.[139] In order to commend the Gospel's wisdom and resist the paradigms of desire that arose from classical philosophies, Augustine's account of virginity and marriage is particularly fruitful for analogical comparison with GCA. His theology provides a means to freely live out desire alternatively to dominant 'revisionist' and 'traditional' discourses insisting on the need to marry or on sexual self-expression as a requirement for human flourishing.[140]

Jerome, as Chadwick argues, went too far in his opposition to the good of marriage or sex: 'Augustine sought also to dispel the resentment among the married laity caused by Jerome's

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[133] *DCD XIV*, xxii, 622; *DIP*, 169-171.
[134] Hordern, J. *Political Affections: Civic Participation and Moral Order* (Oxford: OUP, 2012), 112.
[135] Brown, P. *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (London: Faber & Faber, 1967), 38.
[136] Ibid, 31.
[137] *DIP,* 44-59.
[138] Hunter, *Marriage, 277*.
[139] *DSV*, 27-30.
[140] Rees, G. *Romance of Innocent Sexuality* (Oregon: Cascade Books, 2010), 90.

uitupertio nuptiarum in his disastrous foray into the controversy.'[141] Augustine had to make a major detour from writing dogmatic theology to assist the ethical struggles of the Church related to marriage and sex analogously to how contemporary Anglican theology has been challenged by homosexuality. As Brown observes:

> The heresy of Jovinian shows that a crisis in the associations surrounding baptism was imminent. Jovinian would argue that the sanctity conferred by baptism was sufficient to keep the Christian, thereafter, safe from sin; above all, that this rite fused the Christian community into a single group, in such a way as to make unnecessary the distinction between a 'perfect' ascetic life and a less perfect life of the married laity. Pelagian enthusiasts will merely stand Jovinian's views on their head—by making the ascetic life obligatory for all baptized Christians, in a similar, drastic *reductio ad unum*.[142]

In *DBC,* Augustine charts a third way between Jovinian and Jerome and the Pelagian enthusiasts regarding marriage and virginity. He also builds his rebuttal against their polar extremes which either elevated or instilled a deficient equality of status between marriage or celibacy. Pelagius' followers centred their ascetic enthusiasm on working toward meritorious virtue in their preference for virginity, thus instilling a proto-stoical view of desire. Augustine resists this by relativizing ascetic virtue to humility, and dignifying the negative emotions of desire and sadness which he highlights played a positive role in Christ's own life and redemption of our humanity.[143] Conversely, Augustine was driven to counteract the followers of 'Pelagius [who] rejected any attempt to link the sin of Adam with an effect in the human body, such as sexual desire or *concupiscentia*.'[144] Augustine insisted that righteous desiring is a gift of grace from God, and therefore, centred his view of all ascesis on the universal grace of God's love which reorders desire as a punctiliar process during the pilgrimage home. The body for Augustine is drastically fallen and needs grace, saving asceticism from becoming prideful or stoically self-generating.

While Augustine grants the ascetic reward for virginity is greater than marriage due to its distance from concupiscence, he recognises simultaneously the general call to asceticism in marriage, counteracting Jerome's over-valorisation of celibacy.[145] In an ostensibly similar way to Jerome,

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[141] *Retract.* 2.53, 171: 'We indeed maintain that marriage is a good, and that it must not be supposed that the concupiscence of the flesh... is a fault of marriage. Conjugal chastity makes good use of the evil of concupiscence by the procreation of children.'
[142] Brown, P. *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine,* (London: Faber & Faber, 1972), 203.
[143] Ibid*,* 115.
[144] Hunter, *Marriage,* 263.
[145] *DSV*, 121.

Augustine endows virginity with a hierarchically high, ascetic value. He, however, differs in that virginity is not a means to return to the continent state in the garden but rather, an eschatological good from the ecstatic future.[146] His insistence on a higher eschatological reward than marriage for virginity likely came from Jerome's influence on him:

> Jerome, who during his sojourn at Rome in the early 380s encouraged aristocratic women to adopt lives of celibacy. Not only pagans, but many Christians as well, thought that Jerome's exaltation of virginity implied a denigration of marriage. Jerome's ascetic views received such criticism that he left Rome for Palestine in 385, from whence he continued his advocacy of the celibate life for Christians.[147]

Unlike Jerome, Augustine rejects an ultimate elevation of virginity over marriage reinforcing marriage as co-equal in its witness to created goods (*fides*, *proles*, and *sacramentum*) established by God at the beginning.[148] The equal goods of marriage in its tripartite structure are also affirmed alongside celibacy.[149]

Augustine importantly balanced the value of the two vocations by warning holy virgins of the danger of ascetic pride emerging from a corruptive self-love that could remove the merit of virginity.[150] Marriage was less because it involved participation in the good now without eschatological delay and could easily be distracted by its proximity to concupiscence after the Fall.[151] Virginity was greater as it gave up current participation in certain goods of creation to make space for heavenly *amor*. His way of relativizing marriage has often also been read as both a challenge and homage to his predecessor, Jerome.[152] The Old Testament pattern of procreation in the history of salvation is relativised in the New Testament, and the gay celibate takes such a relativisation forward in their asceticism. One can draw an instructive parallel between the Jovinian-like revisionists today that seek to dismiss the complication of same-sex desire and a Christian ontology of marriage and those Jerome-like traditionalists who seek stoical obedience from LGBTQI+ people with little value for gay self-consciousness and its complexity. [153]

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[146] *DSV*, 81.
[147] Hunter, *Marriage*, 212.
[148] O'Donovan in *Marriage,* 117.
[149] Banner, M. *The Ethics of Everyday Life: Moral Theology, Social Anthropology, and the Imagination of the Human* (Oxford: OUP Press: 2014), 75-76.
[150] *DSV*, 101-103. *DCD XIV*, xxii, 621
[151] *DBC*, 267.
[152] Patout Burns, J. 'Marriage as a Remedium Concupiscentiae: An Augustinian Proposal,' *Augustine Studies* 44, no. 1 (2013): 32.
[153] *DCD XIV*, xxvi, 628-630; *DIP*, 193.

1.2.3 The Dis/Continuity Between GCA and Augustine's Holy Virginity

The contemporary Anglican moment can be likened to the Roman culture of Augustine's epoch where celibacy was either a sign of moral strength or unnatural, repressive, and socially illicit.[154] Procreation, like consumerist self-expression today, was the good which not only made sex permissible, but also advantaged the Empire.[155] This subtext was likely one of the reasons Augustine was impelled to write regarding the conflict between the teaching of Jerome who fiercely defended holy virgins, arguing for the virtue and heightened eschatological merit of celibacy,[156] and the monk, Jovinian who: 'at Rome propounded the thesis that virginity was no more meritorious in the Christian life than marriage.'[157] Jovinian drew the Church in a contrary direction to Jerome with his radical doctrine that merit alone came from baptism, not one's asceticism.[158]

Jovinian's assertion was not just that celibacy and marriage were equal gifts, but that celibacy was a rare gift, whereas marriage was normative (note the similarity of Luther's view and a tendency of some of the rhetoric related to gay celibacy in the Anglican communion).[159] As we have briefly outlined, Augustine's ascetical theology when duly developed makes the 'third' way of gay celibacy coherent. Rather than insisting upon the duality in Jerome and Jovinian's positions, Augustine charted a way through the ascetic debates of desire to a third, deeper ethic. Holy virginity and GCA are common vocations in that they give up the created goods of marriage in deference to the coming future. I have shown so far how Augustine's ascetical theology helps us understand the impetus of gay celibates and their desire to affirm marriage precisely by respecting its created ontology and eschatologically relativizing it through celibacy. As Hunter states:

> In *DSV*... [Augustine] argued that all the good features of marriage—the procreation of children, marital fidelity, and the sacramental sign—are temporal values that do not last into eternity. By contrast, virginal integrity and sexual continence involve 'a participation in the life of angels and a foretaste of perpetual incorruption in the corruptible

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154 *DIP*, 31.
155 Hunter, *Marriage,* 188, 213; 'Christian virgins came to be numbered into the thousands and volunteered out of all classes of society, often against parental wishes, to be 'eunuchs for the love of heaven.' Bybee, A. 'From Vestal Virgin to Bride of Christ' *Studia Antiqua* 1. No.1 (2001): 5. Cf. Cloke, G. *The Female Man of God: Women and the Spiritual Power in the Patristic Age* (London: Routledge, 1995), 57; 'In Roman Society, womanhood was defined solely in terms of marriage and reproduction,' (Ibid, 6).
156 Brown, P. *Through the Eye of a Needle* (Princeton: PUP, 2014): 214, 271, 285.
157 Hunter, *Marriage*, 313.
158 *DBC/DSV*, xix.
159 Roberts, *Creation and Covenant*, 112

> flesh.' Augustine also attempted to uphold the superiority of celibacy by noting that, according to the apostle Paul, the married person is concerned about worldly things (1 Cor 7: 33–4), whereas the virgin is potentially undivided. Because of their more intense commitment to Christ, virgins could 'follow the Lamb wherever he goes' (Rev 14: 4); as a result, they were capable of experiencing a more intense degree of joy in the next life than other Christians: 'The special joys of Christ's virgins are not the same as those of non-virgins, even if the latter belong to Christ; *others have joys, but none of them have this kind*.' Ultimately, for Augustine, the 'superiority' of celibacy over marriage lay in the capacity of a celibate Christian to love God more wholeheartedly, whereas married persons were always divided in their attentions and affections.[160]

Therefore, the future city is known intensely in the holy virgins whose memory is liberated in the hope of the children of God. On Earth, the holy virgins are strange in that they live into the relativisation of procreation. For Augustine, and recently, Michael Banner, such a relativisation took place in the Incarnation on account of which neither was procreation any longer essential nor was Abraham's patrilineality so significant for salvation.[161]

Unlike Christian marriage which shares certain created goods in common with the *civitas terrena*, this eschatological straining forward in gay celibacy *queers* or destabilises the norms of Earth. The *amor sui* emerges from a naturalistic sexual ethic which interprets desire with no revealed or transcendent source. Such norms do not involve an interpretation of desire that shares the same end-point in God or understands human life as made for the enjoyment of God. Instead, marriage and desire are imagined without the revelation of their beauty and meaning in God. GCA queers this naturalistic frame in the Church and society, resisting and exposing those orders of love that vie against God's *ordo amoris*.

Like GCA, Augustine's riposte to the ascetical extremes of Jovinian and Jerome lay in his understanding of the ascetic purgation of desire. This involved the concupiscent or misaimed will driven by lust or burning (*luxuria*, or 'excess'). Such *luxuria* could be chastened through the passional co-ownership of bodies between husband and wife in 1 Corinthians 7. In *DCD XIV*, Augustine employs a plethora of largely synonymous terms for desire or love (*cupiditas, libido*, *dilectio, amor*, *voluntas).*[162] He relates them to the flesh or *sarx*. Without right enjoyment of God,

[160] Hunter, *Marriage*, 213; *DSV,* 79.
[161] *DSV*, 103; Banner, *Ethics*, 172.
[162] *DIP*, 73-78.

they risk producing a deeply flawed self-orientation which must be aided by grace and ascetic purification in the love of God.[163] Augustine redresses the balance by positing marriage as an ascetical *remedium concupiscentiae* which can remedy our loss of control over our bodies and moral faculties by allowing God's love to re-channel sexual *eros*. For Augustine, it was never the case that marriage was lower *in se* than virginity but that marriage required dealing with the threat of concupiscent misuse of creation in a more direct way, and received less of a reward as it could enjoy created goods now.[164]

Augustine implies that marriage contains a greater proximity to the problem of misaimed concupiscence. It is still open to the danger of the bad use of sexuality, which should be reordered first to friendship and procreation, and not self-gratification alone.[165] According to Eric Fuchs, the great weakness of Augustine's theology is the missing virtue of how marriage is more than just a cure for sexual concupiscence.[166] Augustine wanted to safeguard the eternal good of friendship. We now see that sexual pleasure plays an important role in exocentrically reordering desire toward loving one's spouse, God and others.[167] Augustine employs this idea of loving God more intensely in his treatment of virginity, which allows entire devotion to Christ and the complication of desiring created goods well.[168] While GCA does not face the difficulty of rightly using these created goods, it deals with the greater issue of homophobia among the pilgrims in God's city who equate gay erotics to heterosexual desire *tout court* or cast same-sex desire simply as an evil to be erased.

Augustine helpfully corrects a similar imbalance on both sides of his own epoch related to marriage and virginity. As Augustine states:

> When a man lives according to the truth, then he lives not according to the self, but according to God.... it is because man was created righteous to live according to his Maker and not according to himself, doing his Maker's will and not his own: falsehood consists in not living in the way for which he was created. Man does indeed wish to be happy; but he lives in such a way that it is not possible for him to be so.[169]

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[163] Ibid, 75.
[164] Ibid, 100.
[165] Ibid, 103.
[166] Fuchs, E. *Sexual Desire and Love*, 117 in Brown, *The Body*, 402.
[167] *TNA*, 49.
[168] *DIP*, 105.
[169] *DCD XIV*, iv, 586-587.

For Augustine, marriage and virginity as callings should not be sought as a means of showcasing ascetic pride, but rather ascetical vocations and gifts motivated by the core value of the city of God, the *amor dei* or love of God.[170] Asceticism must emerge from the loving grace and knowledge of God, and from no other root. As Cavadini states:

> Augustine, by contrast, presents marriage as a human *societas* configured to an economy of gift that makes a good use of the will to power by subverting it even as it is used, relativizing it within a vocabulary it can of itself never learn to speak, and, thus, recovering marriage and associated natural goods as an economy of gift, of grace, and of gratitude.[171]

For Augustine, the future in the pilgrim's present orients desire in marriage and celibacy–the pilgrim walks upon the road of Christ, and yet is aimed toward Christ as the end of the earthly sojourn. It is this christological hinge on which GCA turns to renew Anglican approaches to desire by re-locating the created good of marriage through an emphatic affirmation of its sacramental significance and its eschatological relativisation in Christ's celibacy.

Marriage as creationally-founded is restored and vindicated in the Church. As Claussen states:

> The idea of the *ciuitas* is a metaphor that after all comes from the realm of politics and has a natural connection with *peregrinatio*, given the civic and legal foundations of that word. Had Augustine used another such principle for City of God, one, for instance, based more closely on traditional interpretations of sacred history, these political aspects of *peregrinatio* would have been inappropriate.[172]

The gay celibate is not just vital to retrieving a renewed vision of celibacy but also the political renewal of its twin-vocation, marriage. The gay celibate as a distinct *peregrinus* provides an intense reminder to other pilgrims of the celestial end-point of all created goods in Christ. As Stewart-Kroeker explains: 'So must the pilgrim's love reflect both the creative ontological work of God and the redemptive ontological work of God… the earthly-eschatological continuity of Christ-like neighbour love… orders perception of the neighbour's beauty such that they are neither idol nor instrument.'[173] The gay celibate intensely reorders their desires around a new perception of

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[170] *DIP*, 91.
[171] Cavadini, J. 'Reconsidering Augustine on Marriage and Concupiscence', *Augustinian Studies* 48, no. 1/2 (2017): Reconsiderations Conference V, 184.
[172] Claussen, M. A. 'Peregrination and Peregrini' in Augustine's City of God', *Traditio* 46 (1991): 67.
[173] *PMAF,* 244, 248.

their neighbour's beauty which arises from the *amor dei* and relativizes created goods other pilgrims are tempted to worship. They emerge as a resistance to the solipsistic desire to love the self inordinately by grasping onto the good without God's transcendent love.

1.3 Drawing the (Dis)Analogy in *DCD XIV:* Those Among the 'Queerest' of Earth's Aliens and Most at Home Among Heaven's Citizens

I now turn to explore how GCA is different and not entirely analogous to the holy virginity of Augustine's time. Augustine's ideal of the holy virgins consisted mostly of noble women (although not exclusively) who gave up the goods of marriage as a choice of vocation: 'It is through believing, hoping, and loving him [Jesus] that you have been able not to forgo marriage as something forbidden but to transcend it as something permitted.'[174] Holy virgins chose to resist the societal pressure to be married to serve Christ but were not afflicted with the particular theodicean wrestle of gay celibates with the created order. As Augustine writes: 'The words 'thou shalt not marry' cannot have the same sense as 'thou shalt not commit adultery' or 'thou shalt not kill,' for these last are demanded of us, whereas the first is freely offered.'[175] GCA, on the other hand, consists in living within a smaller field of optional volition. Marriage is only ever possible if God rarely endows a gay person with the surprising grace to desire an opposite-sex spouse.[176] Secondly, sociologically, celibacy had an important role that was ascetically valued in the Church unlike today's context where vowed celibacy is perceived by the general culture as harmfully repressive or even abusive. We detect here not just an important discontinuity between heterosexual holy virginity and GCA, but between the two cities.

1.3.1 Sexual Martyrs and Holy Virgins: Pilgrimage, Desire, and the City of God

GCA, like virginity, acutely reminds us of the ways human beings variously wrestle with the Fall and its instantiations in terms of desire. While all pilgrims bear with them the trouble of fallen sexuality, celibate pilgrims do so without the safer haven of marriage. They, therefore, must walk the way of the cross in a cohort with other celibate Christians who also do not have the possibility of this resting place for their sexually-erotic desires, and their experience of alienation from parts of the cities of God and Earth who do not understand them. Their lack of sexual expression means they are rejected by the city of Earth and often have their gay identity denied,

[174] *DSV*, 101, 105.
[175] Ibid, 122.
[176] Doherty, S. 'Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth: a theological and pastoral reflection on my journey away from a homosexual identity,' *ANVIL* 30, no.1 (March 2014): 5-16.

and their form of erotic participation is shamed by those in the City of God who disagree. The difference of gay celibates refers to their relationship to created order as reflected in Romans 1 and within Torah-obedience (Acts 15 council and its ruling against *porneia* for the Gentiles, which includes same-sex activity). This is distinct from the generalised frustration which all creatures are subject to sexually due to the Fall, and yet like non-gay Christians who cannot marry. Such frustration is shared equally among all pilgrims, but the uneven dislocation from participation in the possibility of marriage generates real erotic differentiation. While single heterosexual Christians still have the capacity at any moment in their lives to find a spouse and marry, gay celibates who agree with Torah and Pauline ethics do not (I will exegete this difference in chapter two within O'Donovan's christological view of moral order).[177] While it is important to emphasis the similitude of non-gay celibacy, this thesis also seeks to describe this difference for the sake of pastoral care specifically to gay celibates.

Gay celibates suffer from misunderstanding in the earthly city of certain kinds of expressions of gay identity which emerge from other orders of love that were not analogously present in Augustine's context. Such a reality makes the theodicean issue of the justice of God a particularly acute problem on both a personal/psychological and cultural level, as well as necessitating an alternative form of political identity in gay celibacy. In Augustine's theology of love, we can begin to identify and meet these issues for gay celibates through the eschatological renewal of love and the greater joy that virgins uniquely experience in *DSV*.

In line with this theodicean argument which we will develop further in chapter two, GCA could be seen more in terms of an erotic martyrdom where the theodicean burden is extreme for certain gay and non-gay Christians as explicated from *DSV*. Celibacy becomes a default necessity rather than just a volitional choice due to the Fall's particular effect on desire moving it toward the same-sex. Non-gay Christians who find themselves in unchosen celibacy face a deep burden which is different but deeply similar to the gay Christian who faces the reality that their desire for marriage does not accord with the moral order and experiences a narrowing of their volitional field. The Spirit must meet this lack in celibate Christians who do not find it to be an easy calling through the Church's communal life and the fitting impartation of the same gifting of grace. GCA seeks to bring together the universal call to celibacy for all Christians unless otherwise

[177] Hays, R. *A Moral Vision*, 117; 'Paul clearly sees homosexual behaviour as ultimately a form of human deconstruction. He is not saying that everyone who discovers homosexual instincts has chosen to commit idolatry and has chosen homosexual behaviour as a part of that; rather, he is saying that in a world where men and women have refused to honour God this is the kind of thing you will find' Wright, N. T. 'Communion and Koinonia: Pauline Reflections on Tolerance and Boundaries', accessed Nov. 2022, ntwrightpage.com/2016/07/12/communion-and-koinonia-pauline-reflections-on-tolerance-and-boundaries/.

called to marriage with the uneven and polyvalent distribution of theodicean burden between heterosexual celibates and gay celibates; and among each of those cohorts in ways which defy easy generalisation. There is an infused filling of the theodicean unevenness for those for whom GCA is not an easy calling that they might trust God and find joy but the existence of this unevenness does not undermine the basic vocation to either celibacy or marriage. Such particular graces fit the uneven sacrificial differences without removing the uneven sacrificial difference experienced by gay Christians.

The manifold grace of God can meet each situation with the universal default of celibacy and can fill any grievous lack experienced by gay and non-gay disciples alike ('a name better than sons and daughters'). Furthermore, there are other options and concessions like gay celibate partnerships, mixed orientation marriage, and forming vowed friendships which can also meet the needs of those for whom celibacy remains a burden of deep suffering. While that suffering is important pastorally, it remains the case that marriage is not a necessary good for human flourishing, as we see in the person of Christ. For the gay celibate, claiming that gay marriage could be a legitimate charism denies the innate oddity of being a gay pilgrim who, because of the *discordium malum*, must wrestle queerly in the created order. The desire to have marriage as heterosexuals do is a way of fleeing, rather than embracing the queerness of their particular difference, and the way it is embraced in the celibate example of Jesus' life. For the gay Christian who does not perceive any incompatibility with the created order in a gay union or marriage, the default calling of celibacy would be resisted and this may involve an unwillingness to give the whole self to God due to a theodicean complaint regarding the perceived injustice of heterosexuals who can freely marry as desired. The supplemental grace in GCA is refused and the inordinacy of same-sex desire is dismissed to resolve the theodicean burden, which gay celibates refuse as morally impossible. The Church must not leave gay disciples to face with such a complex wrestle with the moral order in Christ as affirmed by the scriptural witness. Such a wrestle is very difficult for the gay Christian and is one shared alongside non-gay pilgrims with their own burdens and crosses.

Such a grief makes gay celibates more reliant on redirecting their *eros* through eschatological re-orientation. Celibacy lives out celestial existence of love for the beloved Christ now in an even more intense way than the holy virgin. This increased intensity is due to the heightened sense of tension, discontinuity, and queer continuity in celibate gays' current state of desiring. Same-sex desire runs counter to the created order and yet in GCA is gained as the intense gift of joy that comes with living as one was created. This gift is an erotic power, which when motivated by

another order of love, drives the desirer toward the eschatological end of love where sexual desire will be entirely eclipsed by heavenly *eros*.

Such an ascetical path echoes Jesus' own martyrdom and passion which we will explore in the next chapter. Jesus lived for the 'joy set before him' in the Resurrection, denying himself marriage's goods on the cross.[178] GCA's witness, given in this two-tiered asceticism, could be likened to the greater asceticism of martyrdom in Christ, which according to Augustine, is higher ascetically in the hierarchy of witness: '... whether fruitfulness a hundredfold is to be assigned rather to martyrdom, the sixtyfold to continence and thirtyfold to marriage; or again whether virginity and martyrdom combined make up the hundredfold, while virginity alone occupies the sixtyfold.... there are still more gifts that can be allocated to these different categories.'[179] For Augustine, such martyrdom is not the individual's choice, but given mysteriously by God's will. GCA reads sexual orientation as one of the different categories that Augustine made space for but did not anticipate. Augustine gestures toward future innovations from his theology, imagining variation in how these ascetical options might interact with other anthropological concerns like same-sex desire.

As noted above, unlike heterosexual celibacy, which always contains the possibility of another option, GCA involves the willingness to forsake romantic sexual love altogether as an option. This kind of celibacy is different to monastic vows or holy virginity which involves a choice when another option may be available. In Augustine's consideration of ascetic differentiation, he shows a pastoral understanding of fruitfulness and reward that should be applied here equally to the gay disciple who gives up any possibility of marriage. The existential element is more demanding for the gay disciple. Christ's love and beauty can elucidate this theodicean dilemma. The virgin or heterosexual celibate, unlike the gay celibate who recognises sexual difference in the moral order, still possesses the choice to marry. They still retain the choice to act on the desires, but not the kind of desire, narrowing their choices for righteous living. If we apply Augustine's insights about martyrdom to homosexuality, GCA's lack of righteous modes for sexual life that chime with God's expressed desire in creation intensifies the eschatological reward in a similar way to the martyr who does not choose their sacrifice. Martyrdom is something that is not chosen but happens to you. If chosen, it loses its heightened virtue.[180] If

[178] Heb. 12:2.
[179] Ibid, 132-133.
[180] *DSV*, 134-136; *cf.* Clark comments that 'in my opinion no one will presume to rank virginity above martyrdom, and no one will doubt that martyrdom is a gift that lies hidden, should there be no testing trial.' (Clark, P. 'Is martyrdom virtuous? An occasion for rethinking the relationship of Christ and virtue in Aquinas', *Journal of the Society for the Study of Christian Ethics* 30, no.1 (2010): 144).

this gay Christian wants to honour the created order, this inevitably combines the non-volitional element of martyrdom (possessing an innate, unchosen orientation) and the gifting of the holy virgin (a chosen life of forgoing marriage).

This 'different category' involves a stretching forward like the holy virgins and yet, due to its martyr-like stance, the celibate incurs a greater precarity thereby requiring greater trust of Christ. This asceticism takes virginity further into martyrdom, in that sexual orientation is not chosen and the option to change course into marriage is unlikely.[181] It also represents an even greater potentiality in terms of witness to the *civitas terrena*. A celibate's queerness speaks to those pilgrims who risk compromising by becoming too easily attached or even wrongly using the goods of marriage. The gay celibate, in both their diverse possibilities of affliction, and also the gift they offer, witnesses to the married pilgrims of desire's eschatological destination (1 Cor. 7:32-35). GCA challenges the politics of the *civitas dei* when it becomes too dominated by an overly intense focus on sex and marriage. The distraction of created goods from the eternal goodness of God and Jesus Christ is disturbed by their heavenly queerness. Gay celibates, when embraced rather than left unheard, can assist pilgrims who are taken off course by an overemphasis on earthly goods through their intense focus on eternal goods.[182] They can interdependently work with those who are delighting in particular created goods which they forgo in God, as well as challenge those tempted to use them wrongfully. GCA's acceptance or rejection by the Church tests how ordered it is by heavenly *eros* and how much the order of God's love really is the centre of the Church's life.

As Elizabeth Stuart states: 'the loss of an eschatological imagination, not just in gay and lesbian theology, but across much of Western Christian theology, has impoverished Christian discourse on sexuality and allowed the collapse of desire into heterosexuality and discipleship into marriage and modern constructions of the family.'[183] When God's city is captivated by this impoverished imagination, the gay celibate risks great suffering as they are constantly met with an erotic culture in both the Church and city of Earth which does not comprehend their sacrifice and sees it as unnecessary, or wrongfully, a form of internalised homophobia. Gay celibates can be a vital gift in renewing the imagination of those that idolatrously grasp for marriage and its goods. While they cannot directly access the goods of creation they give up, they are interdependently related

[181] See Krieg, L. *An Impossible Marriage* (Grand Rapids: IVP Press, 2020) who explores her mixed-orientation (*MOM*). *Cf.* 'queer' marriages (between a lesbian and a gay man), which are distinct from being ex-gay and part of being Side B.
[182] Yarhouse, M. & Zaporozhets, O. *Costly Obedience: What We Can Learn from the Celibate Gay Community* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 70-77.
[183] Stuart, E. *Gay and Lesbian Theologies: Repetitions with Critical Difference* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 110.

to the married who can include them indirectly in certain goods of marriage. These include the rearing of children and structures of kinship-based family life that complement, strengthen and are an equally essential part of the Church's witness. In a mutual way, celibates are essentially important in moving the sight of those married in the Church toward Christ and his richly-envisioning horizon of love. They are not simply to become monastics who are cut off from these goods, but fellow pilgrims to those tempted to compromised misuse of the creational goods of marriage and sexuality.[184]

GCA has distinct differences to holy virginity and yet is highly analogous to it. Its ascetic queerness provides a moral awakening, engaging those in marriage and others in the city of Earth by witnessing to God as desire's *telos* and resting place. GCA lengthens the eschatological horizon and counteracts 'what changed through modernity [which] was the shortening of the eschatological horizon of desire as such, as it came to be identified as sexuality—especially reproduction—and sexuality was understood biologically.'[185] In the contemporary discussion, a new opportunity is available to avoid such pitfalls by means of the analogy drawn between gay self-consciousness and Augustine's thickly textured account of desire, its ascetic transformation, and reward.

I now turn to discuss how GCA is incompatible with the proto-stoical or libertine tendency of those who encourage or seek to undermine celibacy from a motivation other than the *amor dei.* Gay celibacy stands not only in the patristic vein of tradition represented by Augustine's third way between Jovinian and Jerome, but the scriptural teaching of the life of Christ and Paul which presents celibacy as normative for redeemed humanity.[186] To explicate this analogy, I examine Augustine's thinking around virginity in the two cities of Earth and God. I explore Augustine's account of the protology and Fall of human desire to explain how gay celibates are among the queerest of Earth's alien pilgrims, and most at home of pilgrims in the *civitas dei.*

1.3.2 Desire's Holy Flight: Following the Lamb Wherever He Goes

In *DSV*, Augustine uses the motif of the virginal saints in Revelation 14:4 to advise the virgin or celibate to remain humble in their fruitfulness in the Gospel as they obediently follow the Lamb wherever he goes.[187] Like Augustine's holy virgins, celibate gay Christians are free from begetting

[184] 1 Cor. 7:32-36.
[185] Sigurdson, 'Desire and Love…', 525.
[186] Holmes, S. 'On not handling snakes: late modern cultural assumptions about sexuality' in Whittle, et al., in *Marriage, Family and Relationships: Biblical, Doctrinal and Contemporary Perspectives* (London: IVP, 2017), 265.
[187] Ibid, 71.

'the sons of men', and are, therefore, enjoined 'to look on Christ as their lover'[188]: 'You are at liberty from the bonds of marriage. Gaze on the beauty of your love; contemplate him as equal to the Father.'[189] Augustine writes to sway the holy virgins of his time from pride: 'step forth, come to him, and learn that he is meek and humble of heart… you are to go to… the one who came down from heaven because of the weight of his love.'[190] In this sense, holy virgins echo a deeply christological rationale of love as intense exemplars of Christ's own celibacy. As James Wetzel comments:

> Augustine needs two cities – one eternally debased and the other eternally blessed – to set up a polarity between good and evil. The city that has to work its way between the poles is a *tertium quid*. At any given time, some of its members may be more Heaven-bound and some more Hell-bent, but not one of them, while in time, is ever wholly identifiable with either destiny. Augustine speaks of two cities being on pilgrimage, *civitatas terrena* and *civitatas dei*, and he pits the love that characterizes the one against the love that characterises the other. To be consistent, he would have to say that there is only one city on pilgrimage, the secular city, and that its love is unresolved.[191]

These two cities represent two different systems of value for immanent and the transcendent good(s), and vision for how desire, especially erotic desire, should be adjudicated or rechannelled.[192] The virgin and the gay celibate in turn become signifiers of the future life of the *civitas dei*. They are intensely heaven-bound and yet requiring a re-modulating influence from their fellow married wayfarers. Married wayfarers can relate more intensely to the *civitas terrena* because they share the common goods of marriage in a way that the celibate Christian cannot. Celibates embody the *amor dei* eschatologically and help to anchor the love of the *civitas dei* in its wrestle with alternative orders of love in the *saeculum*.[193] In God's city, the celibate gay Christian is embraced as a kind of holy virgin alight with the love of God. Like the holy virgin, they are called to remain humble and use their celibacy to worship God in the joyful song of praise where their desire for sexual intimacy is fulfilled by non-sexual *eros* and their particular closeness to the Lamb.

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[188] Roberts, *Creation*, 51.
[189] *DSV*, 145.
[190] Ibid, 119.
[191] Wetzel, 'Splendid Vices', 276; Holland, *Self*…, 2020, 11.
[192] *DIP*, 31.
[193] Markus, R.A. *Saeculum: History and Society in The Theology of St Augustine* (Cambridge: CUP, 1970), 67.

Conversely, gay celibates must also resist an over-realised eschatology. The gay saint still wrestles in the *saeculum* in that their body is not yet raised, and thus, sexual desire has not taken on its full, eschatological transformation.[194] They will continue to experience an inner struggle between loves. As Simeon Zahl relays regarding Augustine's pneumatology:

> An affective Augustinian approach offers a constructive alternative to models of sanctification… The crucial difference is that by understanding Christian transformation as something that cannot be fully detached from things that happen in bodies and in time, the affective Augustinian approach is attentive to the empirical experience of Christians in the domain of sanctification. Although it looks and hopes for Christian transformation, especially as an outworking of soteriological patterns, it is not committed to assuming such transformation in advance the way that more punctiliar, ontological models are obliged to do.[195]

As per Zahl's rendering of Augustine, the particular understanding of the body and the operation of the Spirit opens a space where the need to identify as gay or describe one's attractions is essential. Identifying as gay, or embracing this peregrine queerness, safeguards the process of sanctification and missional witness by avoiding an over-realised eschatology which would deny the dual goodness and fallenness of desire. Instead, the motivation behind GCA is to humbly allow God's Spirit to work in the weakness and trouble inflicted by the Fall, and in the hope of resurrection which moves the gay body's *eros* forward in love for Christ.

1.3.3 *DCD XIV* and the Gay Celibate as Queer Pilgrim

In order to explain the erotic motivation behind GCA, I now examine Augustine's theology of desire in the two cities. Augustine founds his vision of the cities from an ultimate order of love (*ordo amoris*): 'The two cities then were created by two kinds of love: the earthly city by a love of self carried even to the contempt for God and the heavenly city by a love of God carried even to the point of contempt for the self.'[196] The former leads to the love of God and contempt for this 'artificial individuation' (*contemptum sui*), and the latter, contempt for God (*contemptum dei*).[197] Love of God, then, properly entails the ascetic denial of an old ordering of desire toward a new order that encompasses right use of the moral or created order and future transformation beyond it.

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[194] *DCD XIV*, ii, 553.
[195] Zahl, S. *The Holy Spirit and Christian Experience* (Oxford: OUP, 2020), 212.
[196] *PSL*, 31.
[197] Ibid, 36.

Living according to this order generates the alien nature of the gay pilgrim among those living for self-love without God. O'Donovan defines this fallen instantiation of self-love in the following way: 'Self-love is evil only when the self is imperfectly understood and conceived of as an independent item apart from the rest of the universe.'[198] It is possible to have a love for one's self but this must be ceded to love of God, and therefore, based on self-knowledge according to Christ's renewal of creation: 'a love of the whole of which self is understood to be a part of Being itself instead of love restricted to the self's artificially individuated being.'[199]

The gay pilgrim is set upon pilgrimage in the *civitas dei* which differentiates them in the order of love they adopt. They are confronted by many other *ordines amoris* that vie for central importance in how desire is adjudicated. The *amor dei* among other orders of love has the power to recalibrate the self so that it is loved in ultimate reference to God. Creation and living as one was created is part of that order of love. Christ is both the final end to which desire is drawn and the one who draws the pilgrim out of other orders of love that have beset them through his greater beauty, power, and grace. He empowers this new direction of travel which to the onlooking *civitas terrena*, otherwise ordered to the self without reference to God, appears like the *peregrinus* as queer or strange – from outside the city limits. This is not some stoical exercise ultimately achieved by the pilgrim but a transformation of desire that happens through participation in trinitarian love of Father, Son, and Spirit.

Desire for pilgrims walking collectively as the Church is not understood 'simply as an affect of the subject, but as a decisive confrontation between subject and object.'[200] In Augustine's vision, Christ becomes both the physician of and object of desire, actively renewing home-sick, world-weary pilgrims.[201] They wrestle and flourish in a desirous body enflamed by the Spirit but still troubled by the Fall.[202] Through shared knowledge of the trinitarian love, renewal of desire is mediated through other pilgrims, walking the same road to Christ, and which Christ undergirds.[203] In and through the collective life of the Church, the Holy Spirit pours out love as an eschatological foretaste which energises asceticism to move beyond abstract argumentation.[204]

[198] Ibid, 39.
[199] Ibid, 40.
[200] Ibid, 156.
[201] *DDC*, 14.
[202] *DIP*, 101.
[203] *PMAF*, 67.
[204] *Conf.* xiii, 221.

Such a witness renews and challenges the other pilgrims and their understanding of desire, the Church and the world to more profoundly reconsider its approach to asceticism.

GCA requires an intense search for self-knowledge and desire which is ordered according to the love of God, and not the postlapsarian self. According to the city of God's *ordo amoris,* true self-knowledge can only be procured in 'loving yourself by loving God.'[205] The believer accepts their body but offers up its desires to reinterpretation in the created order through this rightly ordered self-love. This ordered self-love involves self-acceptance as gay or queer or at least, the acceptance of such desires as not involving a morally culpable orientation. Same-sex desire is both a gift and a part of the tensile trouble (corruptibility to death and sin) of the postlapsarian body that will receive resurrection. The original creation of desirous bodies, which now know trouble due to the Fall, is vindicated by Christ who brings bodies by grace and beauty into the more fundamental desire for God. The Church must also draw a careful distinction between the body's trouble and the corruptibility of its weight being drawn away by other loves. For Augustine, postlapsarian bodies are open to constant disturbance or 'trouble' as they are part of the beautiful yet fallen created order which is groaning under the weight of sin and death.[206]

In this way, gay celibates become pilgrims who intensely stretch toward the city of God's eschatological end in Christ. Through grace and the *amor dei*, they are being rendered capable of loving everything in creation in the liberation of God's love. Part of such a redemptive process is seeking to understand their own particular embodiment, which is easily misunderstood by these other pilgrims in both cities.[207] Instead of desiring the same-sex other as spouse or marital partner, perception shifts to another economy of erotics set according to Augustine's *ordo amoris*: 'This means loving God above all creatures and not inordinately loving any creature as the human person's ultimate end.'[208] As Augustine states regarding the direction and goal of desire and the body: 'Man was created right, in the sense that he was not to live according to his own self but according to his Maker, that is, to do the latter's will instead of his own. Not to live after the fashion for which he was designed to live is falsehood. [209] Like other forms of asceticism, the gay celibate is a renewed subject who shapes their erotic longings according to this new order of love in Christ and its secondary aspect, which is living as one was created. Paradoxically, this process draws them into a theodicean wrestle with the created order. Such a wrestle, when done

[205] *PSL*, 198.
[206] *DCD XIV*, 10, 602-603.
[207] Claussen, 'Peregrination..,', 74-75.
[208] Ibid, 118.
[209] *DCD XIV,* 4, 587.

in the embrace of the Trinity, has the power to remind (*revere)* the pilgrim community of the eschatological life in God beyond marriage which aids right use of its created goods.[210] The celibate gay Christian is a queer sign and prophetic warning to the Church. They live further toward the future, morally awakened to its ultimate goal as the city of God on Earth.

1.4 Defining the City of God: Engagement with Asceticism in Nussbaum and Augustine

From Augustine's two cities and *uti-frui* distinction, I consider a possible objection to GCA, and Augustine's ascetical view of emotion and human flourishing. At this juncture, many may remain unconvinced that GCA is free of the stoic repression of the passions with which it has often been associated. In order to speak to these concerns with my interpretation of Augustine's thought, I discuss the difference between GCA and Martha Nussbaum's criticisms of Augustine's ascetical theology of desire.

In agreement with Stewart-Kroeker and Hordern, I have argued that the creational and eschatological re-orientation of desire in Augustine is not to be characterised as a mechanism for stifling good action or inducing prideful self-love, fear, and shame.[211] Instead, I contend that Augustine provides an ascetical theology driven by the fullness of God's love. Such love generates freedom of the will to use creation in enjoyment of God, and, therefore, act toward the creation and one's neighbour in the frame of a new perception of created goodness. Through friendship's eternal goodness and the shared pilgrimage of love, the Church is a place where gay celibates can rest and their 'alien' asceticism can remind God's city of its higher love as heavenly signifiers of the eschatological transformation of sex and desire. A properly Christian asceticism, contra Nussbaum's critique, is possible through the recognition of faith's pneumatological role where passions are not simply extirpated by the will but reoriented and rehumanised in the crucible of divine love and grace through the Spirit. This particular task is essential for the current dissertation to refute the notion that GCA is harmful, stoical repression of same-sex desire rather than a liberative asceticism in the loving knowledge and beauty of God.

In order to substantiate why Christian celibate asceticism is not constrained by shame I now turn to Martha Nussbaum's *Therapy of Desire* and *Upheavals*. For Nussbaum, desire for the Stoics needed to be accompanied by contemplating virtue outside of creation's contingencies. In order for the human being to become wise in stoicism they had to find 'unaffected' joy (Augustine

[210] *Conf. X*, xxxvi, 200.
[211] Nussbaum, M. *Monarchy of Fear: A Philosopher Looks at Our Political Crisis* (Oxford: OUP, 2018) 17-63.

undermines stoicism by defining *apatheia* contrarily to an emotionless state).[212] By citing Diogenes Laërtius ('The good person is always using his soul, which is perfect'), Nussbaum traces a movement in the Stoics against the passions where desire must be resisted by the inner activity of the soul as the way toward the higher virtues.[213] The passions are not reoriented, intensified, and transformed but rather extirpated altogether:

> The Hellenistic thinkers did confront this question – in a way that led them to reject all the passions. A motivation for me [Nussbaum] in writing about them was to discover whether it was possible to accept their arguments about the elimination of anger, while still rejecting their more general attack on passions such as love, fear and grief.[214]

When erotic love is considered in the classical frame things become even more complex, and *eros* is ambiguously valued and resisted. Nussbaum argues that 'the bold Stoic attempt to purify social life of all its ills, rigorously carried through, ends by removing, as well, its finite humanity, its risk-taking loyalty, its passionate love.'[215] Nussbaum's central problem with Augustine is important when approaching passions like same-sex desire. Her work concerns how to avoid falling into the self-generating trap of the Stoics for absolute perfection, and a repressive extirpation of the passions. Nussbaum maintains the human good of neighbour-love and a way forward for gay passions that can 'look with mercy at the ambivalent excellence and passion of a human life.'[216]

Nussbaum draws us to this point in the medieval Augustinianism latent in Dante's *Inferno* where homosexual lust is given a greater punishment in a lower circle of hell because it is not just concupiscent but is 'considered part of the very destruction of nature.'[217] Homosexual court poets are treated less harshly due to their Christian openness to repentance whereas the Platonic tradition, which to some degree originally prized homosexual relations, is given a harsher punishment.[218] For Nussbaum, such an attitude results from Augustine's ascetical ascent:

> Thinking Augustinian thoughts of radical evil mitigates the suffering of having to obey evil powers in the world. It supplies the powerless with a project – coming into God's

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[212] *Upheavals,* 534; *DCD XIV*, ix, 600.
[213] Ibid, 537.
[214] Ibid, 509.
[215] Ibid, 511.
[216] *TOD*, 510; *Upheavals,* 562
[217] *Upheavals*, 562. *Cf.* Augustine's remark that 'For [Sodom] was a place where sexual intercourse between males had become so commonplace that it received the licence usually extended by the law to other practices.' (*DCD XVI*, xxx, 743).
[218] Plato, *The Symposium* (London: Penguin Great Ideas, 2005), 99.

> presence – that does not rely on their ability to will good action here and now. But again: the price that is paid is too high. The price is a profound shame – if not at all uncontrolled, as with the Platonists, still, at a very fundamental element of our humanity – our independence, our wilfulness, our sexual and moral unpredictability. Instead of acting as best we can, we had better cover ourselves, mourn, and wait.[219]

The difference between Dante and Augustine, I would argue, is that just because the created order is upheld for Augustine and thus, same-sex activity struck off, his anti-Pelagian view of ascent and asceticism also involved an understanding of the particular theodicean burden the Fall produced on desire. Augustine is often misread, in a way Nussbaum risks, of being anti-passion or emotion.[220] For gay or homosexual people, along Augustinian lines, there is a greater *felix culpa* that God's grace provides, which would not allow the same hellish move that Dante's *Inferno*, and then, the later Thomistic tradition makes toward gay desire as the destruction (rather than misuse) of nature or created order itself.

For Augustine, God's grace enables a new participation in the created order through the passions, seeing their disorder as part of the Fall's *privatio boni.* Same-sex desire still refers to an originary good. As part of one's human make-up, it must not be shamefully extirpated, but lovingly redirected toward the *amor dei.* This grace produces a love-driven asceticism in virginity or celibacy toward God for which Nussbaum's critique of Augustine insufficiently accounts. Augustine's erotics are different to the stifled, shame-filled fate Nussbaum describes. Celibate gay Christians adopt an Augustinian-like posture which seeks an active path toward an eschatological view of flourishing which moves from shame to cruciform purgation, and finally, resurrection fullness. In the next chapter, I explore this Augustinian asceticism in O'Donovan's terms. This instantiation of christological asceticism, ungirded by the present Augustinian exegesis, maintains the original good of desire in its peaceable form, even with the Fall's added complication now related to the created ordering of marriage and sex.

1.4.1 Augustine's Ascetical Theology of Love: Differing from Nussbaum's Critique of Shame

The motivation for the present thesis arises out of this divergence from Nussbaum to meet the need for a comprehensive theology of desire in Anglican moral theology, not just abstractly or

[219] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 556.
[220] Gregory, *Politics*, 274-91; Bretherton, L. *Christianity & Contemporary Politics* (London: Wiley Blackwell, 2010), 196.

apologetically, but also pastorally for the real lives of gay Christians. It is true that shame, as Nussbaum's critique of Augustine contends, has often wrongly accompanied and stifled the development and practice of the theology of asceticism within the Church. However, when understood in light of Augustine's theology of desire and love, shame is overcome through the joy of living in alignment with the Creator's will and intentions, and the public witness to an alternative erotics.[221] This love supplants the narrative of shame which Nussbaum perceives both as the problem and as deeply embedded in Augustinian Christian thought. Nussbaum's worry about hiding and shame must be met through honoured recognition of love-driven ascesis like GCA in the witness and public life of the Church.

In understanding Augustine's ascetical theology, the dualism between the old and new life is not maintained, as Nussbaum would contend. Rather, we wrestle in a *saeculum* now between the old and new self. The passions of a gay person cannot be seen outright as what lies in the way of arriving at some 'Stoic' perfection of virtues, where the goods of their finite humanity are denied without ascetic re-orientation to a greater good, or fullness. Through the Incarnation, Augustine affirms the original and contingent goodness of human finitude, including desire, contra the Stoics:

> …We sometimes weep, even when we do not want to, though we may be moved not by any blameworthy desire but by praiseworthy charity. That implies that we have these emotions as a result of the weakness of our human condition; but this was not true of the Lord Jesus, whose weakness resulted from his power. Yet if we felt none of those emotions at all, while we are subject to the weakness of this life, there would really be something wrong with our life.[222]

By appealing to the Incarnation, Augustine contradicts the stoical understanding of *apatheia* as an emotionless or passionless state: 'Among us Christians.... the citizens of the holy City of God, living in accordance with God in the pilgrimage of this present life, fear and passionately desire, grieve, and rejoice.... Because their love is right, all these emotions of theirs are right.'[223] Through the Incarnation, Jesus experienced all the emotions (sadness, desire, anger), affirming them by virtue of his own experience of the same. As we will explore in chapter three in Gethsemane, he did not repress them but endured through and redirected them faithfully to God's will. He identified with the gnomic struggle of human desiring, recognising desire's good root, while

[221] Bretherton, *Christianity,* 46.
[222] *DCD XIV* ix, trans. Bettenson, H. (London: Penguin, 2003), 780.
[223] *DCD XIV* ix, 597; *Upheavals,* 541.

meeting disorder with empathic transformation. Through the gay celibate's *metanoia* toward participation in Christ, a new path is opened toward a passionate reordering of emotions. Such a participation resists stoical repression and prizes a new path toward joy and self-gift in God.

As Carol Harrison argues, 'The beauty of Creation as we now see it is, therefore, relative: 'this gloriously beautiful order of things that are very good will pass away when it has achieved its end: it will have its morning and its evening."[224] Augustine resists desire that counts this world as a static reality to be enjoyed apart from God or as one to be used for enjoyment emerging out of the flesh, or Earth's city. Same-sex desire is understood by the gay celibate in a way that counts this world as an ordered reality being transformed on its way. *Eros* is the movement of desire which Christ by grace leads toward enjoying God as the *summum bonum*; 'the beauty through whose imitation all other things are beautiful, and by comparison with which all other things are unsightly.'[225]

The enjoyment of God makes desiring a trustworthy part of pilgrimage. When enflamed by God, desire becomes the good power which resists the disorder of desiring lower things without reference to the eternal or seeing created goods as virtue's distraction to be entirely extirpated. The love and beauty of God re-orients desire eschatologically through a new sight or moral deliberation where creation's goodness can be related to the great and infinite goodness of God. As Hordern highlights, such an ascetical struggle is assisted by the Holy Spirit's presence now as a deposit for new creation in the future, undoing shame.[226] Nussbaum contends, contrarily, that Augustine did not take this insight far enough:

> Augustine had apparently restored the emotions to a place of honour in the good life and with them, the need and imperfect aspects of our humanity... and yet his notion of Eden, and the sin that banished us from Eden, is based, in its own way, on primitive shame, as is his idea of love's ascent.[227]

For Nussbaum, enjoining disobedience of the will with sexuality as its sign meant that human beings must deny *eros* for an original state where human beings were sexual and yet not threatened with the perturbation of disorder (or did not lose control of our bodies, even our genitalia).[228] She argues instead that Augustine moves the pressure for transcendence and the

[224] Harrison, *Beauty and Revelation,* 139, (*De Ord. II. 51).*
[225] Ibid.
[226] Hordern, *Political Affections*, 91.
[227] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 555.
[228] *DIP,* 45.

soul's identity fleeing shame to the future world where one can have hope and where erotic suffering will be 'made up by the transcendent beauty of coming into the presence of God.'[229]

Hordern provides an important critique of Nussbaum at this juncture. He argues that she takes emotion too far as the anchor of knowing the self, which she contends is necessary for human flourishing. Emotion for her has no guiding principle of an order to which affectivity is meant to find fulfilment and rest:

> The Christian view retains an appropriately anthropocentric view of reality while avoiding the elision between self-understanding and eudaimonism which characterises Nussbaum's thought. Her 'emotions' refer to the self only as they refer to the self's eudaimonistic projects. Emotional self-awareness is at the service of self-consciousness not consciousness of self within an objective created order. She neglects systematic reflection on the possibility of this deep interconnectedness of self with cosmos.[230]

Such a renewed self-consciousness along the grain of the cosmos produces an ascetic joy, especially the knowledge of living in obedience to God and how one was created. On an affective level, Stewart-Kroeker also diverges importantly from Nussbaum's assessment of Augustine, instead arguing that 'for Augustine, Christ comes to show human beings how much God loves them so that their love for God may be kindled in turn, and he becomes their neighbour that they may love their neighbour as he loves them.'[231]

Christ is present now under our feet not just at the end of our pilgrimage. The human will, which originally desired what was according to nature or creation, has now inherited trouble.[232] This bodily trouble or perturbation of emotion misuses creation, requiring re-orientation through the greater power of love for God. As pilgrims step, they become world-weary and yet paradoxically foretaste the future transformation and vindication of creation through the Spirit.[233] There is, then, only a fleeting sense of shame that is quickly replaced by the power to act in love, and to perceive the goodness and proper use of creation in enjoying God. In the memory of the gay celibate, old desires still linger among transformed *eros* like the mixed body of

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[229] Ibid*,* 51.
[230] Hordern, *Political Affections,* 85.
[231] *PMAF*, 205.
[232] *DCD XIV*, xxi-xxiii, 581; 16, 614-615; 24, 625-627.
[233] *PMAF*, 27, 99, 117; *DCD XV*, v, 689-693.

the *civitas dei*. The gift of noetic yielding in prayer and worship which Coakley emphasises redeems the heart back through this delight in creation through God's love and beauty.[234]

1.4.2 GCA and the Therapy of Desire in Augustine

The ascetic success of the Church in its witness to new humanity, then, relies on the active celebration and moral formation of kinds of witness that affirm, honour but go beyond the created order's goodness.[235] Bodily asceticism requires the mutual interdependence of the married and celibate in the body of Christ alongside a renewed economy of erotics and intimacy.[236] Gay celibates in solidarity with other celibates remind the Church, in this case, the Church of England, of the future reality of desire-fulfilment in Christ. They reawaken pilgrims to the fact that sex and marriage are contingent goods through the challenging rigor of living now in radical deference to the non-sexual, erotic future. As Augustine desired, well-ordered friendship rather than marriage's lower goods becomes the central pursuit.[237] Gay celibates live out a unique *felix culpa* that also provides an especial glory both similar to and discontinuous from holy virgins. They forgo the good of marrying as their original desire might entail, and, therefore, the capacity to share as easily in universally celebrated goods such as marriage and sex that are found in the two cities.

Instead of having the comfort of these shared goods and a shared political life with the majority of society, gay celibates suffer a lack which they must replace with heavenly affection for Christ. The Holy Spirit provides theodicean consolation to those suffering an alien precarity which requires a deeper dependency toward other pilgrims for earthly love. Gay celibates are set apart as peculiar aliens; queer pilgrims that are signs of the future Heavenly City who not only powerfully renew elements of peregrine mission but also possess the theodicean experience to reform the Church's theology of desire. Like Christ, who became a eunuch for the sake of the Kingdom of God, they represent an aspect of the passion and, therefore, part of Christ's own identity and glory. This queerness or holy strangeness has potential not just to awaken the Church to the Kingdom of God, but also to witness to the horizon of redemptive erotics for which creation was destined in Christ. Their peregrine queerness also provides a powerfully disruptive witness to the norms of Earth's city toward Christ's redemption of creation, especially

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[234] *TNA*, 61.
[235] Created order is part of love's constitution restored by Christ, distinct from mundane creation, which is postlapsarian perception of the world characterised by instability (*RMO,* 33).
[236] *RMO*, 131.
[237] ep. Io. tr. 10.7 (PL 35: 2059); *DDC*, 60; *PMAF*, 201.

the transformation of desire and sex itself with the conviction of their misuse and desire's joyful satisfaction in God.[238]

Gay celibates are, therefore, rendered capable of a radical witness to Christ's own cruciform and resurrection-oriented example: 'So the rest of the faithful, who have lost their virginity, must follow the Lamb not wherever he goes, but only so far as they themselves can go. They can in fact follow everywhere except where he has advanced into the glory of virginity.'[239] Jesus remained celibate to serve and receive the glory of the Kingdom of God on the cross and in the Resurrection. Gay celibates can follow him into the glory of his own sexual and erotic ascesis because of their particular vocation in this troubled age. Christ is the centre of being at home among the pilgrims like the holy virgins who 'follow the Lamb wherever he goes' in a particularly intimate way.[240]

A part of the ethic which the *civitas terrena* cannot understand without knowing Christ is the special intimacy enjoyed with the Lord precisely by living in the vicissitudes of his ascetical example of martyr-like celibate asceticism on the cross. For gay celibates, this is only intensified by their difference from other virgins in their lack of choice, since the direction of their desire leads them to remain celibate re-channelling their desire with a queer effect on natural idolatries.[241] Building from Augustine's account of fidelity in marriage as the *remedium concupiscentiae*, these queer pilgrims engage in celibacy as the primary ordinate mode of desire transformation and the more proximate *remedium concupiscentiae*.[242] They seek to remedy the particularity of the way their desires have been corrupted in a way more closely aligned to martyrdom. For Augustine, martyrdom is not chosen and, therefore, they need an affective anchor to hold them in their wrestle. Through the celestial joy unavailable to the city of Earth but available to the city of God, they seek Augustine's way:

> [For Augustine] to fail in charity, then, was to become weak in willing and to fall into a love of self, neighbor, or other created goods that was disoriented and chaotic because it lacked an orientation toward God... charity which opposed the sexual appetite and reoriented sexual desire could grow beyond the mutual care operative within a family to

[238] *DIP,* 211.
[239] *DSV*, 103.
[240] Rev. 14:4.
[241] *DBC*, 39.
[242] Patout Burns, 'Marital…', 30.

