

TO BELIEVE WITH ALL YOUR SENSES: THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

John Updike was right when he wrote in “Roger’s Version”: “The resurrection of the flesh is the most emphatic and intrinsic of orthodox doctrines, though in our present twilight of faith the most difficult to believe.” We shall try to bring some clarity into the present “twilight of faith” at this point.

I. THE BODY

Elisabeth: The resurrection of the body? There are a good many questions here.

Resurrection is the central theme of Christian theology. But the umbrella of this idea covers the most varied wishes and images: hope for a kingdom of God; the immortality of the soul; a life after death; and a reunion with the dead who have gone before us. According to a questionnaire circulated in Germany, “there is a widespread belief . . . that another or next life will follow” (K. P. Jörns). But the enquiry showed that beliefs of this kind have cut themselves off from dogmatics. The essential point is the “that” of this perspective, not the “how.”

But if we look closely, we see that the central theme of Christian theology isn’t simply “resurrection”; it is “the resurrection of the body.” This is the way we find it in Pauline theology. This is the form in which it has passed into dogmatics. And this is what we find in our creed.

And in this form resurrection has become a problem for many people, and many Christians, women and men. Bodies are present to us every day, in beauty and in frightfulness. Bodies aren’t covered up, are not hidden, are no longer subject to any tabu. The media confront us every day with myriad pictures of dead, murdered, drowned, violated bodies.

Can we set the resurrection of the body against this?

Modern industry has made the surgical and aesthetic transformation of our bodies possible. Has this anything to do with the resurrection of the body?

Bodies can be cannibalized. Body parts can be transplanted. The human body evidently has latent potentialities for prolonging life which are still unknown.

On the other hand, a holistic view of the human being has again made it clear to us that the body isn’t just a physical shell for a spirit to which we have to ascribe a higher value. It is an independent organ, with which we experience and think.

Bodies with their terrors, with their potentialities, with their beauty provoke us to think again about the resurrection of the body. Can it still have anything to do with these bodies which horrify us, which stimulate science and excite the

imagination, which allow us to think feelingly? What could it mean today, to believe in the resurrection of the body?

Jürgen: “Resurrection of the Body.” A few reminders of the Christian tradition.

Before we go searching for answers to your question for the present meaning of the “resurrection of the body,” let us look back to the Christian tradition and ask what our Church Fathers and Mothers had meant with this topic. Why is this exciting and vexatious concept of “the resurrection of the flesh” in our apostolic creed?

1. A first reason lies, I believe, in the general tendency of all biblical sayings about the intentions and ends of God. All the ways of God end in embodiment and on this earth. God created his image, male and female, out of this earth. We are earthly creatures. God’s word and wisdom became “flesh” and dwells among us on this earth. God pours out God’s lifegiving Spirit “upon all flesh” on this earth. How can the history of God with us mortal human beings not end with the “resurrection of the flesh” and eternal life? Christian faith is not about ensoulment, but of embodiment, not about the sublimation of our senses, but their illumination. What matters is the embodiment of the whole life and the life of this earth, on which righteousness shall dwell. Therefore: Life must be lived!

2. There is some confusion in the question how to translate “resurrection of the flesh” in the apostolic creed. Why? Because in the West we are all somehow Platonists in our thinking and our Christianity is often a sort of “Platonism for the people,” as Friedrich Nietzsche mocked. *Resurrectio carnis* is the latin word, and Church father Tertullian has written a famous treatise, where he declared the flesh to be the key of salvation (*caro cardo salutis*). Because the translation with “flesh” seemed to many embarrassing, they decided to translate with “body,” *Leib* in German, because this sounds more personal. Finally Catholic and Protestant churches agreed on the word “resurrection of the dead” because this sounds completely personal. But does this mean the same as in Tertullian’s time?