> the sexual restraint and renunciation that would build a society of friendship and forgiveness in the church.[243]

Like Jesus, gay celibates represent an instantiation of the pilgrim oddity that we should expect of heavenly citizens, ceding desire to the transcendent ordering of God's charity. Their queerness means they suffer from being misunderstood by natural idolatry or dismissed both by other pilgrims who seek either a revisionist or heteronormative way out of the theological dilemma of homosexuality. GCA is prophetically designed to take the Church deeper into celestial charity, as well as challenge the citizens of Earth as a particularly visible and intimate example of embracing a different order of love in Christ.[244] The Church must find ways, then, to make such a witness more visible as a part of its larger calling to be the city set apart for God. Such visibility could happen through liturgical representation of celibate *eros* and ways of recognising GCA as a legitimate vocation.

Augustine's conversion caused him to reject the Manichean tendency to dualistically split darkness and light (material realities), as well as the Neoplatonic distinction between body and soul.[245] Much like the ways gay and heterosexual self-consciousness has been defined by the romanticist idols of the city of Earth, Augustine's holy virgins challenged similar idols within Roman culture.[246] As Bernd Wannenwetsch comments:

> The one status [in the world] is always partly determined by the other [in the polis of the Church], and this is bound to make itself felt at latest where the two conflict. For citizens of the church in the first century, this conflict still had deadly consequences, as the Roman authorities were obliged to require Christians too to put their secular political status first. But because Christians saw themselves primarily as citizens of the Church, this 'status inconsistency' led in many cases to suffering. They thereby testified to the fact that, since in the *ekklesia* there are only full citizens, in the world these people can only be strangers. To put it in pneumatological terms: God's Spirit, which rules the *ecclesia*, relativizes the ties with all the different political, economic, and ethnic systems which are determined by another spirit, the spirit of self-preservation.[247]

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[243] Ibid, 31, 35.
[244] Ibid, 41.
[245] *DIP,* 31, 91.
[246] *DCD*, 19; 31; *DSV*, 117.
[247] Wannenwetsch, *Political Worship*, 144.

Notwithstanding, Wannenwetsch draws out the experience of the earliest Christians, as inflected in the use of the term pilgrim by Augustine, especially the desire for self-preservation or enjoyment of certain goods on the terms of inordinate self-love. He helps to highlight the alien-like limits of the experience of celibate gay Christians. They exist outside the normative expectation of the post-secularist West and its notion of eudaimonism or flourishing. GCA's social queerness or alien status to the city of Earth echoes Augustine's early Christian context where Christians were alien *peregrini*. By elevating God's *ordo amoris* and its renewed perception of the cosmic order, the full theodicean dilemma of same-sex desire is met.

1.4.3 Anglicanism and Holy Virginity: GCA in the City of God

The analogy between GCA and Augustine's holy virgins charts a third way forward for Anglican debates around same-sex desire. The Anglican Church has had to devote much of its thought-life to desire to meet the demands of a world which perceives the Church to be homophobic. The *civitas terrena* does not understand the dilemma of same-sex desire in the created order in the christological way that gay celibates do.[248] The Church, then, has a duty to represent this minority voice, which prizes the *amor dei* above other orders of desire. Similarly, Augustine wrote *DCD* to defend against the charge of blame for the Roman Empire's collapse. Like the Church of Augustine's time, the Church of England's sexual ethic finds itself not just with the need for apologetic fortification, but also liberation in renewed desire for Christ.

GCA evangelically elucidates how to witness to God through the created order and goods of marriage in light of the dilemma of same-sex desire while embodying the reality which marriage is called to signify. Rather than taking the sign as the centre of a vision of human flourishing, it takes the future state of perfected desire in the heart of Christ as the city of God's affective centre and what should define human flourishing. The pitfall of pride for celibacy requires a thoroughgoing account of desire to avoid ascetic enthusiasm or an over-elevation of celibacy. Christology relativizes the good of marriage so that eschatological celibacy is central to the Church's vision of *eudaimonia*. The Church's debates about dis/allowing same-sex sexual activity highlights a much deeper need for a christological definition of human flourishing. GCA applies this christological solution to meet the problem of desire which we will discuss in relation to Coakley's new asceticism in chapter 3.[249]

[248] *LLF*, 35.
[249] *GSS*, 44.

In Augustine's attempt to address the problem of concupiscent desire, one of the glaring omissions is the specificity of same-sex desire and its ascesis. I suggest here that if a greater understanding of same-sex desire and experience were available to Augustine, a unique vocation could have been developed pastorally. An innovative vocation for gay orientation could have met the theological, moral, and pastoral challenges of same-sex desire for the gay Christian today which enjoins martyrdom and holy virginity.[250] Instead, in the modern history of the Church, gay people have been perceived as those who were morally abhorrent or wilfully sinful, instead of those in a theodicean dilemma with a troubled gift that is necessary for the Gospel's work of universal liberation. I have begun to illustrate how gay celibates are an indispensable and integral part of the city of God where desire is recognised as both a gift and differently fallen. The theodicean reality of same-sex desire and created order is met head-on. The Nygren-esque, stoical tendency in the anthropology of the modern Church has meant that the Anglican conversation has been stuck in the loop of the facilely heteronormative or reductively progressive.[251]

Furthermore, the false association of homosexual repression and the good of Christian celibacy can be similarly related to a failed or deficient asceticism – i.e. where gays risk being subjected to a harmfully repressive, deontic expectation for stoical celibacy. In the extreme, this faulty form of gay celibacy can even be understood by a sub-Freudian narrative which perceives any form of asceticism as harmful self-denial or repressive sublimation, which resists needed sexual release.[252] This often toxic mix, described by Coakley in her new asceticism, is part of an evangelically deficient ascetic expectation for the gay person.[253] This latently stoical view of desire is often unfairly attributed to Augustine's account of desire rather than the complex context in which he lived.[254]

On the Augustinian account developed here, the way out of the misuse of the same-sex other is to reorder desire through Christ's beauty and spiritual friendship which can provide fulfilment in celibacy.[255] In Christ's friendship, human longings are not just recognised as troubled or sinful but also, vindicated and restored in the Resurrection of the body.[256] Augustine concluded that

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[250] Sachs, L. W. *Homosexuality and the Crisis of Anglicanism* (Cambridge: CUP, 2009), 12; 130-134.
[251] Ibid, 135.
[252] Whittle et al. *Marriage,* 263-264.
[253] *TNA*, 56.
[254] Harrison, C. *Augustine: Christ and Fractured Humanity* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), 192-193.
[255] See Aelred of Rielvaux and Bernard of Clairvaux on spiritual friendship; *Spiritual Friendship: 5 (Cisterican Fathers Series)* (London: Liturgical Press, 2010), 29-30; Clairvaux, Bernard of, *The Love of God and Spiritual Friendship* ed. J.M Houston (London: Regent College Publishing, 2019), 35.
[256] *PSL*, 31.

the cross and Christ's friendship through it sits as the central paradigm of redemptive beauty and the aesthetic entry point to the city and the anchoring point for desire-transformation.[257] As Tretell posits, the flesh itself is not bad but instead, the inordinacy of desire within the body and affecting the mind which seeks to misuse creation:

> The flesh, in its own kind and order, is good. Echoing Romans 1:25 ('they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator', RSV), [Augustine] says that when one has abandoned the Good Creator ('*deserto Creatore ono*', 420/3, and chooses to live according to the created good ('*uiuere secundum creatore bono'*, 420/3-4), that is not good.[258]

For Augustine, desire must take on an erotic death according to creation's goods that is cruciform in shape. Desire is called to deny the created good's ultimacy before it can proceed to use it well.[259] Erotic death does not involve entire extirpation but ascetical redirection to another order of love. The death of misaimed desire involves a re-orientation toward eternal goods in a new, future-oriented order through the Spirit – an element missing in Nussbaum's account of Augustine.[260]

As Coakley states: 'The challenge is to identify the difference in these many desires, and how to move from corruption to the sublime within them by processes of formation, self-knowledge, humility, and progressive reliance on divine grace.'[261] Instead of desire being told to wait for the future, desire is met now by the Spirit. For Augustine, hidden in the horror of the cross is a beauty so powerful, which when revealed by the Spirit, has the capacity to radically transform the aesthetic and moral intuitions of human beings. Desire is inverted by its object, namely a crucified messiah: '[Christ] hung on the cross, deformed; but his deformity was our beauty (*pulchritudo*) where '*deformitas Christi te format* (Christ's deformity forms you).'[262] Perceiving this beauty veiled in the deformation of Christ's body inscribes a renewed, God-shaped vision of the Good within the (gay) disciple.[263] A new positive moral vision is produced where same-sex sexual desire and the erotic body are ascetically purged and redirected toward the cruciform example and beauty of Jesus, the entry-way to resurrection and new creation through the Holy Spirit.

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[257] *PMAF*, 191.
[258] *DIP*, 44.
[259] *DDC*, 17.
[260] *G&D*, 210.
[261] *TNA*, 2015, 10.
[262] *PMAF,* 230.
[263] Ibid, 227.

Desire toward the same-sex is christologically re-interpreted by gay celibates in a disruptively eschatological way that breaks with the *civitas terrena*. The earthly city has deemed that there is little to be questioned about same-sex desire. In order for gay people to flourish they must express their sexual desires. The view of the *civitas terrena* is a different kind of eudaimonism. As Hordern states: 'the most mature aspect of Augustine's notion of love is a 'rational love' by which worth and value is perceived. Such love has an *ordo* which is either imposed by the lover or given by its comprehending conformity to the order of reality.'[264] This mature love recognises a rational hope for the body which can be stewarded with worth and value according to its enchantment in desire for Christ. As an expression of this reformed love, GCA is highly queer. These queerest of the queer cannot belong in the orders of desire in the *civitas terrena* as they more radically belong to eschatological existence through the Holy Spirit.

GCA emerges both as an extension from Augustine's two city thesis and his ascetic theology of virginity and martyrdom we explored earlier: 'Still more gifts that can be allocated to these different categories… since there are many gifts of divine grace and since one is greater and better than another… we do best to believe that there are too many gifts to be distributed into three categories.'[265] He envisages innovations and yet recognises that martyrdom has the higher reward of a hundredfold fruit. The argument here aspires to achieve such an innovation. Christopher Holmes observes, the Holy Spirit gives the Church not just a new capacity to see aright but a completely renewed vision of love:

> Sight derivative of the Word coincides with love. One does not strive to see so as to master or to dominate but in order to love. To see is to love…One cannot see God or love God out of resources internal to the self, like desire or the community, like tradition alone. Sight is not a semi-Pelagian endeavour.[266]

He goes on further to say that 'a regenerate vision glimpses – however obliquely – things as they are.'[267] GCA is a gift which can connect with the city of Earth's understanding of same-sex desire but embrace the city of God's regenerate vision. God intended creation to take on an even greater end which goes beyond sexual difference to the eternal subsistence of friendship.

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[264] Hordern, *Political Affections*, 75.
[265] DSV, 130: Hunter, *Marriage*, 281.
[266] Ibid, 173.
[267] Holmes, C. *The Holy Spirit: New Studies in Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 172, 174.

This new sight leaves the gay person with this regenerate vision in a very queer place. Marriage and sex are no longer a straight-forward vocation for them unlike their heterosexual peers for whom marriage can be accessed more freely. Through their strange or *queer* difference, gay celibate pilgrims provide the opportunity for moral learning. Their instantiation of gay experience does not hinder their enjoyment of God but rather intensifies it by delighting in God's love and beauty reflected in Christ through creation. As Augustine says, 'One only loves, after all, what delights one,' and the one who gains what he desires, the beloved Christ, gains joy.[268]As we will explore in the next chapter, the gay celibate is among the queerest of alien sojourners. Gay celibates on account of this pilgrim queerness are often oppressively misunderstood by the earthly city and heteronormative pilgrims. Their impetus emerges out of the renewed knowledge of creation that Christ's invitation into the eschatological future begets.

Celibacy, especially when understood superficially, is perceived as a vocation of lack and suffering, rather than joy or fullness of grace.[269] As Tonstad opines:

> All three figures [Balthasar, Coakley, and Ward] want to ground the cross in the Trinity, and all of them in one way or another associate love and closeness with suffering and sacrifice. These problems are associated with an insufficient attention to the Resurrection and the fact that Christian faith is all about the defeat of death.[270]

The distinct lack of discussion related to resurrection, plenitude, and joy has been a problem that Tonstad helpfully identifies in Ward and Coakley. The erotic mainstay of the contemporary Church lacks the Resurrection-laden imagination to make celibacy an attractive path. Gay celibacy, as we have parsed it through Augustine, contravenes Tonstad's critique of

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[268] *Serm.* 159.3 (*PL* 38:869; *WSA* III/5:122).
[269] Tonstad, *Queer Theology*, 43-44: Tonstad unhelpfully avoids Augustine's view of desire which appeals to an originary good perturbed by the Fall, rehashing the dualism or echo of Manicheanism latent in ex-gay theology which sees the body either as entirely good or entirely bad, 'born that way' or not: '…those who have chosen to live celibate Christian lives because they are gay argue that faithful gay celibacy will be rewarded in heaven, and constitutes a form of Christian friendship approved by God…. But such claims turn on a sharp disjunction between inclination and act that Jesus explicitly denies… If we take Jesus' words seriously, sexual sin doesn't necessarily have anything to do with what the body actually does, but lies in desire itself… homophobic churches ought to have the courage of their convictions and admit that they do think homosexuality, the inclination, is sinful.' Tonstad leaves no space for the ascetical nuance which sees a difference between sinful and fallen desire and that same-sex orientation is not sinful, but involves effects of the Fall. Her view gives way to the 'born that way' idea, rather than the thicker texture of what the Gospel presents in terms of the etiology of our desires as a complex weave of creation, fall, and redemption. She equates a Side B position to hidden or internalised homophobia, rather than seeing the theology and queerness behind GCA. This reveals a blindness to the queerness which emerges from the non-dualist view of the Gospel to find another, more integrated option in GCA.
[270] Tonstad, L. M. 'Response to 'Tools in the Making', Karen Kilby's review of *Ge&D',* 2018, accessed: https://syndicate.network/symposia/theology/god-and-difference/ (7/11/2019).

contemporary Anglican approaches to ascesis by: i) seeking to move beyond this dialectic of cross and resurrection by refusing to see the cross as separate from the fullness and flourishing of the beauty and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and ii) understanding desire as only brought to its cruciform death in order that it may be raised giving erotic power to rightly use creation within this current body.

As Augustine emphasises, asceticism must proceed from the joy of discovering the plenitude of God's love and beauty discovered paradoxically in the deformity of the cross, and revealed in the resurrected Christ. As Stewart-Kroeker observes about Augustine's vision of self-transformation in Christ: 'If joy is the emotion that responds most immediately to the true good loved and anticipated by faith and hope—the life of felicity in which one enjoys union with God and neighbor eternally—then it is tied to the judgments that orient the moral life as a whole to its true and right aim.'[271] A new witness of joy can be given to contemporary Anglican theology that finds itself anchored in Christ's own delay toward the 'joy set before him,' which he now shares with us in the Spirit. For the gay Christian, that delay is most acutely felt in giving up a precarious good among the factional voices, which may hold them back from the horizon of desire that is theirs in God, and which endues them with the greatest possible dignity.

The gay celibate responds in this way to both the created gift of the body and its 'troubled' nature. Patterson responds to certain superficial critics of Judith Butler and queer theory's work arguing that 'Butler's thought is an affront to those who do not wish to *investigate* because they *already* know the truth.'[272] GCA's witness has a similar effect on those who see it as an affront to their side of a debate, and thus, do not want to hear it. GCA's queerness and ascetical complexity require the virtue of patience and joy to investigate. By moving beyond repristinating sexual difference or mounting an anti-creational theology, the gay celibate Christian resists faulty asceticism or the Pelagian tendency toward prideful self-denial. Grace opens their ears to the renewing Word, Jesus Christ who they are identified with in their cruciform exclusion and heavenly belonging. GCA is an ascetical movement upwards through participation in the aesthetic and affective joy of knowing Jesus Christ crucified. Through the evangelical joy of shaping the self around the *amor dei*, the new perception of sexual difference in the created order thwarts the affective incurvature which turns sexuality into an idol:

[271] Stewart-Kroeker, S. 'A Wordless Cry of Jubilation', *Augustinian Studies* 50, no.1 (2019): 65-66; *DCD XIV*, ix, 600.
[272] Patterson, 'A Theological Reading…', 41.

> For Augustine, the primordial identity of the soul is forged in its imaging of God. The image of God is not some 'thing', part, or faculty imprinted onto an already existing soul; rather, it characterises how the soul forms its basic identity out of its existence... The soul exists in a type of reflective immediacy in which its identity is given to it from that which the soul is not (i.e., God). This leads to the paradoxical conclusion that the soul becomes most itself when it is least its own.[273]

This paradox of desire where the soul or the affective centre of a human being is given its basic identity by being cast against the holy reality of God – that to which it is not – lies at the heart of GCA. In the next chapter, I elucidate the process of how the gay celibate discerns the moral order in a way that reads it through Christ who becomes the mediator of the grace to ascetically cede and re-enchant the gay body.

I suggest that the beginning of understanding a gay person's soul or identity before God, which starts first in reference to their body and its longing for intimacy with the same-sex other is found precisely in what that soul is not. The human soul has to recognise an ultimate other in grasping its primordial identity. That ultimate other is a holy, trinitarian God revealed in Christ who has established and fashioned creation. GCA connects to Augustine's vision of moral reality, which requires an ascetic process of moral deliberation. This begins with the new sight of coming to know the beloved Christ which meets the soul's craving for the holy other that it often resists by misusing creation.

The fallen but good nature of human *eros* or *amor* is deemed capable of more than just elevation or ascetic purging. Through Christ, desire is made capable of knowing the effects of Christ's own joyous and redemptive resurrection. A new perception of the good is revealed and attained in the Creator's works and goodness. Such a new sight exceeds merely 'natural' or tacit knowledge innate to gay self-consciousness and reflected in mainstream gay or queer ethics, and is, therefore, a uniquely Christian contribution to what it means to be gay or queer. GCA consists in a radically eschatological witness. It is not simply a creational ethic emerging from a direct attempt to repristinate a protology of sex without a serious engagement with the postlapsarian body's trouble. The gay celibate acts from the knowledge begotten by the joy of God's grace which helps us reinterpret the created order from the future resurrection joy of a vindicated but transformed cosmic order. As Hordern states:

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[273] Drever, M. *Image, Identity, and the Forming of the Augustinian Soul* (Oxford: OUP, 2013), 24.

> This moral order is the objective, given shape of the world, structured patterns of value which are not projected on the world by humanity but present before they are affectively recognised... For Christian theology, this reality has been created by God and vindicated by the incarnation and resurrection of Christ, as God's saving actions say 'yes' to the goodness of that which was created from the beginning and destined for fulfilment in the new heavens and new earth.[274]

GCA emerges from the order of love and grace which drives the creature to undergo transformative ascesis toward wise action where desire can be redirected into the concrete existence of the world reperceived through the love of God.

1.5 Conclusion: Gay Celibate Aliens as Pilgrim Witnesses of Evangelical Joy

This chapter has shown that: i) gay celibates embody the regenerate vision given in the love of Christ in an Augustinian frame distinct from and yet similar to the holy virgins of his time; ii) they pose the challenge of renewing desire and celibacy not as a repressive or stoical legalism but by embodying a new christological vision of human flourishing where sex is no longer a necessity and friendship and the *koinonia* of the Church become ultimately sought after as present and eternal goods; and iii) the gay celibate pilgrim appears as an intensely queer figure in the modern earthly city and its sexual politics, longing for the Church to become less the *tertium quid* and more like the city of God where marriage and celibacy orients desire toward a holy end in the glorified Christ. At the queerest edge of celibacy and the Church's wrestle with same-sex desire, then, lies in wait a hope-filled horizon of God's adoption of gay disciples, and their hyper-queer witness. This witness arises from embodying both the strangeness of celestial celibacy and a resistance to the pitfalls of either a stoical or libertine way of understanding desire in the contemporary Anglican discussion.

Gay celibacy highlights a deeply problematic contradiction at the heart of current queer theology, which would find itself queered by the queerest of the queer: those gay Christians who seek to live in a decidedly world-weary and eschatologically-shaped way in the *civitas terrena*, but with a different vision of the Good as part of the *civitas dei*. Paul of course writes of the body of death which we naturally inhabit.[275] But mortal bodies are differently affected by the *discordium malum*. Same-sex desire leads to a particular kind of existential trouble for the body that raises a sharp

[274] Hordern, *Political Affections,* 83-84.
[275] Rom. 7:24-25.

question of theodicy because of the contrast with those experiencing heterosexual desire. Their response to the trouble of the body diagnosed by Judith Butler and queer theory is reoriented around the resurrection hope of a future body destined for another economy of desire with new joys and satisfactions for desire.[276] For Augustine: 'We have wandered far from God; and if we wish to return to our Father's home, this world must be used, not enjoyed, so that the invisible things of God may be clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made — that is, by means of what is material and temporary, we may lay hold upon that which is spiritual and eternal.'[277] The witness of the Church, a body of people who find their origin in the *civitas dei*, is to appear paradoxically familiar to the *civitas terrena*, and strangely foreign or *queer to* it.[278]

This constructive study of GCA has revealed that while the *civitas dei* is a stranger or a resident alien (*peregrinus*) in this world and yearns for its celestial homeland, the earthly city is also not a unified body. The earthly city lies in continuous strife with itself because it is dominated by different visions of the good and desire. If the Church adopts the exact same understanding of desire as the *civitas terrena*, including its understanding of (same-sex) desire, it risks dissolving and losing its identity as the place where desire-transformation in Christ takes place according to rightly-ordered love or the *amor dei*. Instead, the Church is called to take as its basis a moral and pastoral theology that emerges from a christological vision of the good defined by the queerness of Christ's own celibate pilgrimage toward the cross. The dilemma of desire at GCA's heart is part of the problem of sin and human salvation in Christ. I have established a christological grounding for GCA through imitating Jesus as the ultimate heavenly alien. His own salvific mission meant that he had to participate in the eschatological goods of God in order to both witness to the created order and deal with the theodicean burden of his future death on the cross. These gay Christians exemplify the Christ-like strangeness of coming from a different city. Through my constructive adaptation of Augustine's theology, we can begin to see how gay celibates are among the cohort of peregrine aliens who embody Jesus' journey to the cross and its end point in the resurrection. They are among those thoroughly at home among Christ and other pilgrim strangers who deny the world's misuse of goods, face the mystery of suffering, and follow Christ's ascetic example.

This chapter has examined how all creatures in the *civitas dei* are called to live according to their created nature in God, which, for Augustine, is the definition of happiness or human flourishing.

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[276] *Cf.* Butler, J. *Bodies That Matter* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 64-65.
[277] *DDC*, 7.
[278] *DON*, 251-254.

Gay celibates act from this future in the joy-filled response that resurrection can proffer to the radical diagnosis of the Fall in Augustine and queer theory alike. In the following chapters we will explore, from the Augustinian theology which undergirds GCA, how the banks of earth-bound identities and the postlapsarian condition's trouble can become sites of glory bursting with affectively-charged hope. Such a christological hope burns away Nussbaum's rightly-diagnosed shame in the Stoics. Such hope comes from participation in the endless joy of the Triune God, eternally-rooted in the neighbour-love and everlasting joy of friendship which images and imitates the very love and life of God in Christ.

CHAPTER TWO: OLIVER O'DONOVAN'S MORAL THEOLOGY AND GCA

2.0 Introduction: Oliver O'Donovan's *ACWTB* and GCA

Anexetatos bios abiôtos (The life unexamined is intolerable to live). –Socrates[279]

Having established aspects of (dis)analogy between holy virginity and gay celibacy in Augustine, I now turn to O'Donovan's moral theology to move us on from historical analogy into ethical reflection. As Coakley observes vis-à-vis historical study of asceticism: 'asceticism had become voyeuristic, something to study but not actually to do.'[280] In reviewing O'Donovan's work on desire she states, 'there is a constant return to the theme [of desire]… as if to an unresolved dilemma; it is an itch in the system that obviously needs scratching.'[281] O'Donovan emphases Christ's vindication of the moral order through resurrection. I build my account of GCA in this chapter from this dogmatic emphasis. However, as I explore, O'Donovan's work on the erotic body lacks Coakley's depth and yet his moral theology provides an indispensable christological foundation for GCA.

In 1995, the Church of England Evangelical Council released the St Andrew's Day statement, which queried the contribution gay Christians could bring to the conversation over sexuality with the guiding principle to 'be on guard... against constructing any other ground for our identities other than the redeemed humanity given us in Christ.'[282] O'Donovan, a drafter of the statement asks what gay Christians can offer in *A Conversation Waiting To Begin (ACWTB*): 'What good news does the gay Christian have to bring to the Church?'[283] He starts with the assertion that gay Christians must become in some sense 'evangelists.'[284] I apply the account of GCA we have built through Augustine to Anglican moral theology to meet O'Donovan's call for gay evangelical witness. To begin the conversation, he describes a central anthropological enquiry of this thesis: 'can gay Christians present themselves as the bearers of an experience of the human that is, at the very least, of irreplaceable importance for our understanding of our own times?'[285] The task of Christian ethics is identified by O'Donovan as the pursuit of 'ordered structures of being and good,' as well as of love, which he defines as 'human participation in the created order.'[286] Any

[279] *ACWTB*, 15.
[280] *TNA*, 18.
[281] Coakley, S. 'A Response to Oliver O'Donovan's Ethics as Theology', *Modern Theology* 36, no. 1 (2020): 188.
[282] *STANDS,* para 2.
[283] *ACWTB, 16*.
[284] Ibid.
[285] Ibid, 17.
[286] *RMO,* 138.

ethic emerging from the enterprise of giving an account of gay Christian self-understanding must be robustly 'evangelical.'[287] In order to respond to O'Donovan's call for this distinctly gay Christian self-understanding, I appeal to O'Donovan's account of moral order in order to describe the ethical elements within GCA that are essential to understanding the experience of being gay and Christian in a distinctly evangelical, Augustinian way.

Gay celibacy consists in a specific case study to discuss human participation in the love of God and the order of creation as reflected in *RMO* and *ACWTB*. In this chapter, I interpret the Christian ontology of love we have explored in Augustine through O'Donovan's account of moral order. O'Donovan provides essential moral and affective foundations for gay celibacy and enshrines it as a sacramental form of existence that befriends the body's gift and trouble:

> Our relationship with our bodies is a moral task, and not merely an event which may or may not transpire… [it] involves accepting this gift and learning to love it, even though we may have to acknowledge that it does not come to us without problems. Our task is to discern the possibilities for personal relationship which are given to us with this biological sex, and seek to develop them in accordance with our individual vocations.[288]

GCA extends O'Donovan's cruciform ethic which sees exclusion from certain goods in the created order as essential to witnessing to their eventual transformation in coming resurrection. As O'Donovan states, 'the two loves, of God and neighbour, are one love, held together and differentiated by the ordering of the creature to Creator.'[289] The lesser good must be reinterpreted around the greater good. Through O'Donovan, I elucidate the particularities and challenges of what this means for the affections and desires of the gay Christian.

I, therefore, ask of his account of moral or created order two central questions: i) what is the impact the Christ event has on the epistemological authority of created order, specifically how living according to its retrieval in the Resurrection (in the three-fold fashion of vindication, restoration, and transformation) relates to same-sex desire, asceticism, and human affectivity?; and ii) what does it look like for a gay Christian to respond to God's moral authority in this order and to participate, therefore, in an asceticism which reflects Christ's own passion? As O'Donovan states:

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[287] Ibid, 103.
[288] O'Donovan, O. *Begotten or Made?* (Oxford: OUP, 1984), 28-29.
[289] *RMO*, 236.

> The pastoral challenge that the gay phenomenon presents to the church, then, is not primarily emancipatory, but hermeneutic. And that is the supreme justification for a conciliar process that will take up the experience of homosexual Christians as its leading question.[290]

Furthermore, I contrast O'Donovan's argument for marriage as part of the moral order in conversation with Anglican queer theology, which has captured many of the important emancipatory elements. Before we engage directly with O'Donovan's invitation for a conversation and the strengths and weaknesses in his approach, I turn now to exegete his theology of moral order, and how it speaks to the dilemma of same-sex desire and GCA. This section is not a fresh start but a natural step from Augustine to explore O'Donovan's own constructive argument about the relationship between the erotic body and created order.

2.1 The Incarnation and Same-Sex Desire in O'Donovan: Christological Asceticism and Created Goods

O'Donovan constructs an ethic for desire by holding both the eschatological transformation of creation and its moral ordering together in the Incarnation. Marriage not only honours sex difference in the created order, but echoes the eschatological hope, which celibacy or singleness engenders:

> The New Testament church bore witness by fostering the social conditions which could support the vocation to the single life. It conceived of marriage and singleness as vocations, each a worthy form of life, the two together comprising the whole Christian witness to the nature of affectionate community. The one declared that God had vindicated the order of creation, the other pointed beyond it to its eschatological transformation. But the co-existence of the two within the Christian church did not mean a loss of integrity to either. Each had to function as what it was, according to its own proper structure. The married must live in the ways of marriage, the single in the ways of singleness. Neither would accommodate in itself or evoke in the other an evolutionary mutation. Marriage that was not marriage could not witness to the goodness of the created order, singleness that was not singleness could tell us nothing of the fulfilment for which that order was destined.[291]

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[290] *ACWTB,* 16

[291] See where O'Donovan discusses singleness and marriage from 1 Cor. 7 and Matt. 19:10-12 (*RMO*, 70).

As O'Donovan further elucidates: 'singleness is intelligible as a vocation because of the *eschaton*.'[292] There is a mutual interdependence between marriage and singleness because they reflect the transformation of creation as per Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 7 and Augustine's ascetical theology. For Rowan Williams, in the vein of Augustine, the goal of such ascetic vocations is to avoid perversion of desire in an instrumentalist sense. Instead of appealing to created order as the context for testing desire, he opens up the possibility of gay unions as a place to engender this rightly-ordered, trinitarian love.[293]

For O'Donovan, 'morality is man's participation in the created order. Christian morality is his glad response to the deed of God which has restored, proved and fulfilled that order, making man free to conform to it.'[294] Desire 'is the opening of love to time's distribution of created goods.'[295] O'Donovan's creational understanding of moral order helps to complement and direct desire in a contemporary Anglican approach to asceticism, which renews the Church to steward the opening of love to God's distribution of created goods in time. Stewart-Kroeker, in contrast, postulates that there is inarticulacy in prayer (similarly to Coakley's wordless groans) – but not because the created order is not intelligible or not determinative of our obligations to the ethical outworking of our desires.[296] Instead, when we foretaste something of creation's fulfilment, the attraction or beauty of it is so ecstatically captivating. The distance from creation's fulfilment attests to our theodicean burden. The nearness witnesses to the beauty of created order here and now in the revelation of God in Christ.[297] Such elements motivate moral agency through a dignifying ethical clarity, and end point for the erotic desire of gay Christians. GCA, like O'Donovan's moral theology, attempts to straddle the divide between the polarity of either a creational or Kingdom ethic.[298] Like GCA, O'Donovan enjoins both by anchoring them christologically and pointing to their final synthesis of the revelation of the trinitarian God in the transformed creation to come.

For O'Donovan, a truly christological ascesis, then, denies certain desires linked to a fallen affectivity which moves the desirer away from right use of the created order. We know the Creator only as we love him – namely through the Spirit and the contingencies of creation. Postlapsarian affectivity is unstable and needs to be restored through the living Word and loving

[292] Ibid, 71.
[293] Williams, 'The Body's…', 11.
[294] *RMO*, 76.
[295] *Fe&S*, 105.
[296] Stewart-Kroeker, 'A Wordless Cry', 79.
[297] Ibid, 'Resisting Idolatry...', 209.
[298] *RMO*, 15.

knowledge of the Creator, and by the powerful grace of the Holy Spirit. Acquiring this knowledge is not in any sense salvific, but is the shape of reality towards which the Spirit, as will be shown in chapter five, empowers GCA. Through God loving himself in us, Christian asceticism involves a transformation of both heart and mind, will and reason or in the Hookerian sense, the wrestle between laws of nature, reason, and desire. This transformation is not an entire ontological transmutation so as to remove or erase gay desire, but a partial sight, which cannot come by mere education but only by the re-orienting power of the Holy Spirit who groans, as per Coakley in the next chapter, in bodies awaiting resurrection.[299]

O'Donovan's hesitation related to desire may be best explained by the mind's misknowledge which must be constantly renewed in order to resist being conformed to the world.[300] Coakley's account of contemplative prayer and Ward's account of fallen erotics could help to assuage this problem in O'Donovan's emphasis on knowledge.[301] With these caveats met, O'Donovan shows a hopeful path forward for the erotic body in the created order which provides a way to redeem the 'misknowledge' of our postlapsarian desires, which drive fallen politics of desire, generating orders of love that depart the love of Christ.[302] Such an account of epistemic renewal will set us up for our exploration of Hooker's *Lawes* in chapter five.

For O'Donovan's account of moral knowledge in Christ, desire and its ascetic transformation requires the necessary recognition of the authority of God's created order. Jesus prays 'Abba, not my will, but yours be done.' The Gethsemane prayer is an important hinge for the authority of the Father where Christ shows us the path forward in prayerful asceticism. The authority of the Father is located in the recognition of the vindication of creation by the Son, as he undergoes his own exclusion from the created goods of life on the cross to bring the eternal good of the eschatological world recreated in him.

GCA echoes Jesus' own exclusion. Jesus' own exclusion is the christological condition for human asceticism and the theodicean response to the dilemma of same-sex desire for the gay Christian. The redemptive work of the Son is vital in helping the creature to discern, and be empowered to take the faithful path forward through carrying the cross. Such a cruciform asceticism leads to Christ's own triumph over disorder and the *discordium malum*. The gay disciple

[299] 1 Cor. 13:9; *GSS*, 145.
[300] Rom. 12:12.
[301] *RMO*, 151.
[302] Ibid, 89.

with the assistance of the Holy Spirit appropriates this christological path through submission to the authority of the Father in recognizing the vindication of created order by the Son:

> The triumph of the Son of Man prepares the way for the future triumph of his brethren, mankind as a whole. But this eschatological triumph of mankind is not an innovative order that has nothing to do with the primal ordering of man as creature to his Creator. It fulfils and vindicates the primal order in a way that was always implied, but which could not be realized in the fallen state of man and the universe.[303]

Such a recognition of creation's vindication is the condition for understanding the theodicean dilemma of same-sex desire as involving misknowledge of creation. The Incarnation is directly linked to the created order and its vindication in the Resurrection.

The Incarnation calls same-sex desire to the primal ordering of the creation which involves sexual difference and yet points it toward resurrection, not backward in our fallen knowing or 'misknowledge' of creation. O'Donovan parses the Augustinian relationship between Creator and creature reminding us that the Resurrection does not erase or undermine the primal ordering the Incarnation affirms.[304] For the gay Christian, wrestling with their desires in the knowledge of this primal ordering requires a cross-like discernment of what ascetical possibilities arise from grace which resurrects and dignifies the erotic body. We will now turn to the cross and resurrection to explain how this ascetical account is played out in gay celibacy.

2.1.1 Shaping Desire's Death in Christ Through Exclusion: The Cross and Resurrection in O'Donovan

GCA can be understood as a new affective disposition that emerges from the joyful vindication and eschatological patience toward the created order *in via* to transformation in Christ. The joy and patience of the Spirit meet the perturbance to which the body and desire are susceptible due to concupiscence. The fruit of the Holy Spirit can overcome the double-challenge of same-sex desire in that it does not easily align with the created order and the theodicean challenge of the involuntary nature of sexual orientation. The Incarnation both identifies with such a struggle of exclusion but also moves the gay Christian through to a greater fullness of joy and patient intimacy in God. Such an affective disposition fills the void left by the death of a certain interpretation of desire which moves against the created order. The human being, fully alive,

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[303] Ibid, 54.
[304] *ACWTB*, 97-99.

denies this aspect of their affectivity with the revelatory realization of God's love in Christ. What is missing from O'Donovan's account is how such self-denial can avoid becoming an act of self-repression, in a proto-Stoical sense. The question that remains is how such a renewed recognition of created good can maintain itself as an act of self-gift.[305]

The strength of O'Donovan's thought, however, is that the doctrine of creation is evangelically renewed through the gift of desire, particularly understanding the role of the goods of marriage. Like the Ascension and Resurrection, Christian ethics looks both backwards and forwards with a christological lens to the origin and end of the created order. This christological optic can also help to free the Church from oppressively fallen erotics and gender constructions by providing a path forward for desire.[306] GCA is an instantiation of this christological ethic, confirming thought, affection and agency to the coming transformation of creation without undermining Christ's affirmation of the structures of life in the world.

Created order is essential to the rationale behind the account of GCA I am proposing here. Such a key to ascetical transformation helps to ascertain what God's liberating activity and authority is. The disorientation of desire inflicted by the Fall is remedied through loving God, which procures a renewed grasp of creation's terms. Created order assists moral deliberation which can resist contrary witness to other orders of love from the *civitas terrena*. Such countervailing witness is 'marked by its insusceptibility to characterization in terms of order.'[307] The issue, however, is that 'order, even the order of creation, has been classed with law rather than the Gospel, and so assigned a purely provisional and transitory significance.'[308] This obscuring of created order from the Gospel causes a confusion for those pilgrims discerning their wayfaring in the *civitas dei.* Without clarity, Christian self-denial can easily fall into the extremes of libertinism and repression which emerge from a false parsing of 'law' and 'grace'.[309] O'Donovan warns that without the ascetic process of taking up the cross and receiving the power of the Holy Spirit to desire obedience, both righteous participation in the created order and being driven by the eschatological transformation of creation can be compromised. Without created order, desire remains untested and open to the misuse of creation that resists enjoying the risen Creator.

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[305] *TNA*, 21.
[306] Do Vale, F. 'Cappadocian or Augustinian? Adjudicating Debates on Gender in the Resurrection,' *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 21 (2019): 194; *Cities,* 121.
[307] *RMO*, 153: 'Certainly it is too much for us to keep these moral precepts consistently, short of eschatological transformation, as it is too much for us to keep any serious moral programme consistently.'
[308] Ibid.
[309] Ibid, 112.

In conclusion, O'Donovan's account reveals how vindicated created order is essential for the Church's approach to erotics because it: (i) discloses the authoritative reasons for action and the ends of desire compatible with loving God; (ii) is the given context in which a way of life that is stably responsive to God can be forged; (iii) requires relatively regularised patterns of reflection and deliberation in which the way of the Kingdom is distinguished from other orders of love; (iv) is the environment in which humans learn freedom, i.e. obedience and service within and to the order which God has made. We will now explore asceticism in the moral order as it is presented by O'Donovan in Christ's own life and echoed in GCA.

2.1.2 Exclusion for the Sake of a Greater Inclusion: The Cross as Death and Renewal of Gay Affectivity

In order for gay celibates to affectively steward their desires, they are faced with the challenge of being excluded from the created goods of marriage. By reading creation through Christ, they are drawn into the death of desire, which can give way to the renewal of gay affectivity the Resurrection proffers. Such a cruciform exclusion is integral to properly stewarding our affective impulses that are threatened by disorder. The fallen order:

> displays something of the grandeur and beauty of its created nature, however, the point is simply that striking bargains with the world is not the *imitatio Christi*. Christ's followers are called to bear their cross, to 'mortify' those aspects of their own nature which are inclined to compromise 'upon the earth'... they are called to accept exclusion from the created good as the necessary price of a true and unqualified witness to it.[310]

O'Donovan refers to created good as those contingent goods in creation given by God, including those of marriage and sex. To echo Augustine, O'Donovan's asceticism aims to live according to one's created nature. Same-sex desire, however, in gay celibates requires an intense instantiation of exclusion from the created good of marriage. Such a christological exclusion represents a difficult path for (gay) Christians who recognise their desires as leading them contrarily to the created order. Pastorally, the Church must then give a more profound consideration of how their particular situation differs from their heterosexual counterparts.

While O'Donovan points out the exclusion-based paradox of asceticism in the created order in Christ's life, he does not apply it to gay affectivity in a way I do in this chapter. However,

[310] Ibid, 96.

Christ's own asceticism provides a rich focus for discussing the particularities of how gay affectivity is called to proceed in the created order. O'Donovan's account helps both to dispel the seeming dialectical contradiction between eschatology and the created order, self-denial and human flourishing, obedience and grace, the cross and resurrection; and to determine human flourishing through the cross. Such witness to the created order is vital to the form of Christian joy which supervenes on a settled form of ascetic life. Witness to the created order is integral to the joy of living in obedience and the sense of confirmation it endows.[311] There are, however, many elements missing to make this a comprehensive proposal for gay people, especially the aesthetic and theodicean dimensions we have discussed.

The exclusion from certain created goods in order to live according to and in witness to God in the created order could still seem like a stark and heavy burden for the gay Christian disciple. Nonetheless, such a joy-filled asceticism is reflected in Hordern's critique of Nussbaum's negative view of Augustine's theology of desire. The joy of living as one is created in the moral order is an affective motivation Nussbaum does not consider: 'With no transcendent or stable moral order, there is no place for enduring joy.'[312] The belief in a stable and transcendent moral order resists meeting some stoical moral demand and lends the gay celibate the deeper joy of living in the structures of the world according to their Creator's will. Through O'Donovan's christological asceticism, GCA finds profound justification as an act of worship and deference to eternal goods, above and beyond contingent or created goods.

O'Donovan provides a striking way of bridging God's act of self-revelation with human response and ethical knowledge of the created order in Christ: 'We are not invited now to live in the created order as though there had been no cross. The resurrection body of Christ bears nail-prints, and the life of those who follow him means taking up the cross. The path of full participation lies through being excluded.'[313] I advance as an extension from O'Donovan that this exclusion from created goods is a basic condition of discipleship (eschatological apprehension and participation in Christ). Such a condition is present in a particularly unique way in GCA. The Resurrection, following the cross and the experience of exclusion from created goods, transforms same-sex desire from being a grief-stricken burden lacking hope to a joy-filled gift. The grievous lack of a desire which cannot be expressed can become a joyous participation

311 'There can be… no obedience-without-gift, no gift-without-obedience'; *ACWTB*, 104.
312 Hordern, *Political Affections*, 98.
313 *RMO*, 94.

in the future providing a powerful witness to the goodness and christological transformation of the world.

While O'Donovan does not directly mention how this might relate to same-sex desire, his theology offers clarity in terms of describing the process of discipleship for gay celibates:

> Discipleship, then, involves us in the suffering of exclusion from various forms of created good which are our right and privilege as Adam's restored children. This exclusion may be at the hands of others, who do not wish us to participate in those forms of life except on their own terms; or it may be that our own fallen humanity does not equip us as it should to participate in these goods without compromise.[314]

Discipleship for O'Donovan requires an ascetical relationship to the created good and its recognition of created good's contingency in light of the eternal purposes of God. Without Christ, human beings perceive the good of sexuality with the half-light of human perception in the fallen order. Without Christ, we risk understanding desire as instantly good rather than seeing that there is a greater meaning to the world and its goods, recognising that our fallen humanity does not always equip us to participate well in creation's goods.

Without resistance to the compromise O'Donovan highlights here, gay subjectivity risks striking a bargain with the world: 'we may observe how conscientious people can strike some quite tough bargains with the world as they struggle to perceive the greatest measure of integrity compatible with securing the goods they desire.'[315] Here I am extending O'Donovan's thought in a way which he does not overtly anticipate but which is consistent with his christological ethic. He highlights how there are ways of using what is good which are inconsistent with the enjoyment of God. Refraining from using the good in a disordered way can constitute a form of revelatory disclosure. GCA, then, represents, in O'Donovan's terms, a form of resistance to the compromise that would risk wrongly using the created order and its goods (Augustine's *uti/frui* distinction). Gay celibates play a prophetic role in living according to a revelatory disclosure in the created world. They seek to use creation through loving and enjoying God and honouring sexual difference as part of this revelatory purpose, embodying God's purposes in the redemption of the world.

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[314] Ibid, 95.
[315] Ibid, 120.

This constructive extension of O'Donovan's moral theology of desire reveals a rich theological account of an evangelically affective asceticism and its relationship to same-sex desire. By forgoing the possibility of the created good of marriage, gay celibates are protected from being misrepresented as repressing themselves. Instead, gay celibates represent an alternative queerness which faithfully responds to the way the Gospel calls desire to a transcendent and eschatological hermeneutic. They seek to live against the grain of a facile affirmation of same-sex desire which requires no testing or sanctification. O'Donovan's asceticism through 'exclusion from created good' is part of cross-carrying discipleship. This applies differently for the gay or lesbian person than the heterosexual person who does not experience the arbitrary incompatibility of their desires with the created ordering of marriage.

This process of finding one's affections reordered around a different order of love is also informed uniquely by the theodicean burden of the celibate gay Christian who faces never marrying one's desired other. GCA involves wakeful reminders of the created order and the good against the competing orders of love in the *civitas terrena*. The affective self-understanding of those in the *civitas terrena* tempt and call the gay disciple to unhinge themselves from the *amor dei*. Such a temptation can be felt more harshly in a church focused on the politics of marriage and its attendant sexual expression rather than the conditions which would help them in their charism. As O'Donovan states:

> Eros is different. Typically, the good it attends to is present good, one that appears to us now, but when the present good makes us aware of future possibilities for our self, love acquires its erotic character as an inward opening to future self-realisation... Love is the affective recognition of a good; a good is recognised as good in itself and as good for other things, a contributory strand in the web of communication that constitutes created good; as a reflective knower of the world's good, I can find what is good for some other thing is good for me, too.[316]

The Church faces a conundrum in comprehending, in an Augustinian sense, exactly how the created order tests and purges *eros* and while ensuring created order is not where desire ultimately rests. Contemporary Anglican approaches, therefore, require a developed account of how Christ's life has enabled us to participate righteously in the created order and how this effects various identities. A fuller account of how gay Christians can embody the good news of the Gospel, even in the denial of this fundamental and yet contingent human desire for the created

[316] *F&S,* 105.

goods of sexuality in the world needs further theological exploration. Within this thesis' limits it is not possible to provide a full account of how this element of Anglican moral theology bears on other areas but through GCA, I have proffered a way forward in the conversation O'Donovan seeks to begin about gay evangelical witness.

2.1.3 Resurrection and Desire's Temptation: Moral Order and God's Authority

O'Donovan's retrieval of Augustine in his theology of moral order provides an epistemic account of how desire and affections, like same-sex desire, need ascetic transformation and renewal toward moral agency. Along O'Donovan's lines for Hordern, the affections' cognitive intentionality toward the same-sex, like other desire, is:

> not simply at the disposal of the subject who may choose to 'deploy' his affections or not. Instead, affective understanding, refracted through a particular order of value, is attracted by objects [other people of the same-sex] which are features of the generically and teleologically structured, good created order.[317]

Sexual attraction, in the form of an affective recognition of what is perceived to be a good for the self, needs to be situated in the context of both an individual's reflective self-understanding and the Church's collective self-understanding. The particular pastoral and moral struggle of the gay Christian as per O'Donovan, then, is to hold one's innate desires up to the light not just of affective knowledge common to all *peregrini* but the reflective knowledge of the created order, which Jesus Christ vindicated, restored, and transformed.[318] This moral reflection is a rich resource for the Church to understand itself, and in this case, to understand the part of the body of Christ that has a particular affective orientation, and thus learns things differently. The gift of this reflective knowledge comes through 'the creaturely task of knowing and valuing the objectively value-laden, vindicated, created moral order even amidst its fallen condition.'[319] Such reflective knowledge is essential in renewing the Church's ethic as it seeks to live evangelically.

However, the reception of this reflective knowledge is hardly an easy task for the individual or for the Church. As Coakley opines, it requires the hard work on one's knees in prayer. The gay disciple who desires to obey Christ with their desires, therefore, lives with a particular burden in a church in which they appear as a strange alien. They face the personal and existential

[317] Hordern, *Political Affections*, 88.
[318] *Fc&S,* 86.
[319] Hordern, *Political Affections*, 86.

temptation to compromise according to a different order of love in the world which would mean they would be received with open arms. They deny this welcome while also bearing with the Church's conflictual orders of love. Alternatively, there is also the danger of church authority baptising the misknowledge of unredeemed affections by grasping at marriage and its goods without the ascetic process of listening to scripture and the call of discipleship which involves a loving participation in the world's objective reality. This ambiguity from church authority leaves the gay Christian with a particular kind of minority stress and in a pained place of confusion, and temptation to live according to other orders of love.[320]

The question of same-sex desire and GCA challenges the Church to approach the materiality of creation and its redemption through Christ, the 're-sacramentalising' Word. Gay celibates seek, like their monastic forbears, to throw off conventional compromise, and to be freed from the erotic 'misknowledge' that can emerge from (same-sex) desire and its threat to the clarity of their peregrination toward God's city. Instead, as O'Donovan states:

> In erotic experience we discover our own future opened up to us by the recognition of the good. The object of our love is not ourselves, but the other. Yet the longing which accompanies love for the other is directed to a larger and fuller self; possibilities for constructive action, for creative performance, for enjoyment, for growth of various kinds. The horizon of erotic aspiration is to live in relation to the good that excites it, to expose itself to its influence and shaping power.[321]

The gay celibate seeks to live according to an ascetic mode of recognising the same-sex neighbour, accompanied, as she is, by Christ who transforms his disciples' desires through a Spirit-filled and renewed participation in the created order. GCA represents a path for desire to become a trusted source of self-understanding as it is shaped by the eschatological horizon in Christ through a sanctified participation in created goods. As multiple pilgrims together reach this self-understanding, there is an intensification of an alternative erotics, taking form in Christian friendship and communities which live differently to other orders of love. Through such erotic friendship, idolatrously passed by in the erotics of the *civitas terrena* and commonly underappreciated within the Church, the way of the cross can be walked in the good company of those willingly seeking transformation in God's created order.

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[320] See Shaw's work on the plausibility of gay celibate asceticism: Shaw, E. *The Plausibility Problem: The Church and Same-Sex Attraction* (Nottingham: IVP, 2015).
[321] *Fc&S*, 106.

2.1.4 Gay Affectivity and Participation in the Created Order: The Challenge Posed Through O'Donovan's Moral Theology

The account of GCA given so far is a direct construction from Augustine's ascetical theology and O'Donovan's ethics of resurrection. O'Donovan and Augustine provide an eschatological way forward from the sacramental point between the present and the future. Desire is understood as a created gift and a fallen malady. It is a good and an unstable point for self-understanding and right action in the world without Christ. To elucidate this, Hordern parses desire in O'Donovan's way through a process of affective transformation that leads to righteous participation in created order as the basis of self-understanding:

> On this reckoning, the created order provides 'the only [epistemologically certain] point of reference' by which human creatures may reflect on the good and deliberate concerning the right as it is specified in human culture's particular refraction of the natural moral order... Affections are, by revelatory grace, forms of understanding whereby people come via a particular order of value to grasp the cosmos of value as it is, and even as it now holds together in Christ.[322]

As Hordern denotes, Christian asceticism does not deny the importance of desire as the place where moral deliberation and understanding are importantly linked. He acknowledges how affections are broken signposts without revelation, and yet they are an essential part of rational participation in the good. As O'Donovan posits:

> For unknowing creatures falsehood is no danger. We will speak more truly of 'misknowledge' rather than of simple lack of knowledge. Furthermore, even in the disorder consequent upon the Fall of the universe, in the merciful providence of God, does not cease to be the universe. Disorder, like misknowledge, is attributable only to things which are in their true being ordered.[323]

O'Donovan employs Augustine's doctrine of *privatio boni* to found his hamartiological warning about desire as the central basis of identity-formation: 'If the Creator is not known, then the creation is not known as creation; for the relation of the creation to its Creator is the ground of

[322] Hordern, *Political Affections*, 84; O'Donovan, O. *Ways of Judgment* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 311.
[323] *RMO*, 89.

its intelligibility as a created universe.'[324] Hordern, however, pushes O'Donovan's account in a more Hookerian direction, grounding desire in reason, and vice-versa.

O'Donovan locates the problem of misaimed self-love in our desiring, particularly how false love is resisted and identified as ordered around the self. Without God, affections risk leading to misknowledge which denies the authority of God's created order.[325] (Gay) affections, therefore, must be purified in divine love in order to avoid a church driven by the politics of misknowledge. Such misknowledge emerges from misunderstanding self and other. It unnecessarily undermines desire as an element of Christian identity formation in the Word and its incarnational mediation to us as creatures in the Holy Spirit. GCA challenges the politics of this misknowledge by seeking a renewal of O'Donovan's erotic body.[326]

The gay celibate Christian responds to this charge expressed in O'Donovan's ethics of creation, recognising the misknowledge involved in same-sex desire, and why it requires ascetic renewal. GCA represents a hard-won reflective knowledge capable of moving the Church's conversation forward by calling for an affective deliberation anchored in created order. This deliberation grounds reason and moral learning in God's identity as Creator, which is revealed through Jesus Christ and his vindication of created order rather than in the protology of a lost Eden or a creation-less future. As O'Donovan states:

> God does not deny our fragmentary knowledge of the way things are, as though knowledge were not there, or were of no significance; yet it does not build on it, as though it provided a perfectly acceptable foundation to which a further level of understanding can be added. Rather, revelation catches man out on the guilty possession of a knowledge which he has always had, but from which he has never won a true understanding.[327]

The question of same-sex desire, and its ascesis centres the conversation on how self-knowledge is renewed in Christ according to God's created order rather than the self's 'eudaimonistic projects,' or self-creation.[328] These eudaimonistic projects must be interrupted by grace. As Hordern states:

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[324] Ibid, 88.
[325] *PSL*, 76; O'Donovan, 'The Moral Authority of Scripture' in *Scripture's Doctrine and Theology's Bible* eds. Bockmuehl, M. & Torrance, A J. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 165.
[326] *ACWTB*, 92.
[327] *RMO*, 89.
[328] Hordern, *Political Affections*, 43, 83.

> The interrelation of natural affections and natural law is a precursor to the affective possibilities which follow from the accomplishment of Jesus Christ by whom the true nature of moral order was disclosed, in whom the cosmos now holds together, and before whom all orders of value are now judged.[329]

O'Donovan's Augustinian theology of desire flips the schema of someone like Nussbaum in light of Christ's redemption of our natural knowledge. Nussbaum sees the self as the central basis for defining the blessed happiness or flourishing of the human being rather than God's love. As Stewart-Kroeker explains:

> In one devastating sentence Nussbaum summarizes the danger of too much this-worldly attention to otherworldly bliss: "The aim of slipping off into beatitude distracts moral attention from the goal of making this world a good world, and encourages a focus on one's own moral safety that does not bode well for earthly justice." Longing for heavenly fulfilment as the ultimate aim of human life leads to passivity in the present, rendering death and suffering irrelevant. Waiting on the realization of grace in redemption quashes human agency.[330]

As we have outlined with O'Donovan and Augustine, being eschatologically-driven and aesthetically renewed by the beautiful Christ sends us back into the reality of the world. In order to be sent by resurrection power to enjoy and witness to the goods of the world, desire must find its ascetic renewal through joy, throwing off shame.

The flourishing given in the Resurrection is found through the cruciform act of denying one's self and carrying one's cross in communion with one's fellow pilgrims in the *civitas dei*. This collective existence in Augustine's *peregrinatio* schema works against Nussbaum's individualistic vision of desire which would understand the ascetical pressure placed on individual celibates as inimical to human flourishing. This interdependence is essential to keeping any asceticism from pride and disordered self-love. Love of the self which is solipsistic, and resists God's love leads to bad celibacy. Celibacy becomes a source of pride and a sign of moral strength or virtue which leads to a stoicised moralism which spurns grace and the love of God, rather than emerging from it. GCA resists such moralism through the Augustinian pattern of pilgrim friendship and

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[329] Ibid, 85.
[330] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 553; Stewart-Kroeker, S. 'World-weariness and Augustine's Eschatological Ordering of Emotions in en. Ps. 36,' *Augustinian Studies* 47, no. 2 (2016): 217.

humble witness to the sufficiency of Christ's love. This ethic of friendship is both corporate or collective, dependent on the inner transformation of grace in the *communitas* of the Church, and directly from the Holy Spirit.

2.2 The Resurrection, Desire and *Eudaimonia*: The Renewal of Gay Self-Consciousness

For O'Donovan, *eudaimonia* or human flourishing can only happen through the christic life which turns desire outward in the trinitarian life. Cruciform living, which involves exclusion from certain immanent created goods, is at the centre of discipleship. For O'Donovan carrying the cross of Christ, and dying to certain created goods allows the Resurrection to renew us in the Spirit. The Spirit frees us from the 'misknowledge' and obscuring half-light to which our innate desires, without the effects of revelation, are liable.[331] Through this christic transformation, a true knowledge not just of the moral order but ourselves is given through a new perception of the authority of the moral order in Christ.[332]

O'Donovan defines affections as pre-reflective recognitions of an object with its generic and teleological definition, in association with the moral order's overall shape (*gestalt*) and goal.[333] Here, he sees affection or desire as a point where the cosmic, benevolent, and rational basis of love all interrelate. We are reliant on divine grace and love. Our own characteristic excellencies cannot reorder our affections to right moral agency and action. Asceticism is important for all desire because, as Hordern opines, 'the weighting of attention is unstable since the epistemology relies on the self's resources rather than engagement with the moral order which can correct the self, a correction which may itself bring about a greater consistency of action.'[334] The gay celibate gives the epistemological priority vis-à-vis their affections to an attracted participation in the world as it appears in Christ.

As Gregory states, 'habit (*consuetudo*) tends to solidify vice rather than promote virtue', and thus GCA must not be ventured into because of the virtuous character of those involved, which is insufficient to ensure right action.[335] In order to resist bad or prideful celibacy and disordered self-love, virtue involves openness to affective life that leads to a stability of resolve, which grace creates and sustains by opening the creature exocentrically toward God in the moral order. The

[331] *SWT*, 81.
[332] *RMO,* 115.
[333] *PSL*, 21.
[334] Hordern, *Political Affections*, 102.
[335] Gregory, *Politics,* 104.

transformation of gay affections, therefore, involves a process of sorting entrenched misperception of the moral order. Such transformation requires intersubjective verification in pilgrimage that leads to affirming wayward affective recognitions from orders of desire and love other than the *amor dei*. Gay celibates attempt to recognise these orders of love as part of the postlapsarian self that is passing away. GCA involves a conversion of those affections which draw us away from the world as it has been created and its end as it moves toward the resurrected Christ. As Hordern states:

> By remembering the past held in our memory, we are constantly enabled affectively to recognise our past selves in the context of pluriform awareness in the open moment in which we are now called to reflect concerning the good and deliberate concerning what is owed to our neighbours, repeating, adapting, or repenting of past activities in order that we might more consistently do what is right.[336]

Gay celibates are those that tether their affections to the moral order's stability, into which affective recognition draws us. Our desires are dependent on the deeper steadfastness of the trinitarian orderer and redeemer by whom the moral order was created and vindicated and in whom we are drawn in affective recognition in our redeemed memories.

2.2.1 Memory and Desire in the Created Order: Reordering Gay Affectivity

The perceived absence of God, experienced in desire which is misaimed toward the same-sex in the memories and romantic attractions of gay Christians is not harmfully eschewed. Conversely, it is transformed into a site of witness to God's life and ordering of the world. God was there in and beneath all desire unrecognised, unnamed, unknown. This memory of desire can become a kind of witness as God is recognised as having being present in the memory. Turning over memory toward the new self ordered according to God's love is the hinge upon which gay subjectivity is made fit for righteous participation in the moral order. The identification of the self as gay is essential to reordering memory which renews moral agency.

With this honest remembering the gay celibate begins to re-interpret the world through both the half-light given to creatures in worldly orders of value (i.e. a common gay identity with other LGBTQI+ people) and in the stronger light of revelation that fills in the memory of desire in the past reinterpreted in Christ (as a hyper-queer pilgrim). By accepting their sexual orientation as a

[336] Hordern, *Political Affections*, 116.

gift and power, they can be drawn by God's love to see desire as a gift rather than impossible burden. An account of gay identity like this is alluded to by O'Donovan but not fleshed out in any meaningful sense. We will turn now to Augustine and Hordern to provide an account of renewing gay affections in the self-understanding of memory and gay identity.

Gay celibates represent a witness of memory to the past self, where the desire for the same-sex does not simply disappear but becomes a sacramental site of faith that serves a life lived in witness to the moral order. As Augustine describes:

> In the vast hall of memory... I meet myself and recall what I am, what I have done, and when and where I was affected when I did it. There is everything I remember, whether I experienced it directly or believed on the words of others... on this basis I reason about future actions and events and hopes...[337]

Memory allows the gay Christian to understand their past affections in a greater light of moral learning through affective participation in the moral order that is vindicated in Christ. As Hordern states:

> Instead of skating over the surface of the world, affections and memory enable Christians not only to remember the past in the context of this Christ-centred stability but also to participate in it in a committed way, understanding the world as it is in Christ, remembering the past rooted in creation and salvation history and gaining stability for the present moment from Christ in whom all things hold together.[338]

This christocentric participation of the affections in a robust relationship to time is vital in the coming out process. The expression of one's gay identity is a part of witness in and outside the Church which must avoid the pitfalls of wrongly ordered self-love and prize well-ordered self-love which emerges from loving God. Ordinate coming out is also an integral bridge for other LGBTQI+ wayfarers to see another way for their desires with the self's reflective knowledge ordered by God's love within the moral order. The process of coming out frees gay Christians from what Patterson calls 'the ethics of protology' when it comes to gender and desire, which falsely calls gays to live backwards according to the law of Adam and Eve.[339] Gay identity is freed from the natural idolatries which it is often accused of and which it challenges.

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[337] *Conf.* X. viii, 14, 117.
[338] Hordern, *Political Affections*, 112.
[339] Patterson, 'A Theological Reading…', 44.

Gay celibacy denies this easy telic knowledge of the created order that comes from before in the fallen memory of Eden. The gay disciple who remembers themselves solely in terms of Edenic created order (specifically male-female sexual relations) fails to allow for the power of memory to work in and through the christological fulfilment of created order which has now opened up opportunities for discipleship that were unavailable in the fall of Eden. The coming out process, in the context of the Church now, provides just such a way of remembering the self in light of the future that has now become visible. Gay celibates seek Christ as the Second Adam who renews our perception of the created order now through resurrection.

O'Donovan's account helps us to see that the false pressure put upon gays by the Church to live in some epistemic and affective repristination of Eden has held gays back from an attraction to a fully immersive participation in Christ. Coming out is the beginning process of allowing the half-light of truth about desire and the self to join with a renewed perception of Christ and his love in gay celibacy. I have shown that counteracting a christologically-deficient starting point for self-understanding in GCA is essential for a new beginning in moral reasoning vis-a-vis gay self-consciousness in the conversation O'Donovan seeks to begin.

2.2.2 Reinterpreting the Good in Christ: Re-Orienting the Erotic Body in O'Donovan's Moral Theology

Desire is part of a renewed narrative of the [gay] self, which does not delete or erase aspects of the self. Christ converts sight so as to see in terms of the Gospel which is ultimately redemptive and worthy of trust. Memory has a vital role in the reality of being a renewed gay self where rightly ordered affections can lead the erotic body to freedom in Christ's redeemed body. Christ in his resurrection unfetters us from false self-understanding according to the structure of the world and the actions that inadvertently betray the moral order and thus, God's identity as Creator.[340] Gay celibacy has a dual affective directionality, involving a conversion which throws affective memory backwards in light of Christ and the moral order, and its stretching forward in faith, hope, and love toward transformation. Such an asceticism provides a direct path to retrieve a more robust doctrine of creation that synthetically participates in, rather than competes with, redemptive grace. This movement can form gay affectivity into a sacramental site of participation in the *civitas dei*. GCA is a deeply-textured asceticism which can fructify the often-pallid

[340] *PSL*, 158.

conversation in the Church regarding homosexuality toward a greater vision of discipleship and gospel life. Understood in this way, gay asceticism can more robustly and apologetically respond to and meet the question of same-sex desire being posed by other orders of value in the *civitas terrena*.[341] Such evangelism brings us back to O'Donovan's desire for the gay Christian to be the evangelist.

With all this said, there are potential pitfalls with an Augustinian framing of GCA. O'Donovan claims that by applying the *uti/frui* (use and enjoyment) distinction as Augustine does to other human persons, Augustine instrumentalises fellow human beings as means to the individual's beatific end.[342] O'Donovan critiques the instrumentalising aspect of Augustine's earlier *uti/frui* distinction.[343] The human tendency to make other people into objects for the satisfaction of one's own desires is rightly identified by Augustine, but the danger here is that human beings merely become means of use in our desiring, and reduced to their instrumental value for worshipping God or in fallen terms, our ideology. Conversely, Stewart-Kroeker argues:

> The apparently opposite poles of idolatry and instrumentalization betray a magnetic attraction: the problem with idolatry is precisely that it instrumentalises and objectifies what the self loves for its own pleasure and consumption. Idolatry and instrumentalization cannot be divorced or simply opposed as concerns; idolatry itself contains an instrumental aspect of which Augustine is not unaware (yet which much contemporary scholarship overlooks). An excessive emphasis on idolatry or instrumentalization without acknowledgement of their interrelation is likely to create problems in our ordering of loves.[344]

In order to avoid this pitfall for Augustine vis-à-vis desire, the vocations of marriage and singleness provide ways in which both the created order, and its eventual redemption is honoured in bodily asceticism. Exclusion from certain goods for O'Donovan means loving God according to the created order not as a place to rest in, but 'loving it along the way to the Creator and the abode of eternal rest,' or 'pilgrimage.'[345] GCA is a cruciform mode of participation in the created order that points toward another, future goal but also takes a stance towards the erotic

[341] *RMO*, 95.
[342] O'Donovan, O. 'Usus and Fruitio in De Doctrina Christiana'*, Journal of Theological Studies* 33, no. 2 (1982): 362.
[343] Ibid, 365.
[344] Ibid, 'Resisting Idolatry...', 210.
[345] Ibid, 211.

body and its memory in an evangelically robust way that neither denies such memory nor fully affirms it.[346]

2.2.3 The Self Beyond Historicism: Fulfilment of the Created Order and the Redemption of Desire

In this section, I consider the concept of moral order and its implication on self-understanding. In O'Donovan's account of identity-formation, we learn: i) how our natural desires must be renewed but not eschatologically erased (the now-but-not-yet tension of desires denied and desires fulfilled); ii) how the created order still matters in judging our desires and reordering our desiring; iii) that in Jesus Christ, God provides an ethical solution to the problem of inordinate desire by providing a salvific path for the reordering of human affections around eternal enjoyment of God.

A particular lacuna that GCA highlights relates specifically to queer theology's recommendation of same-sex marriage as a legitimate form of Christian ascesis as the basis of self-understanding. In O'Donovan's vein, GCA can be understood as driven by an ethical motivation to honour God's created order in his redemptive purposes: 'Though the Christian tradition always held that Christ's salvific work is beyond nature (i.e. sheer grace) it is nevertheless in full accord with creation.'[347] As O'Donovan states, 'New creation is creation renewed, a restoration and enhancement, not an abolition.'[348] The question of same-sex desire, then, importantly asks a more profoundly christological question: 'What is the role of the created order in Christ's transformation and satisfaction of our desires?'[349] GCA represents, in O'Donovan's sense, a distinctly gay or queer alternative, seeking to live in terms of creation and not in spite of it, understanding the self as a composite of both redemptive transformation and God's creational intentionality. The self is only a free subject and actor in the world, once it locates God's desire for his creation through the revelation of redemptive purposes in God's Son and Spirit.

The created order is not sheer nature as Rogers opines, or just an unqualified affirmation of sexual difference *per se*.[350] It also is not a crude biological reductionism as culturally perceived

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[346] Hordern, *Political Affections,* 199.
[347] Wannenwetsch, B. 'Old Docetism – New Moralism? Questioning a New Direction in the Homosexuality Debate', *Modern Theology* 16, no. 3 (2000): 355.
[348] *ACWTB*, 99.
[349] Ibid.
[350] Rogers, *Sexuality,* 117.

with our counterfeit perceptions of gender, but rather emerges from the presence of grace and its redemption of creation given in Christ. This grace endows human beings with real moral agency to discern, deliberate, and act in light of the renewed knowledge of creation proffered in Christ. This explains why same-sex desire as a contemporary question has attracted such controversy. Same-sex desire, as Williams reminds us, annoyingly poses the question of what true flourishing is, and pushes us to value the 'non-utilitarian, non-instrumentalising' joy and abundance that grace affords.[351] Sexual intimacy is not simply valued for its purposiveness in procreation but as part of this triune joy marked in the erotic body and which is sacramentally freed through Christ's vindication and relativisation of marriage in the created order. This still leaves us with the question of whether the created order known in Christ is honoured in same-sex sexual erotics, and the risk of a cheap grace or as O'Donovan expresses it, 'gift without obedience or obedience without gift.'[352]

Unlike many of the contemporary theologians of desire who leave the question of the created order and the problem of sexual difference largely untouched in their discussion, O'Donovan provides a bridge through a christological reading of created order. Christ came to redeem creaturely life back to the ordered will of God expressed in the establishment of the created order at the beginning and vindicated in his resurrection. The restoration of creation is not, as Wannenwetsch observes, 'a supersession of some original creation' but is 'the uncovering and unfolding of the truth of creation over against every *metallage* (Romans 1:25).'[353] Though our ability to know this moral order in creation is impaired by the epistemological effects of the Fall, a half-light is provided for all people. Christians can – with the help of revelation – read creation with a greater clarity or 'reflective knowledge' through Christ.[354] The gay celibate pilgrim proceeds toward a renewed affective and moral knowledge, giving the self over to a more integrated understanding that goes beyond or 'queers' the historicist ethics forged through repristinating an originary nature that is hopelessly fallen or wonderfully good.

2.2.3 Awakening to the Good: The Created Good's Affective Recognition in the Beloved Christ

[351] Williams, R. 'The Body's Grace' in Rogers, E. (ed), *Theology & Sexuality*, (Oxford: Blackwells, 2007), 309-321.
[352] Ibid, 311.
[353] Wannenwetsch, 'New Formalism…', 358.
[354] Lacoste, J. Y. 'Du phénomène de la valeur au discours de la norme' in *Le monde et l'absence d'œuvre et autres études* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2000), 117.

Hordern's theology of political affections can extend the hermeneutic task O'Donovan calls for by moving affective recognition of created goods forward from the pitfall of historicism. He references Jonathan Edwards's theology of grace as the foundation for re-reading the created order:

> [to the extent that] a created mind perceives something without understanding how it fits with the divine economy, it does not really perceive that thing at all. To the extent that a mind fails to appreciate the order and harmony of things – and, therefore, the way in which things are differentiated and associated – it fails to even be a mind.[355]

As in Augustine, a recognition of God's beauty leads to a new perception of the excellent intelligibility of creation. A close association is drawn from God the Creator with creation's beauty in Christ through the Holy Spirit's transformation of affectivity in the world.[356] The gay celibate pilgrim recognises this beauty with a love toward God that allows her affections or desires to be christologically reshaped by a new *ordo amoris* informed by this excellent intelligibility. Holy affection for Jesus drives a desire to recognise created order through a mind renewed by the beauty of God as both impermanent and yet vindicated by Jesus, the beautiful beloved.

O'Donovan's theology of moral order risks giving a surplus of significance to the created order as the final point for desire. O'Donovan's account requires a greater consideration of how grace apocalyptically transforms the created order. A vision of what the created order will look like in the end is vital for asceticism to have a hopeful vision of fullness to meet postlapsarian lack. The Holy Spirit's bodily presence and spiritual friendship are essential to keeping gay celibate disciples from an ultimately harmful lack of intimacy in an exclusive and covenanted relationship which the created goods of marriage provide. Through a recognition of created good, the Holy Spirit can move gay disciples with holy affection beyond the contingent end of marriage and sex but not without collective support from the Church. The Holy Spirit enables this 'high-quality [affective] understanding which bears considerably on actions,'[357] without erasing the interdependent need of the gay celibate on the rest of the Church. Through such understanding, gay celibates are brought near to God. They foretaste the fullness of love that is the Church's in

[355] Daniel, S. H. 'Edwards as Philosopher' in *Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Edwards* (Cambridge: CUP), 2006, 169; Hordern, *Political Affections,* 123.
[356] *ACWTB*, 160-161.
[357] Ibid, 124

Jesus Christ thereby avoiding the stoical pitfall O'Donovan's surplus of focus on created order risks without a theology of transformation and a strong collective notion of ascetical vocation.

The gay celibate, then, aligns with O'Donovan on this important point: 'Once we separate God's purposes in creation from the inherent goods of creaturely existence, there is little reason to hold on to the view that God meant anything at all by making the world.'[358] The gay celibate subject moves beyond a recognition of created goods toward moral agency and deliberation motivated by God's greater beauty and the resurrection fullness of Jesus Christ. GCA, then, represents an opportunity to renew and inform Anglican moral theology through a sacramental, now-but-not yet theological stance. Gay celibates do not erase gay affectivity as dualistically bad or entirely good, but stretch forward to honour the created order in the eschatological reality of renewal and transformation of the erotic body.

This element of O'Donovan's theological erotics provides the doctrinal centrefold to buttress the motivation behind GCA. The intensity of GCA's queerness pulls the conversation toward the deeper christological trajectory we have parsed by critically extending O'Donovan's epistemology to meet the Church's discussion of same-sex desire. The sacramental reality of the moral order expressed in re-enchanted sexual differentiation is regained as that which mirrors and yet gives way to the 'erotics of redemption' in the mystical union of God's beloved Church and Son, Jesus Christ. The aesthetic and moral impulse of love for God is the motivation in GCA safeguarding it from harmful extirpation. The gay self is renewed through remembering the self in the eschatological reality of resurrection which relinquishes attachment to an old order of good and value, and an old enjoyment of creation on the *amor sui*'s terms.

2.3 O'Donovan's Erotics: Knowing the Good through Admiration and the Body's Grace

When applied to GCA, O'Donovan's work calls for a revalorisation of affective participation in the created order, and its relationship to eschatology in a Christian sexual ethic. In *TNA*, Coakley argues that any sense of loving self-denial or ascesis for the Christian must always be directed *in via* toward a greater fullness of relational joy in the divine life of the Trinity.[359] However, unredeemed human desire is, as O'Donovan reminds us, epistemically unstable:

[358] Ibid, 98.
[359] *TNA*, 86.

> Contemporary aesthetic metaphysics echoes [the gnostic tendency to collapse love and faith] by giving priority among the aspects of love to desire, which attests the transcendence of the infinite by always exceeding the measure of its satisfaction. Without impugning that line of thought on its own terms, ethics must pursue the question of love from quite another starting-point. Its initial contact with the infinite is not in yearning, but in faith, and its initial engagement with love is not through the "beauty of the infinite" but the beauty of the finite. If desire's flight is ever to be well-aimed action, it must presuppose the comprehending gaze of admiration.[360]

Admiration functions in O'Donovan's thought as the separating moment between love and faith. Admiration drives a 'wondering love, a pilgrim's flight.'[361] It is the remarkable character of Jesus Christ and his life that attracts the believer in admiration. The comprehending gaze is this wondering at the Word who renews creation. Being amazed in our finite scale draws us to the goodness of creation in this beloved gaze.

Desire's place here is to support well-aimed action. Both theological authority and the created order are central aspects of how we are to ascertain what is truly an embodiment of trinitarian love and how to rightly order same-sex desires toward another goal of heavenly felicity in Christ. As O'Donovan states, 'For without the love of what is, the "new creation" is an empty symbol- or is it a clanging cymbal?'[362] Our moral and aesthetic formation means that we are ever questioning the place of our desires and will, and ceding them in faith, hope, and love.[363] If ethical knowledge for the Christian is 'knowledge of things in their relations to the totality of things', then, desire and asceticism are directly related to Christology, particularly the renewal of the created order affirmed, vindicated, and transformed in the person of Jesus.[364] This remains a profound ethical question in terms of what it means for same-sex desire that we do not yet see all things in subjection to Christ, as in Hebrews 1-2. For O'Donovan, the proper role of desire and a truly Christian ascesis is vital to avoid idolatry, and a vision outside of the Creator's will or purview for our ethical lives.[365]

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[360] *SWT*, 114.
[361] *PMAF,* 131.
[362] *ACWTB,* 99.
[363] *EIN*, 200-203.
[364] *RMO*, 65.
[365] Ibid, 181

The goal of ascesis is the reordering of loves to a point where there is no sense of natural order or one's internal sense of self apart from its being in Christ.[366] As Stewart-Kroeker reminds us, it is the beauty of the beloved, Jesus Christ, which draws desire out of its fallen state toward a greater goal of recreation.[367] Here both Stewart-Kroeker's and O'Donovan's readings of Augustine are bridged, emphasising the aesthetic motivation of loving the beautiful Christ, which brings together the finite and the infinite, the divine and human. Looking to Jesus as fulfilment of creation and its purpose, O'Donovan provides a synthesis from and correction to the polarisation between 'creation' and 'Kingdom' ethics, and apocalyptic or natural law schools that have often ensnared modern ethical debate about same-sex erotics.[368]

GCA draws and critically extends O'Donovan's epistemology to meet the Church's discussion of same-sex desire. The moral order's sacramental reality linked to sexual differentiation and the beautiful lure of Christ toward affective participation are regained. Created order mirrors and yet gives way to the erotics of redemption in the mystical union of the beloved body of the Church and Jesus Christ reinterpreting sex-difference. Through this sacramental role, GCA finds a new moral agency by being enflamed with Christ's beauty and love. This new aesthetic and moral impulse for God offers the body to the eschatological reality of fullness and resurrection, rather than holding on to the old enjoyment of creation in terms of same-sex sexual erotics and the natural idolatry of marriage. Having now exegeted and suggested ways forward for O'Donovan's moral theology, I now examine his direct treatment of the question of homosexuality and the Church in *ACWTB*.

2.3.1 The Similarity and Difference of Bodies: Same-Sex Desire, Asceticism, and the Conversation Begun by O'Donovan

Here is how O'Donovan reflects on the conversation he intends to begin regarding homosexuality: 'I could discuss the matter through with an opponent sincerely committed to the Church's authorities, Scripture chief among them [and..] the Holy Spirit would open up perspectives that are not immediately apparent... there are still things to be learned by one who is determined to be taught by Scripture how to read the age in which we live.'[369] In this way, he opens the door for the theological understandings of same-sex desire to function as a meeting place of the Church's moral learning. Such interpretative work will assist the Church in

366 *PSL*, 131.
367 *PMAF,* 21-50.
368 *RMO*, 41.
369 Ibid, 33.

understanding how different instantiations of desire have diverse needs, as well as how the charism of celibacy is affected by this difference of relation to created order. As O'Donovan states:

> It is perfectly possible to think of desires as no matter for blame, and yet be persuaded that their literal enactment cannot be their true fulfilment... The gay Christian who complains that the good news is difficult to hear because his position is treated as compromised from the outset could learn that it is not his position but the position of the human race that is compromised from the outset.[370]

The gay celibate appears to align with the subject O'Donovan is gesturing towards here. They fit hand-in-glove as those who, while understanding why others are drawn to different stances, reject the literal enactment of their desires as a possible goal in a gay union or marriage. As evangelists, gay celibates deny the most direct outworking of their desires while seeing them as a gift and mystery to be offered up to the light of the Gospel.

For O'Donovan the position of gay Christians is like the rest of postlapsarian humanity as part of a fractured society charactized by 'a loveless disorder for which we share common responsibility, and all pay the common price.'[371] Gays have 'no infallible introspective certainties in relation to their desires that would put them outside the common human lot of self-questioning.'[372] Here he cites Augustine: 'I became a question to myself.'[373] While this points to a common experience of human desire, O'Donovan does not venture to provide a positive or constructive account of what gay Christians are called to actually possess in terms of ascetical action and experience to offer the Church. O'Donovan's account needs the power of the peregrine oddity of gay celibates who embody a response to the theodicean difficulties and affective differentiation of same-sex desire vis-à-vis the created order. In order for O'Donovan's theology to enter the conversation most fully, his view of moral order needs to be adapted to recognise the particularities of gay self-consciousness which aims toward evangelical self-understanding. An account of how same-sex desire and its discontinuity and continuity with heterosexual pilgrims is needed as parsed in the previous chapter. In order to resist a tendency to universalise away gay subjectivity's difference, O'Donovan must articulate the difference of relation gay celibates have with the moral order. Without this he will lose the hearts which he would desire to beckon toward an ordered love in the hope of resurrection.

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370 Ibid, 107.
371 Ibid, 110.
372 Ibid, 113.
373 Ibid.

2.3.2 A Theodicean Critique of O'Donovan's *ACWTB*

O'Donovan does provide the beginnings of a robust account of asceticism or re-orienting the erotic body's desires in *ACWTB*. In this section, we will piece together a critical account which can bring forth elements in O'Donovan's theology which resource GCA. While the Gospel is universal and calls all subjects into the love of God, for O'Donovan, it also dignifies the embodied difference of the subject. O'Donovan acknowledges theodicean differentiation: 'Yet gifts are given differentially to members of the body of Christ; vocations are distributed variously to serve the common mission. Some are given in the form of special skills and abilities, some in the form of special opportunities, especially opportunities of special experience and suffering.'[374] At this point, O'Donovan expressly gestures toward the concerns of theodicy I have addressed. He insightfully identifies them here:

> From the place of a special sensibility in which the homosexual Christian may find him or herself, we may hear a testimony to the way the world confronts our mission in our time, to its fragmented identities, its disjunctions of feeling, its cruelties, its dislocations and the peculiar possibilities of redemption that God has put at its heart. The rest of us cannot do without this torchlight through the fog of the late modern world in which we, too, must grope our way.[375]

While part of the theodicean wrestle is identified, it is still insufficiently met without a more substantial account. O'Donovan risks denying this difference: 'it is one and the same gospel witnessed to by the gay and non-gay, a gospel of redemption from the enslavement of sin and the purification of desire.'[376] This riposte to revisionism which is a great clarion call to common vocation is not held in tension with a compelling account of gay Christian difference or queerness. There is little recognition of how the universal gospel applies to the difference of same-sex and opposite-sex desiring. While O'Donovan helpfully brings us back to the universality of the Gospel, he does not engage the distinction of gay experience directly. Part of the motivation of this project emerges from this lacuna, engaging the existential grief and joy, as well as the theodicean burden gay celibates carry.[377] The deep resources of grace and moral learning they proffer can begin to open the ears of listeners, whatever their approach, to the gift

[374] Ibid, 117.
[375] Ibid 117.
[376] Ibid, 120.
[377] For a description of the theodicean challenge, see Sadusky, J. *Loneliness and the Celibate Gay Christian* (PhD thesis, Virginia Beach: RUP, 2019), 101-143.

and legitimate wrestle of those who see sexual difference as part of the created ordering of marriage, and yet, seek to befriend their bodies as holy.

O'Donovan encourages the gay Christian to make the same choice all pilgrims in the *civitas dei* face: 'whether to follow the route of self-justification or to cast oneself hopefully on the creative justification that God himself will work within a community of shared belief.'[378] Again, there is little mention of gay celibate pilgrims who can help to morally awaken the Church to its deficiencies when it comes the hermeneutic dilemma of same-sex desire he invokes. O'Donovan does not explicitly imagine what it would be like to possess an unchanging desire for the goods of marriage and yet, by no choice of one's own, to be oriented toward the same-sex. He does not wrestle with the affective self-understanding that comes from the particular movements of the *discordium malum* which leads an entire 'no' to the telic structure of romantic sexual desire. Nor does he engage the grief of living with the loss of the aesthetic and relational goods of human sexual affectivity. O'Donovan does not explicitly imagine what it would be like to be left without a sacramental end for one's romantic desires. This weakness calls for practical reasoning that can profoundly engage a renewed knowledge of the created order including the common procreative and erotic grief it produces for the gay disciple. Created order in O'Donovan hems gay Christians into a rather intense kind of martyrdom, which must be held with the utmost care and engagement by theologians who do not experience this same grief or difficulty.

O'Donovan senses these particularities but does not articulate them to meet the challenge of same-sex desire. Instead, he encourages the gay subject towards a self-questioning posture, which while vital to the task of asceticism, is a form of practical reason that cannot be done alone. A clear path of subjective encouragement and instruction forward into a viable vocation or charism is not explicitly imagined by O'Donovan. The ethical account of how to value the gay disciple's difference vis-à-vis desire is as an opportunity to witness to the universal Gospel that depends on a diversity of missional life. Understanding different instantiations of desire is essential to prevent the unity of the Church from becoming an oppressive uniformity.[379] The catholicity of the Gospel does not lead to an erasure of this difference, but a unity that depends on well-recognised difference.

O'Donovan's response to the question of gay experience requires a deeper engagement with desire itself, especially the unique biological and anthropological grief that gay celibate Christians carry. The ultimate solution for all wayfarers is the love of God which enters their particular

[378] *ACWTB*, 116.
[379] *Witness*…, 11-12.

experiences and challenges transforming them into powerful gifts. While O'Donovan does acknowledge the importance of difference in *ACWTB*, he could benefit from more profoundly engaging gay experience. Instead, he posits gay experience as a *fait accompli* (a pastoral deficiency many in retrospect recognised about the approach taken in STANDS). O'Donovan risks in *ACWTB* of taking the position of Job's friend, whilst still admirably aiming to challenge and embrace the gay Christian subject with a kind of theological and political sanctification vis-à-vis the universality of the Gospel's bearing on all human desire.[380] A robust response to the gift and affliction of gay desiring, suffering, and subjectivity that a renewed perception of the created order evokes requires far more than an account of the universality of the Gospel.

O'Donovan's treatment points to the gay celibate as a potential conversation-partner in identifying the particularities of gay experience. Reflection on GCA can move O'Donovan's account on from its hermeneutic burden to emancipatory and pastoral application. Gay celibates provide the basis pastorally and ascetically to begin to morally learn about same-sex desire through a sanctified perception of the moral order in Christ. While he provides many of the ingredients for a thoroughgoing response to same-sex desire, there are major pastoral and dogmatic gaps in O'Donovan's analysis.

2.3.3 Participating in the Moral Order's Transformation: GCA as an Eschatological Charism

I contend from O'Donovan's conclusions in *ACWTB* that GCA and its subjectivity is an essential component to re-articulating a rich evangelical anthropology that holds both the discontinuity and continuity between heterosexual and same-sex desire together. GCA provides the hermeneutic distance important for questioning same-sex desire without erasing difference. It calls the Church to embrace both the emancipatory and hermeneutic question of same-sex desire. Gay celibates provide a hermeneutic gift to O'Donovan's theology of created order which refers to the gap between the erotic body and the textual reading of scripture that understanding has to bridge.[381] The hermeneutic distance the gay celibate seeks with their own body and its relationship to scripture, God, and creation allows for God's authority to be freshly grasped and obeyed. GCA responds not only to O'Donovan's call for an evangelically-shaped witness from gay Christians, but also his call for greater moral learning. Such a witness resists the superficial and harmful view that gay celibates are 'self-hating' or repressive through an ethic or rightly-

[380] *ACWTB*, 120
[381] Ibid, 79.

ordered (self-)love. The theodicean discontinuity between gay and straight people, then, opens up room for Hookerian innovation which explores different instantiations of the charism of celibacy. I explore this in chapter 5.

Embracing the difference and common discipleship of all pilgrims alongside the existential weight of gay Christian subjectivity resources a greater theodicean enquiry where the christological *felix culpa* of the 'eunuch' or the one who cannot participate directly in the goods of sex and marriage is given 'a name better than sons and daughters.'[382] Due to the gay celibate's lack of capacity to participate in marriage, they reflect Christ's own passional forfeiting of created goods for greater eternal goods – a kind of 'eunuch for the sake of the Kingdom of God.'[383] By living in a costly affirmation of sex and marriage as part of the moral order, an eschatological fullness will be given when these goods are transformed into the erotic horizon of Jesus' resurrected life. The eschatological reward is foretasted now in fellowship of the Church and friendship, echoing the life of Jesus which expanded kinship beyond sex and marriage.

The moral order provides avenues for the theodicean recognition of ascetical lack *via* the cross where, as discussed earlier, disciples 'are called to accept exclusion from the created good as the necessary price of a true and unqualified witness to it [the created order].'[384] Gay celibacy follows the pattern which is reminiscent of Jesus' own exclusion from the created good of marriage and sex due to his salvific mission to die and rise. Jesus Christ is excluded from having children or engaging in marriage thereby becoming both a eunuch or sexual martyr for the sake of the Kingdom, which is coterminous with the gay celibate as erotic martyr. Instead, as the eschatological human he begins a new Spirit-born family that affirms and yet relativizes biological kinship ties through justificatory adoption.[385]

Christ's identity as a eunuch lends an incarnational solidarity to the gay celibate thereby opening a christological way for understanding God's identification with sexual minorities who undergo a similar exclusion. Ceding same-sex desire to God will be fully vindicated in the transformation of the created order, saving celibate ascesis from becoming stoical or self-incurved. The weight and grief at the loss of a deep-seated desire for the created goods of marriage is a place for God's glory and eternal grace to remind the Church of its cruciform calling. The paradox that O'Donovan wonderfully reveals is that those who are excluded from one created good are most intensely included and rewarded in the eternal good of eschatological transformation.

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[382] Isaiah 56:5; Stump, E. *Image of God: The Problem of Evil and the Problem of Mourning* (Oxford: OUP, 2022), 60.
[383] Matt. 19:12.
[384] *ACWTB,* 96
[385] Isaiah 56:5; *DSV*, 61.

Gay celibates need to be recognised as those who possess a charism that is both continuous with and yet distinct from other celibates. Their wrestle with created order brings them into an even great proximity to the 'sacramental' meeting place of creation, fall, and redemption. They are different pilgrims and yet share the same destination in the lack of choice to marry the spouse they are oriented to, reminiscent of Jesus's erotic martyrdom. Their witness reminds the Church, in a time when celibacy is associated with harm or self-hatred to a cruciform self-love which evokes humanity's calling to be 'moral agents - [which] is to participate in [the moral] order, understanding it and conforming to it in what we think and do.'[386] In the pressured complexity of our current cultural moment, gay celibates respond to the love of God which reveals Christ's resurrection where the 'redeemed creation does not merely confront us as moral agents, but includes us and enables us to participate in it.'[387] They experience and embody this closeness to Jesus' ascetical life which procures the powerful hope of the joy set before them through Christ's cruciform identification with the theodicean mystery of their difference. Those who directly participate in the good of marriage can risk compromising such a hope by overly elevating created goods as necessary for human flourishing. Such an overelevation can harmfully exclude celibates from the mainstay of the life and witness of the Church.

Through O'Donovan's theology of moral order, GCA emerges as a Christian gay self-consciousness that enriches and challenges ('queers') all sides of debate in the Church filling in many of the imaginative lacunae in O'Donovan's account. Additionally, the witness of gay celibates has power to upend idols of desire which are common in the *civitas terrena*. These idols impact the Church by causing disunity, and by elevating created goods above eternal goods. Such idols also produce a hatred for Christians who live according to the Church of England's current teaching which defines marriage as necessarily charactized by sexual differentiation.[388] The gay celibate moves to *queer* or disrupt the normativity of the ecclesial scene and reinstate the importance of affections as beginnings of self-understanding in Christ. Such queering exposes how both 'sides' of the conversation normalise or misuse marriage or sex in various forms as a blanket to hide a queerer voice that emerges from the holiness of (consecration to) Christ, especially the dual strangeness of being gay celibates.[389]

Having appraised O'Donovan's thought, we will now turn to how *Resurrection and Moral Order* (*RMO*) can guide the subjectivity of the gay Christian toward sacramental vocation. I argue that it

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[386] *RMO*, 127
[387] Ibid, 101.
[388] *Book of Common Prayer* (Revised Common Lectionary: 2001), 242-246.
[389] O'Donovan in Bradshaw (ed), *The Way Forward?* (London: Hodder & Stroughton, 2003), 25; Hordern, *Political Affections*, 86.

leads to a two-pronged asceticism involving: i) a redemption of desire and *eros* in the eschatological union of church and Christ that humanises an alternative vision of cross and resurrection-shaped flourishing; and ii) a witness in O'Donovan's vein to Jesus and his redemption of creation, particularly its eschatological transformation that exceeds the goods of creation in marriage in exclusion from them and intense inclusion in resurrection. I parse O'Donovan's asceticism and show how it leads to: i) the greater reward of faithfully witnessing to the created order through the means of its eventual transformation in the Resurrection and ii) an eschatological foretaste of the Holy Spirit which fills in lack. To conclude, I suggest that GCA's witness detects and fills in lacunae within the current Anglican conversation namely: i) the tendency in queer theology to pit eschatology and creation, and the identity of Creator and Redeemer against each other in the creature's ascesis and embodiment of trinitarian love, and ii) the marginalisation of the central significance of the transformation of the erotic body and how the grace of such transformation in Christ allows wayfarers to re-approach sexual difference in marriage, and the eschatological good of friendship in Christ's redemption of creation.

2.4.0 The Creator Must Be Redeemer: The Created Order's Moral Significance

Many commentators have criticised queer theological approaches for the lack of a robust doctrine of creation, emphasising the eschatological or apocalyptic reality of the Gospel, where sexual difference is 'exceeded' or even erased over and against the goodness of the created or moral order.[390] This sets up a polarity in the Godhead, where the Redeemer contradicts the intention of the Creator. Without a respect for created order, the two become different figures which are pitted against each other: the Trinity becomes bifurcated as an empty signifier of 'love', without any qualification from the Word of God, overriding the Creator who fashioned human beings as distinctly and bodily male and female. Such discursive posturing creates a historicist split between the originary past and the redemptive future, rather than the cosmic marriage of the two in Christ.[391]

The old-time God is split from the 'new' God of progress, instead of Jesus Christ being the revelation of God, the Creator, who restores creation in a new order, which is the ground of knowing and acting within the world. O'Donovan, however, asserts a decidedly different starting point for understanding desire, especially its role in the formation of personal identity:

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[390] *Cf.* Ian Paul's critique of Mike Higton (*Thinking Again About Marriage* eds. Cornwall, S. & Bradbury, J. (London: SCM Press, 2016), 14-29), and Robert Song's (*CC,* 48) views on the significance of sexual difference in marriage in 'Are We Sexed in Heaven? Bodily Form, Sex Identity and the Resurrection' in eds. Whittle et al. *Marriage*, 104-120.
[391] Soskice, J. *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender and Religious Language* (OUP: 2007), 49.

> If we inquire how the agent is centred in him or herself, competent and empowered, exercising freedom in self-identity, the answer can only be that the agent is centred also upon this absolute centre, the moment of history at which the name of Jesus Christ was made known for the redemption of the world.[392]

The important contribution he makes, then, is to bridge Kingdom and creation ethics.
Such an asceticism does not aim to return to the modernist counterfeits of sexual difference rehearsed in the landscape of today's cities but through the Resurrection. Through the epistemic renewal of the Spirit, the pilgrim rereads the human body through the authority of scripture, renewed desire, and reason, which resists the accusation of giving apologetic force to crude biological reductionism.[393] GCA rather points to the deeper reality of the sacrament of marriage as a signifier of the final redemption of creation in Christ and celibacy as a faithful sign of the new humanity begun in Jesus Christ. GCA is a synthetic third way through the outright rejection of creation or the closing off of our lives to a creation-bound, ethic of 'nature'. This is the sacramental witness which allows the Word to 'resacramentalise' creation and the erotic body providing future glimpses which shine through now rescuing and re-enchanting the trouble of the body. These queer celibate aliens embody in one intense instantiation the future where creation will be affirmed and yet exceeded and transformed.

2.4.1 Differently Desiring the Same-Sex Other: Authority and Created Order

Even with O'Donovan astute focus on the Resurrection and a christological account of cosmic order, his moral theology risks leaning too heavily on creational ontology and authority alone. O'Donovan needs a greater focus on transformation beyond the Resurrection – especially how this transformation bears on the present by the Holy Spirit and in the future through glorification. GCA requires a stronger account of what Tonstad describes in her critique of Ward and Coakley as *gratuity* – of how Christ's whole life has achieved a righteousness that we have been given as a gift. This gratuity propels our new perception of created order forward and drives our ascesis, not just through exclusion but inclusion in a more glorious future transformation.[394] Additionally, queer theology expresses concerns that the Christian asceticism given by celibate LGBTQI/SSA people would inhibit, rather than lead to human flourishing, and this objection may find wings without this development.

In contrast to O'Donovan, Gerard Loughlin states:

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[392] *SWT*, 92.
[393] *Cities*, 45-50, 194-195.
[394] *G&D,* 121.

> In reading Oliver O'Donovan in light of Judith Butler, I am attempting to show that in one sense she is a better theologian than he is, because she has not sought to stabilize the movement of bodily desire against what they [bodies] are called to be. She is open to a becoming that he forecloses and forecloses not in the name of a revealed order, but in the name of a contingent and counterfactual imagining of nature that occludes the one order that theology discloses: the movement of all being towards its end – and in particular, the movement of human beings toward God, the becoming other that theology names *theosis*.[395]

Loughlin insightfully locates the crux of disagreement between queer theory and O'Donovan as having to do with how the doctrine of creation should be construed. Loughlin, however, moves too quickly forward to *theosis* before considering O'Donovan's textured account of how Jesus vindicates creation and resists disordered loves. We see in the beginning that a sexually-differentiated humanity was created to order the world against chaos and to bring forward life and ordered being. Due to the Fall, these originary goods are unstable realities now, but in resurrection are affirmed and relativised.

Gay celibacy enters the scene at this crux as a queerer option that brings O'Donovan's account of order forward into radical eschatological affirmation and relativisation thereby replying to Loughlin's objection. Christ is the mediatorial subject and actor 'from above' who retrieves moral order not as an attempt to condemn the creature, but to affirm their creaturehood and the ascetical gift of the erotic body. It is no wonder, then, that Christian asceticism and queerness are so profoundly overlapped. O'Donovan intersects with Butler in asking more exactly how the Fall can be accounted for when it comes to our bodies *now*. Modernist counterfeits of gender, however, do not affect the affirmation of an ontology of sexual difference as ethically important from resurrection. The hermeneutic affirmation of sexual difference in the Pauline and Augustinian view is eschatological and safeguards creation from sacramental misuse.[396]

Stewart-Kroeker's critique of O'Donovan's reading of Augustine may bolster gay celibates even further from the pitfall identified by Loughlin:

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[395] Loughlin, G. 'Being Creature Becoming Human: Contesting Oliver O'Donovan on transgender, identity and the body', *ABC Online*, (2018, 10.03.2021): https://www.abc.net.au/religion/being-creature-becoming-human-contesting-oliver-odonovan-on-tran/10214276

[396] Hays, *A Moral Vision*, 105.

> Creation and redemption, together, are the work of a loving God. So must our love reflect both the creative ontological work of God and the redemptive eschatological work of God. Thus, do we protect both ourselves and our neighbours from the damaging consequences of seeking our ultimate satisfaction in those who cannot give it to us. Thus, do we resist making others into idols and instruments—in either case, objects of our own desire—rather than beloved fellow travellers with whom we share the road and with whom we will share heavenly bliss.[397]

It would seem also, then, that nature itself, as conceived by O'Donovan is evangelically insufficient as desire of all kinds has been, in Augustine's sense, perturbed by sin and death but also, equally, lifted into the redemptive life of God through Christ. This perturbation becomes the weakness through which glory and transformation of creation comes.[398] As discussed in the previous chapter, Augustine points to the deeper Christian anthropology of desire compared with the philosophies of emotion in his intellectual context.[399] For the celibate gay Christian, a similar move is made to Augustine's treatment of desire to subvert the philosophies which see erotic celibacy as mere self-extirpation and harm.

The end which same-sex desire points to cannot achieve participation in God's created order. Instead it must be re-interpreted and drawn by the beauty of the beloved Christ in the Holy Spirit. This re-orientation of desire drives an ascetic reorientation in the loving presence of the Triune Creator. GCA, then, poses a question for O'Donovan which takes ethics in a theodicean direction he does not: if the expression of same-sex desire in a marriage is incompatible with the structure of the created order, what hope is there for the gay person to inhabit such a created order without being unfairly discriminated against by the Creator who allows such postlapsarian effects on their body through no choice of their own? GCA contributes a robust theodicean response that both shows the importance of Augustine's theology of desire and meets us in the mystery of suffering through the offense and embrace of the cruciform beauty of Christ.

2.4.2 Same-Sex Desire in O'Donovan: Theodicy and the Problem of Sexual Difference

At its heart, GCA is a response to the theodicean problem that is left for the gay Christian. Gay Christian celibacy emerges as a christological asceticism, which does not erase God's created or moral order, but cruciformly forgoes the self's eudaimonistic grasping at created goods for the

[397] Steward-Kroeker, 'Resisting Idolatry...', 221.
[398] *DIP*, 81-100.
[399] *DIP,* 140-142.

sake of the self's renewal and participation in Christ's raised life where such goods are exceeded. Such an intimacy with Jesus and his passion liberates the gay Christian from alienation, and carries their body into the very life of Jesus himself. GCA is essential to expose the harmful practice of trying extirpate desire altogether. Gay celibacy resists tendencies to repristinate sexual difference in an evangelically-deficient manner that do not recognise the radical fallenness of our capacity to distance ourselves 'from the erotic image of the body' and desire.[400]

For example, a 'natural' law can be idolatrously appropriated without transformation of the affections through Christ (these ways often characterise revisionist and traditional responses to gay celibacy).[401] GCA conversely apprehends a certain kind of 'moral knowledge' in the decision to forgo the possibility of romantic or sexual expression due to the creational limits set by Christology. Such a moral knowledge is not ascertained simply by reading creation but from the eschatological grace that transforms it in Christ. Gay celibacy is not a proto-stoical attempt to use one's resources to merely live according to 'the natural law' or an attempt at repristinating gender from the beginning through the self's powers. It takes on a queer sense of time and knowledge from the eternality of resurrection. GCA queers time-bound ethics by seeking to honour the created order of God that is *in via* toward and vindicated in the Resurrection.

GCA also endows gay self-consciousness with a renewed moral agency in the world, addressing the pastoral lack of empathy in the Church toward the theodicean dilemma of same-sex desire within the created order. Redemption is 'not just about the objective order of created goods, but also the renewal of human agency,'[402] requiring a far deeper pastoral response than simply erasing the ontology of creation or repristinating it according to fallen human faculties. O'Donovan highlights the way in which speaking of the world as 'created' assumes that it is ordered to the good. More precisely, it assumes that it is ordered in these ways: (1) 'vertically,' that is, toward the Creator and, (2) as containing objects that are related to each other either as members of a 'kind' (A is "like" B), or teleologically (A is 'ordered to serve' B).[403] A teleological relation exists in the world and such teleological relations are not an imposition from our minds or wills.

On this view, GCA has the power to draw other pilgrims further not only to seek how the created order can be known, but also how its goods appear differently to a person before and

[400] *ACWTB*, 117.
[401] Patterson, 'A Theological Reading', 113; *ACWTB*, 94.
[402] *RMO*, 94.
[403] Lee Anderson, M. *Earthen Vessels: Why Our Bodies Matter to Our Faith* (London: Bethany House Publishers, 2011), 41.

after they come to know Christ. Our participation in order is a continual and sanctifying process of understanding how to use created goods during our pilgrimage journey with and toward Christ.[404] Gay disciples will not always come to the same conclusions since they are influenced by the different orders of love which surround human beings in the liminal space of the cities but their ethical choices must be weighed and listened to as the Church seeks to remain faithful to its Lord and Creator.

For O'Donovan, the challenge of postlapsarian desire requires a renewed discernment which is understood beyond the 'half-light' or common grace of the two cities – ultimately in and through faith in Christ. O'Donovan relates the need for this challenge to anticipatory emotions like desire which can bring forth agency in the world:

> Desire and fear, the two emotions relating to the future are passionate anticipations... but agency is brought into effect not by desire but by hope. Hope is not a heightened form of anticipation. It responds to promise, presuming on a future that is absolute. If, like desire, hope terminated in the thought of future pleasures lurking as possibilities in the present state of affairs, it could not be a virtue... Hope differs from desire because it attends to a different future, the future of God's promise.[405]

GCA acknowledges that desire in postlapsarian humans without hope is misaimed and fails to righteously participate in the created order; the renewed, participative knowledge of the world and ourselves given in Christ.[406] This grace retrieves the ethical import of creation discerned through Christ's renewed mind, disclosed through Christ's life, teaching, and the scriptures which lend a new perception of the world's goods.

The impetus of gay Christians to live celibately does not simply emerge from a creational logic or natural law theory, but primarily from the admiration of Christ's beauty in creation. As explored in Augustine's call for the 'offense' and 'lure of beauty' and O'Donovan's call for admiration where the aesthetic beauty of Christ attracts gay affections into a different order. Gay celibates relinquish an old understanding of the good for another order shaped according to God's creative and redemptive act in Christ. They are a group of people, knowing their long-term stable affections that say 'yes' to a way of life which, to the unredeemed mind, looks ostensibly like a

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[404] *PMAF,* 60-82.
[405] *SWT*, 122.
[406] *RMO*, 112-113.

'no' to the ultimate human good, namely one's union with a desired other. By reordering desire around a new, eschatological goal, what originally appeared to be good (e.g. marriage as same-sex) gives way to a new realisation of the good in God's economy (e.g. goods of marriage and celibacy).[407] Gay celibates, therefore, queer the queer by embodying a new christological perception of the good which does not only affirm sexual difference as a part of the created order but also seeks to live eschatologically through the erotics of redemption which are now foretasted in Jesus Christ and his body, the Church.

2.4.3 Renewing Gay Self-Consciousness: Affectivity and the New Beginning of Self-Understanding

In this next section, I explore discernment of the good as it is disclosed by Christ, and how the practice of GCA goes beyond its caricature by some as self-repressive.[408] Gay celibates prophetically call the Church away from an idolatrous elevation of sex in marriage or fear of 'sexlessness' in celibacy. GCA represents an essential renewal of gay self-consciousness. Through a christological basis in Jesus' own celibacy, GCA understands the self in creation including its moral order, through the knowledge of God's love thereby 'awakening' a new direction for desire and a renewed moral agency.[409]

Such moral awakening brings us to the discussion of what the created order is, and how we discern it. O'Donovan and Wannenwetsch define participating ordinately within the created order as directly resultant from the knowledge of God's creation brought by the (*re-sacramentalising*)[410] Word of God:

> Without a key to the world's meanings we shall never be able to sift through the complex of information we receive about, and through, the world, and bring it some kind of order... Practical reason looks for a word, a word that makes attention to the world intelligible, a word that will maintain the coherence and intelligence of the world as it finds its way through it, a word of God.[411]

Living righteously in the created order requires the light of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word who took on flesh. The rationale behind the theological ethics of GCA submits itself to the

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[407] *DBC*, III, 7.
[408] *TNA*, 10.
[409] *RMO*, 115; *SWT*, 6-9.
[410] Wannenwetsch, B. 'On the Legitimacy and Limitation of Appeals to Nature in Christian Moral Reasoning,' in *Within the Love of God* (Oxford: OUP, 2014), 111.
[411] *SWT*, 12.

knowledge of God's Word and the proper use of creation in light of it. For the gay or queer Christian to be morally 'awakened' involves an asceticism formed around the reality from beyond the innate logic of their desire. They must be awakened to the created order in the faith, hope, and love through Christ's eschatological life beyond sex:

> Faith anchors the moral life in an awareness of self and responsibility, for agency is disoriented and uncertain until we grasp hold of God's work in shaping us to be effective agents. Love structures our awareness of the world and our appreciation of its ordered values, rejoicing in the world as God's creation and its history as the stage of God's self-disclosure.[412]

Gay celibates seek to proceed from a new moral wakefulness and deliberation that proceeds from a discernment of the world, and more precisely, the body's purpose. Knowledge of the (gay) self is, therefore, necessary to know how to conform to God's purposes.

For O'Donovan, the Spirit upholds the continuity of creation and redemption in the created order. Part of this order is the biological *hypostases* of human creatures, male and female, and their attendant ethical significance.[413] GCA denies gay marriage as a possible option reorienting same-sex desire toward God's purposes in the eschatological fullness of relational life experienced in friendship and the fellowship of the Church. As we will explore in chapters 4 and 5, gay celibates understand their desires differently to Graham Ward or Robert Song, seeing the 'erotics' of redemption as essentially homosocial and diverse rather than possibly homosexual. Whilst 'queerness and asceticism are heavily overlapped words...both designating practices that centre on resistance to normative discourses of sex and sexuality,'[414] queer theology has tended to look toward gay marriage and queer subjectivity as necessitating a critique of the dialectic of creation and redemption. Rogers, for instance, argues that same-sex marriage is one way of ascetically embodying the love of the Trinity.[415] Ward argues that the biological reductionism of defining marriage as solely between one man and one woman, like Barth and others, is a theologically-deficient understanding of the 'erotics' of redemption that exceed the created order, given in Christ's life.[416]

In contradistinction, GCA resists the parsing of the creation / redemption dialectic in queer theology, seeking to honour God's created order, particularly its expression in marriage between

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412 Ibid, 103.
413 *ACWTB,* 121.
414 Burrus, V. 'Gregory Nyssa and the Subversion of Identity' in *QT*, 147.
415 Rogers, *Sexuality,* 213.
416 *C&C*, 141; *Cities*, 71.

one man and one woman. GCA seeks to follow the *imitatio Christi*, focusing on the life of Jesus and his own celibate self-denial. From the prayerful transformation of his own desires (as per Coakley) by embodying redemptive *eros* or the love of the Trinity through friendship and celibacy, Christ's life offers a way forward for same-sex desire. Gay celibacy offers a direct path to retrieve the doctrine of creation; the ascetic challenge this retrieval requires challenges to the political status quo which is focused on vindicating revisionist or traditionalist interpretations of marriage. Sexual desire is understood as only a contingent good, designated for marriage defined by God's created order and intention, and not a necessary imperative for human flourishing.[417] Gay celibacy then pushes the Church to go beyond earthly erotics into the redeemed erotics of the new creation.

2.4.4 Historicism and the Ontology of the World: Moral Agency in the Cosmic Order Through Christ

In O'Donovan's account, to act with one's conscience as a moral agent in the world is 'not just about the objective order of created goods, but also the renewal of human agency.'[418] In order to be an agent, the Resurrection has to renew desire, and its goals, toward the future's full participation in and transformation of God's created order. Gay celibacy does not just concern a moral limit but also a fully-fledged moral agency that means something by its asceticism, specifically as a form of renewed agency that comes from resurrection but that vindicates created realities like sexual difference: 'The dimensions of the resurrection are what is to become of the form of the world: creation restored on the one hand, the creature led forward into the new creation on the other.'[419]

O'Donovan, in his retrieval of an Augustinian framework, defines a truly Christian asceticism as the dynamic movement of knowing the objective order of created goods in Christ, which leads to the renewal of human agency in the Spirit of God. This account of Christian agency specifically relates to our being made in the image of God, male and female, one aspect of the created order, which has profound bearings on the experience of gay individuals who choose to ascetically deny the option of a gay partnership or 'marriage,' because of a desire to honour God's original intention for human embodiment and relationality. This strand of O'Donovan's anthropology has profound significance for how we understand a Christian sexual ethic, and the nature and teleology of same-sex desire. Much contemporary theology seeks to construct a

[417] Ibid, 135.
[418] *RMO*, 94.
[419] Ibid.

renewed anthropology of desire where the created order is defined against biological essentialism but little profound work is given to its relational importance (and even more importantly to the lives and experiences of those who engage in GCA).

The theological ethic of GCA does not just involve the conjunction of same-sex desire and gay experience with the anthropology of the Church but calls for its anthropology to be examined in order for the harmful polarisation of revisionist and traditionalist discourses to be dismantled, and to guard against a wrong *ordo amoris.*[420] Gay celibates call the Church to reconstructively undertake the hard Hookerian task of discerning an ethic that upholds scripture, reason, and the tradition of the Church catholic, both the implications of created order and redemption through our renewed consciences. This Hookerian task asks whether or not the 'erotics' of same-sex desire squares with the 'erotics' of redemption, namely, christological reinterpretation of sexual difference as a part of the created order that reflects the mystery of Jesus Christ, and his union with the Church.