No! If we go back to the Hebrew roots *kol basar*, “all flesh,” we find that “all the living” are meant. It follows that human beings shall rise in association with other living things—animals and plants—in the living space of this earth, not apart from them. We shall be redeemed *with*, not *from*, this earth. The apostle Paul knew about this, when he heard the groaning of the whole creation, longing together with us and our bodies for redemption (Rom 8:19ff.).

3. How would it sound if we would say “resurrection of life” instead of resurrection of the flesh, or the body, or the dead? With “body” we don’t mean the soulless body as an object, we also don’t mean the scientifically objectified body or medically treated organs, but the experienced and lived body, with which I am directly and spontaneously identical: I am body = This body is me. This is not the manipulated body, with bodybuilding and face-lifting. It is my own individual Gestalt or whole configuration of my life story.

Life means here the lived life, not un-lived life, loved life, not unloved life, life that is affirmed and accepted, not life that is rejected and denied. Lived life is identified bodiliness; un-lived life is estranged bodiliness.

I would therefore like to talk about the resurrection of the lived life. With this we would accept death is part of life, and believe in the victory of life over death. We would also affirm, that eternal life can only be lived in a body: "The body will rise, all of the body, the identical body, the entire body," as Tertullian said.

For this new holistic view of the world of the human body we have to thank psychosomatic medicine, ecological philosophy, and very particularly feminist theology.

The age-old, but nevertheless astonishing "theology of the flesh" of Tertullian proves to have long-term effects, and not just on John Updike.

Elisabeth: I could agree but I must raise some critical questions. First of all, I see an important difference: How do women understand life and how do men understand life? How do women experience their body and how do men experience their body?

If we examine the matter more closely, we see that attitudes to the body are dependent on the way the body was experienced by the people who determined public and theological opinion, and they were men. The woman's body, with its capacity for bearing children, and its rhythms, was still trammelled by ancient ideas of being at times unclean and in general seductive, of being weaker than the male body and undependable.

In spite of all the bodily acceptance which Christianity managed to achieve, there was still mistrust and a defensiveness which could continually fall back on Augustine for support. And which again and again had to call on the strong arm of the church and the state to control these dubious bodies. The Augustinian tradition runs right through the middle ages, maintaining that the likeness to God only begins *ubi sexus nullus est*—that is to say, in the uppermost realm of the spirit beyond the body. We still find remnants of this kind of thinking in the reasons put forward for rejecting the ordination of women to the priesthood. Hildegard of Bingen's attempt to understand "the feminine as the primal model of intact and whole humanity" was only listened to again in our own day.

So affirmation of the resurrection of the body still remained an ambivalent and one-sided affair.

It was only feminist research and feminist theology that for the first time made people generally aware of the catastrophic traditions which discriminated against women as the image of God, and then the body moved again into the centre of theology. But it was not the pure, beautiful, unscathed body, but the body that was tortured, raped and exploited. The bodies of women above all, but the bodies of men too. The body in our daily experience, the body in its weakness, the body in the society submitted and exploited.

“The redemption *from* the body” became for many Christian women and men liberation *of* the body, and that is not just a change of words: it means a paradigm change with far-reaching implications.

It was not in the End-time and eternity, and not through a resurrection at the Last Judgment, that there was to be a new bodiliness. The thrust of theological speaking and acting was not the redemption from a sinful body, the “sinful little body.” The goal was the liberation of the body from violence and exploitation, already here and now.

The psychological situation corresponded to the social analysis. Whereas for centuries the body had been seen as under the control of mind, soul and will, now the body had “come of age,” so to speak, and moved to the center of a new theological thinking. The body as God’s good creation, trusted not distrusted either by women or men, the body with which we experience, in which we encounter the Other, with which we feel and think. Liberating theology began to see in the social, but also in the psychological-patriarchal hierarchies the sin in and against God’s creation in the humiliated and insulted.