Both Coakley and O'Donovan importantly agree that the redemption of human desires, and more broadly, human flourishing necessarily involves the denial and reordering of certain second order desires for the 'good life' around a greater goal in desiring God.[421] Their difference seems to lie in the appeal to a created order and the role of theological authority in the adjudication of same-sex desire. Without delineating her own view, Coakley understands same-sex unions as a possible way forward for transformation in the Spirit and a preferable option to secular alternatives, but O'Donovan disagrees. He locates the dialectical relationship between the created order, the ascesis of desire and redemption here:

> That moment of self-denial, when we prefer to forgo the created good which is our right rather than enjoy it on terms of compromise, is also a moment of knowledge at which the good becomes clear and conspicuous to us as rarely ever besides.[422]

To forgo the created good of a 'marital' relationship or gay union, then is exemplified by gay Christians who deny this by espousing a traditional sexual ethic. Gay celibate Christians imitate Jesus' passion as an opportunity to renew the modern Christian conscience toward a deeper anthropology of desire rooted in the Incarnation and economy of salvation thereby restoring the authority of the Gospel which calls for us to 'offer our bodies up as a living sacrifice' in imitation

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[420] Ibid, 95.
[421] *RMO,* 98; *SWT,* 81.
[422] *RMO*, 95-97.

of Jesus' life.[423] We see this particularly in the Gethsemane prayer that will be exegeted in the next chapter. Jesus gives up the good desire to live on (and perhaps with an Augustinian gloss, to enjoy creation in and of itself) for the greater desire to do God's will and begin the new creation reality through his death and resurrection. GCA participates in the cruciform life of Jesus' own redemption of human passions by redirecting the *telos* of same-sex desire toward the eschatological order of love in celibacy. Such a witness proffers a third way through the ethical disagreement in the Church that is often dismissed superficially as an evangelically-deficient and stoicised life of bad or repressive celibacy.

The problem that presents itself both in traditional and progressive accounts is on the one hand, an impoverished anthropology and understanding of the distinct embodiment and subjectivity of gay persons (traditionalism), and on the other, the enthronement of desire, *tout court*, without the liberating discipline of christological transformation and the created order (progressivism). Both of these discourses tend toward what O'Donovan terms, 'the mistake of historicism,'[424] which idealistically pits history against created order and God's authority, proffering an insufficient account of same-sex desire as derivative of the goodness of being image-bearers and the effects of sin within God's created order. Wannenwetsch comments:

> As Augustine and the Christian tradition have taught, God created not just human beings but together with them God created substantial forms of social life, too... These forms cannot be comprehended by teleology alone but invite the question for whom they are there...Marriage as such (pure form) cannot be said to represent Christ's love to the church, unless one allows for a christological overwriting of creation.[425]

Gay celibates help to christologically overwrite social life to resist the harmful extremes and theologies of desire that drives church factionalism thereby undermining the Church's unitive life. Through their solidarity with other LGBTQI+ Christians, they create a safe expression of the tradition which welcomes the gay erotic body into the love of God.

2.5.0 The Space In-Between: GCA as Sacramental Existence

In a chapter of *ACWTB* entitled 'Creation, Redemption, and Nature', O'Donovan describes how the Church of Sweden's proposal for same-sex marriages to its General Synod included this

[423] Rom. 12:2.
[424] Ibid, 21, 57, 101.
[425] Wannenwetsch, *Political Worship*, 356.

theological statement: 'Here the distinction between what belongs to creation and what belongs to salvation loses its significance.'[426] O'Donovan comments on this statement:

> The creation of the world by God and its redemption in Jesus Christ are the poles in relation to which Christians have consistently narrated the moral history of the world. There are moments in the narration, of course, that do not lie at either pole but in between them – e.g. the sacraments themselves, which have no place either in the Garden of Eden or in the New Jerusalem.[427]

Sacraments still depend on the 'distinction of creation and redemption; they are sustained by the dynamic tension between them.'[428] If we lose either creation or redemption, a sacrament loses its significance. If the sacramental life of the pilgrim in God's city, especially something as sacred as the affective disposition of bodies and how they are ascetically aimed, is to be safe-guarded within God's will and purpose, both sides of the coin of creation and redemption cannot be denied. Many revisionist approaches attempt instead to reconfigure or resist a knowledge of the world to clear the way for access to non-descript triune love. Such an image of triune love, however, must come through the revelatory mediation of Christ the Word who holds creation and redemption together in the Incarnation and in us by the Holy Spirit. GCA focuses on Christ's mediatorial role as the one who has redeemed and perfected the erotic body through a life which assumed our flesh and its inordinate desire. Such a christological anchor for desire is the epistemic priority that GCA seeks in interpreting bodily desire. By renewing sacramental existence and participation in God it resists enshrining untested desire *tout court*.[429]

In sum, gay celibates are those who seek the gift and obedience that creation summons the soul toward through the body's affirmation as good and its signification in the moral order. Their existence fundamentally resists the rejection or erasure of the body's goodness while also avoiding the denial of postlapsarian effects in our current, groaning state. As O'Donovan states:

> The erotic body, in fact, stands out as the exceptional moment in the repertoire. Here the body conveys a hint of eternity that beckons and calls us from beyond it; here it reaches out to point beyond itself... *eros* is precisely not sexual impulse; it is an aspect of the spiritual life of mankind, though inevitably engendering bodily experiences to accompany

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426 *ACWTB*, 86.
427 Ibid.
428 Ibid, 87.
429 Rom. 3:25.

> it since we are psychosomatic beings whose every moment is a mediation of the spiritual through the bodily.[430]

In a parallel way, Williams touches on this in Augustine:

> The language of *uti* is designed to warn against an attitude towards any finite person or object that terminates their meaning in their capacity to satisfy my desire, that treats them as the end of desire, conceiving my meaning in terms of them and theirs in terms of me... no such cessation of desire is legitimate in relation to finite objects of love.[431]

GCA retrieves 'virginity' as a sacramental vocation for the erotic body to affirm its goodness without acquiescing to the mind of the flesh that grasps hold of creation on its own terms rather than in enjoyment through the dynamic love of God. The gay celibate seeks to reorient their desire so as not to grasp hold of the same-sex other in an attitude which terminates their meaning in their capacity to satisfy desire. Human beings, as O'Donovan opines, are called to the sacramental mediation of the spiritual through the bodily. Gay celibates represent one group who seek this sacramental reordering of desire for the same-sex around God's identity as expressed in creating human beings as co-equal image-bearers, male and female, vindicated and transformed in Christ within the created order.

As Williams and O'Donovan gesture towards, the gay celibate holds a 'reserve toward the erotic image of the body' (that is the use of the body's physical sameness in same-sex desire), not the body itself. Through this reserve, a new perception or memory of the body is instilled which recognises the created order and moves it toward an end beyond the self and beyond the creation – that is resurrected existence in Christ. Such an erotic reserve generates a sacramental existence by remembering the body in the Spirit. Such memory reinterprets the creational good of sex difference through the foretaste of the Holy Spirit and the eternality of a future body and life that honours, fulfils, and eclipses marriage.

The creation is *in via* and same-sex sexual desire along with it. This redemptive movement of desire relativizes and affirms created order by understanding the postlapsarian body as necessitating a renewed materiality from the Spirit: 'the Lord Jesus Christ…will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body.'[432] The glorified body will finally be free from the

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[430] *ACWTB*, 93.
[431] Williams, R, *On Augustine* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 44.
[432] Phil. 3:21.

disturbance of sin, and be fully aligned with the glory and ecstasy of triune participation. Resurrection meets and eclipses the ontologically impermanent parts of our identities including, in this case, same-sex desire. As O'Donovan observes:

> There is bad transcendence as well as good. And there is transcendence of the terms of creation as well as a transcendence within the terms of creation. Getting a distance on the body is not an end in itself and may even be a temptation. The key to achieving the right distance is to locate powers of the soul precisely where every created power of human nature must stand under the judgment of God and awaiting his transforming redemption.[433]

For gay celibates, to err toward a gay 'marriage' would be an example of a misaimed grasp at the transcendence of the terms of creation. Gay sexual consummation would represent a departing from the 'faithful' sacramental existence toward which the Gospel summons the body. The attempt to live free of creation is resisted in order to live transcendentally according to creation's terms. GCA embraces the prayerful groaning of those for whom such a reality requires a self-emptying of desire through the Spirit-mediated help of Christ who knows them.[434] Christ becomes, through prayer and praise, both the pathway of the gay pilgrim in the world and the affective end of life in the body and the redemption for which such bodies were fashioned.

2.5.1 Gay Moral Agency in Christ: Christological Affirmation and Relativisation of Identity

As O'Donovan states, 'Now it is suggested that the same-sex question is better thought about without this narration [of creation and redemption]. In contemplating a same-sex union we need not ask whether we are rejoicing in the bounty of creation, lamenting the distortion of human affections, or looking forward to the lineaments of the new creation.'[435] He suggests here that until reasoned gay voices are widely heard and can act without suspicion in the Christian community, there is little point in asserting 'what gays do or do not believe in.'[436] Gay celibates appear as a queer group that queers the mainstream apologetic attempt to justify or exclude a gay marriage. From this third way, GCA steps in beyond the 'straws in the wind... suggesting that not all gays are enamoured of the liberal bear hug' or the conservative one for that matter.[437] Rather

[433] *ACWTB,* 94.
[434] Evans, *Exploring*, 255.
[435] *ACWTB*, 87.
[436] Ibid.
[437] Ibid, 88.

than arguing about marriage in the Church, this new asceticism embodies a *ressourcement* which parses the dialectic of creation and redemption not as 'merely one episode in the struggle between orthodoxy and revision... [but] its central and decisive battle ground.'[438]

Sacramental existence maintains the identity of being gay but relativizes such an identity according to the Gospel's logic. GCA privileges the permanence of new creation as our future and eternal estate where sexual desire will be transformed in a new erotic economy. Anything less, then, would be not just to deny a truly sacramental existence where the Church is called to live in the breach of the dawning new creation, the Fall and the created order but also the call to repent from the old mind driven by historicist identities that grasp onto old creation as the permanent ontology which only God holds. Such a repentance requires an ascesis that 'strips away the false social representations which constitute the unreal but highly believable barriers. That ascesis is part of what is involved in the redemption of social knowledge and our Earth-bound identities.'[439]

The sacramental existence and witness of gay celibates lies, then, in finding a christological basis upon which to ground the erotic body and to allow the gay or queer body, through the cruciform shape of its worship, to flourish in the plenitude of grace and resurrection. O'Donovan again touches upon this sacramental fulfilment here:

> If we fail to carry the act of (moral) reflection through to its conclusion, and if we fail to inquire as to what the erotic body is a medium for, then we end up investing our perfectly ordinary experiences of sexual attraction with an ontological weight that is, in fact, a borrowed transference, and in our confusion, we fail to understand either ourselves or our bodies.[440]

Gay celibates seek to understand their bodies and desires within the frame of a new mind – no longer the '*phronema sarkos'* or 'mind caught on the flesh', which cannot act or receive the mediation of Christ to us as *hilasterion* or the mercy-seat bridge between old creation and resurrected existence. Such a sacramental existence resists this 'borrowed transference' through the renewed mind in the Spirit which lives into the moral order driven by anticipation of the fulfilment of erotic desire in their new creaturely life.

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[438] Ibid, 88
[439] *COL*, 44.
[440] *ACWTB*, 94.

Queer theological accounts of desire start from a different point of departure to O'Donovan, as theology done on the margins, or from a marginal discourse and experience, or in Butler's case, outside of attempts at identity politics.[441] Interestingly, little work has been done on the marginal experience of gay celibates in the field of queer theology or theory. In fact, gay celibates or the churches that support them are even called 'homophobic' or othered by queer theological discourse.[442] This poses one of the questions at the heart of this thesis: is gay celibacy queerer than the queer academy which assumes a certain posture of how to understand same-sex desire or *mutatis mutandis*, whether queer theology is (in)sufficiently 'queer' in its self-assimilation to the apologetics of (gay) marriage as a boundary marker?[443]

It is primarily gays, for O'Donovan, who seem to care most profoundly for marriage:

> Gays do not always present themselves as natural liberals.... the specialness of gay experience is important to them. It was an insight into this logic that led the late Michael Vasey to insist that the natural discussion partners for gays who took their own experiences seriously were Christians of a more conservative stamp, for whom sex was also a matter of interest as such.[444]

In the self-reflection of pilgrimage, many queer disciples will discern moral order as they come to know the Gospel, and thus, see the world and the telic purpose of their desires to have a different meaning to the mainstay of academic queer discourse. Elizabeth Stuart highlights how queer discourse is identified: '[there are] two ways in which queer theology ends sex: in the sense of overcoming sex as an untruthful, oppressive regime, and in showing the *telos* of sex to be other than reproduction.'[445]

Gay celibates intersect with queer theology in that they aim to overcome sex as an untruthful, often oppressive regime which sees marriage as necessary for human flourishing or *eudaimonia*. By appealing to sex's ending in Christ, they are also able to maintain sex's vindication in Christ through marriage in created order without losing their queerness. An erotic *cultus* which is not christocentric deems the queer celibate opposed to the pursuit of *eudaimonia* as it lacks the tethering point between sex's eschatological end and the vindication of sex as a created good in Christ. Rather than finding one's fulfilment in the love of God and the 'erotics' of redeemed desire in Christ and in the Church, mainstream queer discourse risks falling into the *eudaimonistic*

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441 Tonstad. *Queer Theology*, 1-19; Cornwall, S. *Controversies,* 2011, 112; Patterson, 'A Theological Reading,' 31.
442 Ibid, 43.
443 Ibid, 'The Limits of Inclusion', 7; Ibid, 5, 66.
444 *ACWTB*, 16.
445 *QT*, 12.

game of means and ends within the terms of the radically fallen body untouched by grace. GCA resists this anti-christological *cultus* by queering heterosexism and gay idolatry of sex, retrieving Augustine's *uti/frui* distinction. This instantiation of GCA is a form of christological resistance, enjoying things in God thereby frustrating the flat *eudaimonistic* structure of 'nature' without Christ that drives queer theological discourse as a counter-reaction to the natural idolatry of sex and gender.

In O'Donovan's way, gay celibates refuse to generate their self-understanding according to the contingent and fallen good of sexual desire but rather the epistemic effects of Christ's life which affirmed, vindicated, and transformed the moral order. The gay celibate emerges as a queer Augustinian subject who seeks to inhabit the order of the creation and Creator in the graces of redemption and Pentecost. The queerness of the pilgrim pathway lends a renewed moral significance to sexual difference by moving the *telos* of desire in the created order toward a different interpretative horizon in the *civitas dei*. Gay celibates live toward this *queerer* horizon of hope which frees the discussion from being an apologetic vindication of procreation, sex, ideological heterosexism, or idolatrous grasping at the goods of marriage, without undermining their christological importance.

2.6.0 Conclusion: Restoring an Evangelical Ethic Through Affective Transformation in Christ and the Holy Spirit

The conundrum that same-sex desire presents to the Church is profound, requiring it to form a more thoroughly christological ethic for LGBTQI+ people that resists 'overwriting'[446] or undoing creation's vindication and transformation in Christ. This discussion of O'Donovan and gay celibacy reveals a major lacuna in contemporary Anglican theology which is yet to wrestle with the deeper impetus behind GCA, and the ethical clarity needed for LGBTQI+ Christians to work out their salvation in the fear of the Lord and his loving transformation and energisation of postlapsarian bodies. We have shown that the conversation has been too focused on apologetic arguments for or against (same-sex) marriage, instead of the arguably harder Hookerian task of renewing and retrieving scripture, reason, and tradition explored in chapter five in light of gay experience and self-consciousness's hearing of the Word of God – Jesus Christ – who is apocalyptically celibate, resisting artefactual repristination of nature.

[446] Ibid, 98.

My account of GCA developed in the last two chapters will be further tested and held up critically to Coakley's and Ward's accounts of erotics and asceticism in the next two chapters. Gay celibacy, as I have argued, develops the conversation O'Donovan seeks to begin by providing: i) an aesthetic robustness to asceticism, which emerges from a christological interpretation of created goods; ii) a more robust pneumatological import in asceticism which reorients desire toward future existence now in the sacramental existence of the Church; iii) the theodicean and bodily presence of Christ through the Spirit in the particular instantiation of postlapsarian desire identified in gay experience. The discipleship of same-sex desire must be pursued with nuance as both differing from and yet called to an equivalent obedience. The gay celibate requires a return to the christological dialectic appealed to by O'Donovan, which upholds the dual restoration and transformation of the created order through the risen Jesus who works in us in prayer with the groaning help of the Spirit.

Qualified by Coakley's model of new asceticism and prayer, the next chapter will explore GCA as a position which can resist legalistic oppression by providing a pathway of discipleship that infuses the erotic body with the eschatological hope of Jesus Christ. O'Donovan summarizes this here:

> When the gay experience becomes self-reflective about its own specialness, and invites interrogation in its own right, not merely as another instance of a hard-done-by under-class, its usefulness to the liberal project will be at an end... It will force us to pay attention to the fragmentation of the modern moral world, and to its insufficiency as a measure to judge the performance of the church by.[447]

When the gay Christian is now reconceptualised as a Spirit-filled moral agent rather than just a minoritized population, who allows their desires to be renewed by the Gospel and the Christ-event, they throw off the oppression of a reductive commodification of desire and objectification which the politics of the Church and the orders of desire that compete against God's love thwarts upon them. I reveal in the next chapter how gay celibates seek a new asceticism that echoes Coakley. GCA requires a return again to God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ in a refreshing way as the authoritative basis of Anglican moral and pastoral theology. These are vital to renewing the contemporary Anglican discussion by seeking to live out a truly 'evangelical' ethic in O'Donovan and Augustine's sense. God is exalted above time-bound

[447] *ACWTB*, 120.

historicism, chastening an ethics of desire which does not provide a substantive pastoral response for gay people, especially how to act faithfully in the world and with their bodies.

GCA points back to the way that Jesus is both the goal and the pilgrimage pathway that one treads upon in discipleship, as well as the one who renews the Church's knowledge of the created order through grace. Carrying the cross, forgoing certain desires that seek to enjoy created goods *in se* is not just a danger for gay celibates but is a temptation that is universally felt together among fellow pilgrims on our way to the safe harbour of God. This aspect of moral theology and discipleship is witnessed to in bearing our crosses together and witnessing to the right use of created goods in rightly-ordered celibacy and marriage. When it comes to desire, recognition of difference is integral for the successful mutual understanding and interdependent friendship of cross carrying, which can truly help us to befriend our bodies and assist other pilgrims to carry cruciform burdens. The discussion of O'Donovan has revealed that Anglicanism is yet to wrestle with the deeper impetus behind GCA because it has been focused on apologetics for or against same-sex marriage. Without the broader erotic vision of celibacy, the Church risks compromising its witness and clarity rather than engaging in the hard Hookerian task of refreshingly revisiting scripture, reason, and tradition in search of a profound understanding of gay embodiment. The pre-eminent theologian who has tried to resist such apologetic temptations is Sarah Coakley. We will now consider her new asceticism and how it lends rich resources to understand GCA's contribution.

CHAPTER THREE: RENEWING ANGLICAN ASCETICISM: A RECONSTRUCTIVE APPRAISAL OF SARAH COAKLEY'S THEOLOGY OF DESIRE

3.0 Introduction: Knowing the Trinity Rightly and Anglican Moral and Pastoral Theology of Desire

The account of gay celibacy I have so far advanced owes a great debt to Coakley's clarion call for a new asceticism in the theological academy and contemporary Anglicanism. In this project, I shape a synthesis of O'Donovan and Coakley's thought on desire and asceticism to form my account of GCA, which becomes important in my discussion of Ward's erotics of redemption in the next chapter. For these reasons, I have chosen to explore Coakley first to build constructive links with O'Donovan. Consequently, I adopt aspects of Coakley's work within my account of GCA while retaining what was gained from O'Donovan's account: namely GCA as both thoroughly at home in the created order while anticipating its transformation. I consider the benefits of Coakley's trinitarian ascesis which, while not emphasising created order as centrally as Augustine and O'Donovan, proffers the prayerful tools and definition of *eros* to resist harmful practices and natural idolatries. Due to the limits of space, I have focussed mainly on the lacunae which my account of GCA highlights in Coakley's asceticism. However, with these lacunae met, her theology of desire constitutes an indispensable foundation for GCA protecting it from its disordered form in harmful repression. This chapter's task, therefore, is to extend the thesis' argument by deploying the reconstructive power of Coakley's account to the situation of a certain population of gay and lesbian Christians.

Coakley has dedicated much of her work to the question of desire in her compendium of essays, *The New Asceticism (TNA)* and the first volume of her systematic theology, *God, Sexuality and the Self* (*GSS*). As Coakley has recently opined, the void between systematic and pastoral theology needs to be filled:

> While this void had obvious short-term advantages in the wake of Kant's critiques, and indeed – on my reading of Schleiermacher – was even an uncannily brilliant anticipation of certain non-foundationalist moves of the later twentieth century, it nonetheless sowed certain unfortunate seeds for the rather different idea of an affectively-oriented, and even

> anti-rational, rendition of theology which would have its proper place in the professional formation of the clergy for the church's *practical* business of pastoral service.[448]

In order to remove this void, Coakley brings systematic theology and moral and pastoral theology together in her *theologie totale* positing theology itself as an ascetic task that is always *in via*.[449] As she states: 'What distinguishes [my] position, then, from an array of other 'post-foundationalist' options that currently present themselves in theology, is the commitment to the discipline of particular graced bodily practices which, over the long haul, afford certain distinctive ways of knowing.'[450] GCA is a graced bodily practice which seeks to bring the queer or gay body into the discipline of living according to the *amor dei* through the Holy Spirit who '…always blows afresh to purge, enlighten, inflame.'[451]

Coakley proffers an important theological response to Judith Butler's subversion of gender binaries through a retrieval of Gregory of Nyssa's 'eschatologically-labile body' and contemplative model of trinitarian asceticism.[452] Such a move is reminiscent of GCA and its relativisation and yet affirmation of the created order through a purged *eros*: 'Rather what seems to being enacted [in Butler] is the gesturing to an eschatological horizon in which the restless, fluid post-modern "body" can find some sense of completion without losing its mystery, without succumbing again to "appropriate" or restrictive gender roles.'[453] She sees the contemplative way as a resistance to a sex-obsessed society underpinned by 'bowdlerized Freud' which perceives celibate asceticism as necessarily harmful repression or 'suppression.'[454] Coakley further diagnoses the problem in the intersection between the two cities:

> The power at stake, reductively in this hermeneutic of suspicion is the raw physical power of sexual libido, and the repressive power of churches to manage and control it… If repression is the problem, then genealogical exposure and liberation from restrictive

[448] Coakley, S. 'Can systematic theology become 'pastoral' again, and pastoral theology 'theological'?' ABC Online accessed May, 2022 https://www.abc.net.au/religion/can-systematic-theology-become-pastoral-again-and-pastoral-theol/10095582.
[449] *GSS*, 27.
[450] Ibid, 19.
[451] Ibid, 267.
[452] Ibid, 87; 274.
[453] *P&S*, 166.
[454] Ibid, 167.

> ecclesiastical mores constitute the answers. The sexual repression/libertinism binary is then up and running… those two alternatives represent a false choice.[455]

GCA emerges as a third option from Coakley's diagnosis of the problem with late modern or postmodernist erotics, especially the split between pastoral and systematic theology, and the false choices of libertinism and repression.

To bring these fields into closer contact again, I argue that Coakley's model could benefit from a more robustly christological foundation which incorporates O'Donovan's notions of created order and moral (mis)knowledge as well as Augustine's account of our desirous misuse of creation. To engage the present question of GCA without reference to Coakley's work would miss an indispensable development for Anglican moral and pastoral theology. Coakley's careful handling of systematic theology, particularly the Trinity and how the doctrine applies pastorally and prayerfully to correcting harmful idolatries and visions of God is an essential foil for GCA. Coakley's account of Christian asceticism in prayer has the power to avoid the strawmen that arise when GCA is derided or stoicised rather than met with the astute theodicean response it deserves.

I appraise Coakley's central thesis that 'desire... even fallen desire – is the precious clue woven into the crooked human heart that ever reminds it of its relatedness to its source.'[456] The gift of human desire for God opens and frees us from idolatries or false images of God, through a prayerful asceticism that leads to 'noetic slippage' and an epistemic 'loss of control.'[457] This apophatic moment in charismatic and contemplative prayer can release us from idolatrous views of the Trinity – a strict dyad or *monarchia* of the Father and Son with a 'shrunken dove' as opposed to the mysterious triunity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.[458] A renewed knowledge of the Trinity proffers a promising path for desire that proceeds from a renewed knowledge of ourselves, especially realities like gender and sexuality. For Coakley, we rightly start with God and not ourselves, then participate in grace through a human, ascetical response, and the specificities of our own sexual desires or understandings of gender.

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[455] *TNA*, 34.
[456] *GSS*, 59.
[457] Ibid, 127.
[458] Ibid, 217.

In the final subsection, I apply Coakley's systematic theology to the question of GCA and prepare for our discussion of Ward's erotics of redemption in chapter 4. I chose this order as Coakley's account constructs a corrective bridge between Ward's postmodern body and O'Donovan's Augustinian ethics. I subsequently argue that GCA queers the theological project of contemporary Anglican theology in an alternative way to the binary of gay marriage debates by questioning desire in prayerful purgation. Through a refocus on prayer in Jesus' own asceticism in the Markan Gethsemane and the Gethsemane tradition reflected in Romans 8, I examine how the Anglican world can re-approach erotic vocations that take the theodicean and pastoral aspects of same-sex desire more centrally into account. I show that Coakley's suggestions can create a healthier place than the past for gay disciples to flourish innovating within the Church's teaching and tradition. A renewed agency for the gay Christian subject is afforded in Coakley's trinitarian model of prayer by opening the way for a renewed erotics within the Church and an apophaticism which will lead to the fruit of self-control where desire is moved into the light of renewed self-knowledge.[459]

Without Coakley's account, the gay *peregrini* in the city of God are at risk of following the false choices of repression and libertinism, which ultimately force them out of a place of ascetical faithfulness in the Spirit's calling. Additionally, gay celibates have little protection from the harmful 'sides' that wish to co-opt their stories into objectifying narratives that produce moral outrage, apologetic counterfeits, or easy and even immoral libertinism. An erotic horizon defined obsessively with (gay) marriage leaves the queer disciple with little way out or forward. Coakley's deeply trinitarian model opens up exciting opportunities for fullness and flourishing in worship of and prayer to the Holy Trinity and, thereby, a renewed account of celibate asceticism for the Church setting up the 'hard, Hookerian task' of revisiting scripture, reason, tradition and the experience of the erotic body.[460] Through a christological critique of Coakley's trinitarian ascesis in the Markan Gethsemane, I proffer ways forward for her account of desire-transformation through Christ's mediatorial discipleship from above. To conclude, I reveal how a robustly pneumatocentric Christology recentres the desirer on scripture and a renewed capacity to discern righteous participation in the created order.[461]

3.1.0 *God, Sexuality and the Self*: GCA and Prayer as the Trinitarian Way Through Idolatry

[459] Ibid, 292.
[460] *TNA*, 139.
[461] Cortez, M. *Christological Anthropology in Historical Perspective: Ancient and Contemporary Approaches to Theological Anthropology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 57-78; McKirland, L. C. 'Did Jesus Need the Spirit?' An Appeal to Pneumatic Christology to Inform Christological Anthropology', *Perichoresis* 19, no. 2 (2021): 43-61.

In Coakley's feminist work, the centre of the solution to patriarchal projectionism and idolatry is found in an apophatic corrective in prayer. She argues that a patristic embarrassment about the link between prayer in the Spirit and sexuality in Romans 8 produced a subordination of women and embodied difference (gay bodies) by de-centring the person of the Holy Spirit.[462] For Coakley, such a 'shrunken dove' has led to an idolatrously low view of women which Augustine himself wrestled with as he attempted to connect the doctrine of the Trinity to sexuality and gender:

> There are, it seems, two sides to Augustine's view of women which remain somewhat unresolved and are paradoxically expressed in this section of the *De Trinitate* [book XII]. On the one hand, there is a strong conviction in him that women are mentally equal to men.[463] On the other, scriptural authority… (1 Corinthians II.7) … leads him towards the view that woman, considered in her own right, is different…. and not fully in the image of God unless joined to a man, her husband.[464]

Rather than all order or hierarchy between God and creation being removed, I argue that her trinitarian apophaticism protects 'cosmic order' from erasure: 'ordering oneself to God, in contrast… may precisely be the means of undermining and dissolving such sexed subordination.'[465] For Coakley, the Spirit powerfully corrects projections of gender onto God thereby assisting the creature to rightly order postlapsarian desire by disrupting a linear model of the relation of Father and Son. Such a model has contributed to a deficient pneumatology in the Church's artistic, theological, and moral imaginary and, therefore, pastoral theology. Such a deficient place for the Holy Spirit's role in transforming our desires has led to the present crisis over same-sex marriage.[466] Like gender, the way to purifying sexual desire and erotics from sinful inordinacy is through an epistemic release of control in prayer that opens desire to a new ordering and significance. I suggest that GCA, along Coakley's lines, is integral to opening up a renewed vision of sacrificial worship that can resist the erotics of the *civitas terrena* and embody the apophatically-corrected orthodoxy offered by Coakley's thoroughgoing theology of desire.[467]

Coakley's model can be strengthened by Augustine's account of the creature's fallen attachment to created goods which produces a need to be released from wrong use. GCA seeks to re-approach the body's erotic goods with the renewed sight given in the enflaming love of God. Curiously, Coakley seldom mentions Augustine's *uti-frui* distinction. Her apophatic trinitarianism keeps an avenue open for

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[462] *GSS,* 97.
[463] Ibid*,* 291.
[464] Ibid,
[465] Ibid, 320.
[466] Ibid, 190-265.
[467] Ibid, 296.

renewal of desire, only with apophatic protection from projections that have led to idolatries of gender and sexuality, and in the case of gay Christians, a repressive stoicism or libertine condescension:

> To kill the Father is to remain with and reaffirm the rule of the Father; so there has to be a way out other than enforced repression. So now we know why 'true orthodoxy' is so elusive. It can only occur when the idolatrous twoness of the patriarchal dyad is broken open to transformation by the Spirit… Can a feminist call God Father, then? One might more truly insist that she, above all, must; for it lies with her alone to do the kneeling work that ultimately slays patriarchy at its root.[468]

Can a Christian who is gay, then, also call God Father? Through what Coakley engenders here, GCA emerges as a way forward that avoids the idolatrous appropriation of the Trinity that has kept women and gay people in a subordinate position. The way to a liberated orthodoxy freed from 'enforced repression' is through a deeper understanding of the Trinity, not in spite of it. In this sense, the hydraulic notion of sublimation in Freud is better redefined in Nyssen's way as 'rechannelling' and as the Spirit's work of grace rather than the mind's work or an inner psychic process alone. [469] I agree, therefore, with Coakley that the Trinity must become primary where God's desire for us and our proto-erotic desire for God becomes more fundamental than sex, and humanises the theodicean situation of the gay disciple:

> Freud must be – as it were – turned on his head. It is not that physical 'sex' is basic and 'God' ephemeral; rather, it is God who is basic, and 'desire' the precious clue that ever tugs at the heart, reminding the human soul – however dimly – of its created source. Hence, in a sense that will be parsed more precisely as the book unfolds, *desire is more fundamental than 'sex'*. It is more fundamental, ultimately, because desire is an ontological category belonging primarily to God, and only secondarily to humans as a token of their createdness 'in the image'. But in God,

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[468] Ibid, 326-327.

[469] The hydraulic metaphor or model for desire is shot through classical understanding of desire in Aristotle, Plato and Gregory of Nyssa. Gregory explains that the soul must "transfer [*metatithenai*] its power to love [*erōtikē*] from the body to the intelligible and immaterial contemplation of the beautiful" (*De virginitate* V:1:19–21). For Gregory: '*erōs* needs to be redirected from material beauties—the love of the flesh (*erōs sarkōn, De virginitate* XI:2:10)—to the true prototypical beauty of God (*De virginitate* XI:5:14–20). Desire must not be allowed to spill over into excess; otherwise, it will give rise to a variety of disordered impulses (*hormai*), which include pleasures (*hēdonai*), riches (*ploutoi*), love of glory (*philodoxia*), power, anger, pride, and other such things (*ta toiauta, GNO* IX/1 61:11–13) (*proairesis*): desire (*epithymia*) requires free will in order to reach its proper goal (*skopos*)—human *chreia* (*De mortuis, GNO* IX/1 59:20–22),' (Cadenhead, R. *The Body and Desire: Gregory of Nyssa's Ascetical Theology*, (Oakland, CA, 2018: University of California Press Online). Holy virginity, then, for Nyssa is a rechannelling of desire toward the perfection of God who is in a state of *apatheia*. While God desires us in some sense, God's desire is different to human desiring in that God's affective life is perfectly stable, unperturbed by sin and the exposure of finitude. This is very similar to Augustine who sees Christ's experience of emotion as ultimately good and baptises our desire as capable of purification and elevation, but also cites the importance of divine *apatheia* for the salvation of our own desires, (*DCD XIV*, 9, 14). (Cf. *Apatheia*—"ne consiste … plus à détruire les passions, mais à les redresser, les mieux orienter, les rendre sublime." (Aubineau, *Grégoire de Nysse, Traité de la virginité,* 168.) See also TNA 44-45.

> 'desire' of course signifies no *lack* – as it manifestly does in humans. Rather, it connotes that plenitude of longing love that God has for God's own creation and for its full and ecstatic participation in the divine, trinitarian, life.[470]

Rather than putting the pressure on human faculties, grace does the work through contemplation and noetic slippage rather than in the psychologically-dubious Freudian sense of interior subconscious forces and work. As explored in Augustine, desire-redirection happens through the influence of Christ's body on our body as he moves our loves toward him and away from other orders of love.[471] Coakley's asceticism calls us to offer up our sexuality and body to the Spirit's ascetical reorientation, which avoids repressive stoicism and embraces the upward call to offer up our desires to sanctification in God.

Compared with my account of GCA, Coakley's asceticism has a less developed engagement with originary creation and how sexual difference might figure within the created or moral order as known through the Resurrection. Coakley contributes a developed account of the transformation of the erotic body which O'Donovan needs, but lacks an account of exactly what is being redeemed, what it is being redeemed from (other than an idolatrous focus of Father and Son), and God's intention in creating the body with sex and gender. Her central emphasis on unknowing means, after prayerful transformation we are left stranded without a cataphatic end point or ethic to confirm its origin. Coakley proffers an Augustine-like account of what resurrected life consists in through the Spirit, and yet does not discuss differentiation of eternal reward in the Resurrection. However, in Gregory of Nyssa's vein, a resurrection-driven asceticism, similar to O'Donovan's, only lacking an appeal to created order, is the priority.[472] I imagine Coakley left such a notion out as that which may have been misused to justify natural idolatry and patriarchal projection without O'Donovan's appeal to resurrection. Coakley's trinitarian account of (proto)-erotic desire helps protect created realities like sexuality or gender from being projected onto or becoming penultimate over God. Noetic slippage in prayer assists the gay disciple from repressing or accepting untested (same-sex) desire and yet does not give an account of how to test the desire other than apophatic prayer. O'Donovan and Coakley provide two vital elements to renewing asceticism from ethical and systematic lenses, which can aid in helping the desirer through the Trinity's crucible of love and testing desire toward delightful use of the created order. Exclusion from a

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[470] *GSS*, 9.
[471] *DSV,* 38.118 where Augustine's use of '*pondere caritatis'* (weight of love) refers to how the humility of Christ's incarnation draws the weight of the virgin's love in a non-pelagian way through grace (*cf.* '*amor meus pondus meum'* (My weight is my love), *Conf. XIII*, x, 278).
[472] Patterson, D. *Reforming a Theology of Gender: Constructive Reflections on Judith Butler and Queer Theory*, (Oregon: Cascade Books, 2022), 171-179.

created good for a greater inclusion in Christ's redemption of the cosmic order in GCA is one side of a christological asceticism that Coakley needs to guide same-sex desire.

I contend that the pray-er must move, as per Augustine's *uti-frui* distinction, to the second step which is to use creation positively as affections are renewed and reordered by God's love (an element of O'Donovan's later ethics more fully developed in his account of 'awakening').[473] Prayer leads to action, especially delighting in creation's goods according to this new order of love and thus, being empowered to give up certain 'erotic' goods for eternal ones in God. Prayer aids us in our postlapsarian weakness to understand the ethical status of desire as either leaning into righteous participation in the cosmic order or misusing the creation against God's will. GCA enters here. The gay Christian like the feminist Christian is called to do the prayerful work with the Father, in the Spirit and Son, to avoid a false repression or libertinism. An erotically-fulfilling celibacy honours and righteously participates in the created order. Thus, the gay Christian avoids being used by a heterosexist or homophobic agenda which refuses to recognise the theodicean and erotic differentiation of the *discordium malum*'s random movements uncovering the difference of living with desire which misaligns with the created order's sexual goods in marriage.

Coakley's work offers fecund ground into which GCA can root itself, protecting against a 'homophobic' God who demands a harmful extirpation from the gay Christian. While she does not face the question of same-sex marriage or gay celibacy directly, she invites same-sex desire to be understood according to a more fundamental (proto-erotic) desire for God at its base and potential avenues for it to be ascetically tested.[474] Unlike the proto-stoical view of homosexuality which simply sees it as a disordered burden to be extirpated or overcome, Coakley's trinitarian apophaticism can welcome same-sex desire as a gift to be redirected and channelled in precisely the way that the gay celibate pilgrim of our first chapters seeks. Coakley risks, however, leaving gay disciples with little ascetical direction due to the lack of an account of an originary story which Christ and resurrection redeems from idolatry.

Desire on Coakley's account, however fallen, is always a profound gift and yet, must be relativized in the Spirit's apophaticism. Her account could benefit from engagement with moral theology through Christ's vindication and restoration of creation's goodness, including particularly desire and the will in Gethsemane. Conversely, I suggest that her priority for the Holy Spirit and contemplative practice of prayer procures an essential 'noetic slippage' which can open the church up to the greater depth of

[473] *SWT,* 16-17.
[474] *TNA*, 45.

God's triune subsistence thereby undoing entrenched positions which emerge from untested desire. Contemplative prayer also involves, as Coakley emphasises, painfully confronting the effects of the Fall and its particular implications in shaping our current desires, which is integral to any asceticism, but particularly renewing the ecclesial conversation. The dilemma of adjudicating same-sex desire is met as we are lured forward by the intense ecstasy of God's love in the Christic life of triune participation. The Trinity is not known in abstraction (immanent) or by God's actions (economic) alone but within desire itself, which anchors them inseparably together.

3.1.1 Freud and Sublimation: Freeing Celibacy from Misunderstanding and the Danger of Repression

Coakley establishes her new asceticism and definition of *eros* by freeing the doctrine of the Trinity from idolatrous misunderstandings primarily through a greater focus on the Holy Spirit. She summarizes *eros* as the more fundamental clue to God within us than sexual desire. *Eros* is, therefore, defined as: 1) 'a creative elision of biblical and platonic ideas about desire (Yahweh's primal desire for Israel/Church and the soul's responsive desire for God e.g. Song of Songs, psalms, prophetic books)'; and 2) 'the constellation category of self-hood, the ineradicable root of one's longing for God.'[475] Coakley begins her critique of the modern ascetical crisis in the Church with an appeal to correcting a pseudo-Freudian platitude at its centre: 'A popularised form of Freudianism is often invoked in support of this latter view about the impossibility of celibacy. But this is odd: because Freud himself… never taught that social harm comes from what he called sublimation.'[476] Much of the cynicism toward celibacy emerges, for Coakley, from a deficient theological anthropology of desire borrowed not from Freud but from a popular-level commodification of desire which wrongfully insists on sexual expression for human flourishing and wrongly designates celibacy as part of the cause for sex-abuse crises.[477]

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[475] Plato, *Symposium*, 21; *TNA*, 32; *GSS*, 58.
[476] *TNA*, 5.
[477] Ibid, 21; The hydraulic metaphor for desire is in Plato's *Republic* where he describes participation in the Good as the task of 'attuning the harmonies of one's body for the sake of the concord in one's soul,' (591c–d). Plato employs a hydraulic metaphor for desire: 'When a person's desires incline strongly in one direction, we know that they will be weaker in other directions, like a stream of water directed off into one channel. So, when someone's desires have set to flow towards learning and the like, they will be concerned with the pleasures of the soul itself by itself and will abandon the plea sures of the body, if he is truly a lover of wisdom (*philo-sophos*),' (6.485d). For Plato, unlike Aristotle, 'there was no clear theory of catharsis, but rather a search to 'conform [oneself] to an objective pattern in reality' with the tripartition of the soul, and Diatoma's speech which gives an account of philosophical love' (Kahn, H. C. 'Plato's Theory of Desire', *The Review of Metaphysics* 41, no.1 (1987): 103, 96: (*Phaedo* 65c9, 66b7, 67b9; *Rep.* 6.485b-d, 490b2-7). For Aristotle, desire and eros needed a pathway of catharsis so that *eros* could be balanced and virtue cultivated: 'we desire something because it seems good to us rather than it seeming good because we desire it. For the starting-point is rational thought (*noesis*)' (*Metaphysics,* A.7.1072a2). As Kahn states, 'reason maintains control but needs the cooperation of desire in initiating action,' (Kahn, Ibid, 78). Aristotle and Plato differ in that Aristotle defines desire in categories (*bouelsis, thymos, epithymia*) and Plato has no generic concept for desire, but rather thinks in

The modern employment of Freud has helped us see that much of our desire is manipulated unconsciously:

> The challenge is to identify the difference in these many desires, and how to move from corruption to the sublime within them – by processes of formation, self-knowledge, humility, and progressive reliance on divine grace.[478]

For Coakley, Freud excavates the unseen, subconscious forces and powers, as well as the fact that human desire also animates good instincts and longings and, she adds, our deepest longing for God. Coakley reveals how Freud's *Eros* (the propulsive force for life and union) needs, then, be sublimated or redirected, in part due to its potentially destructive effects on the other.[479] She explains *eros*' particular difficulty while showing how it is central to how we are drawn to union with God and each other.[480] Unlike Freud's *Thanatos* (the effects of death on our desire life), which destroys relationship, *eros* is, conversely, the drive that presses towards union, exocentric, and future life.[481] Coakley helpfully highlights how this was developed by Freud into what he

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terms of the tripartition of the soul or psyche (*logistikon* [rational desire], *thymoeides* [spirited anger], *epithymia* [appetite]). For Plato, desire must undergo transformation through the greater beauty of the forms, releasing itself from the dominance of beauty in the lower goods of the body toward beauty in the soul. *Eros* is educated through the release of rational desire from a weaker object to the 'true knowledge which is knowledge of Beauty itself,' (211c7). Both Aristotle and Plato intersect in that reason and desire must not remain independent categories as in a Humean-Davidsonian view, but as interdependent elements of how we know the good. Solomon points us beyond the cognitivist divide over desire as an emotion to an integrative model of desire which neither denies the hydraulic notion of 'rechannelling' or psychic pressure, (Solomon, R. C. 'Myth Three: The Hydraulic Model' in *True to Our Emotions: What Our Emotions Are Really Telling Us* (online ed, Oxford Academic: 2018), 143).

[478] TNA, 10.

[479] In *Project toward a Scientific Psychology* (1895) Freud employed a hydraulic mechanism which describes propulsion of psychic energy within the mind as discussed in *Interpretation of Dreams* (1899). While never citing Plato or other classical interlocutors, the classical hydraulic metaphor sitting is echoed in his hydraulic imaginary for the flow of the psyche's energies. Reflecting new neurology of the time, Freud saw a 'psychic apparatus' mapping onto the structure of the brain: 'In the psychic apparatus (and in the brain), as in the boiler system, the hot dangerous fluid put tremendous pressure on the entire system, found easy passage through those channels that were open to it, was blocked from others that were kept closed, sometimes with considerable force. It is not hard to see in this some of the basic terms of early Freudian psychodynamics the notion that the unruly forces of the unconscious put considerable pressure on consciousness (something like the gauge of the system), the charging of certain ideas or urges (*cathexis*), the strong impetus to release or discharge (*catharsis*), the need to constrain and contain these dangerous impulses whether by redirecting them (*sublimation*) or by forcefully clamping down on them (*repression*).' (Solomon, 'Myth Three…', 145. See also Richard Rorty's critique of Freud's hydraulic mechanisation of desire and *libido* and the platonic inflection in Freud ('Freud and Moral Reflection' in *Essays on Heidegger and Others* (Cambridge: CUP, 1991), 149-155. Daniel O'Shiel provides a recent and balanced defence of the hydraulic metaphor from cognitivist critique (contra Solomon): 'A middle, flexible ground must be sought and maintained, where obviously not everything should be permitted, but neither can or should everything be policed… we all need to be aware of our internal Freudian emotions and how these go a long way in formatting very significant parts of our affective, emotional, and moral psyches,' ('Safety Valves of the Psyche: Reading Freud on Aggression, Morality, and Internal Emotions', *Philosophies* 6, no. 86 (2021): 14).

[480] *TNA*, 9.

[481] Ibid, 96.

called the *Ego* and *Libido*: 'Complete suppression of man's aggressive tendencies is not the issue; what we try is to divert it into a channel other than that of warfare.'[482]

This theory of re-channelling psychic energy echoes Plato's ancient words of ascent: 'celibates have managed to direct their love to 'all men alike' rather than simply one, chosen sexual love-object.'[483] From Coakley's analysis, we can conclude that Freud would not think GCA, which sublimates and re-channels same-sex desire into a greater fullness or good, is intrinsically damaging. However, Freud's notion of sublimation, which depends on the hydraulic mechanism of desire-reorientation, has been critiqued as overly deterministic:

> The hydraulic model captures the dynamism and energy of our emotions, which is why it so appealed to Freud and so many others. And it certainly explains the urgency of many of our emotions and the fact that some of them, at least, do feel as if they are forcing themselves upon us rather than emanating from us. Thus, the hydraulic model represents an important part of the phenomenology of at least some emotions. But it is not to be taken literally nor should it be accepted as a general model of emotion. Its representation of passivity, in particular, is something that we should vigorously resist, not that we are never "pressured" by our emotions—for surely, we are in any number of cases, if only because we have followed an emotional strategy so far and invested so much in it that we feel that we "cannot" back out now. But that is very different from finding oneself as a cauldron or a boiler and the victim of forces not at all our own doing.[484]

It is, however, important to remember that Freud had moral objections to the religious idea that one should love everyone equally. His model of sublimation was much more like Gregory of Nyssa who understood that our desire could be fruitfully redirected from its (sexual) physiological base, rechannelling desire toward greater ends of worship (love of God and neighbour).[485] The lacuna Coakley helpfully identifies in Freud is that if there 'is no final theory of 'forms'... still less a Christian God or point of transcendence then the newly embraced

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[482] Freud, S. *Civilisation and its Discontents* trans. McClintock, D. (London: Penguin, 2002*),* 56-58 in Ibid*,* 44.
[483] Ibid, 44.
[484] Solomon, 'Myth Three…', 149.
[485] Ibid, 44; 'It is impossible for the mind which is poured into many channels to win its way to the knowledge and the love of God… Imagine a stream flowing from a spring and dividing itself off into a number of accidental channels. As long as it proceeds so, it will be useless… But if one were to mass these wandering and widely dispersed rivulets again into one single channel, he would have a full and collected stream for the supplies which life demands. Just so the human mind (so it seems to me), as long as its current spreads itself in all directions over the pleasures of the sense, has no power that is worth the naming of making its way towards the Real Good,' (*De Virginitate*, 7).

Platonic ladder of ascent leads nowhere.'[486] Such lack of a transcendent referent for desire has produced a culture which seeks to undermine considered, mature ascesis like GCA for fear of a disordered or harmful version casting all asceticism as repressive. This challenges any notion of healthy sublimation which Freud not just granted but praised as essential to the task of love which involves profound self-sacrifice.[487]

For this reason, Coakley's reading of Freud helps explain why our culture struggles to understand how GCA could be an option that does not 'repress' or 'harm'. Instead our culture mistakenly wagers that GCA must necessarily be a practice of self-suppression, or even violence to the self rather than praise-worthy rechannelling which is energised by the Spirit in the human soul. Coakley's riposte helps to show how, without God, sex becomes the naturalistic replacement, embraced as a witness to the friendship that is necessary for human flourishing rather than sex which is unnecessary and contingent to flourishing. Celibacy is rendered a defective impossibility and has been neglected in terms of imaginative theorising in the Church whose proper task is to re-channel the disparate threads of desire toward the *amor dei*.[488] Christ's own celibacy is seen as docetically impossible or for the holy few. To follow its Lord, the Church must, then, insist differently, where other transcendent possibilities, like GCA, are evidences of its belief in a different erotic economy focused centrally on eternal friendship, rather than important but contingent goods like sex and marriage.

The essential problem with Freud's secular view of love, for Coakley, is that *Eros* lacks eschatological or divine direction. This accounts for why modern culture, coloured by a superficial reading of Freud, failed to accept or appreciate a robustly Christian asceticism.[489] Sonderegger summarizes Coakley's theological definition of *eros*: 'The Triunity desires to enfold the creature into pure desire; the Spirit is the lure and chastening of creaturely yearning. *Eros*, then, belongs within *Agape*, a divine seeking that groans within us with 'sighs too deep for words.'[490] The definition of erotic desire contra Nygren, and a superficial reading of Freud is platonically-inflected as in Gregory of Nyssa: '*Eros* is *agape* stretched out in longing towards the divine goal.'[491] I contend from this that Christian asceticism's drive is erotic, and its origin and

[486] Ibid, 45
[487] Scruton, R. *Sexual Desire: A Philosophical Investigation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 205
[488] *Cf.* See Sheffield, F. C. C. *Plato's Symposium: The Ethics of Desire* (Oxford: OUP, 2006), especially how Alcibiades personifies this journey of conflicting desires representing an important figure for future work on GCA (236-239).
[489] Ibid, 13.
[490] Sonderegger, K. 'A Review Article: God Sexuality and the Self,' *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 18, no. 1 (2016): 97.
[491] *TNA*, 47.

telos are found in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In line with Coakley's argument, GCA is an option that emerges from a similar fault in the cultural conversation which fails to understand celibate *eros*. Coakley addresses such a fault. Her new asceticism helps us to avoid seeing GCA as harmfully repressive in the bowdlerised, hydraulic sense and to see it as a non-repressive rechannelling in Nyssen's ecstatic way.

Asceticism, as Coakley states, 'has become larded with the negative associations of repression, ecclesiastical authoritarianism, legalistic forms of self-denial or works-based salvation.'[492] In *GSS,* she argues that hearing gay or marginal voices has been drowned out in post-Kantian ethics by a lack of attention, apophatic attentiveness to real encounter with God, and a lack of epistemic humility:

> It is easy, from a privileged position, to be morally righteous about justice for the oppressed, while actually drowning out their voices with the din of one's own high-sounding plans for reform. Likewise, there is much talk of the problem of attending to the otherness of the 'other' in contemporary post-Kantian ethics, and post-colonial theory; but there is very little about the intentional, and embodied practices that might enable such attention.[493]

Coakley's suggestion to redeem the breach between systematic theology and ethics is to participate in an epistemic stripping through prayerful contemplation. Such a purgative process in prayer 'inculcates an attentiveness that is beyond merely good political intentions.'[494] Coakley's insights here are rich in accounting for why gay celibates have not been heard broadly either in the Church of England or the wider church, and why gay celibates can begin to move beyond the surface of good political intentions. To hear the dilemma of same-sex desire, Coakley contributes the tools to apophatically resist the idolatry of Adam and Eve through Christ who lends a different paradigm of the body as sexually differentiated and yet relativised by resurrection existence.

In order to articulate why GCA has not often been directly affirmed I draw a christological critique of her work suggesting a greater link between her focus on apophatic experience in contemplative prayer and Christ's prayer life. I focus her account on Christ's objective redemption of our desiring and praying in Gethsemane. Such a theological reordering in her

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[492] Ibid, 89.
[493] *GSS*, 48.
[494] Ibid.

project, I believe, provides a better basis to understand the subjective experience of the Spirit and to make space for those othered by past conversation, especially gay celibates. I suggest that such an approach enriches the project of listening to same-sex desire so that gay experience is referred back to Christ's redemption of our desires now through the Spirit's presence.

I proffer a christological extension of her work suggesting a greater link between apophaticism in contemplative prayer and Christ's objective redemption of our desiring and praying in his life, particularly the Markan account of Jesus' Gethsemane prayer ('Your will be done' and Christ's prayer 'not my will but yours be done').[495] Such a reconfiguration, I contend, provides a better basis to understand the subjective experience of the Spirit and to make space for GCA and those othered by the Church and world. I suggest that such an approach enriches the project of listening to same-sex desire so that it refers back to Christ's redemption of our desires now effectuated through the Spirit's mediation.

I agree with Coakley that a Spirit-driven asceticism arrives as the deeper synthesis that superficial solutions to the problem of same-sex desire fail to grasp (i.e. biblical fundamentalism or projectionist revisionism). In particular, such a focus on Romans 8 and participation through the Spirit within the desirer can proffer a richer view of the fundamental nature of divine desire and the glorious path forward for how human *eros* can be purged and freed in the crucible of divine love. Coakley points to the path that leads beyond the false choices of libertinism or repression for gay Christians toward an erotic celibacy that resists a harmful stoicising of desire.

Coakley expands the scope of vision beyond the particular impasse of homosexuality with insights that also deeply apply to the question of all human desire:

> We have so physicalized and individualized desire that we assume that sexual enactment somehow exhausts it. Thus, it is the complete intertwinement of physical and spiritual in desire that first has to be acknowledged afresh, as well as its moral and 'eschatological goals,' if we are to reverse the modern shrinkage of thought about desire.[496]

This proto-erotic desire for God is fundamental to human beings and thus, Coakley's asceticism starts in 'the crucible of divine love [which] paradoxically imparts true freedom through the

[495] Mark 14:16.
[496] *TNA*, 8.

narrowing of choices.'[497] Coakley's insights here are helpful touchstones from which an Anglican account of gay celibacy can safely embrace the narrowing of choices that a knowledge of the moral order and creaturely agency entails. Such a combination of theological strands can generate both close attention to the pastoral and theodicean particularities of being gay explored in the first chapters and a more robust engagement with the Fall's effect on the doctrine of creation and ethics we will meet in Ward in chapter four.

Desire is met and purified by divine love allowing its choices to be narrowed through participation in the divine life of the Trinity. Celibacy is a narrowing of such choices to the martyrdom of Christ, which chooses the divine will above the human desire for self-love or preservation in created good. Unlike *Thanatos*, the effects of death on our desire life in Freud, which seeks to break or destroy relationship, *eros*, conversely, is the drive that presses towards union, *excurvatus ex se*, and future life. GCA is conceived as a necessarily erotic vocation, not a repressive one.[498] The deliberation of (same-sex) desire in how to face, challenge, and transform desires is a central piece of the human anthropological puzzle that undergirds the staid debates in the Anglican communion that Coakley attempts to move us beyond in a way that aligns closely with GCA. Desire is not only brought into a *felix culpa* that we must endure, but brings us to a clue of God at our base; our proto-erotic desire for God.[499]

For Coakley, Gregory of Nyssa's contribution demonstrates that desire is never to be constrained or dampened, but actually sublimated, purged and then, intensified through the power of the Spirit. In a similar way to Augustine in *DCD XIV*, Nyssa embraces certain aspects of Platonic ascent and yet affirms the body's passions:

> Nyssa was operating, of course, with a mixture of platonic thought on *eros* and his own specifically Christian insights on the rich implications of the Incarnation for the possibility of transforming the body and its passions.[500]

The modern employment of Freud has helped us see that much of our desire is manipulated unconsciously:

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[497] Ibid, 9.
[498] Ibid, 10; Isherwood, *The Power,* 132.
[499] *GSS*, 313.
[500] *TNA*, 7.

> Sin, addiction, and abuse… produce underlying issues of distorted or twisted desire and yet also, it [desire] draws us to God and into the energy and ecstasy of participation of the divine life making us human beings who are fully alive for whom nothing in the created world… can be 'alienated' from that same love of God... The challenge is to identify the difference in these many desires, and how to move from corruption to the sublime within them – by processes or formation, self-knowledge, humility, and progressive reliance on divine grace.[501]

Freud excavates the unseen, subconscious forces and powers, as well as the fact that human desire also animates good instincts and longings and she adds, our deepest longing for God. Coakley's discussion of human desire within Augustine points toward a constructive interworking of Freud and Nyssa.[502] God's work of grace within us leads to new forms of self-knowledge which break open identities to a new interpretation – post-secular anthropologies are ripe for this – queering these identities and re-defining them according to desiring God, and leading to other possibilities that are not popularly understood. GCA, then, seeks a renewed self-knowledge, humility, and progressive reliance on divine grace against modernity's repression and libertinism. Coakley's reading of Freud can inspire an account of GCA that invites the (gay) body into trinitarian life by delineating the difference between good sublimation and harmful repression.

3.1.2 GCA and Coakley's New Asceticism: Queer 'Plenitude' and Ascetical Lack

The significant anthropological question of this ecclesiastical moment, as signalled by Coakley's theological work on desire, is the way in which (same-sex) desire can be adjudicated and transformed through the knowledge of the Triune God.[503] Like O'Donovan, Coakley never mentions GCA but Coakley provides a way through for gay celibate Christians to see their sexual orientation not as a disqualifier from participation in the Triune life, but as an important clue to God's desire that is called to be tested and yet affectively channelled through grace. Her *theologie totale* proffers a richer account of erotics than the late West, rooted in the Trinity where desire is more fundamental than sex or gender,

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[501] Ibid, 10.
[502] As Nyssen states: 'Seeing, then, that virginity means so much as this, that while it remains in Heaven with the Father of spirits, and moves in the dance of the celestial powers, it nevertheless stretches out hands for man's salvation; that while it is the channel which draws down the Deity to share man's estate, it keeps wings for man's desires to rise to heavenly things, and is a bond of union between the Divine and human, by its mediation bringing into harmony these existences so widely divided — what words could be discovered powerful enough to reach this wondrous height?' (*De Virginitate*, ii, 21).
[503] *GSS*, 20-35; *TNA*, 1-25.

especially a certain idolatrous obsession with both originary binary-making or unmaking.[504] She resists the idolatrous elevation of critical theory above the revelation of God's self, which seeks to obliterate sexual difference altogether.

Gay celibacy here has the capacity to queer the queer precisely by rooting itself in a robust trinitarian ontology that comes from knowledge of God's word in Christ. Desire for or in the Trinity renders gender labile by relativizing it to God's own nature and ontology breaking human, finite desire open to re-orientation and sanctification.[505] The Spirit's presence vindicates sexual difference by removing it from oppressively ideological manipulations to be held as having import without denying the effects of the Fall on human gender and sexuality, or undermining the eschatological transformation of our bodies and desires.[506] Coakley's trinitarian focus also helps to challenge a certain cultural moralism against celibacy, particularly the pseudo-Freudian 'secular' anthropology which rejects celibacy as a legitimate ascetical response to same-sex desire. She turns Freud's focus on its head by showing how desire for God is the centre out of which a new asceticism can emerge and *eros* be tested, purged, and channelled toward God's will in Christic life.

Coakley's redressing of Freud puts God at the centre again of the sociological programme which informs theological anthropology. However, what Coakley's model is missing is a clear explication of how Christ's humanity provides an anchor for theological anthropology, and avoids the reinvention of the human in a non-christological sense as simply an androgynous angeloid. She defines 'Christ' or 'Christic' life as the place where God makes creation divine, rather than emphasising the primacy of Christ's life as the place where creation was objectively redeemed.[507] A christological focus would help Coakley's model to bridge between the doctrine of creation and the life of Trinity, where ethical or moral theology emerges. Her emphasis on the participatory moment of prayer in Romans 8 must be buttressed by a deeper probing of the objective moment on which all prayer depends, which is Christ's own incarnate life and redemption of our humanity. The Spirit imparts to the pray-er what Christ has redeemed and points to him as the exemplary destination for desire, who guides moral agency in real time from above.

Queer theologian, Linn Marie Tonstad critiques Coakley's approach in *GSS*: 'United with Christ through prayer, the human being becomes the Son; as a result, the significance of Christ's work and the

[504] *GSS*, 212.
[505] Ibid, 59.
[506] *RMO*, 121-170.
[507] *G&D*, 100; *GSS*, 161.

trinitarian activity of the Son both disappear under the weight of Coakley's eagerness to recover the priority of the Spirit.'[508] While Tonstad's critique has a corrective force that runs too far toward plenitude without appreciating Coakley's ascetical caution, she identifies an issue which I believe locks Coakley's approach into a kind of apophatic inertia. This inertia can be moved forward through the Augustinian asceticism we have developed with respect to gay celibacy. The Augustinian priority both for grace or 'plenitude' emerges from hearing the Word. The Word made flesh discloses and confirms the transfiguration of creation. This word provides a pastoral and ethical way forward, which honours Coakley's priority for the Spirit but also maintains a christocentric basis for ethical adjudication of desire. The perceived ascetical lack is christologically transformed by the Spirit into a queer, peregrine plenitude.

The 'ascetical' eunuch becomes the fecund disciple in the image of the Son as a supreme example of Christ's redemptive work through the Holy Spirit. Christ, in the Spirit, gives the redemptive effects of his own prayerful passion to drive the gay Christian toward a new end freed from the false view of *eudaimonia* which would shirk ascetical self-sacrifice but also guarding such self-sacrifice from ascetical pride. When Coakley's new asceticism is reconstructively appropriated with a greater emphasis on Christ's own ascetical example, a richer theology of how the disciple is called to relate the goods of creation to God through prayer is opened up. A robust ethical relationship to the cosmic order is proffered by which one can discern whether a desire is coming from the order of God's love or another competitive order. GCA reminds Coakley's model that prayerful asceticism is not just a process of noetic renewal through contemplative prayer, but also a regeneration of moral agency through the resurrection and power of the Holy Spirit, as we have explored in Augustine and O'Donovan.

I proffer a purgative asceticism like Coakley's which sees lack as a way toward fullness in Christ. Christ is both the redeemer and incarnate exemplar of human prayer who renews the desire of pray-ers from the objective moment of Gethsemane (representative of Christ's Earthly prayer life) and subjectively through his mediation to us in the Spirit's wordless groaning and prayer. Coakley does gesture toward how Jesus Christ is the redeemer of desire first in the Incarnation but does not lead us there in the end: 'When one thinks rightly of God as Trinity, the Spirit cannot bypass the person of the Son, or evade thereby his divine engagement in Gethsemane and Golgotha; for that is a fundamental implication of the principle of the unity of Father, Son, and Spirit… one might even say then, of human engagement with God at its most profound, that the Spirit progressively 'breaks' sinful desires, in and through the passion of Christ.'[509] In this sense, Coakley points to the reconstruction I propose in the latter half of this

[508] *G&D,* 99.
[509] *GSS*, 14.

chapter: that gay celibacy is a Spirit-driven, cruciform asceticism which allows desire to be 'broken open' to a renewed perception of the cosmic order by the Son's passion and ascendant mediation of the Spirit.

In a vein similar to O'Donovan, she leaves the possibility open, perhaps leaving space for others to suggest a way forward – a lacuna this thesis hopes to humbly to address. The 'erotic' gay celibate emerges on the scene as one who prays powerfully from proto-erotic desire for God and who engages in apophatic and charismatic prayer, choosing to love God by forgoing the direction of their affections for the same-sex in order to rightly use created goods with a renewed knowledge of being loved by the Trinity. From this mystery and darkness of trinitarian encounter, the gay celibate can upend harmful idolatries of God and creation which stultify faithful practice. Coakley's 'dazzling' darkness in prayer is an essential part of the Anglican way to welcome the prayerful ascesis of gay bodies charged with the 'proto-erotic' desire for God.

Such an ascetical vocation, paralleling Coakley's feminist concerns, does not throw off the critiques of queer theory and queer theology but seeks to go further 'in' than them, to a place which can reveal that God's desire for us, indeed, is more fundamental for defining our humanity and our moral agency, than our fallible understanding of our own desires and their relationship to creation. Gay celibacy, then, like Coakley's asceticism, seeks to go deeper, all the way down to the desire for/of God before it interprets created or cosmic good. Its propulsive force renews and gives agency to the pray-er and gay desirer to offer their bodies up as living sacrifices, and receive a renewed mind set on the Spirit and not the desire of the flesh. We will now turn to the life of Jesus Christ in Mark's Gethsemane to bring strengthening suggestions to Coakley's account in order to speak effectively into the alternative queerness of gay celibate Christians.

3.2.0 Eros' Transformation in Agape: Discipleship of Desire in Mark's Gethsemane and Romans 8

In the Markan Gethsemane, Jesus cedes his own human desires to the divine will. Such an objective moment in Christ's redemption of our human nature is sedimented in his previous teaching of the Lord's prayer but also in later oral tradition where Christ's prayer in Gethsemane is remembered as a central aspect of the Lord's prayer, 'not my will but yours be done.'[510] In Gethsemane, Jesus, through the Spirit, victoriously surrenders to the divine will through the transformation of his human will crying *Abba* Father. He offers himself up

[510] Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42; Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:1-13.

'through the eternal spirit... unblemished to God.'[511] In Gethsemane, we witness the transformation of human desire, not as a work of Christ's own human self, but *mutatis mutandis*, the Spirit's energising grace, which draws his weak, human flesh into the Father's will. Whilst Christ's humanity is not competitive with his divine nature, his weakness draws him away from desiring the divine will. As Hebrews 5:7, often understood as a reception of the Gethsemane tradition, states: 'he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.'[512] Romans 8 is particularly important for Coakley's upending of gendered idolatries and curiously it shares deep connection points to Mark's Gethsemane. In Romans 8, we also see a similar tendency to Hebrews 5:7 which draws upon the Gethsemane moment in prayer, containing many of the elements of the Gethsemane prayer (including the *Abba* cry, flesh-spirit distinction, and discussion of desire-based weakness). In this section, I seek to demonstrate how Gethsemane is echoed in Romans 8 in order to forge a sound exegetical basis to apply Coakley's new asceticism to GCA, and so elucidate how GCA can renew and inform the role of desire in Anglican pastoral and moral theology.

Gethsemane and its link with filial prayer in Romans 8 represents a lacuna in Coakley's asceticism. Gethsemane is almost entirely missing from her account of contemplative prayer. And yet this prayerful event, as exemplary of Jesus' ascetic prayer life, provides the objective foundation for subsequent Christian prayer as reflected in the Lord's prayer, not least in its relation to God's will for creation. This lacuna is further encountered in Coakley's Romans 8 model of contemplative prayer with the question of what exactly the Spirit is imparting to the pray-er. This weakness, specifically the way in which our desires can be brought to repentance from sinfulness, can be strengthened by looking at Christ as not only the exemplar of discipleship to be aimed towards but the mediator of incarnationally-empathic grace capable of redeeming postlapsarian desire in the Spirit.

Jesus' nature as the eunuch who forgoes sexual desire for a greater erotic desire in God can embrace the gay body called to uniquely witness to the created order through an exclusion from some of its goods. Coakley's focus is the other way around, first on Romans 8 leaving the reader unsure as to the exact content of the Christic life the Spirit imparts. Coakley does not dig further back into the history of Gethsemane and the christological basis of the Spirit's

[511] Heb. 9:14
[512] Hooker, M. *The Gospel According to Mark* (Oxford: Blackwells, 1991), 191; Brown, '7. Prayer in Gethsemane, Part Two' in *The Death of the Messiah* (New York: Doubleday: 1994), 157.

work. I propose that an account of Jesus' own human ascesis before the Father is needed – as derived from his Gethsemane prayer, 'not my will but yours be done' – before moving to Paul's schema for trinitarian prayer in Romans 8.

Coakley appeals to Romans 8 as the exegetical foundation for her new asceticism because of the way in which the Spirit's wordless groans in us provide noetic transformation, renewing our disordered human desires in prayer begetting trust God in the crucible of divine love.[513] She highlights the fact that 'Romans 8 was too hot to handle'[514] for the patristic writers due to its entanglement with sexual desire, and 'feminine vulnerability' with its use of a female-birth pang metaphor for creation.[515] The three reasons for Romans 8's general omission are: i) the loss of noetic control in the experiential force of the Spirit, as well as in the face of our weakness; ii) embarrassment about entering into a 'supra-rational' realm beyond words and the Logos' 'normal' rationality as conceived by the Fathers; and iii) use of a female birth-pangs metaphor to describe the yearning of creation for its glorious liberty.[516]

The Markan Gethsemane account presents Jesus with the vulnerably human or 'feminine' attributes Coakley identifies as missing in patristic theology of desire. Jesus is depicted as: (1) struggling with noetic control; (2) displaying profound emotional vulnerability/distress, so much so that further evangelists do not mention the, perhaps embarrassing, emotive language associated with Jesus' testing in the Gethsemane tradition; (3) crying '*Abba'*, a deeply intimate name for God in Aramaic, falling on his knees as a spiritual struggle with the desire to live and enjoy creation. The Markan account of Gethsemane is far from the picture of a cold, dispassionate Logos, but is conversely a picture of a very human Jesus wrestling with human passions and their force to flee from the divine will. How, then, does Mark's Gethsemane appear as a better objective starting point providing Coakley's new asceticism with a direct prototype to follow in Jesus' humanity?[517] We turn, then, to Gethsemane to explicate the reconstructive possibilities that the Markan account presents.

3.2.1 'Not my will but yours be done': The Temptation of the Righteous Sufferer in Mark 14:32-39

[513] *GSS*, 122; *TNA*, 90.
[514] *TNA*, 92.
[515] *GSS,* 205; *P&S,* 92.
[516] *GSS*, 181; *TNA,* 88-100.
[517] Kierkegaard, *Practice in Christianity* trans. Hong, H. (Princeton: PUP, 1991), 239-241, 291.

The three disciples have witnessed Jesus' power and glory at the transfiguration, but now they are about to watch him undergo the eschatological testing he predicts in Mark 13. Both Jesus and the disciples' 'resolve seems to crumble.'[518] Richard Hicks observes that Gethsemane is about an eschatological and emotional testing or temptation – 'it is as much preparation for future testing as it is a present proving.'[519] Here Jesus faces a 'severe testing of his own faith... in God.'[520] Jesus has to undergo and practice what he predicted and taught previously to his disciples, involving a crisis of faith governed by a temptation to circumvent future suffering.[521] The word '*peirazo*' (to test) is mentioned in the *LXX* in places where God 'assesses the quality of his servants (c.f. Exod. 16:4; Deut. 8:2; 13:3).'[522] Jesus becomes the archetypal disciple when his disciples fail their ascetic task to keep awake and pray. They fail, falling asleep because of their prevailing weakness of human desires, leaving Jesus in the fretful place of being alone in his trial, and his impeding asceticism as God's true servant.[523] Jesus returns to God and the disciples thricely, echoing Peter's future denial of him three times, highlighting human incapacity and salvific need for the grace of Jesus' own obedience to the divine will.[524]

As Eugene Boring observes, Mark's Gethsemane has three major theological layers.[525] First, the historical man of Nazareth was a human being, who despite his trust in God, trembled at the prospect of death:

> He is not a stoic, serene in his transcendent philosophy or unperturbed by what people might do to his flesh, nor is he the triumphant martyr who scoffs at his tormentors. In terms of heroism, the Jesus of Gethsemane comes off poorly compared to Socrates.[526]

Secondly, the Evangelist views the scene not only as an instance of human suffering, resulting from human sin and injustice, but in terms of divine-human suffering:

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[518] Boring, E. *Mark: A Commentary* (London: Pres. Pub. Corp: 2006), 398-399.
[519] Hicks, R. 'Emotional' Temptation and Jesus' Spiritual Victory at Markan Gethsemane,' *Journal of Biblical and Pneumatological Research* 30, no. 4 (2013): 32.
[520] Ibid, 31.
[521] Evans, C. *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 144 in Marcus, J. *Mark 8-16: A New Translation and Commentary the Anchor Yale Bible Vol. 27A* (Newhaven & London: YUP, 2009), 389; Ibid, 35.
[522] Hicks. 'Emotional Temptation...', 33.
[523] Marcus, *Mark,* 401.
[524] Ibid, 407.
[525] Boring, *Mar*k, 401.
[526] Ibid, 398.

> Mark's Christology incorporates and affirms the reality of the human Jesus, his weakness and suffering. It is important for Mark to represent Jesus as both truly human and divine... far from a cardboard cut-out, appealing to the mystery of human suffering in the will of God.[527]

Thirdly, we see Jesus *qua* his human nature exemplifying a faithful asceticism in real time and under the greatest duress imaginable with the threat and fear of impending death and judgement. Such dereliction brings forth his cry to *Abba* Father denoting a greater union with God.[528] The radical addition of *Abba* indicates a union not seen before. *Abba*, unlike Father, is never used in the Old Testament or Jewish tradition to address God.[529] The term connotes intimacy and special belonging to God that is intensively intimate.[530] We see a direct exegetical link back to the three theological strands that would provide a christological anchoring point to Coakley's ascetic prayer-based model linked to Romans 8:15's *Abba* cry.

The other Gospels seem to lessen the fretfulness and vulnerability of this moment, perhaps due to their hesitation in depicting Jesus' anguish at his testing hour.[531] The Markan account instead echoes and intensifies this human vulnerability in appeal to the Psalmic tradition of the Righteous Sufferer (Psalm 6/42/43: 'many are the afflictions of the righteous').[532] The verb form, 'to tempt' transmutes to the noun *peirasmon*, which again is connected in the parallels of the time to the idea of demonic attack[533] and becomes part of the Lord's prayer in Matthew 6:13, 'lead us not into temptation.'[534] This, alongside the words 'your will be done' in the Lord's prayer are markers, evidencing that the Gethsemane tradition and this crucial moment of Jesus' life formed the centre of the earliest Christian prayer, and thus, must be similarly essential for Coakley's asceticism.[535]

Joel Marcus argues that by the first century much of the surrounding literature in Mark's is reflect in its focus on Jesus' victory over the powers and casting out demons spoke of how the elect were, 'to be tested by an eschatological tribulation assailed by Satan's hosts.'[536] This

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[527] Ibid.
[528] Ibid, 399.
[529] Ibid.
[530] Hooker: 'Mark's Gospel is the clearest portrayal of the Gethsemane tradition and the realism of the Markan depiction of Jesus suggests its likely historicity', *The Gospel*, 161.
[531] Marcus, *Mark*, 381.
[532] Ibid, 371.
[533] Rev. 2:9-10; 1 Pet. 4:12, 5:8; Rev 3:9-10.
[534] Marcus, *Mark*, 389.
[535] Ibid, 340.
[536] Ibid, 389.

subtext of spiritual warfare drives through the Markan Jesus who is not just engaged 'in personal confrontation with his own death, but in eschatological warfare against cosmic forces... an ongoing battle for the salvation of the world'[537], and it would seem, as part of this, the healing of fallen human desires through his victory over the flesh.[538] The eschatological emphasis of Mark 13 is transferred over through the imperative '*Gregorein*' (Keep awake!).[539] Jesus takes his own advice, giving himself to prayer as the prototype of faithful discipleship, practising what he teaches them in Mark 13.[540] The pressure becomes so much that he falls to the ground (*epipten epi tes ges*, 14:35b), reminiscent of Saul as the anointed but rejected king of Israel, but unlike him, remaining fretfully active in prayer to his *Abba* Father.[541]

Elizabeth Shively's reading of Mark, specifically Christ's testing by Satan in the wilderness, similarly pre-empts Gethsemane where Jesus does not just overcome Satan, the principalities and powers, and Peter, but also himself: 'Now, the test Jesus faces does not come through the agency of another human being. Mark depicts the distress and trouble of Jesus' soul so as to suggest the struggle comes from within Jesus' own being.'[542] Jesus, then, is the exemplar of self-denying prayer that gives over human desire to the divine will, and thus, should be at the centre of any prayer-based account of Christian asceticism or theology of desire.

The indirect request for the cup to be taken at 'the hour of temptation' predicted previously in the Markan account, is understood also as a sign of 'eschatological urgency (the hour) and judgement (the cup).'[543] Jesus' prayer gives us the immediate answer to his petition for the cup to pass. The divine will is for him to give his life as a ransom at Golgotha, and yet hidden in this prayer's pathos is another victory over the powers that would enslave him to untransformed desires.[544] Our overcoming or 'being more the conquerors' is only possible because of Jesus' perfect asceticism: the Son's victory over his weak flesh and its desire.[545] Jesus' understandable desire to want to flee impending eschatological judgment ('the hour') in

[537] Ibid, 372.
[538] Ibid, 380.
[539] Ibid, 381.
[540] Ibid, 382.
[541] Ibid, 383.
[542] Shively, E. *Apocalyptic Imagination in the Gospel of Mark: The Literary and Theological Role of 3:22-30* (Berlin: DeGruyer, 2012), 162-163.
[543] Ibid, 162.
[544] Marcus, *Mark*, 385.
[545] Rom. 8:37.

his death is overcome in us, when we, in our failing strength, cannot give ourselves to God through prayer.

Whilst the whole of Jesus' incarnational life is vital as an exemplar for our discipleship, Gethsemane is the incarnational key to the surrender of one's will and desires, and thus, primordial for Coakley's new asceticism. Jesus has further revealed his very human response by anxiously fretting between prayer and looking for reinforcement from his disciples three times, finding only human ascetical failure and tragic divine silence in his wake.[546] He provides the faithfulness that none of his disciples did by obeying his own command to pray, but he also suffers from the noetic effects of desiring contrarily to the divine will, and the noetic renewal of ceding to the Spirit's willingness.

In the Markan account, Jesus Christ, after a battle with his desires and the powers attached to them, victoriously prays, '*Abba... not my will, but yours be done.*'[547] Through his prayerful struggle we see the relationship of the three persons from which grace flows to liberate human desiring contrary to the divine will. What Gethsemane teaches us is that desire, then, can either be a block to or the driving force in the economy of redemption through which disciples are crucified with Christ and receive the Spirit's power that transforms fallen desires into gifts (a *felix culpa* theodicean response to the inordinacy of the flesh). Coakley's definition of *eros* as the propulsive power of desire toward union can both empower relationship with God or hinder it.[548] Gethsemane is, therefore, reconstructively integral to Coakley's prayer-based asceticism in showing a clear way forward for overcoming and reordering same-sex desire in GCA by offering the postlapsarian body up as a living sacrifice in the will of God as an imitation of the cruciform life of Christ (Romans 12:1-2). Here we see a rich aspect of both 'erotic sainthood' and discipleship, for which both Coakley and Mark's Gospel are aiming.[549]

From the earliest of times, critics of Christianity as well as some Christians have treated the Markan portrait of Jesus' temptation as embarrassingly incompatible with the impassibility of the Divine Logos.[550] Celsus, and some of those who understood divine impassibility as necessitating a dispassionate Logos, worried or saw this as evidence against his divinity (Origen, *Against Celsus*

[546] Ibid, 771.
[547] Ibid, 761.
[548] Brown, "§7. Prayer in Gethsemane...", 177.
[549] For Coakley's notion of discipleship as training for erotic sainthood see *TNA*, 53.
[550] Sandnes, K. *Early Christian Discourses on Jesus' Prayer at Gethsemane (*London: Brill: 2016*)* 189.

2.24).[551] The author of Luke omits the references to Jesus being overwhelmed, anxious, and sorrowful, softening the impact of the scene further by having Jesus kneel on the ground rather than 'falling,' and having him pray only once, rather than praying fretfully three times.[552] The author of John in their differing emphasis seems to partially rebut or dampen the Gethsemane tradition in Jesus' prayer: 'And what should I say – 'Father, save me from this hour! No! – it is for this reason that I have come to his hour!'[553] Hilary of Poitiers most blatantly critiqued the Gethsemane tradition in Mark by asserting that only heretics say that Jesus feared death as to do so was to deny that he was consubstantial with the Father.[554] However, Aquinas reads this as proof that Jesus had both a human and divine will.[555]

Contrary to this anxiety, we see a human Jesus providing the faithful ascesis which the Father desired in the Spirit, and which, as Cyril of Alexandria emphasises, redeems human passions, and the covenant, forever.[556] The Markan depiction provides a christological anthropology of affect and emotion in the sanctifying process of prayer. In Gethsemane lies an important and missing soteriological and protological lynchpin for Coakley's asceticism: without Jesus' obedience through triune prayer, our prayerful asceticism would not be possible and would fail without Jesus' sending of the redeeming Spirit. For the above reason, it is fascinating that Coakley would not locate any theology of desire or ascetical anthropology first in Jesus' humanity, beginning instead with the believer's experience of prayer in Romans 8.[557]

For these reasons, an epistemological priority for Christ's prayerful life in Coakley's ascetical model is integral so that bodily asceticism can be richly resourced from Jesus' prayer life to meet the demands of erotic martyrdom in GCA. Such a direct christological *ressourcement* connects prayer to Christ's vindication of creation's good to trinitarian ascesis. Such a re-centring on Christ's prayer life in Mark can help to spell a return to cruciform discipleship of desire, which is the call of the Church. With this rationale in mind, we will now turn to the echoes between Gethsemane and Romans 8 to justify it as a better initial anchoring point for Coakley's new asceticism, especially as it relates to GCA's theodicean exclusion from the created goods of marriage explored in chapter two.

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[551] *Ibid*, 171.
[552] Marcus, *Mark,* 399.
[553] John 12:27
[554] Brown, "§7. Prayer in Gethsemane…", 178.
[555] *ST* 3:18.1; Ibid, 170-171.
[556] Weinandy, T. et al. (eds), *The Theology of Cyril of Alexandria* (London: T & T Clark, 2003*),* 153.
[557] Heb. 5:7; 4:15.

3.2.2 Another Anchoring Point: Christ's Asceticism at Gethsemane and Romans 8

Romans 8 has three main commonalities with Mark's account of Gethsemane. We see textual and theological overlap at three points in Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-39), and Romans 8:

1. Victory over the flesh through the Spirit: '...those who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit' (Romans 8:5b); 'The flesh is weak, but the S/spirit willing,' (Mark 14:38b).
2. Praying *Abba*: 'When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God... if, in fact, we suffer with him...' (Romans 8:15-17); 'Abba Father...' (Mark 14:37b).
3. Overcoming temptation and the powers in suffering: 'In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us' (Romans 8:37a); 'He fell to the ground and prayed... not my will but yours be done.' (Mark 14:35a, 36b)

The Gethsemane tradition that depicts Jesus as the vulnerable human does not shy away from the supra-rational experiences of wordless prayer in the way Coakley contends the tradition of the Church generally does. Mark's depiction connects the Incarnation of the Son and the sending of the Spirit in prayer that presently transforms and purifies our desires. Without this stronger link to the human Jesus, what is assumed is not healed, and Coakley's Trinitarian model of ascetical prayer loses its strength for desire-transformation. Without Christ's redemptive work, desiring God in the Spirit would have little way to test or reorder desire as well as confirm transformation and the moral agency energised by the Spirit's power.

Spirit and flesh are understood in the biblical and Hebrew sense, where 'flesh' represents a human being's totality, with S/spirit representing God's power.[558] What we then infer from the spirit and flesh anthropology of Mark is that a human being left only with human resources – their totality – is bound to fail the ascetic task. They are dependent on God's grace entirely and no amount of ascetical work without grace will deliver transformation. Their participation with Christ through the Spirit's lure to God's love has a profound power to transform our desiring and our relationship to accord with vindicated and affirmed created order. The spirit/flesh anthropology provides an apt place for Coakley to emphasise the central role of the Spirit. He effects and applies the incarnational salvation (e.g.

[558] Boring, *Mark*, 212.

transformation of desires) of the Son to God's children in Romans 8, and such salvation's effects transforming desire (as per Augustine's *uti-frui* distinction) through creation's right use in enjoyment of the Trinity.

Theologically, Ian McFarland highlights the important point related to the spirit-flesh anthropology of Gethsemane and Romans: '… the fact that the rest of us remain human beings, who unlike Christ, still await deification means that our lives continue to be characterised by gnomic struggle against sin.'[559] He further accounts for how Christ represents an inchoate theological anthropology of desire:

> As a human being, Christ had a natural (and therefore proper) fear of death that caused him to will the passing of the cup. Such aversion to death is a feature of human nature as such and it is no way unique to Christ. What defines the particularity of Christ's existence as a human being is his being called and given the grace to accept the cup. The process whereby grace is victorious in his life involves real fear and real pain – but without sin. In this way the movement of grace in and by which a person becomes most himself has genuine drama, but at its heart is not the problem of sin and the question of whether to follow God's will... but of how to follow it (in which God transforms a generic humanity into a particular human destiny).[560]

McFarland, then, demonstrates how all three strands hold together: i) Christ is the prototype or exemplar of appropriating the divine life of the Spirit and grace victoriously to fallen human flesh thereby faithfully loving his Father, the Creator; ii) by the Spirit's grace, he prayed in perfect dependence on the Father (Abba) rendering him able to cede his will; and iii) he is, therefore, victorious over the powers that sought to retain human will and desires in bondage against the divine will and, therefore, able to be our effective, saving, high priest.[561] The insight from GCA that in order to have this greater fulfilment one must submit to a proximate self-denial is insufficiently recognised in Coakley due to neglect of the christological particularity of the Gethsemane prayer. Gethsemane is essential to the call to repentance or the cruciform reality of dying to and seeing desires resurrected. In order for Coakley's new asceticism to meet the

[559] McFarland, I. 'Naturally and by grace": Maximus the Confessor on the operation of the will', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 58, no. 4 (2005): 433.
[560] Ibid, 432.
[561] Torrance, A. 'Reclaiming the Continuing Priesthood of Christ' in ed. Crisp, O. *Christology Ancient and Modern* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 195.

particular dilemma and gift of same-sex desire, Gethsemane is needed as the testing-moment for renewed affective participation in created reality.

The question that remains is how the cruciform self-denial of Jesus led to the transformation of his human will and desires in the Spirit, and how this speaks to the anthropology and ethics of desire for his followers who are tempted in a similar way. McFarland asserts that the natural desires of the human Jesus explain why he experienced deliberation about death because of the fact that part of a truly human nature is to will not to die (natural, second-order desires of survival, food, etc.): 'Whereas humankind was created with a natural desire for God, the Fall corrupts desire. In redemption, however, this internal division is healed.'[562] As Kierkegaard posits, if Jesus is the redemptive prototype, we must be careful not to try to get around the demands his life places on us as disciples, whilst also recognising we are helpless without the person of the Spirit to undertake them now.[563] Starting from Gethsemane would help avoid an asceticism merely based on the phenomenological experience of noetic slippage in the Spirit which is only one part of being led to the Jesus in whom we live and move and have our being.[564]

Coakley comments only passingly on the flesh/S/spirit anthropology that Gethsemane and Romans 8 share in common, and yet it is intimately linked to the *Abba* cry and the Spirit's wordless groans that she appeals to for her systematic theology of desire.[565] The victory over fallen desire which her asceticism aims to assist is dependent on the Incarnation. The clear thrust of Gethsemane is both soteriological and ethical. Jesus' prayerful struggle teaches us as disciples that we must stay alert to temptation and pray dependently in the Spirit for the Father's help. Jesus' prayerful mediation now from his redemptive position ascended at his *Abba*'s right hand enables this. We cannot just get through temptation/testing through the ecstatic experience of the Spirit or imitating the Son or crying to the Father – all three cardinal elements are inextricable. Without this cruciform self-denial, and salvific work of Jesus in the Incarnation and its strong ethical upshot, ecclesiastic debates will be stuck in a relativistic quagmire of prayerful practices and subjective claims to transformation.

On this point, Cyril of Alexandria emphasises the interaction of Jesus' assumption of our human nature, and his perfection of it through the submission of desire to the divine will and

[562] McFarland, 'Naturally…', 412.
[563] Kierkegaard, *Practice*, 195-245.
[564] In Eph. 4:20, 5:1-2; Acts 17:28.
[565] *GSS*, 192.

the divinising grace that helps us in our weakness toward God.[566] Cyril saw that Christ's humanity, whilst distinct from our own, was also a pattern for us: 'The Incarnate Word is both agent and recipient of human redemption at the same time.'[567] Thus, Coakley's account can better assist the gay body through this corrective not just by showing how desire is eschatologically appropriated and reordered (as in Nyssa), but how Jesus is decisive as both the grounds of and the ethical exemplar of any Christian asceticism: 'Christ is for us a pattern and beginning and image of the divine way of life, and he displayed clearly how and in what matter it is fitting for us to live.'[568] She has yet to reveal exactly what the Spirit applies to the life of the praying disciple and the example with which the Spirit appeals and points us to concretely. I argue that the answer to this is found precisely in what Christ achieved for us in his human life, averring the importance of bringing this to bear on Coakley's model, and assisting with a renewed asceticism for the particular situation of the gay disciple.

3.3.0 Reconstructive Proposals from Gethsemane in Coakley's Model of Contemplative Prayer: Recentring Wordless Prayer in Romans 8

Coakley focuses her enquiry on Paul's description of the Spirit's wordless or groaning intercession in us. However, the wordless groans of Romans 8 form not just the basis for the practice of contemplative or charismatic forms of prayer, or a feminist apologetic for the doctrine of the Trinity, but also the way to grounding human desires, like sexual desire, in a more fundamental desire for God.[569] Coakley seldom mentions the narrative of Jesus' life or the Gospels or modern examples of those who ascetically live out their vocations in ascetic, prayerful ways in submission to God. That said, in *Powers and Submissions (P&S)*, she critiques Swinburne's tendency to see human, bodily desires as inimical with the [impassibility of] the divine nature. She refers directly to the narrative of Jesus' life here:

> Events like Golgotha and Gethsemane seem to show Jesus' humanity, according to Swinburne, as in some sense defective from its true, heavenly, norm... [when in fact it] cuts away the ground on which the 'man of reason' stands. Analytic philosophy of religion is hardly noted for its positive attention to passivity, vulnerability, or the ceding of control... states one suspects that could be delegated to the female.[570]

[566] Cyril, *The Unity of Christ*, 113; Weinandy, *Theology*, 121.
[567] Keating, D. *The Appropriation of Divine Life in Cyril of Alexandria* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), 200.
[568] Ibid, 202.
[569] Coakley, S. 'Sin and Desire, 2017; *GSS,* 171; *TNA*, 21.
[570] *P&S*, 31; Evans, C, S. (Ed), *Exploring Kenotic Christology* (Oxford: OUP, 2006), 271.

Even with this admission, Coakley's work on desire is sparse with references to Jesus' prayer life and ascetical self-denial. A future way to strengthen her theology of desire would be to gain a definition of desire from the particularity of Jesus' life, before then moving on to retrieving Nyssa, and Freud's neo-platonic definition, and then link this to the praxis-based concerns (e.g. GCA).

The goal of contemplative prayer for Coakley is the practice that break us free from generating our ethics from dogmatism, working first from vulnerability with God. This is a tendency one could observe in O'Donovan's earlier account in *RMO* but less so in *SWT*, which emphasizes creation and order, rather than prayerful desiring. Coakley's goal is to find again the 'direct contemplative knowledge of the Logos' which can aid us in our desiring,[571] and is the cataphatic streak in her asceticism. Such knowledge is not parsed in terms of creation. There are two main aspects of contemplative prayer that Coakley commandeers. Firstly, she draws on 'epistemic transformation' through control and loss of control where the 'prayer of un-mastery or noetic slippage'[572] brings on an awareness of one's deeper desire for God, and where the intellect is darkened and expanded, and the will or love of God intensified. As she states, 'Prayerful submission is participation in the trinitarian life, not a false submission to patriarchal powers, and in the end no human practice at all, but the direct infusion of divine grace from God.'[573] The impacts of this process on relating to the world is not worked out in O'Donovan's fashion. Like the man of reason Coakley describes above, O'Donovan's account shares some of the deficiencies she describes, and requires a deeper engagement with the vulnerable ascetical practices like GCA which front real theodicean, not just moral challenges. Finally, transformation of desire happens through contemplative practice through sorting and ordering desires related to sex, corporeality, and God. Fallen human desire is tested, purified, and, then, united to God through the noetic release of the Spirit. For Coakley, sanctification enjoins *eros* to *agape* again through this process of purification: 'The progressive, albeit slow, identification of the self with the 'handing over' of Christ to his death that is so distinctive a mark of the passion narratives… the unitive and Christic 'handing over of the self.'[574]

[571] *TNA,* 81.
[572] *GSS*, 325.
[573] Ibid, 134; 315.
[574] *TNA*, 109.

Maximus the Confessor saw desire as the driving mechanism of the human will – 'a nexus where inclination (*gnome*), choice (*preairesis*), and nature (*phusis*) intersect.'[575] This nexus is where christological developments from Chalcedon came to see Christ's agony in the garden 'as the prototype of genuinely human action: at once free, natural and founded in grace.'[576] Like Coakley, McFarland is careful to point out that Christ's ascesis in Gethsemane is not a destruction of the human will, but rather *a transformation of it*.[577] The human and divine desires were no longer inimical within Jesus but constituted an ultimate reconciliation of the divine and human will in his person.[578] Coakley gives little account for what is communicated by the Spirit from Christ and how desires broken by the Fall are healed in Christ. The key, then, is entry into the exemplary life of the human, historical Jesus that baptises us with the Spirit enabling us to act out of love from and for God. In O'Donovan's sense, Jesus' death and resurrection offers the exemplary pattern for desire in prayer which the Spirit imparts to the pray-er. Such a christological anchor affords the epistemological confirmation for ethical agency in the world and the right use of its goods in worship of God prized by GCA. From contemplative practice, we will now turn to how her asceticism can be critically strengthen through the exemplary power of Jesus' ascetical vulnerability in Gethsemane.

This will include looking at how Coakley forms her methodology around the wordless prayer (either glossolalia or 'groans too deep for words') from Romans 8 in order to describe how GCA is a Coakley-like innovation. The Holy Spirit, through these intercessions, moves believers to such ineffable encounters with the divine.[579] The Spirit breaks open our inherited notions of hierarchy that we project onto the Godhead.[580] The Spirit disrupts these notions, supplying a profusion of metaphorical names of God that prevents any one name—such as 'Father'—from becoming all-determining: 'the ascetical approach brings its own distinctive solution... the right language for God is not something to be 'fixed' at the outset by mere political fiat, but is part and parcel of the programme of the ascetic transformation of desire.'[581] This breaking open of gendered language is inextricably tied to laying bare our own desire before God. In the end, our naming of God and our confrontation with our own disordered loves are one irreducible movement or action.[582] To speak of how prayer may

[575] McFarland, 'Naturally…', 437.
[576] Ibid, 439.
[577] Ibid, 437.
[578] Ibid, 441.
[579] *GSS*, 121.
[580] Ibid, 189.
[581] Ibid, 91.
[582] *TNA*, 71.

change one's perception of the theological task is something that goes all the way down to the created order and our faithful obedience to God, the Creator and Redeemer.[583]

Coakley contends that we are able to let go of the epistemic control of idols generated by these desires, whether false projections onto God or the distraction from the divine will they cause:

> No less disturbing than the loss of noetic control in prayer and all that followed from that was the arousal, intensification and reordering of desire that this praying engendered. Anyone who has spent more than a short time on her or his knees in silence will know of the almost farcical raid that the unconscious makes on us in the sexual arena in such prayer, as if this is a sort of joke that God has up God's sleeve to ensure that "ourselves, our souls and bodies" are what we present to God and not some pious disembodied version of such. Our capacity as Christians to try to keep sex and God in different boxes is seemingly limitless, but the integrative force of silent prayer simply will not allow this, or not for very long.[584]

In this dark testing of prayer one is freed from these false images and the fleshly desires' force attached to them.[585] The sense of disturbance in the early practice of contemplative silence brings bombardments from the unconscious where the divine presence in its dark mystery procures a 'noetic expansion or... trans-individual sensibility,'[586] and desire transformation is made possible in the likeness of the Son.[587] An added problem, however, is that Coakley does not mention how prayer can lead us into the cross or passion story, where Christ himself undergoes a similar disturbance, and overcomes it toward resurrected transformation and plenitude. There is little explanation of the paradigm for how ascetic purgation is to be understood, adjudicated, or practiced wisely.

Coakley does, however, controvert the charge many pit against her for a kind of contemplative elitism distanced from realities like bodily suffering: 'Is this kind of enquiry into prayer merely an elitist, Platonist-inspired, undertaking for the small minority of Christians or is it deeply founded in Jesus' example and for all who 'seek God?'[588] She further suggests that early in the patristic era, during the reception of Nicene trinitarian theology, this 'elemental encounter with the

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[583] *GSS*, 171; 32; 40.
[584] Ibid, 189-192.
[585] Matt 6:9-13; Rom. 8:26.
[586] *GSS*, 178.
[587] Ibid, 75.
[588] *TNA*, 4.

Spirit–with its intensification of erotic power and a problematic entanglement of human spiritual and sexual desires– led doctrinal gatekeepers to be suspicious of the Spirit, and, ultimately, to corral it.'[589] In the process, a doctrine of the Trinity shaped by Paul – in which the Spirit's 'wordless groans' draw believers up into the life of God – was replaced with a Johannine model, in which the Spirit 'becomes the secondary purveyor'[590] of the already-complete relationship of Father-Son to the Church.[591]

Coakley argues that a picture of the Trinity where the Father and Son predominate and the Holy Spirit 'shrinks'[592], is too little chastened by the Spirit's purgative work and, therefore, has proved incessantly susceptible in the Church's life to an idolatrous view of God. Attendant to this low Pneumatology is an impoverished theology of (bodily) desires: 'unless we have some sense of the implications of the trinitarian God's 'proto-erotic desires for us', then we can hardly begin to get rightly ordered our own erotic desires at the human level.'[593] I contend that Coakley diagnoses one of the reasons for why GCA has been resisted by both progressive and traditional views. Only by participating in the Spirit's life are we taught what it means, and what it does not mean, to name God the Father as 'Father' and the Son, 'Son,' and to desire God and, therefore, creation rightly.

Through the rigor of prayer-based asceticism, Coakley teaches us to importantly reject the Pelagian pipedream of easy self-understanding or comprehension of God as well as pretentious or 'super-Christian' discipleship void of God's intervening grace. Such a corrective from Coakley can be applied, then, to Augustine's warning to the holy virgin and 'erotic' martyr who might be tempted toward pride. The ascetical clarity which leads to moral agency of rightly-ordered relationship with created goods must be safeguarded so that Coakley's emphasis on progressive sanctification in prayer is retained. Such a christological extension can also protect against stoicised asceticism which terminates in self-will or the semi-Pelagian resources of the human will alone, rather than grace and plenitude of life given in Christ's mediation of the Spirit toward the theodicean wrestle of the (gay) pilgrim. We will now turn to how the *ecstasis* of the Spirit leads prayer to Jesus as discipleship's exemplar.

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589 *GSS*, 102.
590 Ibid, 111.
591 Hill, W. 'Faith's desire: A review of God, Sexuality and the Self,' *First Things* accessed June, 2015 *https://www.firstthings.com/article/2014/06/faiths-desire.*
592 Ibid; *GSS*, 136-142.
593 *TNA*, 96.

3.3.1 Toward the Cross: Gethsemane Prayer and Christ as Prototype

Coakley defines her new asceticism in this deeper paradox, where divine favour and human development toward ascetical maturity come together in practice and grace: 'one starts from 'practices' that one might be tempted to regard as entirely self-propelled, but they are joined over time by practices that involve deeper and more demanding levels of response to divine grace.'[594] These practices, however, need a prototype from which to draw inspiration in the labours of ascetic prayer and divine transformation. Kierkegaard emphasizes the vital importance of Jesus as our prototype in how the Spirit meets our own human particularity through Jesus' life:

> Christ is the prototype... If he didn't come in lowliness... he would have become a general excuse and escape for the whole human race and every individual in the human race... an imitator [rather] is or strives to be what he admires, and an admirer keeps himself personally detached, [and] consciously or unconsciously does not discover that what is admired involves a claim upon him.[595]

A Kierkegaardian focus on Christ as the redemptive prototype from which ascetical practices are derived, highlights an aspect of Coakley's model that is sorely missing. The greater picture of desire's role in discipleship or following Jesus is not just believing in him or ecstatically enjoying his Spirit, but also imitating his cruciform life as disciples with our own embodied particularities or different instantiations of desire (e.g. being gay).

Coakley comes close to positing Christ as prototype in observing the way in which ascetic practice does not have instant effects that can be commodified, but works against 'ethical trivialization':

> What is the most purified Christian 'practice' is… being like God [in Christ] … handed over to the world, to wait upon it, to receive its power of meaning. It is a passage into a peculiarly active form of passivity in which the divine pressure upon us meets not blockage but diaphanous clarification through the long haul of repeated 'practices' of faithfulness.[596]

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[594] Ibid.
[595] Kierkegaard, *Practice*, 195.
[596] *TNA*, 110.

Coakley comes close to acknowledging a created order or the prototype of Christ as the one who relates to the created good through which the desirer is called to interpret and 'use' creation in enjoyment of God. Kierkegaard's Christology of Christ as prototype can help us direct this prayerful pressure to using created good ordinately, rather than leaving such desire's transformation to untethered experience. While Coakley is right to emphasize a robust Pneumatology, without an intimate anchoring of the experience in the Spirit to Christ and his vindication of the created order as ascetically central, her model lacks a more developed christological account of desire transformation in Gethsemane. This would lend her theology the power to incarnationally meet and empathise with the gnomic struggle of the desirer, especially same-sex desire and its more complex relationship to creation in GCA.

3.3.2 Transforming Desire from Above and the Continuing Priesthood of Christ

An additional reconstructive suggestion for Coakley's new asceticism to meet GCA emerges by looking at the Son and our union with him through the Spirit. In Christ's intercessions for us now[597] we find a grace-driven asceticism that can transform sin-affected desire.[598] Only through his continuing intercession and priesthood do any of our prayers successfully transform desire for God or God's will. Through his mediation the Spirit intercedes within us with wordless groans able to transform our desires. Cyril of Alexandria paved the way for this synthesis with his maxim of two births but one subject.[599] In his *Letter to the Monks*, for example, Cyril contends that Jesus is 'the living and enhypostatic Word,'[600] that is to say, the ultimate prototype for human-ward movement toward God, including desiring God.

Alan Torrance points to retrieving the doctrine of Christ's continuing priesthood, as well as the Spirit's role in our transformation into disciples who can face our own Gethsemane.[601] Torrance's emphasis on Christ's continuing mediatorial priesthood to us in prayer is reflected in Hebrews 2:16-18: 'For... reason [of death] he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.' In this sense, the body of the Word himself is 'life-giving, since he had made it his own by a real union transcending our

[597] Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25.
[598] Morgan, J. 'The Role of Asceticism in Deification in Cyril of Alexandria's *Festal Letters', The Downside Review* 135, no. 3 (2017): 150.
[599] Weinandy, *Theology,* 210; Fairbairn, D. *Grace and Christology in the Early Church* (Oxford: OUP, 2003), 200-224.
[600] Morgan, 'The Role…', 149.
[601] Torrance, 'Reclaiming…', 203.

understanding and powers of expression [or in this case desires!].'[602] As his disciples who receive his priesthood, we too come to 'participate in his holy flesh and blood, we are endowed with life completely and absolutely, because the Word dwells within us, both in a divine way through the Holy Spirit and in a human way through the holy flesh and the precious blood.'[603] It is thus through equal and direct participation in the Word and Spirit that postlapsarian desire, and its particularities, can be transformed.

For this reason, our flesh and desires could not be transformed alone through the divinising Spirit without the Incarnation:

> If [the Word] had not been born like us according to the flesh, if he had not partaken of the same elements as we do, he would not have delivered human nature from the fault we incurred in Adam, nor would he have warded off the decay from our bodies, nor would he have brought to an end the power of the curse.[604]

Jesus is the high priest for our bodily desires, and the one who prays for our own inordinate desires, transforming our prayers in contemplation and through other wordless groans or (glossolalic) intercessions in the Spirit. In virtue of the fact that Jesus has perfected human flesh forever, he can send the Spirit to help overcome the imperfection and weakness of our frame.

The resurrected humanity of Christ and its proper desiring of God is, then, the most comprehensive basis for Coakley's trinitarian asceticism, and the theological anthropology to be employed in ecclesial conversations related to desire and sexuality. As Torrance posits, Christ becomes the One for the Many and as the Son affords us access to the eternal communion shared in the Spirit with the Father.[605] Christology, especially the trinitarian, consubstantial relation of the Son to the other persons of the Trinity is the basis of and door into our ascetic participation in God, particularly to confirm our desire and ward off false images of God or idolatry. The relation that underpins the sanctification of our desires is a relationship between Christ and the Father through the Spirit; our desires are sanctified by being conformed to the person of Christ who subsists in our human nature. Our redemption, then, is tied to Christ as

[602] Fairbairn, *Grace*, 202.
[603] Ibid, 134.
[604] Weinandy, *Theology*, 68.
[605] Torrance, 'Reclaiming…', 195.

'truly human, representing humanity to the Father as our fellow human... the 'enhypostatic' (the exemplar of human-Godward movement).'[606]

Asceticism is part of what Torrance deems the 'human-ward movement toward God'[607] undertaken in the Incarnation and imparted through the Spirit. Importantly for a reconstructive retrieval of Coakley's new asceticism, Torrance argues that Jesus 'is a faithful High Priest who was identified with us in the most radical way and is to be viewed ... as the perfecter of our faith.... Given the Incarnation did not cease with his death, his ascended life is characterized by his priestly role of ongoing mediation ... (1 Tim 2:5) ... representing an ongoing dynamic on God's part.'[608] Furthermore, for Torrance:

> The whole of... prayer requires that it be interpreted in light of what Calvin referred to as the *mirifica communtatio* [the wonderous exchange]. The Son has taken what is ours [our confused, tempted, struggling humanity that is unable to pray]... and has sanctified it in himself so that we might have what is his.[609]

Through Christ's continuing priesthood we are not just given to share in his worship, prayer, and intercessions, but equally the power of grace which transform desires in the Spirit, which brought him at Gethsemane to pray 'not my will but yours be done'. The Anglican Church must, then, be looking to identify an asceticism which faithfully searches for a response to the dilemma of same-sex desire through the real-time and continuing priesthood of its direct head, the ascended mediator, Jesus Christ.

Desire is not just transformed through our ceding to the Spirit, but is equally reliant on Christ's continuing (incarnational) work to sanctify us from above, drawing us into the triune will through grace: 'He [Christ] became Mediator between God and human beings in order that he might minister the things of God to us and our things to God.'[610] Through his priesthood, Christ not only communicates God to us but also transforms our human response or will toward the divine, especially our relationship to the Creator's ordering of created goods according to his loving act of making the world.[611] He unites us to himself by the Spirit, thereby lifting us by his Spirit into the divine life so that he makes 'our meagre,

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606 Ibid, 202.
607 Ibid, 201.
608 Ibid, 187.
609 Ibid, 191.
610 Athanasius, *Orations Against the Arians* (4.6) in Ibid, 193.
611 Ibid, 194.

confused worship and intercessions (desires) his own, thus sanctifying them.'[612] Desire transformation, then, is a dual work of the Word and the Spirit by the Father's will, and reaches into the theodicean spaces of lack that the gay celibate experiences when it comes to honouring the created order. The Father, through the Son, and by the Spirit meets the gay disciple and embraces them into his love, calling them to a new relationship to creation and bodily desire, which lives according to the erotics of marriage as God originally created and Jesus vindicated through his marriage to the bride, the Church. This dogmatic bridge we have identified in GCA between Christ and the Spirit mutually reinforces Coakley and O'Donovan's asceticism.

3.3.3 Coakley's Trinitarian Asceticism and the Historical Particularity of Jesus in Mark's Gethsemane

While the whole of Christ's life is significant for the transformation of his desires, we are given a window into the trinitarian nature of his prayer life at Gethsemane. The objective basis of human desire's redemption is Jesus' assumption of a human nature in the Incarnation: 'there is a shortcoming... in [Coakley's] project... in respect to what qualifies the Spirit to do what the Spirit does... The Spirit is not interested in replacing Christ but in declaring Christ to us.'[613] The person and effect of Jesus' life would, therefore, be the more suitable foundation for Coakley's task and the anthropological basis for GCA, rather than an isolated appeal to Romans 8.

The experience of the Spirit in Romans 8 represents a participation in Christ's own life, as exemplified in the Garden of Gethsemane. The question, then, remains as to whether Coakley's trinitarian model of *ascesis* is insufficiently christological, and thus, unable to meet the gay disciple in their Gethsemane-like wrestle with same-sex desire. I do not think ultimately Coakley's model is insufficiently christological, but rather must be extended to inspire moral agency through Christology, and to protect experiences of prayer from the projectionism she rightly desires to avoid. It may be that Coakley avoids a christological priority so as to ward off debates about the *filioque* or that it would reinforce the patriarchal idolatry of the dyadic relation between Father and Son, subordinating the Spirit. Through a greater focus on the historical locus of Jesus' own passion and prayer life, and a 'pneumatocentric Christology', Coakley's model could more profoundly engage in the

[612] Ibid, 194-5.
[613] Holmes, *Holy Spirit*, 212.

embodied experience of gay disciples.[614] The bodily particularity of Jesus is central to the Spirit's work in confirming the ascetical direction or desire to honour God's will in the created order. Without the suggested change in christological priority, prayer and subjective experience of spirit can too easily depart from the call of God's Word, and allow (same-sex) desire to go untested.

Coakley refers very seldom to the person or historical life of Jesus Christ in *TNA* (only five times in the index, but rarely historically and only indirectly through the experience of the Spirit in prayer) or *GSS* (it is alluded to but not exegeted). Karl Barth, who could be seen as guilty of Coakley's charge of an overemphasis on the dyad between Father and Son, does also remind us of how important Christ's role is when it comes to redeeming created, and anthropological ascetical concerns:

> [Prayer] does not know and proclaim anything side by side with or apart from Jesus Christ, because it knows and proclaims all things only as his things. For it, there is no something other, side by side with, or apart from him… Everything that it knows and proclaims as worthy of mention, it does so as his.[615]

Coakley maintains that her contemplative model of trinitarian prayer 'rightly sustains systematics, is itself a progressive modulator and refiner of human desire: in its naked longing for God, it lays out all its other desires—conscious and unconscious—and places them, over time, into the crucible of divine desire.'[616] Coakley's trinitarian priority needs to slow down and heed the exegetical moment I have proffered in order to centre the Spirit's work on the incarnate life of Jesus Christ, and by extension, our human, embodied lives. By exegetically engaging the objective moment of self-denial or asceticism in Jesus' life in Mark 14:35-36 which redeemed all desire and prayer, we are brought to Cyril of Alexandria's model of asceticism, which emphasises self-denial for the sake of divine fullness of life in the Spirit. In such a frame, a Christian asceticism will lead us outward to embody trinitarian love and to avoid perversion of desire; what Cyril referred to as the 'sacred and holy war' of asceticism.[617]

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[614] McKirland, 'Did Jesus…', 45-53.
[615] *CD*, IV, 1. §22.
[616] *GSS*, 52.
[617] Morgan, 'The Role…', 154.

Cyril's doctrine of divinisation focuses on Christ's appropriation of the Spirit's divine life to us in our struggles as the mechanism for him (and later Maximus the Confessor) that propels the transformation of human desires. This is not self-repression or stoic self-control, but the grace of God through the Son and in the Spirit.[618] The goal of asceticism is this divine fullness of life that Christ, having perfected human nature as the Logos enfleshed (i.e. by submitting his gnomic will to the Father in Gethsemane) appropriates in the Spirit to the praying disciple. This appropriation releases them from interpreting natural desires in resistance to the divine will. A more profound engagement with the discontinuity between the fallen desires of the old *sarx* and those of the renewed Pauline *soma* that tastes and 'awaits' entire eschatological satisfaction is needed in Coakley's asceticism. Through Christ's discipleship from above, fallen sexual desires can be brought into Christic death, and resurrection toward the divine will. Furthermore, Coakley's model can touch the bodily ground in the dilemma of same-sex desire and its relationship to the created order linking Gethsemane to the way in which the Spirit reorients desire into a renewed and Augustinian relationship with creation and its goods.

The problem related to desire must be held as both Christocentric and pneumato-centric. Our discussion has shown that we do not have to choose. The model of ascesis given by Jesus' life and example, culminating on the cross and in the Resurrection, is the first port of call for comprehending self-denial or any asceticism. Human desire is understood from Jesus who is the eschatological human being rather than the supposit of Christic, phenomenal experience of Spirit-based, apophatic prayer. While desire is understood wonderfully as *in via* toward the resurrected life of Jesus, the significance of its origin in the Incarnation in Coakley is not extensively fleshed out. In this way, her lack of christological emphasis risks undermining its capacity to pastorally and morally assist the theodicean wrestle and engage the ethical question of same-sex desire.

3.4.0 Conclusion: O'Donovan's Witness to the Created Order in GCA and Coakley's New Asceticism

To elucidate Coakley's model for our present exploration of GCA, I have explored how Coakley identifies the thin theology of desire resultant from a superficial reading of Freud that has induced and attended our current anthropological crisis related to gender and human

[618] Blackwell, B. *Christosis: Engaging Paul's Soteriology with His Patristic Interpreters* (Berlin: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 302.

sexuality.[619] A synthesis of Coakley and O'Donovan helpfully proffers in its place a model for a new asceticism that retrieves the trinitarian tradition of contemplative prayer to resource GCA. With a more direct appeal to God's created order in Christ, Coakley's account can better hear the gay disciple, in their own particular Gethsemane, generating the kind of renewed asceticism for which Coakley has called. This chapter has shown, therefore, that Jesus' prayer to the Father in Gethsemane is not only the natural place to test and reconstruct Coakley's argument, but essential to establish an ethical conclusion like GCA. O'Donovan needs the richly trinitarian account Coakley proffers to meet not just the ethical nature, but the theodicean difference of gay experience. Coakley benefits from a christological integration of moral order in her asceticism to meet GCA's dilemma through contemplative prayer in the Spirit.