When we talk about body today, we ought always to ask: is the body we mean also the body which gives birth, in which life grows, and in which life can also die? Is it the body which isn’t only young, beautiful and dynamic, but is also disabled, sick and infirm? Is it the body with which we love, encounter the other, master everyday life, feel and think? Is it not just the shell of our spirit and our soul but the force-field of our life?

When we think about this, then we can speak of the resurrection of life.

2. RESURRECTION

Jürgen: Let us now try to link these new experiences of the body with the ancient symbols of hope of the “resurrection.” I shall begin, for a change, with a leap into dogmatic theology.

Vita mutatur non tollitur says the preface to the Catholic mass for the dead. Life is changed but not destroyed. How to conceive this fundamental transformation of the body?

The idea of a “resurrection of the dead” always presupposes death, and is clearly bodily resurrection, if we take the Hebrew roots seriously. Instead of resurrection, Paul can also talk about *zoopoiesis*, meaning the giving-life to mortal bodies through the spirit of the resurrection which “dwells” in them (Rom. 8:11).

The apostle Paul knew about the special character of the life-giving female body, saying: “The whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs until now. . . . We ourselves groan within ourselves waiting for the redemption of our body” (Rom 8:22).

And this is life-power before death. In 1 Cor. 15:51, he calls the same process transformation and according to Phil. 3:21 our “lowly” body is to resemble the transfigured body of the risen Christ. If we talk about resurrection, we think of the death it presupposes; if we think of *zoopoiesis*, we mean the lived-life already here

and now. Transformation presupposes life as what Thomas Aquinas called *forma corporis*, the determining principle of a living body, or in Goethe's words, "determined form which livingly develops"; transfiguration anticipates the transfiguration in the beauty of the divine life.

According to these ancient ideas, what comes into being is not a different life, it is this lived, loved, and mortal life which becomes different; it will be healed, reconciled, and perfected, and in this way arrives at its divine destiny; for "God created the human being in the image of his own eternity" (Wis 2:23). Death is the violence of separation, resurrection is the power that unites what has been separated.

When is this to happen? "The resurrection of the dead" is a universal, eschatological symbol. On the one side all the dead are meant, and on the other side the annihilation of death itself is the cosmic equivalent of this personal idea: "And death shall be no more" (Rev. 21:4). For the Christian faith, resurrection is a process which began with Christ's resurrection "from the dead," continues in the bodily indwelling Spirit, who is the giver of life, and will be completed in "the eschatological moment" (1 Cor. 15:52).

When will this "eschatological moment" take place—the moment when all the dead are to rise to eternal life? In that moment eternity breaks into time, and in the face of eternity, all times are simultaneous. "Before the face of God the times are not reckoned," explained Martin Luther. "Thus the first man Adam is as close to him as he who will be born last before the Last Day, for God sees time not according to its length, but transversely, athwart time." But that means, conversely, that all the hours of our deaths reach, or arrive at, this "eschatological moment" of eternity. So when is the resurrection of the dead to take place? My answer is: immediately after the death of every individual. "Today you will be with me in paradise." That is the doctrine of "the resurrection in death." The perfecting of the human being, body and soul, takes place immediately at death. The resurrection of the dead happens in the movement of eternity, contrary to the transitory course of time, which moves from the last moment of the first. It is like a bolt of lightning, lighting up synchronically everything that has happened in sequence in the progress of time. Today this idea is supported by Catholic theologians too, and according to Karl Rahner is not heretical.

This brings us back to the question: What is it that is raised, reconciled, transformed, and transfigured? And we answer: It is the whole, lived and loved life, and, in that life, above all the primal power of life which Paul calls in Romans 8:11 the "indwelling" resurrection Spirit of God—an idea which is also, incidentally, linked with a reminder of Jewish Shekinah theology: in the lived moment we experience in ourselves divine power. In surrendering to this life we participate in God's love for the world. Out of this, as we hope, new, eternal life will emerge.