Coakley's approach offers to O'Donovan's moral asceticism a deeply important affectively and traditionally-astute account of how erotics can drive exclusion from some created goods for the sake of intense inclusion in their vindication and transformation in Christ. On the one hand, this innovative interweaving of O'Donovan and Coakley's *theologie totale* offers a powerful corrective to confront not just the errors of libertinism or repression, but equally the false idols that undergird and empower them. [620] On the other hand, Coakley protects O'Donovan's account from ignoring the theodicean vulnerability of the body, and our dependence on prayer to protect against idolatrous projection from misuse of the created order onto God.

Coakley's theology of desire is what O'Donovan needs to avoid the susceptibility of his intense focus on created order to natural idolatry thereby protecting the gay erotic body from harmful repression and fostering healthy sublimation. Without the Word and Spirit's challenge in and through the triune life of prayer and contemplation, the Church has little way to resist both counterfeit erotics and natural idolatries. Coakley's move safeguards against natural idols which privilege a certain cultural understanding of sexuality, and can ensure O'Donovan's account is not misread homophobically to exclude gay people. Coakley's theology of desire protects O'Donovan's intense focus on moral order and created goods from susceptibility to natural idolatry by showing a path toward experiencing resurrection fullness now thereby

[619] *TNA*, 7.
[620] *GSS*, 352.

protecting the gay erotic body from harmful repression and promoting a healthy non-repressive sublimation of desire.

GCA, driven by a desire to wait attentively upon God's reordering of same-sex passions, is distinctively theofoundational – motivated by attending to God's will for our bodies as they have been gifted to us.[621] As Roger Scruton posits: 'The consumer culture is one without sacrifices; easy entertainment distracts us from our metaphysical loneliness. The rearranging of the world as an object of appetite obscures its meaning as a gift.'[622] However, the theofoundational point of departure Coakley offers in the experience of the Spirit depends on the knowledge of Christ and vice versa. In Christ, divinity and humanity meet in prayer providing a clear ascetic example and denial of this 'rearranging of the world as an object of appetite obscures its meaning as gift.'[623] Emphasising the Holy Spirit means speaking of the transformation prayer provides for human desires through the Incarnation. This chapter has therefore shown that the starting point for any ethic for desire must be located in the person of Jesus Christ who is the incarnational exemplar of how our passions are redeemed, given, known, and worked out in prayer through the Holy Spirit's power and ecstatic life.

My account of GCA developed through Augustine and O'Donovan can help reinforce Coakley's asceticism grounding it in our dependency on the power of Christ's mediation of grace to our desires. Christ is the beloved who helps us to choose, against our unpurged desire, to live as a creature in the deeper vein of God's created order. The reasons for re-centring Coakley's asceticism on the person of Jesus and his prayerful ascesis from GCA are twofold: i) in order to affirm Coakley's trinitarian impulse through an intimate insight into the relationship of the Trinity where the Son prays 'Abba' in the Spirit (Jesus uses the intimate name *Abba*, which may have been why Paul employs the term in Romans 8, the exegetical lynchpin of Coakley's argument), and; ii) to address the absence of Jesus Christ's own self-denial as the prototype or exemplar to imitate and from which we receive mediation in Coakley's account. Through his continual intercession and union with us in the Spirit, Christ keeps us from being Kierkegaard's superficial admirers.[624]

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[621] Hill, W. *Washed and Waiting* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 137; ibid, *Spiritual Friendship* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 112.
[622] Scruton, R. *The Face of God* (London: Bloomsbury: 2010), 171-172.
[623] Diller, *Theology's*, 91.
[624] Kierkegaard, S. *Concluding Unscientific Postscripts to Philosophical Fragments* XXI, Vol II ed. Hong *et al (*Princeton: PUP, 2013), 141.

Finally, this chapter has shown how GCA appears as a new form of asceticism in Coakley's vein by accepting or denying desires for created goods (e.g. celibacy and marriage). GCA does so in deference toward a greater good or fullness, like union with the divine or *in via* towards the *eschaton*[625] where 'desire, asceticism, and God as Trinity belong together, all the way down.'[626] This nexus of associations in her theology of desire establishes a rich account of bodily asceticism from which to start O'Donovan's desired conversation for gay Christian self-reflection in light of the Gospel. The gnomic struggle of the gay celibate to submit their desires to the will of God due to exclusion from the created good of marriage is met profoundly in Christ's own example in Gethsemane. As seen through Coakley's lens, this more fundamental desire for God can be trusted as the site for transformation of same-sex desire as long as it involves an appeal to the human struggle of Jesus in prayer and his example in the bodily asceticism.[627]

I, therefore, conclude that: i) in order for Coakley's asceticism to meet the gay celibate it needs greater engagement with how creation, the person of Christ, and prayer-based tradition explored in Mark's Gethsemane; and ii) the Logos' assumption of our human nature in Christ is the essential theofoundational and soteriological anchoring point for the Spirit's work of transforming desires in prayer.[628] While Coakley acknowledges that her Christology will follow at the end of her systematic theology, this chapter has revealed why a greater Christological anchoring is needed in the interim. The constructive critique I have made takes the praying disciple beyond apophaticism to cataphatic participation in the created order in a way that does not turn in on itself in stoical self-repression or libertinism. Without the Incarnation and the cruciform life of Jesus, (i.e. his prayers in Gethsemane, and continuing priesthood through the Spirit now), human prayer, or 'proto-erotic' desire for God would remain unstable, and, therefore, constitute an unsuitable beginning point for ethics or meeting the desire-based dilemma of gay Christians.[629] I will now apply the critical insights of this extension of Coakley's new asceticism and GCA to the theological erotics of Anglican queer theologian, Graham Ward.

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[625] Ibid, 123.
[626] Ibid, 67.
[627] Cf. Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, (Harper, 1962), 42; Barth, *CD III*, 2.
[628] Diller, K. *Theology's Epistemological Dilemma: How Karl Barth and Alvin Plantinga Provide A Unified Response* (Illinois: IVP Academic, 2014), 132.
[629] *TNA*, 95-96.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE QUEERING OF SEXUAL DIFFERENCE: REVISIONING DESIRE IN GRAHAM WARD'S CITIES OF GOD

4.0 Introduction: Augustine's Civitas Dei and Ward's Erotics of Redemption

In this chapter, I argue that Ward helpfully presents the Church as an alternative community of desire to fallen and idolatrous modernist erotics. An authentic community must offer true I-Thou relationship among the counterfeits of modernity that act as 'parodies of the Christian *ecclesia.*'[630] I will show: i) how Ward's account of erotics and gender through trinitarian analogy protects the body and sexual difference from natural idolatry but simultaneously rules out the bodily re-enchantment the resurrection proffers to physical sexual difference as part of the created order; and ii) how GCA queers (counterfeits of) sexual difference in the way Ward envisages whilst retaining both the good of procreation (as in Robert Song's apologia for same-sex relationships) and the sacramental aspect of sexual difference within marriage. This chapter will act more as a foil against which to contrast the (queerness) of my account of GCA than as an essentially constructive contribution. I finally contend that Ward's Barthian suspension of sexual difference in the *diastema* between the Trinity and creation undermines Augustine's call to rightly use the goods of creation according to one's created nature and God's *ordo amoris*.

4.1.0 Time, Desire, and Cities of God: Historicism and the Body in Ward and O'Donovan

Ward departs from O'Donovan in that he sees time as relativizing the past analogies or cosmologies we construct in the city. Before we can build a city, we begin with an originary account of creation which God the Triune Creator restored in Christ. O'Donovan and Coakley see creation as *in via* toward the *eschaton*. In *Cities*, Ward traces, through the cultural memory of globalised cities, how desire and time coalesce into simulacra of a bodily 'original'.[631] He observes the way in which the modern subject has replaced the Christian person. Such elevation of the individual subject is most felt in how we define our humanity in the social life of cities. Ward provides a postmodern path forward through an antidote to the gender counterfeits that the individualised modern subject has produced without God. To free us from these parodies of the Church's love, he 'genderfucks' physiological sexual difference:

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[630] *Cities,* 117, 125.
[631] Braudillard, J. *Simulacre et Simulations* (Paris: Galilée, 1981) in *Cities,* 60, 243.

> The erasure of the specific biological difference issues… from reading the relationship of the male and female from a theological (rather than a medical or sociological or anthropological) point of view. Where the true understanding of creation's ontological order comes from a participation in the operation of God's being, the biological – nature as it has been conceived since the seventeenth century as an independent realm of self-grounding, self-defining entities – has no value. Corporeality is such because it is materiality informed by the Spirit. To hand the corporeal as if it were not also spiritual and theological is a form of idolatry; a consequence of sin, ignorance and human arrogance.[632]

Ward resists a certain nostalgia with analogies and hermeneutics that arise from past epochs to cure the disturbance of desire at the heart of the modern cityscape, and to re-enchant the malaise of its desire culture.[633] Through Trinitarian analogy, he attempts to save sexual difference from becoming epistemologically idolatrous. Such a move is curious, considering the resurrected body of Christ as per O'Donovan, which does the work of redeeming fallen bodies through the vindication and transformation of created order.

Ward's reading of Barth queers modernistic representations of sexual difference that originate from a distinct and independent reality of 'natural theology.'[634] For Ward, sexual difference that is not related to God's triune revelation is idolatrous. Judith Butler and Luce Irigaray's work on gender untether sexual difference from this temptation to an idolatry of nature and human self-knowledge apart from God.[635] Representation of gender makes sexual difference no longer a crude physiological reality. Instead, sexual difference is caught up in language, performance, and representation of gender. In Ward's reading of Barth, a lacuna he misses is that the I-Thou relationship in marriage cannot be merely spiritual but is theologically tethered to the body as creation.[636] As O'Donovan and Coakley argue, the spiritual must be mediated through the physical. Sexed male and female bodies are central in Barth to the stability of the analogy between creation and God.[637] To entirely suspend or remove the biological undermines the reality of same-sex desire which operates from perceiving otherness in the same biological structures.

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[632] *Cities*, 193.
[633] *C&C*, 186; *Cities*, 192.
[634] *Cities*, 68.
[635] *C&C*, 131-132.
[636] *Cities*, 194.
[637] *CD* III/2, 287–288.

As examined in chapter two, O'Donovan locates the renewal of political witness through a distinction in the *saeculum* between the two cities' respective loves: a disordered self-love and a right self-love established in Christ through a renewed knowledge of self and creation.[638] In chapter three, Coakley locates a political renewal through attending to a robustly trinitarian practice of ascetical prayer. The city of God is constituted through a christological foundation in the Resurrection and the Spirit's work to unhinge projection of gender and *eros* onto God. Ward differs from O'Donovan and Coakley in interpreting sexual difference through Barth's *analogia fidei* or *Christi*. Unlike O'Donovan who reads sexual difference within the erotic body of Christ through resurrection and Coakley who protects sex from idolatry through the Spirit's propulsive erasure of masculine projection onto the Trinity,[639] Ward defines it as a component of human covenantal relationship which transcends biological sex:

> From the point of view of revelation, the difference is read in terms of a covenant constituted through reciprocal desire. It is the covenant through desire for the other that constitutes the image in us of the nature of the Godhead itself and the economy of relations created by reciprocal desire within the Godhead. It is not biology *per se*….[640]

In a similar vein to Gregory of Nyssa, Ward defines sexual difference by re-appropriating Augustine's scheme of the two cities and two loves to the I-Thou relationship in Barth.[641] Sexual difference for Ward emerges in the analogical *diastema* between God and creation.[642] This sacramental space suspends sexual difference from the created order. As Ward states: 'Analogy as *ana*-logical is theologically freighted. It bears the weight of a profound cosmological significance… because creation is related to an uncreated creator, who not only inaugurates but maintains a world-order within which analogy is an index of participation.'[643] Ward establishes an analogy between the sexual difference of human beings in erotic relation and the intra-divine difference of the Trinity. Desire, especially sexual desire is not caught up in the cosmological reality from which the city is constructed, but from the representational dilemma of the Fall and gender.

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638 *RMO*, 5
639 O'Donovan, *Begotten,* 56; O'Donovan 'Transsexualism and Christian Marriage', *Journal of Religious Ethics* 11, no.1 (1983): 135-162.
640 *Cities*, 193
641 *CD III/2*, 318-329, 337-340.
642 *CD III/1* (1958), in *Cities*, 190.
643 Ibid, ix.

In Ward, desire is called to reflect the triune life of God, yet the bridge to maintain the creature-creator divide is lost where other disciplines are relegated to Barth's *Nein* to natural theology.[644]. As Ward states: '… we read sexual difference aright when we read it from the theological perspective rather than the biological, sociological, and anthropological perspectives.'[645] The body is a suspended text to be read through the covenant between bride and bridegroom, Yahweh and Israel, and only thirdly, itself. He relegates sexual difference to a metaphorical reality where 'two differentiated positions within a divinely ordered sociality… signify partnership, covenant, fellowship, and helpmates. They are symbolic positions within divine narrative.'[646] Inadvertently, Ward elevates sexual difference above God's own creative activity and the meaning given it in Christ's resurrection of the body. For Ward, Christ does not just re-read sexual difference christologically but the schizoid Christ *reconstitutes* it altogether.[647] Such a reconstitution is not possible with the affirmation of the body and created order given in the incarnation, cross, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as I have so far argued. Christology is strangely relativised through a noumenal reading of sexual difference which defines the Trinity in terms of human *eros*.

In Ward's vision, gender does not just become labile before the Trinity as per Coakley, but is entirely suspended from the body itself.[648] Ward goes further than Coakley to redefine sexual difference as an erotic difference that has little to do with sexually-differentiated bodies.[649] Sexual difference is suspended as a eucharistic site untethered from creation's ontology and *telos*: 'Bodies are not self-grounded, and self-defining. A person's physical body, the 'one flesh' of the nuptial body, the Church's nuptial body and Christ's eschatological body map one upon another.'[650] Such an analogical vision is mapped over the ontology of creation to reflect God's triune nature, removing any significance of sexual difference in and of itself. Like Augustine, Ward sees the city as 'humankind's most sophisticated image of order: social order promoting personal order, and both [are] concomitant with cosmic order… Theology does not handle what God is; only what God is in relation to the world.'[651] The question from Ward's account, then, is how theology of desire functions for the Church in post-postmodern cityscapes, especially when it comes to

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[644] *Cf.* Barth, Karl. *Nein!: Antwort an Emil Brunner*, (Theologische Existenz Heute, C. Kaiser, 1934), 14 and Baker, D. B. *The Transformation of Persons and the Concept of Moral Order: A Study of the Evangelical Ethics of Oliver O'Donovan with Special Reference to the Barth-Brunner Debate* (*PhD Thesis*, University of St Andrews, 2010), 9, 131, 171.
[645] Ibid, 194.
[646] Ibid, 196
[647] *C&C*, 61.
[648] *Cities*, 184; *GSS*, 115.
[649] *Cities*, 191; 276, 3n.
[650] *Cities*, 194.
[651] Ibid, 2.

notions of (bodily) sexual difference. I contend that GCA can renew a neo-Augustinian vision of the *civitas dei* and inform Ward's theological vision, challenging some of its assumptions about how gender and sexual difference are known and problematised.

Coakley and Ward share similarities related to the created order, only Coakley mentions it far less in *GSS* and *TNA*. In *Cities*, Ward directly appeals to cosmic order but in a different way than O'Donovan:

> The world as such is not brutally given; it is an artefact resonant through all its parts with intelligibility. It is cosmological because analogy traces an order that is dependent upon a creating God, an active God… the concern of this book… is… to construct a theological cosmology which does not ape or long to return to the analogical worlds of past times. This theological cosmology is composed here in the contemporary world with its technological advances, its traumas, and its enchantments; its fears, its fantasies and its fetishisms. It is a Christian theological cosmology founded upon dwelling in analogical relation, in complex communities which constitute cities of God.[652]

Unlike O'Donovan who seeks a renewed knowledge of the erotic body in light of the resurrection of Christ, Ward redefines the erotic body altogether, especially its relationship to sexual difference. An Augustinian commonality and ethical departure may be detected between Ward and O'Donovan/Coakley. O'Donovan, following Augustine, claims that love cannot be love unless it lives out the created good according its cosmic ordering in Christ. In O'Donovan, creation has a central affirming role in revelation. In Coakley, gender is rendered labile, but not irrelevant. For Ward, created order is analogically experienced starting with the Trinity as the basis for rightly-ordered erotic life and loves, where biological sex is relativised as no longer important in sexual erotics.[653]

In Ward, desire helps us to queer sexual difference and to free us to live in a triunely-shaped economy of desire where difference is properly recognized as *analogical* rather than a physiological absolutism.[654] One could imagine O'Donovan calling for caution with an appeal to the christological vindication of the created order in the Resurrection.[655] Coakley, as we have explored, approaches this issue through noetic release of control in prayer. I contend that

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[652] Ibid, ix.
[653] Ward, 'There is no sexual difference' in *QT, 84*.
[654] Cities, 186.
[655] O'Donovan, O. *Transsexualism: Issues and Arguments* (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2007), 6-7; *RMO*, 92.

redemptive erotics must in O'Donovan's way emerge from Christ's life, death and resurrection to vindicate, restore, and transform created order.[656] Such redemption includes a re-enchantment of physical sexual difference which does not try to go backwards to retrieve a protology of gender or sex as in Patterson's 'Law of Adam and Eve' but rather arises from the hope of the body's resurrection in Christ.[657] Sexual love must involve sexually-differentiated bodies because of Christ's vindication of the moral order. For Ward, conversely, the schizoid Christ's body gives way to the metaphorical nature of sexual difference which opens his vision of the Trinity's erotics to same-sex couples.[658]

These Anglican accounts provide elements of what GCA seeks to achieve as a *via media* between them all. As Ward states: 'Our understandings of the world, even the natural world, are coloured by the way we represent the world. The postmodern city exalts that power to represent.'[659] For Ward, sexual difference is caught up in representational language games of power; it is never given to us as read in a crude male-female physiological reductionism but always the production of a relation.[660] It is either read through modernist counterfeits or the Trinity which 'suspends it' as an erotic analogy. The body's nature, as per queer theory and Judith Butler, is radically fallen and unable to be represented to us except as a phenomenological site for eucharistic performance in a postlapsarian world of gendered stereotypes.[661] Ward's account throws up many questions related to the body's hope and what a Christian anthropology of desire and the body constitutes. The alien pilgrim witness of gay celibates seeks to live in the communities of desire and redemptive erotics which embrace the body of Christ's hope in resurrection rather than remain ensconced in the representative despair of postmodern cities. I now turn to focus on the perception and representation of bodily sexual difference and how my account of GCA highlights lacunae in Ward's approach.

4.1.1 The Body and the City of God: Ward's Hermeneutics of Gender and Reading Difference

For Ward, as per Foucault and Butler, bodies 'are written upon; these writings have to be read and reread, and this will change the nature of what is written, rewriting the body again. Tissue is not text, but there is tissue only because there is text. This means that Christology, in dealing

656 Ibid, 27-33.
657 Patterson, *Reforming,* 10-105; *RMO*, 93.
658 *C&C*, 71.
659 *Cities*, 69.
660 'There is no sexual difference' in QT, 82.
661 *C&C,* 78.

with various textualisms is forever prone towards the forgetting of the body.'[662] In this sense, Ward is hesitant to write over the body's ontology, and yet he suspends sexual difference in an analogical way to avoid a fallen grasping at gender to avoid counterfeit intimacy. As he states, 'The corporeal as such is, on one level, a philosophical abstraction or isolation proceeding from the complex of the body… [and is] only possible on the rejection of the theological and ethical orders that give value and significance to the body.'[663] Male and female as a given protological imaginary is a fallen discursive construction in a similar way to my account of GCA. I agree with Ward that gender cannot be easily read into sex, but through grace, the gender-sex divide can be sacramentally bridged. Ward clearly departs from what Augustine and much of Augustinian ethics has said where sex difference is integral to marriage. Ward's account needs not suspend biology and its signification, but rather, save and relativize it through the incarnation. GCA arises from the relativisation and affirmation of biology, and can achieve an equally robust resistance to counterfeits of gender and intimacy Ward diagnoses. The resurrection body is not an erasure of original humanity's body, but a vindication, restoration, and transformation of it.

In Ward's account of belief in the postmodern city he critiques forms of evangelicalism, Roman Catholicism and fundamentalism which he takes to be 'anti-modern counter-cultures.'[664] He argues that they are deemed culturally Manichean in their separatism and lack of involvement with the secular city scape. They are a false alternative to a liberal humanism, which has no foundation in God and is unable to be part of the *civitas dei* in that sense. My account of GCA similarly recognises that these Christian movements are often undergirded by natural idolatry in a similar way to Ward. Ward instead sees the way through similarly to O'Donovan and Coakley as a much softer Christian ontology; a hermeneutic ontology (Vattimo).[665] In this vision Christian tradition is 'open to its future transformations.'[666] The believer must not merely fall into becoming one of Michel De Certeau's 'pseudo-believers',[667] by allowing intimacy to be controlled by the politics of natural idolatry attached to gender stereotyping. Like O'Donovan, they must rather employ a hermeneutic that resists romanticism of the past or historicism.[668] GCA emerges on the scene in a way that is remarkably similar to Ward but with an equal awareness of the

[662] Ibid, 115.
[663] Ibid, 144.
[664] Ibid, 69.
[665] Ibid, 71.
[666] Ibid, 74.
[667] Ibid, 75.
[668] Ibid.

revisionist tendency to try to erase sexual difference and the created ontology of the body that Christ redeemed.

Ward's critique of historicism when it comes to sexual difference appears as incomplete. Unlike Coakley who speaks little about created order, he leans against a robust doctrine of creation that emerges from Christ's sacramental affirmation and incarnational relativisation of sexual difference and procreation. He does, however, hold time before God, both a sense of the future or the past (a queer tendency and one important to heed for Christian ethics of gender).[669] Ward's critique of the nostalgia of our postmodern cities and churches risks falling back into a historicist loop where God is held in a hermeneutic of suspicion. He explains how the *civitas terrena* is tempted to counterfeit sexual difference according to other orders of love. By resisting the reduction of sexual difference to biology, Ward suspends sexual difference as a bodily metaphor, highlighting how a harmful binary can be set up which resists the diversity within unity required for erotic love that reflects the Trinity.

In my account of GCA, the pilgrims set alight by the love of God in Jesus Christ do not need to make Ward's move as their reading of the body and creation undergoes epistemic renewal in the Holy Spirit. Such a position does not 'remain enthralled to, and foster, a biological essentialism and *hom(m)osexual* economy (in Irigaray's understanding of the term).'[670] Through the Augustinian renewal of love's sight, the disciple can re-read sexual difference within the body, protecting marriage from a dualistic or gnostic suspension of the body and its sexed nature. Such a pilgrim can resist the '*ho(m)mosexual*' counterfeits of sexual difference and gender through a christological asceticism which honours created order and resurrection, and is protected from natural idolatry.[671] The body can be brought forward into a sacramental existence which affirms the created ontology of sexual difference in marriage while opening up other ways of embodying eucharistic difference in friendship and alternative erotics.

GCA can provide a cure to the heterosexist parodies differently to Ward's relation-based model of erotics. Instead of redefining sexual difference as a relationally-noumenal experience between (two) bodies, GCA can provide a new way for the Church to embrace Ward's diagnosis of the problem in a fallen world with the epistemic protections of a christologically-vindicated created order and Coakley's contemplative solution to patriarchal projection. Instead of erasing sexual

669 Patterson, 'A Theological…', 112
670 *Cities,* 198.
671 Ibid, 220.

difference, the Church, like GCA, is called to both affirm and relativize sexual difference. This move frees Ward's critique from its hyper-Barthian frame of analogy that collapses the body's ontology, resisting a projection of human *eros* onto God. My account of GCA maintains a necessary creature-creator divide between the inner life of the Trinity and human interrelationship, where the creature is called to live within the terms of the created order.

My account of GCA does not consist in a monastic separation from the *saeculum* but goes right to the heart of the co-mingled cities of God and Earth. The gay celibate body is driven by radical grace that works to renew the Church's redemptive erotics as a sign of creation's redemption from its groaning. God's transcendence can begin to re-enchant the body and the signification of creation again through Christ, repairing the breach between *signum* and *res*.[672] The restoration of the created body will necessarily require a sacramental and heavenly witness from the borderlands of the politics and idolatry of sex in the *civitas terrena*. Gay celibates lead in this distinctly Christian, queer witness following the Lamb wherever he goes. GCA does the work that Ward wants a noumenally-suspended sexual difference to achieve. GCA challenges an idolatrous grasping onto sexual difference but also protects against its proto-gnostic erasure. Rather than attempting to fight the counterfeiting of modernism in its cities with the self's representational powers, the gay celibate responds with the hope proffered in the sexually-differentiated body mediated through the Holy Spirit's presence.

The gay celibate's queerness also resists Aristotelian readings of creation that are not Christologically broken open by grace and which do not take Fall's effects seriously enough when it comes to knowledge of nature. Natural law or natural theological approaches can risk producing heterosexist counterfeits that are, as Ward argues, innately '*hom(m)osexual*' or dominated by the heterosexual male subject who covers over relational difference, which is detrimental to authentic representations of sexual or erotic difference: 'to posit a gender, a God is necessary; guaranteeing the infinite… If women have no God, they are unable either to communicate or to commune with one another… As long as a woman lacks a divine made in her image she cannot establish her subjectivity.'[673] Coakley proffers a different solution to Ward emphasising the Spirit's effacing of idolatrous projections of gender through contemplative

[672] *DDC*, 31.
[673] Irigaray, L. *Sexes and Genealogies* tr. Gillian C. Gill (New York: CUP, 1993), 61-63 in *Cities*, 220; *cf.* Ward's time-bound critique of created signs: 'They [signs] operate as a self-referential and deferential matrix… Governed by the Word of God the signs become sacramental – dense with mystery… our knowledge, of and through reading these signs, is partial and time-bound', (*Cities*, 7).

prayer without erasing the sexually-differentiated body.[674] The crisis, then, for Ward is found in the parodies we generate of loving relation in difference through biological self-creations from below. Such biological reductionism avoids revelation and becomes ripe for gendered representations through patriarchal power. GCA aims as a queer pilgrim witness to resist these self-creations in an Augustinian way without rejecting the creational and redemptive significance of sexual difference and the embodied self as a creational gift of grace.

Ward's diagnosis of the parodies of the Church's erotics in the *civitas terrena*, and its attempt to read nature without revelation is solved through a resistance to a theologically-erotic differentiation experienced between two bodies. As Ward states: 'we read nature and society not in terms of what we see around us, but what is revealed to us following the resurrection of Christ.'[675] Ward is right here to critique Barth's view of homosexuality or this essentialist tendency in Barth (and Von Balthasar), which sees the female only as 'a variant of the male; his other half which fulfils and supports him.'[676] For Barth:

> Sexual difference rehearses the dialectic of the self and the other; the dialectic of itself is constitutive of being human. That is, a human being is such only in relation to other human beings. Man and woman together constitute what it is to be human, making marriage fundamental anthropologically as well as theologically. Marriage is the fulfilment of sexual difference; the fulfilment also of a certain *analogia Christi* insofar as it imitates the…. relationship between Yahweh and Israel… Christ and the Church.[677]

Ward's persuasive critique of Barth's view of homosexuality, ('the malady of homosexuality… the physical, psychological and social sickness, the phenomenon of perversion, decadence and decay,')[678] is essentially important in GCA to avoid oppressive stoicism and natural idolatry. For Ward, Barth's view of sexual difference is insufficiently theological and inconsistent with Barth's broader theology.

Similarly to Coakley's critique of trinitarian representations of God which 'shrink' the Holy Spirit, Ward challenges Barth's subordination of the Spirit 'as the one who maintains and keeps open the unity of triune relations of love.'[679] Such subordination maintains the 'isolation of the

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[674] GSS,
[675] *Cities,* 197
[676] Ibid, 197; Irigaray, *An Ethics, 152.*
[677] *C&C*, 130.
[678] *Cities*, 201; *CD III.4,* 166.
[679] *Cities*, 198

erotic from the *agapaic*, the lack of participation and co-operation of the two desires, grounded in intra-divine love, which leaves Barth simply peddling the male perspective…'.[680] The Church's issues with sexuality and gender emerge from our misunderstanding and lack of the anthropological application of the Trinity's relationship to creation. The gay celibate is a subject not so much concerned with gender and sexuality first but with desire for God and living for God in and through creation as it is given in gift and yet with desires that move in directions opposed to their original giving. They come with a different perspective and perception of the good enflamed by the love that can learn from and meet Ward's challenge.

Within Barth's theology, Ward identifies the solution to Barth's problem with sex and gender. Ward suspends sexual difference to provide another option for gay or queer bodies. For him, it is the necessary element to deliver a reflection of trinitarian love but only in a noumenal, non-physical sense as bodies become performatively 'written upon'. They are ensconced in fallen constructions of gender that are not authentic to the true erotic difference to which the mystical body of Christ is called. In GCA, however, the physiological difference of sex is affirmed as a contingent good which is not required in the *eros* of celibacy, and yet holds for marriage and sexual relations. Sexual difference functions in a relativised way, freeing the Trinity from the dangers of the '*hom(m)osexual* phallocentricism' that Luce Irigaray identifies as covering over sexual difference, especially female sexual difference, and, therefore, the proper functioning of love and redeemed erotics.[681] GCA safeguards the body from epistemic erasure whilst also confronting the problem of modernism, and its oppressive gendered politics through Coakley's contemplative corrective and O'Donovan's focus on resurrection. Differently to Ward's christologically-schizoid reading of *eros*, which understands the resurrection encounter between Jesus and Thomas to have a (homo)erotic element to it, GCA resists the suspension of sexual difference into a noumenal realm.[682] Desire and the body disrupt the perspective of the one, monolithic, male (heterosexual) perspective and its proto-stoical culture through its doubly queer asceticism.

The gay celibate seeks a Christian account of celibacy that upends heterosexism and Ward's diagnosis of a *hom(m)osexual* economy without overwriting and discarding the ontology of a sexually-differentiated humanity that is beautifully embodied and affirmed in Christ's physiological resurrection. Ward's account provides a profound analysis of the issue with the

[680] Ibid, 199
[681] Ibid, 117; Irigaray, *An Ethics,* 194.
[682] *QT*, 81-85.

Church's erotics, affected too easily by a culture of counterfeit erotics and parody. However, Ward makes radical moves away from the tradition and scripture to dismantle gendered parodies of the Church. Such a move away from scripture and tradition that uphold the physiological reality of physical sexual difference is unnecessary when compared with GCA. It unnecessarily undermines the prophetic witness of his account with a false solution that leads the Church away from being the harbinger of redemptively-affirmed and creationally-vindicated erotics.

4.1.2 Discerning Difference: Augustine's Created Body and Ward's Account of Sexual Difference and Erotics

I turn now to the sexually-differentiated body as the hinge upon which a new asceticism can be effectuated in Anglicanism in conversation with Ward. In Augustine's anthropology, bodies and cities are also importantly overlapped. In Ward's account, the body is the site in which desire and orders of desire play out in the city. Augustine builds from Paul's anthropology of the *sarx* or 'flesh', and its desires that war against the Spirit. These two forces are at work writing over created reality and sit at the foundation of the two cities. As we have outlined for Ward, another layer of the city is innovated in such a vision of the city and the body. The modernist operation of power happens through digitalisation and atomisation, which seeks to dominate or colonise the body, especially queer or 'other' bodies through a male-dominated, *hom(m)osexual* hierarchy.[683]

In the contemporary city, the body, for Ward, has become the principal site for the operation of power through the order of simulacra: 'cities are cities of the sign, concerned with the image and culturally self-conscious… a post-symbolic condition in which there is zero degree of significance.'[684] Bodily difference is affected by this representational issue, suspending the body and its ontology as sexually-differentiated in the performance of gender. Both Augustine and Ward locate desire at the centre of how the city is built and imagined, and for Ward, desire is where we need to return in the postmodern city:

> A holographic presence of St. Augustine permeates these pages whispering of the 'two loves' of which only one is holy, the other impure (*immundus*); the one sociable (*socialis*) and the other self-centred (*privatus*) (Augustine, 1972, XI, 20). He whispers also of places in which these two amorous desires operate 'the mortal course of the two cities, the heavenly and the earthly, which are mingled together (*permixtarum*) from the beginning

[683] Irigaray, *An Ethics*, 35.
[684] Baudrillard, *Simulations,* 101-24 in *Cities,* 60, 64.

> down to the end. Of these the early one has made to herself… false gods whom she might serve by sacrifice; but she which is heavenly and is a pilgrim on earth does not make false gods, but is herself made by the true God of whom she herself must be the true sacrifice (*cuius verum sacrificium ipsa fit).* Yet both alike either enjoy temporal good things, or are afflicted with temporal evils, but with diverse faith, diverse hope, and diverse love, until they must be separated by the last judgement, and each must receive her own end, of which there is no end.'[685]

On Ward's view, reminiscent of Coakley, the cure to fallen erotics is the *amor dei* and its power to reorient our desire for created goods around the greater and more fundamental desire for and in God. As Harrison elucidates, God, the Trinity, loves God's self in us, and we are transformed in such a participation of God's self-love as the image of God's own loving self-relation.[686]

Ward suggests that this is only possible when the word *eros* (or in Latin, *amor*) is reclaimed by the Christian church and the dualism between *agape* and *eros* undermined.[687] GCA seeks a similar end to Ward, representing ways of living out a unitive desire to be one with God and neighbour without the fallen sexual ideology which enshrines heterosexism. Where GCA differs is: i) in refusing the noumenal suspension of sexual difference away from the body's ontology as a sexually-differentiated part of the created order; and ii) in seeking to relativize and affirm sexually-differentiated marriage in the Church's life and to re-centre the Church's erotics on heavenly friendship and the collective fellowship of the Holy Spirit. GCA sees the diversity of the body as a vital sign to a heavenly reality, intensely shown in marriage, but also in God's creation of diverse male-female bodies. Ward argues instead that the 'meaning and significance of bodies is ultimately ungraspable.'[688] On Ward's view, marriage defined by physiological sexual difference is only ever a heterosexist simulacrum. It cannot be retrieved or vindicated by resurrection as per O'Donovan, or affirmed and protected from idolatry by Coakley's apophatic corrective in prayer. As we have shown, Augustine contends that bodies are a gift of grace, and that grace proffers the capacity to know the bodily self – a self God became bodily and incarnate to save. Along similar lines to O'Donovan, I suggest that Ward must heed the power of resurrection in reading sexual difference and thus, open his account to the goodness of the body as created and vindicated by God in Christ.[689]

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[685] *Cities*, 24.
[686] Harrison, *Fractured*, 211.
[687] *Cities*, 76.
[688] *C&C*, 112.
[689] *G&D*, 80-85.

The sexed body is left in a hopeless situation in Ward when it comes to its own phenomenology and materiality, risking dualism. The Holy Spirit reveals, however incompletely, our eventual eschatological transformation beyond marriage where sexual difference will take on a different meaning, and yet affirms its goodness in us now.[690]

Ward tries to achieve what the *eschaton* in Christ does for sexual difference through the Holy Spirit but empties sexual difference of its signification through erotic semiotics. GCA departs from Ward not in his diagnosis but his solution. GCA recognises the difficult liminal tension in Christ between the vindication of creation, and the transformation of its order, and, therefore, affirms a theology of desire which excludes the option of extending sexual differentiation as a representative element between two male or two female bodies. Friendship, however, can be homosocially erotic in the way Ward describes. This differentiation between GCA and Ward is where a major lacuna is opened up vis-à-vis his solution to the fallen counterfeits of the Church's redemptive erotics. Ward's account sacrifices an affirmation of creation, endowing it with an ethically superfluous role.

Ward discusses how the two cities in Augustine are 'dualistically drawn', 'founded upon two antithetical economies of desire, both of them erotic': 'In the language only one distinction remains: '*amor dei* becomes *diligam te* through all subjects serving one another *in caritate*; while *amor sui* becomes *digilit virtutem suam* through acts of subjugation issuing from *dominandi libido*. The difference between the kenotic disposition of *caritate* and the despotic disposition of *libido* emphatically remains because of the parallelism governing the passage.'[691] These cities, although driven by two opposing orders of love are inextricably bound and cannot be falsely or artificially torn from each other. For Ward, it is the same *amor sui* which gives rise to distorted representations of the divine, parodic simulacra of theological truths. Such a tension affirms GCA as a liminal, sacramental existence which does not deny creation but relativizes and affirms it through Christ who defines redemptive erotics through theological authorities of scripture, reason, and tradition, which I explore in the concluding chapter on Hooker.

The Roman '*imperium Christianum'* was a product, for Ward, of a disordered co-mingling between the cities, rather than one that was driven by the *amor dei*, an imperial simulacrum of what the

[690] Do Vale, 'Cappadocian...', 197.
[691] *Cities,* 227.

Church was supposed to be.[692] Ward points to a space for forms of representation that are anti-simulacra, and which resist spurning and misusing the virtue of Christian faith for the *libido dominandi* of Earth's city. In some ways, his account is reminiscent of GCA in that it calls for a renewed asceticism akin to Coakley that resists heterosexist hatred of gay bodies, and the natural idolatry that undergirds them, and which 'shrinks the dove.'

Gay celibates, then, appear as a queer alternative to Ward's suspension of sexual difference. They resist the stoical culture of this '*imperium Christianum'* by retrieving created order in the Holy Spirit through resurrection. Ward's reading of Augustine applied to the postmodern cityscape is important to the witnessing love the Church possesses beyond historicist politics. His account, however, worryingly undermines the created order and the stability of the eschatological horizon he tries to employ. GCA achieves similar ends to Ward's queering of sexual difference without undermining the ecstatic life of the Holy Trinity that affirmed and vindicated physical sexual difference in the second Adam, Jesus Christ.

4.1.3 Queer Aliens: GCA as an Alternative Queer Witness in Ward's *Cities of God*

In response to Ward's exploration of erotics and gender in the postmodern city, gay celibates, like the holy virgins of Augustine's day, are called to resist the simulacra of erotic and sexual politics, but also realise that they are exposed to the same desires and temptations of those espoused in the *civitas terrena*. However, the distinction between those belonging to the cities of God and Earth is located through a just mind and heart which loves rightly and resists the 'disorders of the nihil.'[693] By beholding the form of God's beauty, founded on a reordered bodily desire, gay celibates are able to love others thereby justly loving themselves. Loving oneself truly, then, becomes a function of how, through a renewed mind that is justly drawn by God's beauty as the *summum bonnum*, the pilgrim is able to embody an authentic erotic intimacy, which is not threatened by the *discordium malum*. In a way similar to O'Donovan's account of admiration, Ward sees this just-minded love from Augustine as the basis for a renewed erotics.

However, the role of sexual difference in that – as part of the beauty of God's creative act and its interwoven nature to our humanity as the image of God – is left to the wayside in his erotic depiction. Rather than allowing the Trinity's transcendence to sacramentally affirm sexual difference in the other's body as part of marriage, he seeks not just to queer the representation of

[692] Ibid, 229.
[693] Ibid, 236

the sexed body but discard its sacramental significant altogether. Ward forfeits beauty's justice from Augustine in his account of how the Church is called to be that community. He undermines the justice of beauty by denying its asceticism and the embodied, cosmically-grounded, eschatologically-inspired erotics of the Kingdom which resists the false politics of sex bound by a love of self or history, rather than God.

The witness of gay celibates, then, rests on how God came to affirm and restore the capacity to know our bodies. It cultivates the joy of living according to one's created nature, capable of living in an order of love through the gift of inter-relational diversity that is known in the physiological and phenomenal experience of being Christ's body, the Church. In this sense, asceticism is founded not on a stoical extirpation but a collective bodily positivity which can fill in for the Fall's anti-ecstatic lack. By entrusting our troubled bodies to God, the Fall's reoccurring and wayward trace in our bodies can be overcome sacramentally in the creature by grace's fullness thereby celebrating desire as a gift without denying its present waywardness and requisite ascetical purgation. Rather than remaining weighed down by the body's inordinacy as something completely beyond repair, the gay celibate embraces their body as the site of a greater cosmic romance with Christ that affirms and exceeds a sexual economy of desire. Heavenly *eros* re-enchants the body back into its creaturely being, thereby fending off any danger of repression. There is no pure spirit in which to Platonically escape or with which to suspend the body. Sexual difference of a noumenal or metaphorically 'suspended' kind as in Ward's picture is denied, and replaced with the fullness of resurrected *eros*.

For Augustine, the Incarnation signifies that the bodily affect is affirmed as good but also, understood as radically affected by the Fall so that the human will requires ascetical sanctification.[694] This sanctification, however, is only ever achieved by the inbreaking grace of God's love so as to stave off the semi-Pelagian desire to read the body in a piecemeal, Aristotelian way with a simple, heterosexist *telos*. Marriage can no longer be a reigning good which competes against the redemptive erotics without which celibates or LGBTQI+ people are cast aside as unnatural. Rather, marriage and its goods are affirmed but need constant relativisation from celibate and non-heterosexual pilgrims who can celebrate marriage and sexual difference as part of the sacramental weave of God's beautiful and very good creation. God must, therefore, as Wyclif asserts, give eternal goods first before we, as creatures, can delight in

[694] *DCD XIV*, 9, 599.

earthly goods well.[695] The celibate gay ascetic privileges grace first as the Holy Spirit aids in the reorientation of desire to avoid the suspension of bodily difference as well as the idolatry of its fallen representation.

For Ward, such a reclamation of *eros* is vital to the task of reimagining cities so that we do not produce nostalgic holograms of the past centuries or get caught in the counterfeit simulacra that reject God and God's love: 'Divine *eros*, the love of God, and human *eros*, the love of human beings for God possess far greater dynamics, operating across far greater domains, than just sexuality…. Since the nineteenth century…. *Eros* and sexuality have come to mean the same thing.'[696] From this undoing of the fusion of *eros* and sexuality, GCA has emerged as an erotic alternative to these atomisations of desire into *mere* sexuality.

GCA queers the postmodern city's insatiability of desire which creates parodies of love by witnessing to heavenly *eros*. This heavenly *eros* resists being made by the market and pornographic eroticism which drives commodification, to always 'sense privation or an entitled sense which demands immediate gratification.'[697] As in Coakley's new asceticism, fulfilment in the love of God through healthy sublimation or Nyssen-like rechannelling resists such commodification through an eschatological erotics, which refuses such a logic of deathly privation (*privatio boni).* As Ward says, 'Christian desire is always excessive, generous beyond what is asked. It is a desire not to consume the other, but to let the other be in the perfection they are called to grow into. It is a desire ultimately founded upon God as triune and, as triune, a community of love fore-given and given lavishly.'[698] Communities that embody an alternative to the horror of endless desire are vital. Gay celibates arise in resistance and alternative witness, recovering from the horror of these cities of endless desire and the objectification and commodification of the gay or queer body in these (post)modern cities. The Church, then, must learn from this erotic ascetics in how to embody 'alternative erotic communities; communities analogically related through desire… a theology of the city that recalls us to the cosmological…',[699] or, rather, to the created order and the joy of living as one is created as we have learnt through Augustine and O'Donovan.

As Judith Butler states in *Gender Trouble*, 'the univocity of sex, the internal coherence of gender, and the binary framework for both sex and gender are… regulatory fictions that consolidate and

[695] Wyclif, *Civil Lordship*, 511-13.
[696] *Cities*, 76.
[697] Ibid, 71.
[698] Ibid, 77.
[699] Ibid.

naturalize the convergent power regimes of masculine and heterosexist oppression.'[700] In Butler's philosophy of gender, she argues that sex is impossible to 'get to' but rather is 'performatively-enacted signification.'[701] Irigaray in some sense affirms the reality of sexual difference as an ontological category.[702] Conversely, Butler radically severs our capacity to know sexual difference other than as a performance or script to be received and acted out within bodies where 'materiality itself is constructed.'[703] Ward charts a distinctly theological way through Karl Barth's account of the *diastema* between creation and Creator; humanity created as the *imago dei* in and through sexual difference, a difference mediated by desire; and thirdly, divine kenotic and human erotic self-giving.

From these three strands, Ward seeks to textualize the human body as a metaphor to erotically free it from an anthropological dualism that pits desire against the body:

> By the dualism (between *eros* and *agape* which lies outside participation and co-operation of the created order in the divine made possible by the *analogia Christi)* Barth isolates the erotic community which, as he examines in its sociological and ecclesiological forms, develops into a *hom(m)osexual* economy. It becomes saturated with the male perspective which cannot establish the true difference he requires.[704]

In this next section, I now turn to how sexual difference is understood by Ward in these (post)modern cities, especially as a 'love which exceeds biological reproduction.'[705] This mystery is 'opened up (by) same-sex relationships… Same-sex relationships displace heterosexist symbolics, revealing a love which exceeds biological reproduction.'[706] Gay celibates seek to live out a love beyond biological reproduction which reflects the eschatological reality of resurrection without losing the sacramental meaning of sexual difference in marriage; their love not only displaces heterosexist symbolics, it relativises them altogether by undermining the false righteousness of what Patterson calls 'the Law of Adam and Eve.'[707] However, unlike Ward's suspension of sexual difference, gay celibacy does not deny the created order, its bodily erotics and the symbolic nature of sexual difference within it. We will now turn to examining Ward's view of trinitarian analogy, sexual ethics and redemptive erotics in light of GCA.

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[700] Butler, J. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 44.
[701] Ibid, 34.
[702] Irigaray, *An Ethics,* 18; 216.
[703] *Cities*, 195.
[704] Ibid, 77.
[705] Ibid, 311
[706] *Ce&C*, 154.
[707] Patterson, *Reforming*, 135-140.

4.2.0 Same-Sex Erotics and Ward's Suspension of Sexual Difference Through Trinitarian Analogy

Ward contends that there 'is no sexuality or sexual difference as such, just as there is no difference as such, only distances and affinities occurring across networks of relation' in his earlier work to affirming a kind of metaphorical or noumenal sexual difference which suspends the body and its sexually-differentiated being in *Cities of God*.[708] In these post-postmodern erotic communities ('cities of god') which are marked by an alternative economy of desire, the Church is composed of authentic communities which challenge the parodies of love that modernity produced. These communities resist a sexual politics of difference that is a-theological or emerges from a parodying heterosexism – the kind Barth himself unhelpfully espouses.[709]

As Ward states: 'the internally unstable economy of desire suggests itself here in which the self-giving, free love of *agape* makes possible the incorporation and oneness of true *eros*… the Church, then, occupies a space in which the dualism of *agape* and *eros*, kenotic and possessive desire, is deconstructed.'[710] In Barth's alleged dualism, trinitarian difference and sexual difference operate at odds with each other and Ward seeks to incorporate them through the question of analogy, 'which comes to the fore when we examine the way in which two economies of desire relate to two ontological orders; two forms of *analogia entis*, two ways of conceiving relationship-in-difference.'[711] The 'intradivine' form of God's 'three modes of being – Father, Son, Spirit – which constitutes a two-fold difference… related through a shared ontology. The second form is between male and female who share in a common ground of existing.'[712] The Church, then, is called to be a community that upholds how trinitarian difference shapes sexual or anthropological difference.

Ward resists binaries of sexual difference by trying to locate a redemptive erotics that exists in the diastema between the Trinity and creation. He also alters sexual difference to instantiate its entire redefinition: 'The Church must sanctify, then, genuine sexual difference through its liturgies – whether that sexual difference is evident between two women, two men, or a man and

[708] Ward, G. 'There Is No Sexual Difference' in *QT*, 82, Ward, G. 'The Erotics of Redemption – After Karl Barth', *Theology and Sexuality* 9 (1998): 52-72; *Cities*, 113, *C&C,* 106.
[709] *Cities*, 191.
[710] Ibid.
[711] Ibid.
[712] Ibid.

a woman.'[713] Sexual difference is suspended as a noumenal feature of the *diastema* between creation and the Trinity, regardless of the phenomenology of being man or woman, genderfucking a binary, and strangely undermining same-sex desire by requiring it to become analogically heterosexual. Rather than marriage being tethered exclusively to physical sexual difference as per Augustine's vision of the City of God, such a doctrine is discarded as mere analogical nostalgia. Sexual difference is no longer a part of the texture of God's very good creation manifested through dynamics of difference and unity of persons in their fuller make-up, which physically reflects the diversity within unity of the Triune God.[714]

This is where Ward risks falling into the historicism he sets out to avoid by being bound to the erotics of 'progress.' By rejecting past analogies, he seeks to construct an ethics of the now or future where physically-located sexual difference is discarded culturally as a false simulacrum of love. He overwrites physical reality with an erotic metaphor which opens marriage to same-sex couples. In contrast, erotics, as we have revealed from Augustine, are not just the site of a created gift but also of the Fall, where desire is untethered from the grain of the created good in the body. The desire Ward describes leads us away from right use and distorts created good and our perception of it, desiring what is contrary to it so that we discard the christological restoration and redemptive relativisation of sexual difference in the Resurrection which GCA prizes. There is a profound overlap and departure between Augustine's vision of the city of God and Ward's queer account of sexual difference as an analogy to the intra-divine difference between the trinitarian persons.

In Ward's account, marriage becomes a 'narrative of the creative interval between two bodies, maintained by the labour of loving as it moves in hope towards the eschatological coming of the Kingdom, which is redemption – personal as far as it is also ecclesial.'[715] In *DCD XXII,* Augustine argues that 'there will be both sexes in the Resurrection' and that 'a woman's sex is not a defect, it is natural.'[716] In this sense, Ward argues that Augustine saw sexuate bodies as having 'an eschatological future because they have a creational origin.'[717] Ward does not object so much to a sexually-differentiated body, but that our capacity to read these bodies and extrapolate gender is radically affected by the Fall:

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[713] Ibid, 202.
[714] O'Daly, *City of God*, 186-187.
[715] *Cities,* 202.
[716] Ibid, 203.
[717] Ibid, 205.

> The difference, the affinity, the eroticism and the sex of those involved in the actions is inseparable from speaking, from words and translations of words from one language to another… Sexual difference is not a given, a fundament, a starting-point… there is no theology of sexual difference, only the production of sexual difference in theological relation… there is no pure physiological state.[718]

There is no 'pure' body, no protology in the beginning that can be retrieved and known from the body itself, 'rather bodies become sexualised by the consciousness of being-in-relation.'[719] Relating itself 'constitutes an *eros*.'[720] Ward, however, cuts off the epistemological ground to Augustine's claim which we have explored in O'Donovan and Coakley, where we still return to the body as determinatively vindicated by the embodied Christ.

And yet, Ward does not want to undermine the existence of a physical difference entirely: 'there is the material order of things and there is what I will term the ethical order of things… I am not suggesting that the world of genetic pools and carbon compounds is divorced from the world of values and significances.'[721] In other words, what Ward wants to resist is a kind of gender-positivism which assumes 'the opacity of its objects' where 'ontology is epistemology.'[722] Gender is a purely phenomenological affair which is 'about how [the material object] gives itself to be understood.'[723] There is little sense that the Fall has meant that desire and erotics are under the sway of a particular *discordium malum*, no longer obedient to the (divine) will pulled away from living according to the tissue of the created order in sacramental participation, and thus recognising the true nature of creation and the Creator's intention within it. Sexual difference as a created limit is disregarded and the redemptive aspect of how to renew desire is lost.

In order for the creature to respond ethically to the Fall, grace must be able to restore our capacity to perceive creation as a gift laced with innate meaning and not up to our (mis)use or enjoyment-within-itself. Ward's deconstruction of the gendered optimism of a kind of natural law ethic vis-à-vis sexual difference or a 'positivism' of gender is astutely queer but it fails to incorporate the Holy Spirit's sacramental capacity to help us perceive the good of sexual difference in christological terms and, therefore, to retain its importance ethically as GCA does.

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[718] Ward, 'There is no sexual difference' in *QT*, 82.
[719] *Cities*, 83.
[720] ibid, 87.
[721] *C&C*, 155.
[722] *Cities*, 84.
[723] Ibid, 89.

The Holy Spirit works in the creature to renew our minds as we ascetically give up our bodies as living sacrifices to be re-read according to the new city for which the body has been redeemed. In this sense, the gay celibate Christian responds ascetically by denying such an idolatrous gender positivism, but also relativizes sex and marriage in celibacy lending it a dually-queer posture. This dual posture equally refuses Ward's epistemic erasure of a sexually-differentiated body and God's calling in Jesus Christ to live according to it. Such an asceticism opens up queerness to the holiness of the *civitas dei* through a more robust doctrine of creation through resurrection. It removes the epistemic quagmire for creaturely agency inasmuch as sexual difference plays a vital role in the erotics of the Church as a resistance to (post)modern parodies of love, rather than an instantiation of such parodying or counterfeiting.

Along Augustinian lines the Incarnation submits the value for procreation and sexual difference to chastity in the function of marriage – the function of marriage becomes more about its ascetical powers than merely the good of procreation *per se*. Christ's incarnation does not terminate procreation but reorients it around a new goal of spiritually populating of the *civitas dei.* Sanctified *eros* does not erase an aspect of the created order, but rather denies both the positivism of gender that can be entailed in heterosexist readings of sexual difference and the absolute denial of postmodern epistemology which thwarts any access to bodily ontology. What Ward fails, then, to see is that his own undermining of sexual difference is part of the parodying of the Church he seeks to expose.

GCA then, following Augustinian lines, lives in the liminal tension of a vindicated created order and the eschatological future. It erotically affirms the vindicated created order in marriage and yet erotically exceeds it in celibate living. GCA restores the Christian body to a place of hope-filled agency rather than a place where 'the meaning and significance of bodies is ultimately ungraspable.'[724] The power of grace helps the creature read the body as a redemptive gift. Those in the city of God are called to a liminal vocation that grants a sacramental re-infusing of the body's meaning in the Church. That vocation also has queer importance in that it can keep us from fallen readings of sexual difference which oppress women and minority populations.

What Ward terms 'biological essentialism' has, for far too long, been the obsession of the Church and the *hom(m)osexual* economy (in Irigaray's understanding of the term as male-dominated social relationality or patriarchal power), read from a modernist or neo-Aristotelian

[724] *Cities*, 84.

view of 'nature'. Our starting point should not be the body and sexual difference read off the body or 'nature' but from the ontology given to us through the Trinity: 'In contrast to the determinative biological starting point for discussing sexual difference (filtered through scriptural exegesis) of Karl Barth and Balthasar, I have offered here another place to begin – with the "operations" or economies of embodiment and relation.'[725] Ward's starting point in the Trinity, like Coakley, is deeply Augustinian, and I believe, the right way to develop the discussion of sexual difference and bodily ontology.

In Ward's account the Church as the community of redemptive erotics stands against the (hyper-/post-modern) *civitas terrena* by resisting modernist simulacra of sexual difference. By appealing to Butler's deconstruction of gender through language he suggests a different 'ontology' of sexual difference where:

> 'male and female'… are, in their gendered performances, inscribed within a temporality, a social context and an historical movement which causes the 'meaning' attached to those nouns to exceed their biological definitions. 'Male' and 'female', because they are identified in and through language, are caught up in wider fields of sanctification than simply the anatomical.[726]

Ward baptises sexual difference into a gender deconstructionism, reifying its meaning toward an unstable ontology which can never recover from the epistemic Fall, diagnosed by Butler in an endless bodily performance written onto the world. The true self is located internally rather than a gift as we are renewed on our pilgrimage in Christ.

The way forward for Ward from Butler is, then, through understanding performance as ritual, baptising her representational account of sexual difference and gender through his account of trinitarian erotics. By interpreting sexual difference in a radically eschatological way, he redefines male and female as a noumenal metaphor: 'two differentiated positions within a divinely ordered sociality that signify partnership, covenant, fellowship, and helpmates.'[727] Ward implores the Church to flee the modernist objectification of creation – its Augustinian misuse – if you like – by sanctifying difference in all relationships that seek reordering according to God's love, whether between two women, two men, or a man and a woman. For Ward, then, gay marriage is right at the heart of re-baptising this noumenal account of sexual difference into the erotic

[725] Ward, *'There is…'* in *QT*, 84.
[726] *Cities,* 196
[727] Ibid.

economy of the Church as a eucharistic site of resistance to hypermodern parodies of desire and love.