What age shall we be in the resurrection? A strange question. But people are asking. My answer is, in every age, in eternity, all our ages will be simultaneous. Shall we turn into angels? No, I don't think so; we are creatures of the earth, and in the resurrection it is this earthly and mortal life here that will be transfigured. So the

gender differences in which we are created will remain too. Shall we then go to heaven? No, I think, we aren't applicants for angelic status. We are creatures of the earth, and with our resurrection we also wait for "the new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:13). The new eternal life we personally hope for is not without a location, it is not somewhere in nowhere; its place is the new earth in "the life of the world to come" as the Nicene Creed puts it. I personally think we will be redeemed when we are called by our names (as Isaiah 43:1 says) and rise. Our names mean our person, our whole biography as women and men, and our lived community with one another.

Elisabeth: I must again interrupt your dogmatic explanations, and ask about that "power this side of death." What does it look like? It has received much too little attention. Unless we include it in our thinking about eternity, we overlook the real meaning of eternity.

For the emphasis of previous theological statements has meanwhile shifted dramatically. In feminist theology "resurrection" came to be understood as an uprising and rebellion.

In one women's group we were puzzling over what this weighty term "resurrection" could say to us in our struggle against unjust structures, when an elderly little woman stood up and said: "I am standing up—that is, resurrection!"

Uprising against sexism and racism. Rising out of our own warptness and false feelings of guilt! What had been traditionally understood as resurrection came to be suspected of being a putting-off to a better world hereafter, or a narcotic for escaping from the problems of the present. But now resurrection came back into everyday life and into social reality.

Biblical stories about healings offered a graphic background for this. When the stories about Jairus's daughter (Matt. 9:25) and Peter's mother-in-law (Matt. 8:15) talk about their standing up and getting to their feet after sickness, we find the same word, *egeirein*, which is used for the resurrection of Jesus (Mark 16:6).

Martha's confession of faith in the story about the raising of Lazarus stresses in a unique way—and unlike the traditional confession of Peter—that "Christ, the Son of God, has come into the cosmos." Here the dynamis, the living energy of God, is already healingly active. Here eternal life already begins in the person who becomes the source of God's water of life (John 4:14).

Starting from a viewpoint like this, feminist theologians now began to develop their own emphases. For Carter Heyward, the resurrection was now no longer "an event in the life of Jesus; it happened in the life of his friends." For Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza there are two versions of resurrection in the New Testament. According to the one, traditional, male version, Jesus has ascended into heaven and sits on the right hand of God; and this is the message passed on by the authorities.

The feminine version is that the tomb is empty, but that the women are told that he has gone before them to Galilea, and that they will see him there. Discipleship means finding the Risen One again in the little unimportant people and in their struggle to live; it is there that he is present.

That there is a life before death, that resurrection should be understood as belonging to this world, and that it is marked by a passionate struggle for social justice: that became the tenor of feminist theology.

But today we have to ask: is this viewport enough? Doesn't it exclude fears and hopes? Doesn't it reduce human beings to will, reason and energy?

"What use is feminist theology to me now?" asked the Innsbruck theologian Herlinde Pissarek-Hudelist at the end of her life, after she had been struck down by cancer. And she answered drastically: "A dirt." How can the power before death become a comfort beyond death?

Jürgen: What is *life-power before death*? People who live in the light of the divine love become capable of happiness. All their senses come alive and they open themselves for the beauty of this life. But they become capable of suffering too, and feel the pains and the disappointments of life. Ultimately speaking, people who love life become alive from within but at the same time outwardly vulnerable and mortal. It is love that lets us experience what life and death really are. We can easily make the countercheck: people who lose their love for life become apathetic and indifferent. They pass the world by, as if it didn't exist. They are turned to stone, even though they are still alive. Earlier, they were described as "dead souls." Today we might say they are like "zombies," walking corpses.

Rejected, unloved, denied life is dead life. What we experience here is then *death before life*. This is brought out very well in the biblical image about the grain of wheat. Unless the grain of wheat is sown and planted in the earth" it remains alone" (John 12:24). It dries up and loses its power to live. That is death before life, a hopeless death. That is life that is un-lived, unfruitful and denied.

So, the hope of resurrection is indeed a "power for life before death," for it makes people ready to surrender to this life with all their energies and senses, to go out of themselves, and to love life unreservedly and wholly. But what does that mean for the bereaved and the mourning? I should like to see *comfort beyond death* like this:

When we experience the death of people we love, it is a comfort to know that they are in eternal life, that we can remain linked with them in the Body of Christ, and that we can grieve with a sure and certain hope. If people cannot live or are not permitted to live—when a child dies; when a friend is torn to pieces by a bomb; when life is cut short, killed, ruined, or eaten away by cancer—it is a comfort to trust that God will also complete the good work which he began when they were born, and that death cannot stop him from doing so, because God is God.

From our standpoint, death is an end, a rupture, a loss, a bereavement, but from that other standpoint every death is a transformation and transition to eternal life. It was children doomed to die in the concentration camp in Theresienstadt who painted the many pictures of chrysalises and butterflies which we can see today in the Jewish museum in Prague. The poor caterpillar breaks out of its chrysalis and flies away into the "broad place where there is no cramping anymore." Seen from

our standpoint, death is the end of life, but from that other standpoint life is the end of death: “Death is swallowed up in victory,” the victory of life (1 Cor. 15:55).

3. THE EXPERIENCE OF HOPE OF RESURRECTION

Elisabeth: I don’t want to give up hope for a life in a future world either, as some women and men today do. It has accompanied Christians, women and men, for two thousand years. It has given them courage and stability for the lives they live in the present, and trust and hope in death.

But I don’t want to interpret death any more as “the wages of sin,” because that robs this life which has just been rediscovered of its fullness and variety. It could depress and paralyze people in the past, and still can. I want to see whether the power that wills and aims to make us whole here, can be taken over into another existence too.

I should therefore like to begin with our “born-ness,” our natality. This is an idea of the Jewish philosopher Hannah Arendt, who replaces what Heidegger calls our “thrownness” by the idea that we are born once and for all and uniquely so that we can seize the initiative in our existence and full potentialities. Traditionally Christians, both men and women, have had their eyes fixed on mortality. If we turn round and remember our beginning, our born-ness, we also turn back to God’s pleasure in us and in his creation. That can change the way we look at death and eternity too.

I shall take over your words “transformation” and “transition” and ask: How can I experience this?

So I should like to begin with the this-worldliness of our experiences and ask: What experiences here and now go beyond our life here and now? For this I should like to begin with the body, which has for so long been maligned in Christianity, as offering a new pattern of perception.

Here I found helpful the ideas about resurrection held by some women theologians in the Third World. For them too, resurrection takes place in the present, but the images they use for it aren’t just fixed on the struggle for liberation. For example, Fabella (from the Philippines) sees before her a garden in which Mary Magdalene’s encounter with Jesus takes place, and bound up with this image are the pleasures of the senses, beauty, the cosmos—echoes of paradise. In this way the resurrection experience of Western women Christians, which is sometimes too militant, is expanded by aesthetic categories. A space comes into view which I don’t create but which wraps me round, and lets me be.

Individual hopes, and the words “happiness” and “pleasure” have their place here too. Resurrection means the individual and the social body too, and both have their place in the cosmos.

Thinking of the body rediscovered in this way, I should like to talk about resurrection in the senses.

Let us remember Mary Magdalene's encounter with the risen Jesus: she supposes that he is the gardener, and it is only when she hears his voice, calling her by her name, that her senses wake up and she recognizes him.

Through our bodies and its senses, if they become truly sensitized, we can discover other dimensions of space and time, and can experience resurrection. In our passion for this world and for life in it, we become aware of the quiet tones of transcendence, and we remain open to new spaces and new times.

To rise with all our senses lets us experience each day as something new, lets us experience every moment differently, see differently, taste with delight and touch in different ways, lets us participate in God's creative power.