Instead of basing sexual difference in the tissue of male and female bodies, he sees it as an interpersonal dynamic that is suspended above the phenomenologically-mysterious body. There is no account of how God's Word from above renews the body and reveals its mystery, counteracting erasure of bodily sex. Instead, Ward leaves the physical world that God has created and the incarnate Word's re-sacramentalisation of our bodies and their meaning aside to produce a mysteriously metaphysical account of difference-within-relation, which comes worryingly close to collapsing the creature-creator divide. Ward, therefore, does a kind of kenotic violence to the order of creation to make an erotic space for all bodies that desire each other in mutuality, rewriting sexual difference as an 'interval of desire…' that 'participates analogically in trinitarian difference which enables the suspension of all that is and becomes in this world within the perfection of God's own transcendent being.'[728] Sexual difference as a physical limit and as morally-freighted is suspended into a noumenal metaphor, and Ward's account covers over the queer bodies of gay celibates and their desire to live in the joy of one's created nature.

4.2.1 Critical Lacunae in Ward's Erotics of Redemption

However, when gay celibates enter Ward's scene various lacunae may be identified in his account of redemptive erotics. By their queer or alien pilgrim witness delineated in chapter 1, they help to identify an idolatry of sexual difference and marriage. The idolatry, however, is double-edged – two paths emerge, where, in order to resist heterosexism or the complete loss of sexual difference, the gay Christian is tempted to wrongfully extirpate their desires entirely or to follow their desire toward gay marriage. Both, however, are false choices. As we observed in O'Donovan and Coakley's asceticism, the Christian is called to undo such false choices.

The answer to a fallen economy of erotics, then, is Jesus' own celibately ascetical, erotic life which gay celibacy seeks to intimately imitate. For Augustine, the physiological grain of creation matters in Eden as one of the only patristic fathers to affirm sex and sexual difference in the prelapsarian garden. Sexual difference and sex are christologically woven into the very good creation of God, male and female, in the beginning. They are relativised as a type, and now

[728] Ibid, 202.

longer a law, to tell the greater mystery of marriage between the Church and God, husband and wife, as a cruciform resistance to fallen erotics.

However, Augustine's protological affirmation does not mean that the modernist parodies and misuses of marriage and (physical) sexual difference identified and diagnosed by Ward are not to be resisted by the Church (i.e. heterosexism which oppresses queer or LGBTQI+ bodies).[729] Gay celibates reveal another route to fulfil much of Ward's critique of modernity's obsession with heterosexist politics, or natural law accounts which insufficiently diagnose the effect of the Fall on bodily and created realities and the gift of queer bodies which upend a fallen ideologizing of sexual difference. He even specifies that we should have a hermeneutic of suspicion toward how he has constructed his own Augustine:

> But we are not asking Augustine's questions in Augustine's context and, furthermore, following a line of inquiry opened by the hermeneutics of suspicion, we have to question whether the 'Augustine' we have examined, quoted and critiqued is not a production of my own. Mine is not the Augustine who advocated orthodoxy by coercion or who wishes to extol sexual continence as a higher erotic way, for example… mine is not the Augustine of Christian polemics.[730]

Ward graciously, therefore, leaves his own account open to being queered. What the gay celibate, then, may help Ward to see is the potential pitfall to which he exposes the doctrine of creation; and the compromise to which he exposes resistance to the modernist simulacra of intimacy and love which produce the very false representations of the (sexually-differentiated) human body he seeks to dismantle. What his account falls back into is the Butlerian hopelessness without a sacramental way forward. The resurrection of Jesus' body and the plenitude of resurrection hope motivates a new asceticism as creation is re-sacramentalised by its redeeming Creator. On the other hand, GCA consists in a resistance to another kind of dualism or Manicheanism to which Ward's account is dangerously open – the entire erasure of sexual difference in *eros* – where the body is torn from the erotic entirely; a Platonic dualism which Judith Butler aims to avoid and which tears body from spirit, phenomenological from noumenal, and language from being.

Rather than maintaining a new epistemic access to righteous living through Jesus Christ which resists modernity's misuse of created goods, Ward drives a quasi-dualistic, hyper-Kantian split

[729] *Cities*, 125, 182, 200.
[730] Ibid, 202.

into the very doctrine of the Trinity in order to disturb and queer not just postlapsarian representations of gender but physical sexual difference itself. The issue, however, is that in order for same-sex desire to be understood, as Ward seeks, so also, sexual difference must be upheld not just noumenally but also physically. As Tonstad states:

> in the non-bounded and non-bodied trinitarian relations, where persons are relational all the way down, space-making, wounding and self-emptying language verges on the mythological. It denies just what trinitarian relationality allows: intimacy without distance, differentiation without fracture, difference without competitive multiplicity, and gratuity without sacrifice or suffering. If instead the Father's penetration of the Son entails the eternal sacrifice of the Son… then God indeed holds nothing back in God's love for God's creation… There can be no eschatological end to suffering in such an account, for God's *ousia* is not then infinitely plenitudinous; divine difference too is a threat that can only be met by self-sacrifice.[731]

By trying to project human sacrifice and asceticism into the Trinity and splitting the noumenal from the phenomenal, Ward constructs a social Trinity that is also confusingly non-transcendent, collapsed to contingent, human *eros*. As Tonstad states, 'a laudable commitment not to go behind God's self-revelation on the cross, has, *via* an entanglement of desire, difference and bodied existence, erected a cross in the very heart of the Trinity.'[732] By saying that we are called to image the internal dynamics of the Trinity, Ward sections off sexual difference into the noumenal realm so that it has very little to do with the body or the ontology we struggle to access due the Fall's gendered counterfeits. Human relationships float free from the body, secured in a transcendent and disembodied spirit, rather than in God who, as in O'Donovan, became human and vindicated, restored, and transformed the creation through resurrection.

Instead of appealing to the evangelical relativisation of procreation and sexual difference in the Incarnation which opens up celibate ascesis and non-sexual erotics in the Church, Ward strays into territory which casts the body into a noumenal space where sexual difference is read as if a text with an erased bodily origin. Sex is understood as an act of interpretation rather than received as a gift of created difference and grace in the body allowing us to participate sacramentally in sexual goods. Ward does not mention that Jesus Christ's sexed body was raised from the dead, nor the direct link between the mystery of the union of the Church and Christ

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[731] *G&D*, 85
[732] Ibid, 86

which the creation of sex difference was established to reflect. Resurrection appears within the cruciform erotic body calling desire to live within the transformative fullness and terms of the created order. The body is not left on the cross in erotic death. Marriage, then, as a physically-differentiated good, cannot be cast into a non-physical noumenal space without throwing the Church itself into that space thereby falling into the Manichean dualism Ward seeks to avoid.[733]

For Ward, the body is *transcorporeal* – it does not 'dissolve or ab-solve, it expands *en Christo*…. Transcorporeality is an effect of following in the wake of the eternal creative [transfiguring] Word... the body accepts its own metaphorical nature – in so far as it is received and understood only in and through language. Only God understands creation literally.'[734] What Ward seeks, then, is to suspend the body as epistemically unavailable to us in order to provide comfort amidst the suffering difference of gay embodiment for the gay couple. He makes this concrete by focussing on a particular gay couple, Jon and David (i.e. as he stipulates Jon's bereavement and David's brokenness with AIDS).[735] Rather than giving an account of the theodicean wrestle that gay people face, Ward jumps forward to understand the body (of Christ) as trans-corporeal rather than peregrine. Metaphors should enable us to read the significance of creation in a clearer way so we can act as creatures. Ward risks instilling a contradiction between the Creator's intention in fashioning sex difference and the Redeemer's desire to undo it. What the Creator intends by creating male and female is totally lost in Ward's concern about the performativity of gender and erotic intimacy. Coakley, unlike Ward, prevents this issue by seeing the body as labile, rather than noumenally suspended, in a way that gay celibates corroborate.

The transcorporeal (body of) Christ also becomes suspended or is rendered dualistic. By denying sexual difference and its known ontology in God, he denies the human need for epistemic renewal within our bodies. Instead, we are led away from creation's ontic structure in order to resist heterosexism undermining desire's relationship to our created humanity. As Ward states:

> We need to explore the economy of that loving which incarnates the very logic of sacrifice (which is also a giving-up, kenosis) as the endless giving and the endless reception…. The suffering and sacrifice which born of and born by passion is the very risk and labour of love; a love which is profoundly erotic and, to employ a queer theory term, gender-fucking. It is a suffering engendered by and vouchsafing difference; first

[733] *Cities*, 31.
[734] Ibid, 95
[735] *C&C*, 264.

> trinitarian difference, subsequently, ontological difference between the uncreated Godhead and creation, and finally sexual difference as that which pertains most closely to human embodiment. But here is not the valorisation of difference as such, only difference in relation to the oneness of God… For the suffering and the sacrifice participate in the redemptive process; they are moments in what is finally a doxological movement… the primordial suffering is the suffering of loving and being loved.[736]

Commenting on Ward's vision, Tonstad contends that God is dangerously close to a human projection of suffering love where God is by nature passible and suffering love.[737] However, this provides little room for a final redemption of suffering so that love can fill all in all, and creation can be restored from its groaning toward the future.

Through receptivity, vulnerability, and interdependence we are stuck in an anthropomorphised *eros* which is yet to be sanctified by the Resurrection or touched by God's rightly ordered *eros* in *agape*. The fragmented nature of human *eros* after the Fall is not called to a cross where one is called to give up the initial state of one's desire for its transformation. Rather than recommending a grace-driven ascetical theology of embodiment as per Augustine, which helps the groaning creation to give up its misaimed desires and the 'genital' loss of control, God is baptised into the post-postmodern world of fragmentation, vulnerability, and endless suffering 'love'. There is little to no account of how desire has been disturbed by sin other than to stave off a past historicism that idolatrously clings to past analogies. The ethical is left open to a historicism of the future and the present with little critical corrective through the Spirit. The same epistemic critique Ward gives to past analogies needs to be applied to present ones now in the Spirit.

For Ward, difference and distinction require wounds within us like Jesus.[738] I contend that gender-fucking, if it is done to created ontologies, rather than to fallen simulacra of intimacy and gender can generate a form of (sinful) epistemological violence toward created sexual difference. Ward's deconstruction of gender and sex, then, is open to a Pelagian pitfall. The self is left to correct its epistemic issue with physical sexual difference rather than letting the Spirit through grace do the work of relativizing idols of gender and sex like Coakley and O'Donovan. The Spirit is the one who moves us toward a fullness-driven asceticism like GCA, which undermines

[736] *C&C,* 262-263.
[737] *C&C*, 260; *G&D*, 82.
[738] Ibid, (*C&C*).

natural idolatries of sex from the plenitude of the body's redeemed and transformed future in Christ. Instead, Ward wants us to remain fissured by the Fall and in the 'lack of foundations within oneself which requires and enables the reception of divine plenitude,' denying the sacramental restoration of the body which GCA prizes.[739]

Pastorally, if we were to apply Ward's view of sexual difference, we would end up with heterosexual marriages that cease to be marriages – if the two partners see themselves as noumenally the same-sex (i.e. a wife and husband feel that they perform in the noumenal realm of sexual difference as male and male or female and female) then their marriage would be void. This would produce many issues for the Church pastorally if it were to move forensically through all its relationships searching for a noumenal sexual difference which is difficult to epistemically verify outside of an inner subjectivism or phenomenological sense of 'mystery'. Ward's queering of sexual difference dissects the body as objectively known and held by God from the subjective reality of the Church as Christ's body, untethering it and bringing it only into noumenal or metaphysical existence. Gay marriage in the noumenal, erotic sense would be wrong, too. Two same-sex partners would need to be 'noumenally' heterosexual (i.e. one functioning as noumenally sexually differentiated to uphold sexual difference), denying homosexual erotics.

Ward's account, then, does not get us to where he wants us to go and leaves the LGBTQI+ community in a deconstructed space out of which it feels difficult to reconstruct anything but where postlapsarian human desire leads. Ascetic witness and sacrificial exclusion from a created good in O'Donovan's sense is not valued as integral to desire's renewal in the love of God. Gay marriage is still sublimated to a heterosexual erotics where a same-sex couple must be heterosexual in a noumenal or analogical sense. There is no mention of the gay celibate or other Christians like holy virgins who seek an alternative erotics to the *civitas terrena*. As Ward states, 'attraction arises still in difference, in opposition, through alterity. There is no desire without difference.'[740] The *eschaton* almost becomes a projection of postlapsarian erotics of difference rather than embracing the inclusion the Resurrection proffers through cruciform exclusion of certain goods. Sexual difference still exists, only as a non-physiological *analogical* reality – a kind of ghost in the machine of sexually-differentiated and ambiguously queer bodies – where little transcendent hope is provided in the future for either.

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[739] *Cities*, 172.
[740] Ibid, 200.

Redemption is a disembodied memory of a heterosexual past that no longer is or ever really can be. A kind of erotic concession is made to live everything out now, a kind of over-realised eschatology of bodily *eros*. Sexual difference is erased so it can be reinvented as entirely noumenal, rather than a created good that exists in eschatological tension vindicating the created good of the body and yet pulling the city of God forward to the body's resurrection and transformation. The *civitas dei*, then, for Ward becomes a non-physical city – a kind of metaphorically-suspended erotic economy which collapses the physical into (trans-corporeal, Hegelian) spirit, and the divine into the human. The city loses its physically-tethered and transcendentally-enchanted reality of sharing the love of Christ by the Holy Spirit in humanly-distinct and yet similar bodies.

The Creator-Redeemer pulls the creation into the greater reality of redemptive *eros* that is sanctified by the sacrifice and self-denial of the cross and the fullness and fecundity of the resurrection-life of Jesus as the centre of the Church's being. Gay celibates embrace an *eros* that honours sexual difference, perceiving the eschatological reality it is being pulled into in Christ. In such a way, GCA moves us beyond *hom(m)osexuality* into divine participation. Such a theology of desire queers Ward's schema in a bodily way, facing gendered counterfeits but without suspending sexual difference into the *diastema* of the Trinity. At this point GCA represents a different anthropological response to the *diastema* between creation and Creator by retaining the sacramental meaning of sexual difference in marriage within creation through O'Donovan's eschatology.

GCA's witness awakens the memory of the body, enchanted by grace and pulled forward into the future by resurrection grace. Sexual difference is retained as anthropological and contingent, relativised but vindicated in the corporeal resurrection of Jesus Christ. Marriage is exposed as a sign, rather than the thing signified itself, which lends the alterity of sexual difference as a site of reflection back to the intra-divine alterity of the Trinity. If there is no necessary bodily alterity in the original sign of marriage, then, the alterity of God and humanity is no longer signified. Ward's account diagnoses the problems of sexual signification in marriage and yet meets these problems with a solution that reduces marriage to a non-physical form of difference in an erotic I-Thou relation.

The *citivas dei* is not meant to be bifurcated in Augustine's vision from human bodily contingency. This is clearly demonstrated by his account of emotions and affect as part of our good creaturely life through the Incarnation.[741] While Ward has diagnosed many of the effects of modernist counterfeits or parodies of the Church in the city-scape, they remain slanted toward one side of time – present or future reality – rather than to God as the transcendent, Creator-Redeemer who vindicates original creation and helps us receive its renewed meaning through God's erotic presence with us in the Spirit. The gay celibate witness prioritises the Spirit, resisting how the LGBTQI+ community's queerness has been hijacked by the politics of marriage (opposite or same-sex) in the (post)modern cities. As Tonstad contends: 'queer theology is not about apologetics, or at least it should not be about (the) apologetics (of marriage).'[742] Ward's account leads us in some way to an apologetic for (gay) marriage, which loses its queerness, and capacity to undo an idolatry of sex and marriage which covers over the queerness of gay celibates.

The queer celibate pilgrim community does not, then, appear as one apologetic device to affirm heterosexism. Instead, as a part of the mixed body of the city of God, they queer the apologetics of queer theology and the heterosexism it seeks to dismantle. GCA takes Ward's account of redemptive erotics further in that it goes beyond sexual difference by seeking to practice love which radically exceeds contingent marriage in friendship or heavenly *eros* now. GCA is a kind of erotic martyrdom which resists pitting celibacy against marriage. GCA, in its martyr-like stance, has helped to reveal these lacunae in Ward's thought and more generally in Anglican moral and pastoral theology, which has perhaps sought to 'make its home' too easily in the present, or in past analogy as Ward contends. As Augustine asserts: 'it is from the likeness of things up there that all the different kinds of things in this lower creation were made, even though the likeness is a very remote one.'[743] To be queerly celibate is to relativize creation towards the greater reality 'up there' in the future all the while remaining sacramentally faithful to the body's vindication in Jesus' resurrection. GCA lives into Augustine's vision of the city which apocalyptically relativizes created goods in a way that achieves Ward's aims of resistance to modernist counterfeits of intimacy and difference without undermining sex difference as an important component of creation-based ethics.

[741] *DCD XIV*, ix, 596.
[742] *QT*, 27.
[743] *DCD XII*. ii, 500.

4.2.2 Marriage and its Goods: GCA as a Third Way Through Ward and Song's Same-Sex Erotics

I will now turn to briefly comparing Robert Song's Anglican *apologia* for same-sex relationships, *Covenant and Calling (CC)* and the constructive strengths and lacunae in Ward we have outlined. Song defines marriage as necessarily sexually-differentiated because of its unique telic purposiveness in procreation.[744] Song understands same-sex partnership as a possible eschatological charism which prizes new covenant fruitfulness beyond procreation similarly to childless married couples.[745] Song, unlike Ward, asserts that 'male-female sexual differentiation is indeed justified within marriage, but it is only justified because marriage in creation is oriented to procreation.'[746] The notion that sexual difference needs to be 'justified' echoes Ward's critique of sexual difference, but unlike Ward, Song saves sexual difference from entire erasure by arguing that procreation is essential to marriage. Where Ward suspends sexual difference through analogy to save it from natural idolatry, Song relativizes it eschatologically making way for the moral affirmation of same-sex unions.

Song incisively argues, however, that procreation is not eschatologically necessary for Christians in a way reminiscent of GCA. Song differs, conversely, by taking the eschatological relativisation of procreation further by arguing that there is no reason that covenant partnerships, which are non-procreative, 'should be heterosexual.'[747] I argue that Song overdetermines procreation within the ontology of marriage thereby leaving out the vital importance of marriage both as a *remedium concupiscentiae*, and an essential sacramental sign, which has essential theological significance in the worship of God. He omits exploring how such a notion is central not just to moral theology in the Christian tradition but also crucial to the shape of how the Gospel is eschatologically figured into creation.

Song does not examine the difference between heterosexual and same-sex desire nor the Augustinian account of the troubled postlapsarian body. Unlike Ward, he underdetermines Fall's effects on our present embodied state and risks subverting the eschatological *eros,* beyond and yet signified by marriage. He does not consider how the signified has to correspond to the rightly-structured sign. He fails to explain why sexual activity is necessary for this non-procreative same-

[744] *CC*, 23.
[745] Ibid, 88.
[746] *CC,* 58.
[747] Ibid, 48-50.

sex union or how same-sex sexual expression does not violate the created order.[748] Song also fails to mention the notion of sexual difference being an integral part of God's created order and intent except inasmuch as it serves the purpose of procreation. Furthermore, he does not mention the complications of embodied life entailed in postlapsarian creation and the queerness that emerges from the gay body in its different instantiation of the *discordium malum*.

Additionally, Song does not touch on the harder question of the way same-sex desire can be transformed including how, if at all, a same-sex union can participate in the created order of God, which is the foundation of resurrection eschatology.[749] His lack of consideration of same-sex desire's misalignment, then, risks producing an over-realised eschatology where bodily trouble is removed rather than sacramentally drawn by Christ's body into a faithful asceticism as per Coakley and O'Donovan. He imagines the future as an innately sexual, rather than celestially erotic or desirous state where sex difference is vindicated, restored, and transformed. Song instead imagines sexually-active same-sex partnerships without Christ's vindication and transformation of the created order. Such an approach, however, would require sex to be part of the eschaton and would have to undermine the vindication of created order that O'Donovan maintains now.

GCA, then, provides an alternative understanding of how to resolve the problem of same-sex desire that avoids such pitfalls by focussing on how desire functions in the created order. This also includes wrestling with the troubled body postlapsus retaining continuity with Augustine's theology of holy virginity and desire. Ironically, a reading like Song's lacks the mark of a queerer reading of the body. He does not seek to retrieve a protological basis for sexuality through resurrection, pitting creation against eschatology. He instead looks toward the body's present vindication as radically affirmed:

> Sex BC is not the same as sex AD. Before Christ, marriage as a good of creation was inseparable from procreation; but after Christ, while marriage and procreation do not stop being goods, we are also directed to a future resurrection life in which marriage and procreation will be no more. The vocation of celibacy is the first sign of this resurrection life, witnessing as it does to a time when God will be known as the fulfilment of our

[748] Ibid, 35.
[749] Trettel, A. 'Sex, After Christ'*, The Expository Times* 126, no. 6 (2005): 282.

> desires. The question is whether this 'time between the times' in which we live, between Christ's resurrection and his return in glory, also admits… another calling.[750]

This calling for Song is the third option of a gay partnership which is eschatologically-oriented and could be sexually expressed due to eschatological relativisation of sexual difference and procreation. However, such relativisation tends toward sexual erasure where sexual difference is reduced to part of the procreative rather than sacramental good. Fascinatingly we see two important strands that GCA attempts to bring together again without losing one or the other: i) the sacramental good of sexual difference; and ii) procreation as essential to marriage. GCA shows a way through the impasse of Ward or Song, who require the overriding of one of the goods of marriage for the sake of the other. GCA instead maintains both the *sacramentum* of sexual difference and the good of procreation as essential elements of legitimate erotically-sexual expression in marriage.

Song identifies the eschatological hinge on which GCA also builds itself without account for how the eschatological is partially continuous with and founded on the created order. In this sense, Song's model of a same-sex union pits eschatology against the sacramental nature of creation, rather than seeing them as intertwined and interdependent realities. Song risks instilling a contradiction between God's identity as Creator and God as Redeemer. What the Creator intends is not what the Redeemer incorporates. Ward's account has called us to *queer* sexual difference so as to free it from the parodies of redeemed *eros* modernity has offered us. Ward calls us to face the body's trouble, which Augustine points to in *City of God*.[751]

Ward and queer theology's diagnosis of the Fall, then, is vital to understanding GCA not as an oppressive deontic duty foisted on the gay population, but rather a fully-fledged Augustinian asceticism of love. A *felix-culpa* for the gay disciple is opened up which takes both the particularities and universal theodicean and ethical elements of the bodily wrestle with inordinate desire seriously. A spiritual fecundity in the gay body's celibacy *queers* heterosexual '*hom(m)osexuality'* in Ward's terms.[752] The gay celibate, then, reinterprets the body through the Holy Spirit's power to deny the oppression that simple binary relations of gender have caused:

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[750] *CC*, x.
[751] *DCD XIV,* xiii, 608-609; xi, 603-607.
[752] *Cities,* 198.

> The gay person lives a life dominated by the shame and knowledge of an illegitimate life. This illegitimacy is reinforced by exclusion from natural processes that characterised their own family. Eribon refers to the loss of a heterosexual lifestyle as melancholy—an endless sadness "of the loss homosexuality causes homosexuals." The gay person's sexuality disqualifies them from participating in a life that is "normal," which Eribon identifies as mostly bound to the notion of the natural family.[753]

GCA identifies lacunae in Anglican moral and pastoral theology through an undoing of the bounds of 'natural family.' The first is toward O'Donovan, who too easily connects the postlapsarian body to inhabiting the created order. The second is the need for a robustly evangelical account of creation, fall, and redemption like O'Donovan's but that takes desire seriously, in Coakley's way, all the way down by wrestling with the cosmic order, the trouble of the body, and the reordering power of grace.

In line with Daniel Patterson, the gay celibate seeks to move beyond the 'Law of Adam and Eve' which has no power to redeem or take the theodicean position of the gay person into account.[754] Like in Ward's attempt to save sexual difference from physiological idolatry, the originary scene of Adam and Eve is no longer available to us. However, like Song who retains procreation, Christ affirms and yet relativizes the importance of sexual difference. Christ, then, is able to embrace the gay erotic body in his incarnate, cruciform, and resurrected life thereby incorporating gay Christian celibates into his sacramental mission to renew and recreate the troubled body in resurrection. Queer humanity is set free from the 'idol' and law of Adam and Eve in unsanctified *eros* toward the eschatological human being Jesus Christ who sacramentally restores sexual difference and its right use in marriage.

This relativisation protects from natural idolatry without erasing natural law or created order altogether (especially as christologically regained by resurrection). The rupture between Christ's own celibacy and the sublimation of celibacy in the Church's own erotic vocation is quasi-docetic in that it undermines the *enhypostatic* relationship between Christ's very human life and our own. Christ is seen as God and his celibacy is barely related to our human lives. Gay celibacy points to the need for a deeper erotic renewal that provides gay disciples with a clear and pastorally-empathic path in which to aim desire in peregrination toward Christ.

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[753] Patterson, 'A theological', 114; Didier, E. *Insult and the Making of the Gay Self* trans. Lucey (Durham NC, DUP: 2004), 37.
[754] Ibid, 169.

An Anglican ethics of desire which is robustly Hookerian must emerge from our participation in the divine life which vindicates, restores, and transforms the created world confirmed in scripture. O'Donovan accounts for such an orderedness in relation to creaturely agency: 'Creation forges a link between reality and moral existence in a world fitted to agency. The experience of being acted on is accompanied by that of being made active. Normative representations of the good, as ideals, laws, goals etc., are derived from our sense of the good as a gift.'[755] The disappearance, then, of how the good gift of being created is an element that needs renewal in Anglican pastoral theology and ethics. Through our discussion of Ward and Song, we have shown how gay celibates represent a compelling alternative to their counterproposals by correcting the natural idolatries they diagnose while upholding the doctrine of the created order's restoration, which Coakley and O'Donovan safeguard. In sum, GCA represents a queerer theodicean engagement with same-sex desire and its relationship to creation through the authorities of scripture, reason, and tradition.

4.3 Conclusion: 'Like the Angels': The Gay Body and Ward's Erotics of Redemption

In this chapter, I have outlined an alternative route forward which critically develops Ward's account of erotics in the city of God by appealing to a thicker doctrine of creation native to Augustine through GCA reflected in Coakley and O'Donovan. I examined how Ward's suspension of sexual difference into a noumenal reality in the *diastema* of the Trinity, no longer tethered to the physical body, is not necessary to identify and resist modernist idolatries, and counterfeits of gender and sex, particularly the fallen parodies of redeemed erotics espoused in the modernist city. I argued that Ward's queering of sexual difference undermines hope for the gay body by keeping it locked in a queer hopelessness because sexual difference must be produced as a relational, erotic quality rather than a gift of grace innate to the created body. Sexual difference must be *achieved* in erotic relation in a worrying way which undoes the physical in order to reach a metaphysical participation in the Trinity, rather than *eros* being a gift which is part of the body's grace given by God in creating sexually-differentiated humanity. GCA reveals how Song's affirming view of gay unions underdetermines or even undermines sexual difference as part of the *sacramentum* of marriage as well as the pitfall of inserting sex within the *escaton*. In the next chapter, I explore how GCA's witness elucidated from our consideration of Coakley and O'Donovan's asceticism challenges elements of queer theory and theology. To this end, I

[755] O'Donovan, O. Gifford Lecture 1, 'The Missing Object', *University of St Andrews* accessed 24 November, 2021: youtu.be/WYAjEpKIEWA

will now turn to showing how GCA helps to restore theological epistemology vis-à-vis creation, sexual difference, and the created order by appeal to the participable order of desire and the laws of reason and nature in Richard Hooker's *Lawes*.

CHAPTER FIVE: QUEERING THE QUEER THROUGH DIVINE REASON AND ORDER IN HOOKER

5.0 Introduction

In *LLF*'s prologue, Archbishop Justin Welby directly references the renaissance reformer Richard Hooker and the theological methodology developed from his works: 'this is an Anglican method of theological reflection, based around Richard Hooker's pattern of scripture, reason, and tradition: scripture read together in the wide and long life of the Church, with all the skills that God has given to us.'[756] Hooker explores the relationship of desire with divine and human reason by bridging the realms of nature and divinity through a christological reading of scripture akin to that of the patristic deposit and the magisterial reformers.[757]From this foundation in Hooker, I argue that i) GCA works through the laws of reason and nature, and the participable order of desire which bridge the eternal (angelic) and natural (human) orders of God through Christ; ii) contemporary approaches to sexuality are best informed by scripture as the authority which tests our knowledge of the law of nature in the trinitarian manner outlined in *Lawes*; and iii) my account of GCA honours Hooker's epistemology of laws by holding same-sex desire up to the light of scripture, reason, tradition, and the Spirit's angelic enflaming of desire.[758] According to Welby, Hooker provides a theological basis for seeking certain innovations to scripture and tradition as the Church of England examines its position. Any innovations must make light of 'the mistakes of the past', as well as resist 'simply reproducing models from secular society.'[759]To conclude this thesis, I draw out the Hookerian elements that undergird my account of GCA in light of Welby's foreword and in response to *LLF*. I posit GCA as one model of resisting secular society as an Anglican innovation or *via media* drawn from the renewed [Augustinian] orthodoxy I have outlined in our engagement with Augustine, Coakley, Ward, and O'Donovan.

5.1.0 A Hookerian Call to Queerness Through Scripture: 'Angelical' Holiness and the 'Participative' Intelligibility of Creation in *Lawes*

[756] *LLF*, ix.
[757] Kirby-Torrance. W. J. 'Richard Hooker's Theory of Natural Law in the Context of Reformation Theology', *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 30, no. 3 (1999): 681-703.
[758] Atkinson, N. *Richard Hooker and the Authority of Scripture, Tradition and Reason* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2005), 129; Joyce, *Theology*, 41; Dominiak, 'The Logic…', 39; *Lawes* I.2.2; 1:59.5.
[759] *LLF*, vii.

Hooker sought to emphasise 'the differing use of reason depending on whether it was being employed in the *regnum mundi* or the *regnum Christi*.'[760] For Hooker, 'supernatural lawes' could not be detected in a 'natural way.'[761] In the divine realm, reason is powerless to discover 'what we should doe that we may attain life everlasting.'[762] Reason is important when it comes to the *saeculum* or the realm 'civilly associated' but does not save.[763] Indeed, all orders of existence beyond even the human or natural ones are to be known through grace and participation in God's nature because of the Fall's effects on reason and desire. We can draw from Hooker that an asceticism within the creature is required to know God's will, conform human will, and test desires following Christ's example in Gethsemane. Reason, desire, and nature are three epistemic aspects of knowing God's will and how to faithfully order the Church.

A rich evangelical argument related to Augustine's theology of desire is not just at the heart of Hooker's move but also identifies what the Church is missing in its discussion of gay asceticism as we will explore in *LLF* at the chapter's end. Hooker's utilisation of reason is wholly continuous with an explicitly reformed catholic view and the normal course of contemporary Anglicanism, especially its relationship to scriptural authority.[764] A retrieval of Hooker's distinct synthesis of reason and desire through a christological reading of scripture in the worship and moral life of the Church is key to resource the faithful asceticism of not just gay people, but the catholic body of the Church. Hooker provides a rich snapshot into how the laws of reason and nature are called to correlate with God's trinitarian nature through the participable order of desire. In regard to *LLF*, I will argue that the ascetical wrestle of gay Christians can be well-framed by Hooker's doctrine of participation and the criterion he uses to test and safeguard participation from the disorder or lawlessness his attackers often feared through the interdependence of reason and desire.[765] The integral element to GCA that Hooker contributes is the authority of law and its mediation to us in reason and transformation through desiring God. I will constructively apply his insights regarding the adjudication of same-sex desire toward excellent use of created goods through angelical holiness.

To begin, I now examine how Hooker's *Lawes* concerns a defence of the practices and polity of the Church of England in scriptural terms against puritan critique, and how his thought, in ways

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[760] Ibid, 131.
[761] *Lawes,* I,3 ix.
[762] Kirby-Torrance, '*Richard…'*, 132.
[763] Ibid, 131.
[764] 'Richard Hooker's…', 691.
[765] *Cf.* Cartwright *Replie* and *Second Replie* in which Hooker is challenged regarding the human will in *Lawes*.

that echo GCA, can inform the Church's current conversation, and elucidate the given account of GCA.[766] A return to divine reason and law at the heart of Anglicanism, which helped Hooker find a *via media* beyond the wars of religion, is essential for the conversation after *LLF* to be robustly Hookerian and therefore, definitively Anglican. The theological anthropology put forward by Hooker in his defence represents a distinctly Anglican treatment of the interaction between desire and nature, and the struggle of human beings to rightly use the created order after the Fall. Hooker describes his impetus for discussing reason as:

> Declaring therein what lawe is, how different kindes of lawes there are, and what for they are of according unto each kind. This done, because ye suppose which ye strive; and upon this surmise are drawen to hold it as the very maine pillar of your whole cause, that scripture ought to be the only rule of all our actions.[767]

For Hooker, scripture is the main and ultimate, but not sole authority. Scripture and its truths are mediated through reason and tradition, quelling the attacks of certain Puritan objectors who sought a reductive doctrine of *sola scriptura*.[768] He seeks to invoke the laws of reason and nature as essential authorities in the process of defending church polity but also guiding fallen human desires.

To begin, I briefly outline Hooker's legal ontology and the relationship between the laws of reason and nature which pertain to human life, obedience, and desire and connect humanity to the divine order through angelical participation in God's triune nature. These conceptualities will help to frame our final thoughts about the role of desire and GCA. In book 1 of *Lawes,* Hooker begins with the divine law, which belongs to the unknowable order which only God knows and which God never breaks. He defines his law-based ontology beginning with the highest good in the divine order or good or 'eternal law': 'the booke of this law we are neither able nor worthie to open and looke into.'[769] Next is the law of nature or the law 'which natural agents have given them to observe, and their necessary manner of keeping it.'[770] Hooker clearly believes in an order that creatures are called to participate in righteously: 'I am not ignorant that by law eternall the learned for most part do understand the order, not which God hath eternallie purposed himself in all his works to observe, but rather that which with himself he hath set downe as expedient to

[766] O'Donovan, L. J. *Theology of Law and Authority in the English Reformation* (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1993), 145.
[767] *Lawes* I:34-35:30-33.
[768] O'Donovan, *Theology,* 137.
[769] Ibid, I:62:10-11.
[770] Ibid, I:63:4-5.

be kept by all his creatures, according to the severall conditions wherewith he hath indued them.'[771]

Out of God's greater eternal order emerges a created order that is integral to true participation in grace and righteous living before God. As Hooker states:

> That part of it which Angels do clearly behold, and without any swarving observe is a law coelestiall and heavenely: the law of reason that which bindeth creatures reasonable in this world, and with which by reason they may most plainly perceive themselves bound; that which bindeth them is not knowen but by speciall revelation from God, divine law; humane law that which out of the law either reason or of God, men probablie gathering to be expedient, they make it a lawe.[772]

The created order provides a natural law marked rationally in the world as a gift. Hooker goes so far as to pose this question: 'See we not plainly that the obedience of creatures unto the lawe of nature is the stay of the whole world?'[773] He seeks to explicate how the laws of reason and nature, and angelical order of desire mirror the unknowable divine law or order 'written in the bosome of God himselfe… [whereby] nature therefore is nothing else but God's instrument. Beyond the Angelicall lawes which belong both to nature and eternal reality is the law whereby man is in his actions directed to the imitation of God.'[774]

5.1.1 Reading Hooker's *Lawes*: Navigating Desire, Natural Order, Reason, and Law

In his initial classification in Book 1 of the *Lawes*, Hooker makes an unusual distinction between 'natures law' or the 'law of nature' and 'law of reason'.[775] He postulates that the two former terms are commonly used to 'designate that law which orders the activities of 'each created thing'; it thus includes the laws that govern the move of the planets as much as the moral codes of human conduct.'[776] Hooker restricts the term 'law of nature' so that it refers only to natural (i.e. non-rational) agents, excluding humanity. He, then, introduces the term 'law of reason' to refer to that law which 'bindeth creatures reasonable in this world', i.e. human beings.[777] As Nigel Voak states, 'Hooker is not consistent in his usage; he can frequently be found using the term 'law of

[771] Ibid, I:63:6-10.
[772] Ibid, I:63:14-15
[773] Ibid.
[774] Ibid, I:63:18-26.
[775] Ibid, I:63.17-22 (I.3.1); 1:64.3-12 (I.3.2)
[776] Voak, N. *Richard Hooker and Reformed Theology: A Study of Reason, Will, and Grace* (Oxford: OUP, 2003), 115-116.
[777] Ibid.

nature' (or occasionally 'natures law') in a traditional manner to refer to a body of law that binds rational and non-rational agents.'[778] The law of reason refers to that which human beings are called to live and, as we will explore in relation to GCA, never contradicts a positive law in scripture.

Hooker's account here while formulated in a different time resembles O'Donovan's christological account of moral order, only it is accessed principally by the gracious aid of reason, which functions by the Holy Spirit. In this sense, O'Donovan provides an element of christological justification for Hooker's view, only centring it back on the relationship between resurrection and creation. As Voak highlights, 'natures law' is very related to the idea of cosmic order rather than simply a human moral law, which chimes with O'Donovan's broader evangelical theology of cosmic or created order. They also both similarly appeal to the tradition and authority of the Church as vital elements to life in Christ.

While O'Donovan has an account of the erotic body and participation through knowledge of Christ, human participation in the divine order is less developed. For Hooker, unlike angels who are filled with the knowledge of God, human beings 'if we view them in their spring, are at the first without understanding of knowledge at all. Nevertheless, from this utter vacuitie they growe by degrees, till they come at length to be even as the Angels themselves are.'[779] What the resurrection does for O'Donovan, the angelic existence of higher realms does for desire and participation in Hooker. Hooker's account of desire can aid O'Donovan's triad of vindication, restoration, and transformation of the created order by lending it an affective account of participation and a more textured imaginary for the transformational element now through angelical desire.[780]

For Hooker, the destiny of human beings, then, is to live into the natural law out of the greater reality of participation in the divine nature for which they are destined becoming like angels. Celibacy is 'a thing more angelical and divine' and a foretaste of this participable and ordered destiny.[781] From Hooker, we see more clearly how gay celibates relativize their desires in the

[778] *Lawes* I:86.28 (I.8.6); I:90.19-22 (I.8.9); I:119.29 (I.12.1); I:120.21-3 (I.12.2); I:190.11 (II.8.6); I:313.1 (IV.2.6); I:314.8 (IV.2.7); 3.240.20 (VII.15.14).
[779] Ibid, I:74:20-24.
[780] In personal conversation with Oliver O'Donovan regarding the transformation of created order, he cited Milton's angels who kiss and pass through each other all whilst being material as his best attempt at an image of the heavenly *eros* that is coming which is non-sexual and yet intensely intimate. It reminded me distinctly of Hooker's account of angelical participation through desire.
[781] Ibid, IV:288:3.

created order through the help of the celestial or angelic law and the liturgical tradition of worship, which perfects nature through grace.[782] Created order is the foundation but not the end of worship, which calls creation to its 'angelical' transformation in Christ. However, sin occurs when human desire departs from what reason knows is good or when reason and desire attach ultimately to a good resisting worship of God as in Augustine's *uti-frui* distinction:

> Reason therefor may rightly discern the thing which is good, and yet the will of man not incline it selfe thereunto, as oft as the prejudice of sensible experience doth oversway. Nor let any man think that this doth make any for the just excuse of iniquity. For there was never sin committed, wherein a lesser good was not preferred before a greater, and that wilfully; which cannot be done without the sinful disgrace of nature, and the utter disgrace of nature, and the utter disturbance of that divine order, whereby the pre-eminence of chiefest acceptation is by the best things worthily challenged.[783]

The punishment, then, of forgetting the reasonable sense of human beings toward the natural good with the compromised or corrupted will is not just to be out of step with the good of the created order but the divine order also: 'Good doth followe unto all things, by observing the course of their nature, and on the contrary side evil by not observing it: but not unto natural agents that good which we call Reward, not that evil which wee properly tearme Punishment.'[784]

Like O'Donovan, Hooker shares the Augustinian conviction that living against our created nature is sin, and living according to it within the divine felicity of grace provides a passionate movement in the soul toward participation that recognises the goodness of the created order and rightly ordered loves. Hooker also shares the idea that grace can enhance sanctified participation with rewards for faithfully-lived asceticism: 'Through cooperation people can earn a heavenly reward, and through performing works of supererogation, they can increase the extent of that reward.'[785] GCA is thoroughly Hookerian in recognising the corruption of desire that puts gay affectivity and its desired end in gay marriage above affectivity for God, and the right use of marriage and sexual difference within it.

As Torrance Kirby states: 'The current assumption of Hooker's commitment to a peculiarly Anglican *via media* is theologically imprecise and is ultimately misleading with regard to the

[782] Ibid, I:191.16-20;
[783] Ibid, I:80.20-29.
[784] Ibid, I:93-94.30-33, 1-2.
[785] Voak, *Richard*, 320.

central purpose underlying the composition of the *Lawes*.'[786] A latent moral theology of law, reason and the essential issue of how grace and nature are to be related epistemologically in *Lawes* assists greatly in laying the ground work for Anglican moral theology of desire. This theology of choice in Hooker which reveals how the law of nature and reason can help to describe the dilemma of same-sex desire before gay disciples. A Hookerian basis for any Anglican response to same-sex desire like *LLF* must more rigorously engage Hooker's theology of moral choice which makes the mediating authorities of scripture, tradition, and reason a central foundation. Voak summates the elements of Hooker's view of theological authority (scripture, reason, tradition) here in a hierarchy:

1. Doctrines found in Holy Scripture 'by expresse literal mention'
2. (a) Doctrines deduced from Holy Scripture by demonstrative reasoning; and
   (b) Natural laws and mere spiritual facts deduced by demonstrative reasoning.
3. Probable reasoning and tradition licensed by a society such as the Church.
4. Private probable reasoning and tradition.[787]

For Hooker, moral choice require an interaction with these authorities of scripture, reason, and tradition *and* the embodied reality of desire and living into the cosmic order (part of reading scripture and tradition, probable reasoning and engagement with law): 'there is in all things an appetite or desire, whereby they incline to something which they may be: and when they are it, they shall be perfecter then nowe they are.[788] Furthermore, human rational participation in the order of creation reflects angelical desire or *eros*: 'desire provoketh unto motion so that 'the divine power of the soul' stirs itself into action as the 'spur of the soul'.[789]

As Patrick Patterson says, 'reason's apprehension of the good is wedded to its corresponding desire for it.'[790] The angels 'being rapt with the love of his beautie... cleave inseparably for ever unto him [whereby] desire to resemble him in goodness maketh them unweariable.'[791] As Dominiak states:

> As it desires God, then, the rational angelic nature becomes non-discursive; the controlling metaphor becomes that of sight, a direct and affective cognition of, and

[786] Torrance Kirby, W. J. 'Richard Hooker as an Apologist of the Magisterial Reformation in England' in *RHCCC*, 222.
[787] Voak, *Richard*, 263.
[788] *Lawes* I.5.1; 1:72.30–73.2
[789] Ibid, I:7.1; Patterson, P. D. M. 'Hooker's apprentice: God, entelechy, beauty, and desire in book one of Richard Hooker's Lawes of Ecclesiasticall Politie', *Anglican Theological Review* 88, no. 4 (2002): 982.
[790] Ibid.
[791] Ibid, I.4.1; 1:70.8–10

> union with, the object of contemplation. Humankind exists between the 'footstool and throne of God', that is, between material creation and the immaterial intelligence of the angels… as with the angels, the transcendental property of goodness, convertible with the plenitude of God's being, draws out all kinds of human desire such that it 'tendeth unto union with that it desireth.'[792]

Moral choice must also be formed liturgically for Hooker through the inherent copulation which irresistible desire for God lends: 'participation is that mutuall inward hold which Christ hath of us and wee of him, in such sort that each possesseth other by waie of special interest propertie and inherent copulation.'[793] The authority of tradition and the practices of the Church embed social relations and sacraments in this rational and angelical participation through God's *ordo amoris*. The tradition of church liturgy draws human reason into the angels' unending desire for union with God where we participate by our senses in the beautiful goodness of God whose 'heavenlie inspirations and our holie desires are as so many Angels of entercourse and comerce betwene God and us.'[794]

5.1.2 Hooker's Participable Order of Desire: Knowledge of the Good through Angelical Holiness and Reason

Hooker's theology of desire for union with God provides a mature development of the Augustinian *uti-frui* distinction, avoiding the extremes of irreparable fall or conversely a kind of hyper-Thomistic rationalism that elevates reason above the Fall's effects. Hooker opens space within the formation of our knowledge of the law of reason for more to be known and innovated from scripture. His theology of desire makes way for the authority of scripture to be heard in light of reason within gay experience thereby bringing wisdom to bear on the theodicean challenge of same-sex desire: 'they cannot but gather from thence greate experience, and through experience the more wisdome, because conscience and the feare of swarvinge from that which is right maketh them diligent observers of circumstances, the loose regarde whereof is the nurce of vulgar follie.'[795] Experience needs reason for it to grow and become wisdom, and reason needs scripture to test wisdom. As Hooker states:

> Which powers and faculties notwithstanding retaine still their naturall manner of operation although their originall perfection be gone, Man hath still a reasonable

[792] Dominiak, 'The Logic…', 41; *Lawes* I.11.2; I:112.13; I.11.6; I:119.5–6.
[793] *Lawes* V.56.1; 2:234.29–31.
[794] Ibid, V.67.12; 2:343.7–31; Lawes V.23.1; 2:110.7–16.
[795] Ibid, V.1.2; 2:18.4–8

> understanding, and a will thereby framable to good things, butt is not thereunto now able to frame himselfe. Therefore, God hath ordeyned grace, to counterveyle this our imbecillite, and to serve as his hand, that thereby wee which cannot moove ourselves, may be drawne, butt amiablie drawne.[796]

Reason is a vital part of the whole, which helps asceticism forward so as to be 'ammiablie drawne.' Like Augustine, grace must move the heart to renewal of reason by the Holy Spirit.[797] Reason undergoes both its humbling and strengthening in the discernment of an order of creation which is beautifully reperceived in a Spirit-led asceticism. The will for Hooker has been furthermore weakened and reason is not enough to turn it amiably, especially when it comes to 'what the will of man naturalie hath; what I wanteth through sinne, and what it receiveth by meanes of grace.'[798]

The natural law of marriage in sexual difference matters, but, due to the will's weakening and desire's central place in our knowledge of God, it cannot be lived merely by reason alone or without grace. The participable order of desire (the mature development of *uti-frui*) is parsed here by Hooker:

> Our nature hath taken that disease and weakness, whereby of itselfe it inclineth only onto evil. The natural powers and faculties therfore of mans minde are through our native corruption soe weakened and of themselves soe averse from God, that without the influence of his speciall grace, they bring forth nothing in his sight acceptable, noe nott the blossoms or least buds that tende to the fruit of eternall life.[799]

Hooker recognises the dual nature of human knowledge of the good with a blend of idealism and realism. We need grace for us to know the diagnosis of the Fall and to be capable of participation in the good through human faculties like desire and reason.

Hooker reflects earlier Thomistic debates about free choice and knowledge where postlapsarian human beings have kept their aptness for free choice and knowledge of the will, but have lost their ableness: 'had wee kept our first ablenes grace should not neede, and had aptness beene also lost, it is not grace that could worke in us more then it doeth in brute creatures.'[800] Hooker

[796] Ibid, IV: 103.17-24
[797] *Conf. X*, xx, 29.
[798] Ibid, IV:101.8-10.
[799] Ibid, 4:103.11-17
[800] *DF* 4:101.29-31.

echoes Aquinas' words here: 'Even in the damned, the natural inclination to virtue remains; otherwise they would not experience remorse of conscience. That it remains inoperative in them; however, results from the absence of grace… the aptitude to see remains in the root of the nature in so far as he is an animal naturally endowed with sight, but it is not brought into activity for lack of a cause which makes this possible by forming the organ requisite for seeing.'[801] Basil Wiley describes the fittedness of human beings in Hooker to participate in the natural order and its goods as a 'Jekyll-and-Hyde duality of human nature… calling one the 'sincere' and the other the 'depraved' nature of man.'[802] Any analysis that is Hookerian, and by extension, Anglican, is impelled to take into account the dual nature of desire in its fallenness and also, its gift as a door to participation in the good. We can apply this to GCA in that (same-sex) desire is called to the universal ascetical testing and purgation so that laws or understandings of the good which depart from the natural good and its affirmation in scripture are exposed and challenged through these distinctly Anglican authorities.

We can begin now to see how GCA guides desire against the flow of a more docetic view of Jesus' life which understands celibacy as a feat for the graced few rather than ordinary gift, the default calling for all Christians. Hooker insists that celibacy ('more angelicall and divine') is not just to be affirmed, but also seen as an exemplary form of asceticism which can meet the very deep challenge of how scripture, creation, law, and reason intersect with sexuality and gender, especially same-sex desire.[803] As Dominiak opines regarding Hooker's *Lawes*:

> Both participation and desire revolve around Hooker's idea of 'law' as an inherent, formally instantiated, and rational rule of action appropriate to the thing it directs. As such, 'law' yields an analogy between created forms and the divine nature: for creatures, inherent formal laws represent 'the means whereby they tende to their owne perfection'; and for God, eternal law remains co-identical with his perfect, rational nature, the archetype of participable order.[804]

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[801] ST I-II.85.2 ad.3; 'Hooker refers [to Aristotle], even more laudatory than Aquinas, as "the Arch-Philosopher" (*Lawes* I.10.4; 1:99.28). Hooker adapted Aquinas's definition of law in ST 1a2ae.90.1,2 yet went beyond any ordinary Aristotelian or Thomistic account of causality… [his] legal ontology, if it may so be identified, takes the form of a generic division of the various forms of law, modelled formally, at least to some extent, upon a similar analysis by Thomas Aquinas in ST 1a2ae.90–6,' (Kirby, T. Richard Hooker and Thomas Aquinas on Defining Law' in eds. Svensson et al, *Aquinas Among the Protestants* (London: Wiley & Sons, 2018) 91; 95-96).
[802] Wiley, B. *The English Mind: Studies in the English Moralists* (Cambridge: CUP, 1964) 110.
[803] *Lawes* V:73.1.
[804] Dominiak, P, A. 'The Logic of Desire,
' *Reformation & Renaissance Review* 16, no. 1 (2014): 39; *Lawes*, I:4.1; 1:69:10.

While many have read Hooker as a champion of nature and our rational participation in it, I contend that Hooker proffers a way back to participative holiness and its importance at the centre of the discussions of sexuality and desire through *Lawes*. As Dominiak opines, we must counteract the hyper-rationalist or anti-rationalist frames that have caused us to shirk any talk of ascetical sacrifice, bodily yielding to God's will, or has separated ethics from the metaphysics of trinitarian life: 'The supposed autonomy of human reason, however, entails a specious naturalism that denudes rational public life of the emotions, evacuates creation of God's immanent causality, and separates ethics and politics from metaphysics.'[805] In this vein, what has been distinctly lacking in contemporary Anglican accounts is a well-parsed interaction between moral reasoning in creation and the participable order of desire in the body attending to Hooker's doctrine of order and participation. Reason is not simply 'a cognitive power marked by autonomy or heteronomy.'[806] Hooker grants 'a theonomous character to reason, which informs all creation and dynamically suspends it from God as a rational community.'[807]

O'Donovan and Augustine's theologies of desire point us back to Hooker's role for both desire and reason as that which invites a notion of 'love' to an epistemic testing before it is granted to reflect trinitarian participation and christoform life: 'divine agency 'indwells' creaturely agency, without absorbing or being absorbed by it.'[808] Like O'Donovan, Hooker sees no competitive relationship between grace and well-ordered creaturely agency. The Church is collectively called to both a rational and affective participation in God. Minds and hearts are together renewed by grace to empower right use of creation again in enjoyment of God. As examined in Hooker, such a process is only possible through participation, a mode of rational, affective movement given by the Spirit and anchored by law.

An approach that seeks the 'participable order' is vital in renewing reason and desire. These epistemic foundations must be renewed and purged to guard ordered relations with God and creation in the Church thereby ensuring right worship and human flourishing. As Dominiak observes vis-a-vis Hooker's moral theology:

> The First Eternal Law protects God's utter transcendence: it describes God's apophatic, internal operations, including His voluntary purpose to share a similitude of His being in creation. The Second Eternal Law establishes God's immanent causality in creation: it

[805] Ibid, 38.
[806] Ibid.
[807] Ibid.
[808] O'Donovan, 'Gifford Lecture 1'.

> describes the order which God 'hath set downe as expedient to be kept by all his creatures, the theonomous patterns of desire and behaviour intrinsically kept by all creatures according 'to the severall conditions wherewith he hath indued them.'[809]

As we have shown, Hooker reveals how desire exists at the intersection between God's eternal law and the natural law fitted for creatures. Same-sex desire, like all postlapsarian desire, is called to these two elements of ordered being established in a distinctly Anglican doctrine of trinitarian participation. Reason and desire are interdependently woven in human beings as Dominiak articulates: 'it is that reason and emotion are, for Hooker, gifts created and formed by grace into holy desires, fitting us for the glory of God.'[810] I contend from Hooker that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit helps to comfort the desirer and to provide the affective and aesthetic motivation in the beautiful beloved with the goal of reordering desire through affectively-charged, rational participation in *eros*. The path of gay celibacy, then, is the path of drawing same-sex affectivity toward the purgative liberty and formation of holy desire, fitting queer pilgrims for the glory of God and erotic sainthood.

Through the laws of nature and reason, creation is epistemically linked to the identity of the Triune Creator, and, therefore, cannot be merely suspended or erased by sin. Creation, rather, is known through Christ, who renews desire and reason as vestiges of grace. As Dominiak states:

> Hooker crafts a sense of theonomous participation in God which cuts through such readings and casts 'reason' and 'emotion' within a logic of desire aimed at God's goodness…. creation is theonomously and non-contrastively suspended from God. Accordingly, 'reason' has a multivalent texture: it is an intellectual power natural to the human form, but also comes as a divine gift that participates in God's rational nature as a diminished similitude. Sin corrupts the ability, but not the aptness, of this intellectual gift. Grace supplies the want and need of natural reason as a further, remedial, complementary gift. Similarly, the 'emotions' (or rather Hooker's pre-modern analogues of passions and affections) are also multivalent: they are part of the formal giftedness of human nature and are essential for human flourishing; but, the disorder wrought by sin requires *remedial grace, which* (through the habitual, embodied practices of worship) *reorders and trains the emotions towards participation of God's nature*. The logic of desire circumscribes

[809] Dominiak, 'The Logic of Desire', 39.
[810] Ibid, 50.