For me a seed, a primal model of God's creative power, remains even in and after the dissolution of my body. It contains something of myself, my uniqueness and unmistakability, which is not forgotten. Just as during our lifetime we still remember for a time people and their special character, and the same is eternally true of God. This seed, this grain of wheat, holds within itself my history, which for me is part of the history of a body. A body that is not characterized by sin and transience, but which holds within itself all the experiences of pain and happiness, the failures and the things that have succeeded, grief and passion. My hope is that we shall be raised with a transformed body, a body which tells our history, which will be consoled and healed of all its insufficiencies, and which is aligned with all its senses towards community with all the living.

Jürgen: Perhaps it will be helpful if we take another great step and ask about the ways eternity has been thought of.

It isn't easy to form well-founded ideas about eternal life. They all too easily become speculations and then completely irrelevant for life here. But we live in time, and the experience of time already encapsulates an idea of eternity. We live from a primal life force, and directly bound up with that is an unrestricted will for life. "For all delight wills eternity, / wills deep, deep eternity," wrote Friedrich Nietzsche in one of his poems.

When we are searching for the temporal concept of eternity we are faced with the question: *Plato or Boethius?* According to *Plato*, we experience time as the moved succession of fleeting moments of life, moments which can never be brought back. This is time as *chronos*, and according to Greek interpretation *chronos* is a brother of death, *thanatos*. Transitory time has then to be understood as a time of death. If time is what is transitory, then, as Augustine concluded (*Conf. XI*), eternity must in contrast be understood as what endures. Paul accentuates the contrast between time and eternity by talking about the perishable here and the imperishable there (1 Cor. 15:53). Transitory time is the process of the dying of the living and perishing of the dead. If we apply this contrast between time and eternity to "eternal life," it certainly allows us to think the negation of time, but not a timeless life. So "eternal life" is often equated with "eternal rest" and the "sleep" of death. Applied to God, this concept of eternity turns God into a dead being without relationship, since the negation of temporal life makes every life impossible.

But the God of the biblical traditions is a living God, who has relationships in time with the earthly beings he has created. His eternal life is life-creating, fruitful life. Consequently Christian theologians from Thomas Aquinas to Karl Barth have preferred the concept of eternity which derives from *Boethius: Aeternitas est interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio*—eternity is the unlimited, whole, simultaneous and perfect enjoyment of life.

Applied to God, God's eternity then means God's unlimited livingness, and his inexhaustibly creative fullness of life.

Applied to the eternal life of human beings, this then means unlimited livingness and the complete affirmation of life in the unhindered participation in the divine fullness of life. "Through nature, human beings remain wholly human in soul and body; through grace they become wholly divine in soul and body," explained Maximus Confessor.

If we transfer this concept of fullness of life to the daily experience of time, the perspective changes: now we don't look back sadly to "lost time" in a past which can never be brought back, and to the eternal death which swallows up everything which vanishes with time. We look forward, into the life that is coming to meet us, into the time that is beginning, which heralds the fulfilled time of eternal life. Time as we experience it at evening and in our farewells is replaced by time as we experience it in the morning and in our welcomes. *Chronos* disappears and is replaced by *kairos*, for *kairos* is a brother of life. Empty time becomes fulfilled time, and fulfilled time becomes the foretaste of eternal livingness (*aevum*).

The living forces of this creative divine Spirit are not supernatural gifts; they are "the powers of the world to come" (Heb. 6:5). If body and senses are filled with these powers here, then life is healed, reconciled and put to rights, and is experienced like a "new birth" or a "new creation." A new springtime of life begins.

Elisabeth: What does belief in the resurrection of the body mean?

Maybe it means to live eternity in some way in our lifetime. For me it means to become attentive to the transforming powers which already change our lives here and now, which let us see, feel, hear and taste differently, which also accompany the work for justice and righteousness on this earth, then we can also expect that powers us like this don't come to an end when our biological life ends. Just as in this life we experience being-dead and coming-alive, death and life, indifference and concern, mourning and commitment, so this dynamis of God's, which reaches beyond the dimensions of our everyday life, is not confined to our present existence either. We can trust this God-as-Creator to give energies which reach beyond the horizon of our own lives. Perhaps for this we ought also to include the experience of women who know about what is, even medically, the marvellous and mysterious regeneration of bodily powers and vitality after giving birth, which can often be astonishing and strong, and in which the overflow of energies into other spheres of life is experienced. A female experience of God's creativity, also a paradigm of God's passion for life, which embraces pain and joy.

To believe in the resurrection of the body means for me committing myself to the creative power of God which never dries up, the God who has become human—become flesh—a creative power which we experience every day in our bodies. It means thinking and experiencing with all one's senses, encountering what is other, and exposing oneself to what is strange and alien. But it also means giving this body the blessing of rest, sometimes doing nothing, and “accepting the grace of life, the capacity for love” as Rubem Alves puts it, so as to learn how to enter into God's rest, which is not a tedious silence but fulfilled happiness.

Jürgen: The Spirituality of the Body

What spirituality we look for and cultivate depends on what Spirit we experience. If it is the Spirit of Christ's resurrection, then it lays hold of our whole life and leads us not just to a mysticism of the soul but to a mysticism of the body too. The Spirit who is the life-giver doesn't only liberate the soul from oppressions and sadnesses; it also frees the body from tensions and the things that poison it, for the Holy Spirit is not just aligned towards “the salvation of the soul,” but towards the healing of the body too—that is to say, the healing of the whole of life. The first experiences of the Spirit are the complete Yes to life and a newly awakened love for life in all its fullness.

If we want to resist the cynicism which permits the annihilation of the living in the human world and the world of nature, we must first overcome the growing indifference of our hearts. We have got so used to the dying of nature that we have stopped allowing ourselves to be touched by it. We accept the death of whole peoples without any great excitement, as we once did in Rwanda; and we belittle the dead of the civilian population in wars, calling it “collateral damage.” That terrible things happen is bad enough, but that we get used to them so quickly is much worse. The spirituality of the loved life breaks through this self-made numbing, the hard shell of our indifference of heart breaks open, our coldness towards the suffering of other people disappears. We are seized by compassion. We can laugh again and cry again; we are incensed, and protest against the mass deaths. Those who begin to love the whole of life like this—not just their own life but the life of other people too—resist the death-wish in themselves and the powers of death in their society, and stand up for the future of life. “You love life—we love death,” wrote the El Qaida assassins about the mass murder in Madrid. Whatever these Islamists love, we love life—their lives too; and we desire their suicide as little as their mass murders.

You spoke about a “resurrection in our senses.” Yes: The spirituality of the body also has a sensory side. In some great sadness, after the loss of someone we have greatly loved, or in some crisis, we feel how our senses are numbed and quenched. We no longer see colors, we no longer hear any melodies, we no longer taste anything, and all our feelings seem to have died. We become more or less uninterested, and turn to stone even though we are still alive. This is the “dark might of the soul.”

If in the divine Spirit we then again experience the unconditional love for life, a new joy in living awakens in us. We again see the beauty of this colorful world of ours. We again hear the music of life, recover taste once more, and our feelings draw us out into the world. Our senses wake up, and we take part in life. That is the new sensuousness which belongs to the spirituality of the body. That is the beginning of the resurrection in us, with which, according to Hildegard of Bingen, “the springtime of the whole creation” begins.

Let me close with a verse from Rhabanus Maurus’s well-known Pentecostal hymn:

Our senses with thy light inflame,
Our hearts to heavenly love reclaim;
Our bodies’ poor infirmity
With strength perpetual fortify.

ELISABETH MOLTMANN-WENDEL
and JÜRGEN MOLTMANN