> both the intellect and the emotions, placing them together on a rational continuum of holy desires oriented to participation in, and union with, God.[811]

What is being suggested here is not a return to a post-enlightenment, Platonic view of reason or rationality but rather:

> Divine rationality drenches… both the material and immaterial aspects and powers of created forms such that desire variously draws them in non-cognitive and cognitive ways alike towards goodness. Far from the model of a disembodied autonomy or distant heteronomy, rationality becomes theonomously, suspended from God, warm, hearty, affective, and embodied within the legal, participatory order of desire.[812]

Participation in the created good for the Church, then, is not solely rational or affective, but always in some way, a blend of both. Reason acts as a 'theonomous participation in the rational divine nature' which endows a dignifying form of rationality to redeemed desire as well as rational aspects to created forms through which desire is purged and tested.[813]

Without carefully parsing Hooker's innovative account of law, *eudaimonia* can be unhinged from creation and the joy of living according to one's created nature and the final reward of honouring this by sacrificing certain created goods can be easily lost for GCA. The law of reason is vital to delineating the bounds of human flourishing as Augustine (and later Aquinas) corroborates. The discernment between orders of love happens through the created bounds of our nature, and yet is a dangerous task without angelical grace protecting against repressive self-condemnation.[814] Our embodied life and experience needs the dual assistance of grace and the order of creation in the process of living in the purgative love of the Trinity. Without such assistance from reason, the restoration of human moral agency wrought through grace, in the form of righteous participation in the world, risks being lost. Scripture and the laws of nature and reason provide the guardrails testing and identifying the 'ill made' laws of human beings. The positive laws of scripture and reason guide a new asceticism driven by the deeper work of affective transformation in the created world through the grace and love of God: 'That which doth guide and direct his reason is the first generall law of nature, which law of nature and the moral law of

[811] Dominiak, P. *Richard Hooker: The Architecture of Participation* (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 149.
[812] Ibid, 149.
[813] Dominiak, 'The Logic of Desire', 51.
[814] Lombard, N.E. *The Logic of Desire: Aquinas on Emotion* (Washington: CUAP, 2011), 112.

scripture are in substance of law all one… lawes humane must be made according to the generall lawes of nature, and without contradiction unto positive law in scripture.'[815]

The more liberal wing of the Anglican communion has read from Hooker a legitimation for the individual conscience to search for an innovative 'communal consensus' as the way in which to 'solve' the dilemma of desire and embrace same-sex marriage.[816] Compier highlights how the Episcopalian Church has read Hooker to justify 'the very notion of church-sponsored ethical standards.'[817] On this view, the inviolability of the individual conscience overrides the authority of scripture and its calling to our desires through the law of nature and reason. The principal problem with this more liberal view of Hooker, as Joyce argues, is that they 'somehow managed to overlook those tests where Hooker states unambiguously that the moral law is timeless and changeless, universally binding, and coterminous with the word of scripture.'[818]

Unlike the Episcopalian or liberal direction, which has tried to use the laws of nature and reason to lead to a suprabiblical conclusion about gay marriage, Hooker's view of scripture carries the strong warning that: '…lawes humane must be made according to the generall lawes of nature, and without contradiction unto any positive law in scripture. Otherwise they are ill made. Unto lawes thus made and received by a whole Church, they which live within the bosome of that Church, must not thinke it a matter indifferent either to yeeld or not to yeeld obedience.'[819] Hooker, in line with Calvin, helpfully qualifies this with the passing away of the ceremonial and sacrificial laws of the Mosaic law but confirmation of moral law. Beyond this, he goes so far as to say that '… to despise them [laws of scripture] is to despise in them him.'[820] The law of nature as revealed to the Jews in the Mosaic Law, when it came to sexual holiness, are affirmed by the ruling at Jerusalem that Gentiles should abstain from 'fornication'.[821] Hooker's prioritisation for scripture and its native context, therefore, would not allow the loose and adjusted account of scripture teaching on homosexual acts espoused by Song, Williams, and Episcopalian community consensus.[822]

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[815] *Lawes*, III: 9.9.2, 10 (p. 237).
[816] Compier, 'Hooker', 252.
[817] Ibid, 256.
[818] Joyce, *Richard,* 134*; Lawes* III:10.4; I.242.31-4; III:9.2;1.237.9-12.
[819] *Lawes* I:237.27-28.
[820] Ibid, I:238:13-14; III.9.2.
[821] Ibid.
[822] Compier, 'Hooker', 258: 'Following Hooker's example [in our anxiety about sexual morality], we would do well to avoid modes of moral persuasion which either consist of the bare quotation of chapters and verses from Scripture, or of appeals to the inviolable authority of private conscience.' Allison Joyce aptly critiques this view (*Richard Hooker*, 104-105) pointing to the fact that moral issues outlined strongly in scripture were not *adiaphora* for the conscience to decide: 'Compier is certainly correct that Hooker challenges the puritan idea that scripture is, as

In this sense, sexual morality for Hooker and the scriptural witness would fit strongly in the category of an area of church order and discipline rather than one of many *adiaphora*, such as the perpetual virginity of Mary, which were subject to private reasoning and will:

> …Whatsoever lawes he hath made they ought to stand, unlesse him selfe from heaven proclaime disanuld, because it is not in man to correct the ordinance of God, may know, if it please them to take notize thereof, that we are as far from presuming to think that men should presume to undo some things of men, which God doth know they cannot better. God never ordeyned anything that could be bettered. Yet many things he hath that have better now when change is requisite, had bene worse when that which now is chaunged was instituted.[823]

In line with the way that the law of nature and the moral law of scripture are 'in the substance of law all one', gay celibates *queer* fallen readings of natural law by returning to scripture and the erotics of the body. Through a greater hermeneutic distance and patience with the body and its relationship to created order, they probe the participable order of desire as the way through their dilemma rather than seeing it solely as their dilemma's source. Such a Hookerian asceticism seeks to live in witness to the cosmic order's affirmation in the law of nature which reason and scripture confirm within us by the Holy Spirit.

GCA is an affective response to the beloved Christ who renews us to love well in the cosmic order, rather than an extrinsic striving to accommodate desire within law or law within desire. Similarly to Hooker, for GCA, the power of the order of desire pulls the creature further into the angelical participation in God that the law of reason cannot provide, but also upholds its truth in a relativised way. As Hooker states:

> Government is that work of God whereby he sustains created things and disposes all things to the end which he naturally chooses, that is the greatest good which, given the

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Hooker puts it, 'the onely rule of all things which in this life may be done by men' (*Lawes* II; 1:143.6–8). But there is an important distinction here that Compier appears to miss: at the beginning of Book II of the *Lawes*, Hooker urges the puritans, when they appeal to the authority of scripture, 'not to extende the actions whereof they speake so lowe as that instance doth import of taking up a straw, but rather keepe themselves at the least, within the compasse of morall actions, actions which have in them vice or vertue'; in other words, Hooker here informs his opponents that 'morall actions' are *precisely* the area in which they should be appealing to the authority of scripture.'

[823] *Lawes* I:243:17-27; III.10.5. See also Voak's discussion of *adiaphora* in *Richard,* 256-260 where he discusses how scripture takes ultimate authority when it positively affirms or annuls a law and how reason and tradition function where scripture is silent or ambiguous.

> law of creation, can be elicited. For, given the law of creation [is the rule of all] it was not fitting that creation be violated through those things which follow from creation. So God does nothing by his government which offends against that which he has framed and ratified by the very act of creation. The government of God is: general over all; special over rational creatures. There are two forms of government: that which would have been, had free creation not lost its way; that which is now when it has lost its way.[824]

Hooker's discussion of ecclesial polity is fascinatingly close to the ascetical rationale of GCA. A form of natural law is still required due to the way in which human beings have lost their aptitude for the use of nature. God's act of creation has a purpose which must be upheld. Human attempts at obedience can be sanctified into the future angelical participation to which desire lead us with the help of reason. Desire is called to align with God's government, founded on created order.

Hooker opens a way to bridge the divide between the gift of reason, and our capacity as creatures to live according to our created nature alongside our entire dependency on grace due to the Fall's effects on reason. In a distinctly Augustinian way, Hooker sees God's divine order and love to be reflected in human life by living in honour of the Creator through obedient participation in the natural order. In *Lawes* he states:

> It sufficeth therefore that nature and scripture doe serve in such full sort, that they both joyntly and not severallye eyther of them be so complete, that unto everlasting felicitie wee neede not the knowledge of any thing more than these two [and] may easily furnish our mindes with on all sides.[825]

He continues: 'the unsufficiencie of the light of nature is by the light of scripture so fully and so perfectly herein supplied, that further light than this hath added there doth not neede unto that ende.'[826] There is no competitive relationship between the work of grace, scripture, and reason as given by God to discern the ends and purposes of the created order. Desire may obfuscate reason through the will, which is radically compromised in an Augustinian way. Torn between orders of love, the will and fallen desire draw us away from living according to our created

[824] Ibid, IV: 86.28-87.12.
[825] Ibid, I:14:5; I:129.10-14.
[826] Ibid, II.8.3; I:188.4-7.

natures. Hooker articulates how scripture and created order are essential to renew asceticism in the Church by giving reason and wisdom a redemptive importance.

Wisdom, 'the unemptiable fountaine', is the meeting place of Hooker's theology of desire and law. He draws us to scripture as the ultimate authority, and yet opens up space for the knowledge and laws of nature in the divine will:

> Whatsoever either men on earth, or the Angels of heaven do know, it is as a drop of that unemptiable fountaine of wisdom, which wisdom hath diversly imparted her treasures unto the world. As her waies are of sundry kinds, so her maner of teaching is not meerely one and the same. Some things she openeth by the sacred bookes of Scripture; some things by the glorious works of nature: with some things she inspireth them from above by spirituall influence, in some thinges she leadeth and trayneth them onely by worldly experience and practise. We may not so in any one speciall kind admire her that we disgrace her in any other, but let all her wayes be according unto their place and degree adored.[827]

The dilemma of same-sex desire and its complexity requires a Hookerian-like approach to scripture and reason-based experience, which is brought together christologically through wisdom's renewal of desire. Like Christ in Gethsemane, the human will must cede to the divine through the laws of nature, desire, and reason. Hooker's integration of desire, nature, reason and divine order through scripture vindicates GCA which excludes itself from and yet radically relativizes the good of marriage by accepting wisdom's invitation into the redeemed *eros* of Christ.

Hooker's *Lawes* provides the robust trinitarian anthropology which *LLF* and contemporary Anglican theology of desire requires to meet the theodicean wrestle of GCA. Without the law of nature or order of creation, the Creator is split from the Redeemer. The Redeemer incorporates what the Creator inscribes in human beings. Furthermore, it reveals that postlapsarian desire in its queerness needs the assistance of the law of nature reflected by the holiness of the angelical order of redeemed desire. Such angelical queerness which is part of the erotic renewal of the good is called to re-inhabit the deeper texture of the body and the world and its rational structures in God, including marriage and sexual difference. Such structures go beyond the world as it is given and known by us without Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. The creature's moral

[827] Ibid, I.4,1; 1.47.23-1.48.

reasoning emerges from how cosmic order is vindicated in Christ through a renewing of human affectivity – a winnowing of fallen human desire when it comes to right use of created goods in God.

The Fall is not absolute in a way that queer theory would affirm. Gender and sexual difference are not impossibly bound in fallen linguistic and performative representation. The Spirit through scripture frees the body to return to itself in a new and eschatologically-charged way. Such a return requires a recognition of its sexually-differentiated beginning as the basis rather than the destination of eschatological renewal in Christ. In *Lawes*, Hooker holds to the Augustinian tensions related to the body, nature, reason, and desire. The queerness of gay celibates has a true hope, an essential and interior eschatology, which throughout the peregrine journey is revealed and energised by the Holy Spirit. The body can indeed be re-enchanted with a sacramental meaning from the clutches of natural idolatry's death in the angelical Resurrection and renewing effects of grace. A grace-initiated asceticism becomes essential to breaking the hold of natural idolatries as well as myopic or unclear positions which dismiss the legal order of God. GCA aims to throw off such idolatries and platitudes, which have covered over the difference of the gay body and its human complexity and goodness.

From our discussion of Hooker, I contend that an Anglican ethic and response to the dilemma of same-sex desire as this thesis has purported should stand upon Hooker's shoulders. His model incorporates the innovation of gay experience without erasing the positive laws of scripture which map onto created order. His insights into the interface between the Fall, law, and the participable order of desire are elements which form our moral choices, especially in sexually-related asceticism, and something as foundational to the laws of reason and nature as marriage and its ontology. Hooker's *Lawes* shows a way forward that refuses the two extremes of cognitive rationalism or anti-cognitive elevation of desire (represented in their popular forms as repression and libertinism).[828] Instead, the erotic body and desire are essential to the proper functioning of reason, and desire integral not just to redeemed rationality but love ordered to God. Order and law as outlined by Hooker protect the Church's approach to same-sex desire from falling into these two extremes. Furthermore, Hooker's priority for grace invites queerness into the renewed *eros* of the risen Christ within the holy and cosmic limits of knowing the Triune God. Gay celibates are one interdependent group in the pilgrim throng called to submit and relativize their desires to Christ's lordship. Desire is called to ordered value as given in the body

[828] Leys, R. *The Ascent of Affect: Genealogy and Critique* (Chicago Scholarship Online, 2018), 14-20.

of a sexually-differentiated humanity, and the eschatological potency of such bodies to reflect the 'angelical' future and mysterious union of Christ and his bride, the Church. In this final section, I call for a return to the distinctly Hookerian thesis at the heart of Anglicanism through GCA. Such a move has the power to evangelically anchor the Church's approach to theodicy and the ethics of gay erotic life, contributing to a renewed moral and pastoral theology that can meet the ascetical crisis at its heart.

5.2.0 Theologies that Inform *LLF*'s Theology of Celibacy and Marriage

Through our discussion, we have traced an explicitly Anglican Hookerian understanding of desire. Hooker fills in many of the lacunae I have identified in the contemporary landscape regarding sin's effects on interpreting the erotic body in the created order. We have had to reckon 'together with man's essential involvement in created order and his rebellious discontent with it… the opacity and obscurity of that order to the human mind which has rejected the knowledge of its Creator.'[829] At the heart of christological anthropology is the call to live out one's affective and erotic vocation in line with the created order. The relationship between Christ's own ascetically-perfected humanity, especially his relationship to his body and desires, the created good, and our own ascetical callings in it, is the centrefold for considering and testing the nature of same-sex desire. The distinctive understanding of Hooker's laws of nature, reason, and desire which recognise the Augustinian heritage of being called to live as one is created is brought forward by O'Donovan's theology of moral order. A similar concept is pointed to by Coakley in the need for a renewed, trinitarian asceticism.

As we have shown in Hooker, the Creator's intentions and will are revealed through the laws of nature, reason, and desire. As Joyce states:

> Fundamental to [the nature and purpose of law] is [Hooker's] sense both of the inherent interconnectedness of the whole of Creation, at every level of the hierarchy, and of the balance between different parts of the created order; this balance is maintained, to the benefit of the whole of the universe, if each part of Creation observes the law of its nature. Conversely, if any creature were to act against its nature, the whole would suffer.[830]

[829] *RMO*, 19.
[830] Joyce, *Richard*, 75.

For Hooker, the fundamental search for wisdom is to find the path that conjoins the law of reason with the human creature's desire and creation.[831] Grace works to revivify desire through the Holy Spirit thereby restoring reason to non-idolatrous knowledge of the natural good. Such a knowledge of the natural good is supplied through reason but is insufficient for ultimate righteousness, requiring the assistance of grace through the Holy Spirit and scripture.[832] Reason is an instrument of divine grace and yet is dependent on the Spirit's activity in renewing affective use of the moral good. Redeemed reason arises from the divine action of grace which renews innate *eros*. This rationally-adjudicated *eros* drives participation in the law of nature which mysteriously reflects the divine order or law of the Trinity.[833]

Joyce helpfully outlines the way in which, along Thomistic lines, Hooker seeks to affirm the importance of reason in participating in created good – although she is light on engaging the Augustinian lines of Hooker's thought when it comes to the Fall's effects on rationality. Joyce presses such a Thomistic line to the point where Hooker warns against our capacity to objectively repristinate the law of nature. She fundamentally disagrees with Dominiak that Hooker, in his justification of the ecclesiastical polity of the time, makes space for innovation or change beyond the creational ordering of the world and our call to righteously participate in it through reason and desire.

Dominiak, however, argues that a further law of grace or 'desire' is required which recognises that reason must be aided 'with the influence of divine grace' and the 'instinct of the holy ghost.'[834] For Hooker, 'desire stands within the rational architecture of participation and exhibits both an extensive as well as an intensive aspect and logic… desires are created existential motors which drive the ecstatic, formal move from becoming to being through the pursuit of perfective ends parsed as 'good'.'[835] However, Joyce differs with Dominiak citing how the nature of scriptural authority delineates and aids human beings in discerning the law of nature or righteous participation in the created order. For Hooker, grace and scripture are required guardrails to live out the law of nature in the Church. Paul Surlis points a way through from Joyce and Dominiak, which brings the laws of desire and nature into an important tension for avoiding epistemic extremes like anti-affective rationalism or an anti-cognitive romanticism: 'Hooker does not underestimate the consequences of the Fall for man. But he does not over-estimate them

[831] *Lawes* III: 214.13-15.
[832] Dominiak, *Architecture*, 231.
[833] Ibid, 212; *Lawes* I:90.5.
[834] Ibid, 127; *Lawes* I:234.31-235.18; III:8.18.
[835] Ibid, 127.

either.'[836] Human flourishing is framed, then, not by a metric outside of God's act of creation but in and through human bodies which have significance for worship, and not just the cognitive and affective apparatus for the right use of created goods, but angelical transformation.

Hooker can help retrieve the Augustinian idea that desire should accord with the created order as a necessary aspect of loving God in Christ. Such a call is carried forward by Hooker in his validation of marriage as displayed in the *Book of Common Prayer* and its liturgy of marriage.[837] He also affirms celibacy as an 'angelicall and divine' vocation, reminiscent of the future and celestial existence of all creation, and yet recognises the pull of untested 'nature' toward marriage.[838] We have drawn from Hooker that no definition of marriage or course of action for same-sex desire should depart from what is already devised and delivered in scripture: 'Nothing ought to be established in the Church which in the word of God is not commanded.'[839] What is received by the light or 'starre' of reason is called to accord with scripture without falling into the antirational pitfall of Puritan Biblicism.[840] GCA, then, enters as a Hookerian synthesis of the affectively-renewed rationality of gay reasoning and experience, alongside the authority of scripture and Augustinian tradition, which clearly understands sexual difference in marriage as an originary and sacramental good.

Additionally, reason in contemporary Anglican approaches has a small role to play in interpreting the created good and ontology of marriage as it gets in Ward's erotics (Ward) or the role of prayer in renewing desire (Coakley). Little role is given to the renewal of reason. Human queerness must rather be met by grace to re-read creation according to God's identity. Queerness meets the renewal of holiness. This holy renewal of queer bodily hopelessness is the key to resourcing a faithful, ascetical response to the ordering of creation and its transcendent relation to God's own identity as Trinity. Such holiness, given in the Spirit's desire-enflaming presence motivates *eros* to move beyond the false options of libertinism and repression that Coakley admonishes us to avoid. Hooker's cognitive anthropology which conjoins laws of desire and reason is the rich cornerstone *LLF* needs to hear GCA, and develop a pastoral theology for adjudicating same-sex desire. I will now examine how a robust application of a Hookerian epistemology of law and desire is missing from the recent *LFF* resource, and why this has meant that GCA is poorly represented as a thoroughly Anglican response to same-sex desire.

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836 Surlis, P. 'Natural Law in Richard Hooker (*c.*1554–1600)', *Irish Theological Quarterly* 35 (1968), 185.
837 Joyce, *Richard*, 220-222.
838 *Lawes* V: 73; Ibid, 220.
839 Ibid, III: 220:19-20.
840 Ibid.

5.2.1 Filling in the Void Through Hooker: *LLF,* GCA and Contemporary Anglican Approaches to Desire

LLF treats the question of celibacy directly as a form of self-denial or asceticism. Celibacy is understood as an eschatological charism in two ways. The first is as a reflection of the present order's impermanence and secondly, its restoration in the new order to come. This new order will involve the transformation rather than the erasure of marriage's goods in a universal, and yet mysteriously non-sexual, erotic communion: 'The valuing of celibacy in the early church was associated with the expectation that Christ would soon return, and the present order of life would pass away.'[841] Secondly, 'celibacy was seen as an anticipation – a sign of foretaste – of the new order of things that Christ's return would usher in, an order in which, Jesus says, people 'neither marry nor are given in marriage, and are like angels in heaven' (Matt. 22.30).'[842] Celibacy is understood as creating space in life 'for intensive dedication to prayer and the work of Christ's Kingdom.'[843] It involves a kind of erotic asceticism where celibates are 'turning away from one kind of intimacy for the sake of others' which is reflective of Jesus' own celibacy, where he did not 'lack anything proper to a fully human life.'[844] A further appeal is made to how Paul 'gives a certain primacy to celibacy over marriage as a context for the pursuit of discipleship.'[845]

LLF discusses Side B theology briefly: 'Some gay and lesbian people understand the Church's teaching on these matters as an expression of what following Jesus demands. They understand their calling to follow Jesus as bringing with it a demand for celibacy – and they experience this as a costly but important discipline.'[846] Conversely, some gay and lesbian people:

> argue that to impose such a pathway [of celibacy] on people while calling it a gift or celebrating it as a calling makes it harder for those affected to be honest about their experience and about the cost and pain of what is demanded of from them. They also sometimes find that their criticisms are treated as if they were rejecting the whole idea of self-denial, or the whole idea that discipleship demands discipline and transformation.[847]

The section ends by defining the essential disagreement between 'Side A' and 'Side B' theologies: 'The argument is about whether celibacy is the only appropriate expression of discipleship for

[841] *LLF*, 239
[842] Ibid.
[843] Ibid, 238.
[844] Ibid, 239.
[845] Ibid.
[846] Ibid, 241.
[847] Ibid.

gay and lesbian people – and these Christians answer that is it no more or less of a possibility than it is for heterosexual people.'[848]

Celibacy, unlike marriage, is never described by *LLF* as sacramental. Marriage, while not deemed a sacrament, is described as sacramental. Such a thin theology of celibacy is a sign that GCA has not been duly theologically accounted for when it comes to discussions of created order in *LLF*. This absence of celibacy's sacramental significance may, in this sense, be a sign of the greater place the document gives to marriage, and its centrality for flourishing, and also, its decision follow Song's innovationist account. Celibacy is solely described as an eschatological sign and charism and, therefore, is unable to describe GCA's martyr-like stance in the created order. This sacramental theology is essential to describing the particular theodicean burden gay celibates face. Their costly witness to the created goods of marriage through a martyr-like exclusion which enjoys greater eschatological inclusion is missed almost entirely.

In *LLF*, celibacy is not understood as essential but coincidental to the erotic health of the Church. The affirmation of and relativisation of marriage which Jesus' own life and GCA provide is lost. Celibacy is described as an 'important' vocation, rather than an essential one which helps the Church to resist natural idolatries or the 'misknowledge' of created goods through affective and rational participation in Christ.[849] Such lacunae might not shut down the formation and affirmation of GCA and yet *LLF* does not give GCA the full and central representation within the *LLF* process it would merit. The notion of having spiritual children or being a spiritual progenitor is also lost within the 'sign' idea. *LLF* needs the scriptural type of Jesus as the eunuch who inherits 'a name and a monument (progeny) better than sons and daughters' in Isaiah 56 as employed in Augustine's *DSV*. Conversely, *LLF* provides a very helpful theology of friendship, and places this eternal good as a central focus of the Church.[850] While friendship is represented well, how it is eternal when marriage is not and how it might fulfil our erotic longings for intimacy are not directly related to the theodicean challenges of same-sex desire.

The final analysis *LLF* undertakes regarding the gay Christian disagreement over celibacy does not refer to the moral or created order, and the theodicean issue that this produces. Furthermore, it does not also explore the other realities that Side B Christians see as plausible options for the future in depth (including celibate partnerships, covenantal friendship and mixed

[848] Ibid.
[849] *RMO*, 111-116.
[850] *LLF*, 15, 18, 19, 20, 26, 35, 60, 65, 75-78, 142-143, 181-182.

orientation/queer marriages). A careful listening to a Side B perspective reveals that celibacy is not the only option but more likely due to the narrowing of choices in the way we have outlined. *LLF* mentions the concept of created order without developing it at all, except for citing *Issues in Homosexuality*: 'Homosexual people are in every way as valuable to and valued by God as heterosexual people… [and yet] homophile orientation and its expression in sexual activity do not constitute a parallel and alternative form of human sexuality as complete within the terms of the created order as heterosexual.'[851] *LLF*'s lack of consideration of GCA covers over the theodicean dilemma of desire at the heart of this gay, Christian experience and the faithful cost of gay celibate witness. The wrestle of the hermeneutics of the body, scripture, and creation is missing. The Augustinian theology of the *uti-frui* distinction or right use of creation in worship is a tragic lacuna. The cruciform lens through which we love or arrive at affective delight in one's created nature is not fleshed out sufficiently to understand the impetus behind GCA as an erotic vocation.

Additionally, *LLF* presents the question as a choice between two alternative options: one arbitrarily demanding celibacy and the other rejecting Side B celibates as ascetics who demand celibacy from other LGBTQI+ people as if another far more 'humane' option was possible or another model of solidarity is possible even in disagreement. Such an assumption subtly undermines GCA, and its moral and pastoral depth, as well as the queerness of its witness to challenge and renew the Church's approach to desire. *LLF*'s presentation of the question of same-sex desire, then, does not meet the challenge of GCA as we have described in this thesis. The theodicean response of gay celibates emerges like the holy virgins who used the power of erotic celibacy to challenge the reductive and oppressive meaning of (women's) pilgrim lives.[852] They engage in a celibate asceticism which is a great cost to themselves in a way that is not just about a freely-chosen charism. Rather it is a form of martyr-like virginity which seeks Hookerian obedience to the rational order of worship in the Church and the authority of scripture, which upholds sex-difference as an essential sacramental ingredient within marriage and loving our erotic bodies.[853]

Such a witness requires more than a few pages on celibacy and a few paragraphs on gay celibacy.[854] It demands, as we have revealed, a far deeper and specific treatment, including how the Church can shape its life to better support the witness it has called for and the celibacy it has

[851] Ibid, 196.
[852] Isherwood*, The Power,* 71.
[853] *Lawes* 5:73:1-12; Joyce, *Richard*, 217-228.
[854] *LLF*, 239-241.

required. By ascetically excluding themselves from one of the goods of the created order, gay celibates are loving God in a particularly intense way in an unwelcoming *saeculum*. By choosing to make this the centre of how they live out desire within the natural order, they await resurrection. Through this intensity of ascetical patience, they specially and intensely image Jesus' own theodicean dilemma as the Son of God, who had to die for sins and be excluded from the created goods of life. The gay celibate in their response to the theodicean question of same-sex desire reflects Jesus' stance toward the mystery of his own suffering as the exemplary eunuch for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

A final critical lacuna in the *LLF* resource from the vantage point of my account of GCA is a missing Augustinian discussion of what true self-love looks like when it comes to living according to the *amor dei*. Right order is not conceptually addressed by *LLF* in terms of the ontology of creation from the Anglican moral theology of Augustine, Hooker and O'Donovan. Self-love is not qualified to refer to a form of affective self-relation that rightly uses creation in the enjoyment and love of God's identity as the Creator of sexual difference. Self-love, then, floats unattached from Augustine's *uti-frui* distinction, and can too easily be understood as a moral therapy that enshrines desire without being submitted to ascetical purgation. Divine reason and order provide a limit for desire to be tested, reshaped, and rechannelled.

Jesus himself confirms this relativisation of biological kinship when he says to his own mother 'these are my brothers, my sisters, my mother, those who do the will of God.'[855] The 'beauty' of Jesus Christ, and the aesthetic element of GCA, are barely mentioned.[856] The aesthetic element of how the beauty of the beloved Christ and desire experienced in such beauty motivates an erotic martyrdom and exclusion from lower created good is omitted. The radical nature of such a stance is also not captured, which seeks to throw off the oppressive use of the goods of marriage and creation to cover over the gay body and its queer agency in challenging natural idolatries.

Gay celibate witness is an essential bodily practice in the process of finding this distinctly Anglican way forward from the instability of the dilemma of desire and culture-war mentalities which enshrine marriage and sex as a necessity for human flourishing rather than centring the Church on the *amor dei*. The queer witness of these particularly alien pilgrims points forward to a different understanding of the gay Christian debate that needs representation for a true 'conversation'. Gay celibates invite a greater priority to be given to theodicy rather than ethics in

[855] Mark 3:35.
[856] *LLF*,.237.

order to hear and minister to the heart of gay people. Authority is an essential epistemic aspect of adjudicating desire. The way in which scripture interacts with erotic asceticism in gay celibacy begins both through prayer and ceding control to God while also restoring rational participation which recognises the moral significance of the created order and sexual difference in marriage. Church consensus, like that being attempted in the Church of England's current exploration of human sexuality in *LLF*, must, therefore, arise from a Hookerian treatment of the authority of scripture and the grace of scripture and creation's goods through desire and reason.

5.2.2 Celibate Asceticism in *LLF*: Divine Reason in Creation, Moral Order, and Gay Experience of Desire

In this section, I briefly examine the recent *LLF* resource book and its treatment of gay celibacy, specifically recognising that *LLF* does not comprise 'an agreed way forward… or comprehensive account.'[857] From the outset it is important to acknowledge the laudable investment the Church of England has made through *LLF*. However, while many of the elements which could provide a thoroughgoing account of the deeper theodicean challenge of created order for gay celibates are explored, they are not directly applied to the theological rationale behind GCA in *LLF*. My enquiry here is whether the project's treatment is robustly Hookerian. I hope to do so in a way which holds together the mutually reinforcing and corrective force of the theologies of desire in Augustine, O'Donovan, Coakley and Ward, critically interrogated in chapters 1-4.

Part three of *LLF* explores the Church's approach to the anthropology of love and desire, especially human ways of loving. This treatment of desire and the 'story about being human', acknowledges the profound importance of created order: 'God created and ordered the universe, and God declared this ordered creation good (Genesis 1). Sin is our failure, individually and collectively, to live in accord with the God-given ordering of creation. It is our rejection of, and our falling short of, the good for which we were made.'[858] The section also acknowledges the way in which the word 'natural' can be used in a way that is so complex it can produce inaccuracy, when theologically 'natural' refers to the good of God's created order. Furthermore, it importantly highlights the way in which oppression, exclusion, and harmful differentiation has been leveraged against LGBTQI+ people through a bad use of these teachings. *LLF* provides very helpful conceptual categories for exploring a robustly Gospel-based response to the dilemma of same-sex desire.

[857] *LLF*, 3.
[858] Ibid, 212.

LFF's hamartiology is based on what departs from living according to the created order, and yet it is curiously missing when discussing same-sex desire.[859] The very asceticism of celibate gay people is described but not celebrated, and is not associated with the inclusivity of the Gospel which embraces all kinds of people, but only a matter of preference or conscience. Little note is made in this section of the affirmation of the Levitical injunctions in verses 18:21-22 (and their deeper meaning not just in covenantal terms but created order terms). For this reason, Jewish sexual ethics are not removed by GCA as they belong to the affirmed and vindicated created order common to the Gentile and Jewish church.[860] This deeper integration of Christ's inclusion of eunuchs (sexual minorities) and affirmation of the created order is present in Paul's writings where those with same-sex desire were justified but required to abstain from the halakhic definition of '*porneai*' in 1 Corinthians 6:9 and explained in Romans 1-2.[861] The early church's ruling against sexual immorality affirmed and relativised this continuity between Judaism's general consensus against same-sex acts and the budding Christian church in terms of its sexual ethics.[862]

By citing Matthew 16.24-26, *LLF* appeals to the ascetical theology of Augustine:

> Following Jesus involves denying ourselves and taking up our cross (Matthew 16:24; Luke 9.23). Jesus' followers are called to live lives that, left to our own devices, we would not automatically live. To follow Jesus means learning new patterns of action, speech, thought, imagination and feeling. It involves a new ordering of our desires – as we learn to love ourselves, our neighbours and God as we should.[863]

LLF describes Augustine's ordering of loves as a 'homecoming, a restoration' in order to receive life to the full where we must give up 'destructive impulses, dying to our old ways, in order to learn the fullness of life that comes from following Jesus.'[864]

Referencing the current crises with sexual harassment, racism and sexism, Coakley's new asceticism is echoed to help us '…to discover new habits, to practise restraint, and to learn a new ordering of our desires.'[865] In order for human beings to enjoy the '…beauty and goodness of bodily life, and the delight that is possible in beauty, touch and movement of another… self-

[859] Ibid.
[860] Acts 15:20.
[861] Instone-Brewer, D. 'Evidence of non-heterosexual inclinations in first century Judaism' in Whittle, *Marriage,* 112.
[862] Hays, *A Moral Vision*, 157.
[863] *LLF*, 236.
[864] Ibid, 237.
[865] Ibid, 236.

denial is needed … not to overcome delight but to discover a truer and fuller delight.'[866] Furthermore, the collective task of self-denial in Jesus can be co-opted by power and hierarchy where discipline and self-denial have been used to control and police people who differ. Such a disordered use of power has privileged the 'desire to exclude those who differ', which is exactly the kind of disordered desire from which the Church needs to be rescued.[867]

Such a picture of self-denial while profound in its sociological and virtue-based critique of how self-denial has been taught, does not apply a theology of divine reason, law, or moral order as integral elements to such self-denial. *LLF* departs from such basic features of Christian moral theology, as traditionally understood. One example is Robert Song's noteworthy account of gay unions as an eschatological charism, which I discuss at the end of the chapter. By contrast, Hooker enjoins both Aquinas' '*Gratia non tollit naturam, sed perficit'* (grace does not destroy nature but perfects it) and a protestant theology of grace and predestination, reminiscent of Augustine. These two 'ways' of nature and grace were at the heart of the conflict in the Elizabethan religious establishment which Hooker sought to vindicate by synthesising them: 'the want of exact distinguishing between these two waies [viz. of Nature and Grace] and observing what they have common what peculiar hath bene the cause.'[868]

Hooker's interpretation of reason and nature is of vital importance for renewing and informing any innovation vis-à-vis desire worked toward in a scripturally-authoritative, Anglican frame. Don Compier attempts to align Hooker's work toward liberal innovation through laws of reason and nature 'imprinted in the minds of all children of men' in contradistinction to the Puritans.[869] Hooker believes that 'scripture can teach us the sacred authoritie of the scripture… we would do well [however] to avoid modes of moral persuasion which either consist of the bare quotation of chapters and verses from Scripture or of appeals to the inviolable authority of private conscience.'[870] What Compier fails to see, however, is that the laws of nature are underpinned by the law of a natural desire for something greater than reason or nature.[871] God's love renews our eyes to see truth in the scripture and by the fear of God, to live obediently in it. This is not crude biblicism but a thicker sacramental doctrine of scripture present in Hooker.

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[866] Ibid, 237.
[867] Ibid.
[868] *Lawes*, V:313.19-23.
[869] Compier, D. H. 'Hooker on the Authority of Scripture in Matters of Morality' in *RCCC,* 253-255; *Lawes* II.8.6.
[870] Ibid, 258-259.
[871] Needlands, W. D. 'Hooker on Scripture, Reason, and Tradition' in *RCCC*, 83-85.

Joyce argues in a way that maps analogously onto my critique of *LLF*: '[Compier's] article demonstrates very cogently the perils of starting with a modern ethical problem and, then, going to Hooker's text to see if one can unearth ideas or concepts that appear to be of relevance to it, and of quoting him selectively; such an approach is inevitably going to lead to some distorted interpretations of his text.'[872] My account of GCA is not so much seeking a justification through Hooker, but rather, takes on a constructively faithful stance from Hooker's very fine balance of scripture, reason, and law reminiscent of his own approach to ecclesial conflict between Puritans and Rome. Joyce argues that Hooker sees scripture as authoritative because the Spirit engages desire and reason as an experience: 'Hooker concludes that the final authority of scripture is *sui generis* 'ministering farther reason through the operation of the Holy Spirit.'[873] GCA, in a similar way, holds desire and reason together through its queerness and the Holy Spirit's affirmation of the created order and natural structures in resurrection. Contrary to Atkinson, who underplays the role of the Church in scriptural discernment, Joyce sees Hooker's understanding of scripture as authoritative in and through its sacramental reading collectively in the Church.[874]

In order to cut the Hookerian knot, I contend, akin to Thomas Cranmer, that what the heart loves, the will chooses, and the mind justifies and, therefore, 'an affection could only be overcome by a more vehement affection.'[875] In Hooker, scripture quickens the gracious transformation of the hear but cannot produce it, requiring the Spirit's application by illumining reason and awakening a 'proto-erotic' desire for God above all.[876] When the heart and desire is transformed by the Spirit through scripture, the will chooses a new path by the scriptures' wisdom and the mind seeks to justify it.[877] I think this cuts the knot of arguments over innovation and scriptural authority in Hooker when it comes to homosexuality. A noetic release of control is needed before the Church and the gay community can see the viability of the deeper, peregrine way of GCA. Coakley's account of transformation in prayer at the deepest level and O'Donovan's moral theology give us a lens to adjudicate conflicting interpretations of Hooker. GCA is an instantiation of O'Donovan's christological ethics and Coakley's new asceticism. Together they work to reform the heart in the crucible of God's love and moral order so that scripture's truth can be ministered to the gay body and mind in non-repressive obedience.

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[872] Joyce, *Richard*, 105.
[873] Ibid, 116.
[874] Ibid, 117.
[875] Null, A. *Thomas Cranmer's Doctrine of Repentance: Renewing the Power to Love* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), 100-101.
[876] *GSS*, 220; *TNA*, 21.
[877] Ibid, 99.

GCA seeks this Cranmer/Hooker-like third beyond the warn territory of conservative and liberal arguments.[878] On issues of the erotic body, I argue here that Hooker's theology of scripture supports GCA as it honours laws of nature and reason elevating them in the desire for union with God. The sacramental word lives in, feeds, and leads us through scripture as the Anglican first authority nourishing ascesis with our desires, and the persons they desire leading to renewed use in worship of God. Due to the limits of this thesis, I discuss the lacunae GCA generates through Hooker's synthesis of reason, nature and desire.

Song argues in a way reminiscent of Rowan Williams that a non-perverse use of the same-sex other in participative joy is not just possible for gay couples but prophetically and eschatologically upends the heterosexism latent in conservative theologies.[879] Taking Hooker's line, a theological innovation is possible from scripture in Song. Song takes a similar line to Williams who argues that the innovation of a gay union is not just possible but properly Hookerian:

> not because of a trivial relativist view that what's true of God changes according to circumstances, but because of the opposite convocation, that God remains God, a 'law unto himself,' and, for precisely that reason, can only be discerned in the 'following' of divine action within the mutable world, in a process of learning, not a moment of transparent vision or of simple submission to a decree.[880]

Williams' argument here presses strongly on one side of Hookerian methodology as a participable apophaticism reminiscent of Coakley where God is a law unto himself. Instead of emphasising the importance of nature's law for us, Williams seeks innovation from scripture and tradition through reason. Moreover, unlike O'Donovan, he neglects the eschatological restoration of creation. Nature is a mutable thing that is subject to God, rather than God establishing a created *telos* to which desire is called in Christ. Like Ward's redemptive erotics, Song does not take the law of reason and nature into account as an epistemic anchor for our interaction with desire and scripture and even more importantly, he neglects the way that the sexually-differentiated body is a created sign in marriage to reflect and embody the love of the Trinity. I suggest that a more thickly-textured Hookerian approach leads convincingly toward GCA, and does not move in Song or Williams' particular direction.

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878 Joyce, *Richard*, 103-148.
879 *CC*, 60-61; Williams, 'The Body's Grace' in *QT*, 313.
880 Williams, R. 'Richard Hooker: Philosopher, Anglican, Contemporary' in *RCCC,* 374.

The critique here is that *LLF* suffers from a similar tendency in Song and Wards which skip over Jesus' vindication of creation's goodness thereby undoing the link between the creation of sexual difference and the holy identity of the Trinitarian Creator. This omission of created order undermines the pastoral capacity of the Hookerian resources *LLF* employs to assist gay Christians to read their bodies well and use creation delightfully in God. Instead, a view of *eudaimonia* or human flourishing untested by Hooker's laws of reason and nature takes precedence in *LLF*'s commendable breadth of representation of views, and yet deficient account of GCA. GCA reveals a tendency in contemporary Anglican theology in which our desires and lives no longer have to accord with Hooker's laws and so the sacramental existence of the Church is undermined. The patristic view that the holy and rightful place for sexual use of created goods is in marriage between a man and woman is represented well in *LFF*. However, this paucity at connecting same-sex desire, created order, and bodily hermeneutics signals that *LLF*'s approach needs further testing to avoid susceptibility to non-Hookerian innovation, and other orders of love from the *saeculum*.[881]

Through this discussion of *LFF* we see that GCA is a robustly Hookerian stance, which resists the Kantian elevation of (heterosexual) marriage. It is not simply a positive law that is easily observable in nature but as with the use of any good, it requires grace to discern, and, therefore, restoration through Christ's redemption of the cosmic order. Kant unhelpfully enshrines marriage within a juridical moralism, where its theological mystery is lost, reflecting the signified or eschatological reality of union between church and Christ. By reducing *eros* to the natural use of sex, he presents a disordered, reductive use of law which spurns the theodicean element of the Fall and same-sex desire (especially the *uti-frui* distinction which connects creation to the ultimate *res* to be enjoyed, its Creator). As Kant stated:

> For the natural use that one sex makes of the other's sexual organs is enjoyment, for which one gives itself up to the other… But acquiring a human being is at the same time acquiring the whole person, since a person is an absolute unity. Hence it is not only admissible for the sexes to surrender and to accept each other for enjoyment under the condition of marriage, but it is possible for them to do so only under this condition.[882]

Queer theologian, Paul Fletcher criticises Kant's approach to ordered good through juridical morality in marriage as an ideology of morality in practice which 'demands a reciprocal

[881] *LLF*, 25-26.
[882] Kant, 1996b: 62 in Fletcher, 'Antimarriage…' in *QT*, 261.

possession that itself requires the sovereignty of the self and the rejection of various modes of desire.'[883] He goes on further to criticise this rejection of desire in Kant: 'Desire that rules the body – be it desire for intimacy, the divine, or erotic enjoyment – can only rightfully occur once it is mastered by the law and occurs within the parameters of the contractual, juridical agreement that we call marriage. Kant is intent on divinising order *qua* order in moral terms.'[884] Rather, Fletcher argues that 'The starting point for such reflections and practices, however, must be a rejection of the ideology of moral values and that violence of sacrificial origins, of the laws that divide the Christian. Only then is a truly radical Christian eroticism possible.'[885]

Through a close reading of Hooker's views of desire and natural law, this chapter has revealed how GCA helps to discern that there is another way through the Kantian approach to marriage and order, and Fletcher's critique of it. The Kantian option reduces marriage and legitimate eroticism to a juridical or deontic reality. Kant risks upholding the kind of natural idolatry that GCA seeks to resist by queering it eschatologically. Fletcher queers this Kantian repristination of 'nature', on the other hand, opting for a radical Christian eroticism which seeks to upend any order or orderly goodness in creation. Such extremes must be avoided by a more robust response to either option, and GCA is such a *via media*. Fletcher's form of queering betrays the vital christological anchor of resurrection where the original creation is rescued from sin and death, vindicated, affirmed, and then, exceeded or transformed. In an attempt to free desire, Fletcher undermines natural order, and instils the very dualism he is attempting to flee:

> The resurrection of the body is at odds with the management of life… where pleasure is immune to economies of value or price because it is given as an experience and therefore invaluable. Pleasure, as an apprehension of transcendence is radically mundane. Pleasure is outside of morality. True pleasure does not pursue, at any costs, the empty illusion of a righteous economy of sexual desire.[886]

Fletcher's queer theology attempts to queer law or order equating morality with a Kantian-style reductionism or natural idolatry in a way Hooker, and Anglican ethics would not allow. He objects to the misuse of law and created order by erasing it. Such a duality or binary between this kind of queer approach and natural-law arguments are, then, 'queered' by GCA. The renewal of *eros* through grace that gay celibacy prizes locates a deeper way into the ordered texture of

[883] *QT*, 261.
[884] Ibid, 262.
[885] Ibid, 265
[886] Ibid.

creation through a robust christological and pneumatological participation in God's vindication, restoration, and transformation of creation.

5.3 Conclusion: Desire's Home in God's City and the Transformation of Queerness Through Angelical Holiness

Hooker's account of order and participation reveals the paradox of law and desire, where human beings in Christ's own pattern exclude themselves from certain created goods for the greater inclusion in their transformation through Christ. I have shown that Hooker, the most innovative of the reformers upon which the Anglican Church is founded, was clear that where a positive command was given in scripture, the law of nature is described and proscribed. Hooker's theology provides profound justification for GCA in a distinctly Anglican sense. Gay celibates are a reminder of the ascetical paradox of self-denial leading to resurrection flourishing which accompanies not only the Church's joy, discipleship, and vocation to worship, but covenant faithfulness to God. GCA is part, then, of the cosmic undoing of Adam's curse and its nefarious, natural idolatries to reflect the mystery of the Church's union with Christ. Through an exploration of *Lawes* and the contemporary approach of *LFF*, this thesis has helped us to glimpse the way in which GCA represents a queerer position than the gay or heterosexist contention over marriage. The laws of nature and reason and the participable order of desire, twin-elements of human and divine knowing, are vital in confirming legitimate asceticism, guiding just moral action and sanctifying moral agency.

These two parts of being human ensure that our participation aligns non-idolatrously with the divine *logos* of God in creation. Reason and desire are joined again as shared elements in our image-bearing nature. They allow us to know and live out God's love through the Holy Spirit in creation. At the heart of Christ's own resurrected life is an epistemic healing of our hermeneutic capacity to affectively and rationally read and rightly use creation in troubled bodies. Through exclusion from the good of marriage which witnesses to creation's vindication, gay celibates, alongside the pilgrim throng of the Church, are brought into the greater inclusion and 'angelical' knowledge of God's holiness and transcendent identity, relativizing and affirming the roles of moral order, desire, and sanctified queerness in worship. Hooker, by bringing reason and experience together in a sapiential theology, helps us thread a way forward which incorporates the experience of celibate queerness in contemporary Anglican theology of desire.[887] The queer

[887] Williams, R. 'Hooker: Philosopher, Anglican, Contemporary' in RCCC, 370-371.

incapacity to construct gender or an 'originary sex' complicates, and opens human experience to a greater sacramental meaning, and rational participation through Jesus Christ – a kind of sacral *felix culpa*. Queerness complicates our fallen natural theology of the world to make space for holiness and a christological use of the good which recovers nature from death, oppression, and idolatry.

This thesis' treatment of gay celibacy has highlighted the need in contemporary Anglican theology to pastorally engage and meet the real lives of disciples. By bringing an erotic renewal and the ethics of created order together, GCA provides a third, robustly Hookerian way to ethical discernment through cruciform participation which purges and elevates the role of desire in the way that Hooker describes here:

> For man doth not seem to rest satisfied, either with fruition of that wherewith his life is preserved, or with performance of such actions as advance him most deservedly in estimation; but doth further covet, yea oftentimes manifestly pursue with great sedulity and earnestness, that which cannot stand him in any stead for vital use; that which exceedeth the reach of sense; yea somewhat above capacity of reason, somewhat divine and heavenly, which with hidden exultation it rather surmiseth than conceiveth; somewhat it seeketh, and what that is directly it knoweth not, yet very intentive desire thereof doth so incite it, that all other known delights and pleasures are laid aside, they give place to the search of this but only suspected desire.[888]

The Hookerian witness of Christian pilgrims, of which GCA reminds us, is two-fold. It requires: i) non-idolatrously living into the law of nature as known through scripture, reason, and tradition; and ii) angelical queerness which stretches toward union with God through the participable order of desire. The intersection of these two elements in Hooker's legal epistemology represented in GCA invites the Church to revaluate and test the true pilgrim pathway to living faithfully as the City of God. Our exploration of Hooker has given us distinctly Anglican language to describe how GCA points to Christ who himself relativizes and vindicates created goods by enflaming desire toward our right use or relinquishing of them in the Spirit. Christ is the Beloved who transforms our groaning desire enabling us to forgo or use created goods with eschatological patience and angelical joy.

[888] *Lawes* I:115.2-13.

CONCLUSION: CALLING NATURAL IDOLATRIES AND UNTESTED QUEERNESS TO HOLINESS

The decision to proffer a thoroughgoing treatment of gay celibacy in a time of ongoing strife over gay marriage was motivated by the need for a deeper theology of celibacy which could describe the lives of a particular LGBTQI+ population within Anglicanism. This population, while embodying the Church of England's current teaching on holy matrimony being between a man and woman, is often missed in the negative space of that affirmation. Gay celibates contravene the assumption that queerness is reduced to gay marriage apologetics and instead reveal that queerness is a far more diverse reality than is often assumed and involves contradiction and paradox. By drawing together the rich resources of Augustine, O'Donovan, Coakley, and Ward, differing elements of Anglican theology have been able to converse with GCA as a traditionally-Hookerian innovation. Through my analysis of four contemporary theologians, I have offered a timely, ambitious, and systematic treatment of same-sex desire, and a rigorous response to Oliver O'Donovan's call for a distinctly evangelical account of gay self-consciousness.

This critical study of GCA bridges Christian ethics and queer theology, representing the beginnings of a distinctly Anglican theology of desire which can describe and face the challenge of ethics and theodicy for gay Christians. By revealing how GCA represents a peregrine queerness, a way is opened to move beyond an apologetic focus on marriage and the sexual good toward the holy witness to the resurrection where sex and marriage will be transformed. The erotic theology behind GCA, which is reminiscent of Sarah Coakley's new asceticism and Ward's queer critique of modernist erotics, can also remove the prejudice leveraged against (gay) celibates and those vowed religious who are often wrongfully associated with 'oppressive' traditional or revisionist apologetics. By articulating this renewed theology of desire, my account of GCA has not only elucidated lacunae in Christian ethics and queer theology in which there exists no comparable study to date but also points to the active role gay Christians can play in contributing to redeeming the Church's erotics. They represent a sacramental queerness which can challenge the wider Church, as Ward evokes, to its calling as an alternative erotic community.

This thesis has provided a novel treatment of how gay celibates in their exclusion from the created goods of marriage paradoxically facilitate a greater, more ecstatic inclusion in the transformation of those created goods through non-sexual *eros*. As part of the pilgrim throng, gay celibates help the Church safeguard the good of marriage and surrounding politics from wrong

use by reminding married pilgrims of the greater horizon where sexual goods are contingent and friendship is the ultimate and eternal good in Christ. As alien pilgrims, unable to rest in the City of Earth's erotic politics, this thesis has shown how gay celibates remind the Church of its cruciform and eschatological calling to exclusion from certain created goods for a greater inclusion in the redemptive joy of resurrection in the heavenly city.

I have also explained how GCA plays a vital role in renewing the Church's knowledge of its theological authorities and its theological anthropology. Gay identity, as lived through GCA, is 'a home to venture out from and explore...', and a reflection of the 'saving message [that]… you may be free from the constraints of your identities.'[889] As Coakley reminds us, gender and erotic desire is *in via,* interrupted by and fulfilled by desire for God and the christological work of the Spirit in our lives. The celibate gay Christian arrives as a prophetic harbinger of the life of the Kingdom which seeks an ascetical queerness that tests itself in the created order and beckons the body into the resurrection fullness of Christ. As Benedict XVI opines, 'an intoxicated and undisciplined *eros*, then, is not an ascent 'in ecstasy' but a fall, a degradation of man.'[890] This thesis has shown how the erotics which motivate GCA emerge as an example of this redemptively ecstatic ascent, which resists anthropological degradation beyond moral order. Through GCA's perspective as a bodily ascesis with a queer intensity, contemporary Anglican theology is invited to morally learn from and discover again the joy of God's statutes and laws in scripture affirmed in Christ's vindication of the cosmic order.

The thesis has also replied to potential objections showing how GCA is rewarded with a name better than the created goods of marriage like the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 who was likely among the first Gentiles to be baptised and to receive Christ's life-giving name. In response to a common objection that not all gay people are called to celibacy, I have shown how celibacy is a default calling for all Christians unless otherwise called, particularly straight or non-gay Christians who do not find a spouse and have unwanted celibacy. GCA is both a joyous and troubled gift and shared commonly as the default gift and calling of all Christians. For those gay Christians who do not feel easily called, the troubled element of inordinate desire represents a martyrdom-like sacrifice which requires a fitting impartation of grace due to the misalignment of same-sex desire with the created order.

[889] *ACWTB*, 136.
[890] *Deus Caritas Est*, 4.

If there was no pathway for queer flourishing because of the Church of England's view of marriage then this thesis would conclude against it. However, GCA consists in a robustly christological pathway of vocation (duty) and gift (calling) where marriage is relativised as unnecessary for human flourishing and celibacy returned to its original place as the better calling which can maintain both queer flourishing and the created order's vindication. Celibacy cannot be imposed, but it is called to as a vocation, a duty of offering up all our desires to God in surrender. I have shown why the Church, then, must become a place where the particular burden and gift of GCA can be supported and received. Like the eunuch of Isaiah 56, gay celibate Christians can experience intense lack in their vocation alongside other Christians and yet through the transformation of *eros,* can be given Jesus' name which is 'better than that of sons and daughters.'[891] Isaiah prophesies the christological future when the gentiles and sexual minorities (eunuchs) would be embraced and engrafted into godliness. From this Isaianic promise, this thesis has also demonstrated why the traditionalist and revisionist discourses which have tended to produce the old polarity of gay liberation and oppressive dogmatism must be resisted and queered to foster a faithful evangelical innovation as Justin Welby seeks in *LFF* which does not betray scripture, reason, or tradition by facing the theodicean challenge of same-sex desire head on and queering the natural idolatries that cover it over.

Through a thoroughgoing account of redeemed erotics, this thesis has also provided further clarity by denoting how GCA resists repressive or bad, stoical forms of celibacy through healthy sublimation or redirection of desire.[892] Good celibacy emerges from loving self-gift, and a renewed moral conscience for gay bodies, and represents, therefore, a non-repressive, mature sublimation. Such a distinction between good and bad celibacy is yet to be sufficiently delineated in the Church of England's moral and pastoral theology.[893] GCA parses Anglican theology of desire to make space for the Church to prize the even greater glory or fullness which exists beyond sexual fecundity and in good celibacy which faces the theodicean challenge of same-sex desire.

For the Church to cover over a holy renewal toward reordered *eros* is to reject the gift that these gay disciples and their theodicean courage represent for the Church. Through a description of the dilemma gay celibates face, the thesis has also highlighted the high pastoral price incurred due to the constantly heavy burden of being mischaracterised by warring factions. Not having

[891] Isaiah 56:3b-6.
[892] Matt. 16:24.
[893] TNA, 50.

such a sacrifice honoured or represented, but held with suspicion by two 'sides' of an ideological battle has often kept gay celibates silent and in queer grief. Instead, the thesis has shown a path forward for the troubled gift of the gay body's queerness. From this trouble, GCA is imbued with affective power to stretch forward to the heavenly horizon and gift of new creation life where created good shines forth and is transformed.

GCA represents a robustly Hookerian *via media* that recognises the holy calling of and theodicean wrestle of queer bodies in the Church's conversation. Rather than seeing the question of same-sex desire as a purely ethical quandary, this thesis has revealed why it must first be approached as a theodicy question, requiring profound pastoral investment. As Coakley states: '…for we go on, in the great Anglican tradition, with debate, riposte and counter-proposal. In a post-post-modern era, there is no better way to be systematic.'[894] This thesis is such a counter-proposal, leading the conversation into a third, *via media*, which prizes the all-sufficiency of the Triune God through an Augustinian ethics of well-ordered friendship. In the midst of the groaning trouble of other orders of love, GCA embodies one intense instantiation of this friendship with Christ and the Holy Spirit. The Anglican conversation needs the brave moral agency of these queerly celibate *peregrini* who reveal how the contemporary theological treatment of desire has been overly-defined by the natural politics of (gay) marriage and heterosexism. As *LLF* states, 'To live rightly in response to God is to live as we were created to live… There is no shortcut: listening for the voice of God demands a careful, self-critical and ongoing conversation between our faith and our knowledge of the created world.'[895] By queering the queer, gay celibates call the Church of England not just to receive this witness but to lead queerness out of its fallen tendency toward erasing created order into angelical holiness.

I wrote this thesis to articulate how gay celibate Christians reflect an intimate part of Jesus' own sacrifice. Gay celibates, recognising the misalignment of their desire with the created order, live, alongside other fellow celibate pilgrims, in a Christ-like sacrifice of giving up marriage and sex. Both Christ's life and GCA call the Church to value the eternal good friendship in its ethics of human flourishing and *eros*. GCA is not a self-repressive practice or way of life but an erotic, love-charged asceticism arising from the joy of discovering how to live within the tension of one's created nature and in anticipation of its transformative destiny in Christ. Gay celibates belong among the heavenly aliens called to resist other orders of love and to confirm the pilgrim path which leads home in Christ. By drawing the weight of bodily queerness away from the

[894] Coakley, S. 'A Response to Oliver O'Donovan…', 192.
[895] *LLF*, 340.

dialectical snare of repression and libertinism, the Church can receive GCA's witness which carries the vulnerability of desire into the Father's love. GCA represents a positive contribution which reveals that the created order does not stand in the way of redeeming fallen idolatries of gender and sex but is rather vital to it by bringing queerness to rest in holiness. Alongside their fellow pilgrims, gay celibates point to the holy love known in Christ's powerful word and the Spirit's enflaming of desire, which calls human beings to rejoice in their ultimate purpose: the holy joy of worshipping God forever as one unified but diverse body of Christ.

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