St. Paul and the Resurrection Effect: Phenomenological and Pastoral Soundings

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I feel very honoured from the outset to have the opportunity to contribute a chapter for Prof. Anthony Kelly’s Festschrift. I first encountered Tony’s captivating and poetic style of teaching as an undergraduate, studying theology at Yarra Theological Union in the mid 1990’s. His units especially on the Trinity, Eschatology and Bernard Lonergan encouraged students to develop their theological imagination. At this time, Tony was eager to be my honours supervisor, helping to instil a love for both philosophy and theology. Later, for my Masters in Theology, I compared and contrasted Kelly’s theology with Hans Urs von Balthasar’s using Lonergan as a critical medium. Moving on to my PhD studies, Tony journeyed with me for four and half years at Australian Catholic University as my principal supervisor. The topic of the dissertation was Levinas, von Balthasar and Trinitarian Praxis. After completing the PhD and lecturing at the University of Notre Dame Australia, Fremantle, I have sent a number of my publications in theology and Continental thought to Tony where he has shown great interest and encouragement. In recent years, I have benefited from Tony’s research and publications on theology and phenomenology. I know that Tony would be very keen for me to give a Levinasian perspective to his work on Paul and Resurrection Effect. The following piece of writing in so many ways bears the mark of Tony’s influence through the years upon my theological development.

St. Paul is an intriguing and fascinating character. He is intriguing because his consciousness of mission is deeply rooted “in’ the resurrection”. ¹ He is also fascinating because his identity has been transfigured (suddenly changed) and transformed (forever changed) “by the act of God in raising Jesus from the dead”. ² We may name this the ‘resurrection effect,’ ³ of God

colliding into our world, causing accidents; unheard of, turbulent events of sensitivity and meaning, stirring and upturning and disrupting our worlds with sudden and enduring change. The resurrection effect reflects a ‘diachronic’ and anarchic (immemorial) truth, namely a call and command shocking and anointing us into responsibility through time and from the very beginning of time. Paul’s experience of the resurrection effect is archetypal, teaching us the language of faith, hope and love. “Never close enough,” yet always coming “closer and closer,” Paul, a prisoner in the Lord (Eph 4:1), yearns for the possibility to be touched by Christ (touch-ability); a movement of bodiliness met by the “embrace” of the face of the risen Christ and hope for Parousia.

**Christic Conversion and Bodiliness: the language of faith**

By accident on the way to Damascus, momentous change has come to visit Paul. Putting into question zealously for doctrine, ideological urges and violent visions to persecute and destroy (Gal 1:13, 15), Paul encounters a diachronic and immemorial moment of “Christic conversion”. By something unheard of – transfiguration and grace - Paul experiences the radiant and overwhelming word of the risen Christ. And by the transforming word of Jesus, saying now what has never been said, revealing a past that has never been present, and sharing a vintage that has never been tasted and savoured since the days of Creation, Paul defines his life (and our life) of ministry, in simple, yet grave terms: “so we are ambassadors for Christ” (2 Cor 5:20). So then, what is our mission? Living ‘in’ the resurrection, the deepest part of Paul’s whole being has been saturated by the risen Christ. The “good news” (1 Cor 15:1) is bursting to come alive in Paul. He wants us to listen, for he

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4 Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence*, translated by Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1999), 82.
5 Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, 82.
has a “mystery” to tell us. Come closer then, come closer, can you hear his voice and see his vision! “We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye …” (1 Cor 15:51-52). We could well wonder whether Paul is speaking from experience. Indeed, he breathes with the breath of the spirit of Christ. The resurrection effect, more than a mere sign, takes us closer to beauty, goodness and truth; to the very glory of the Lord. In the splendour and beauty of such glory, the Spirit of Christ ordains and orders a new sense of bodily life. For Paul, this means his everyday ways of speaking, thinking and feeling are now changed, transfigured and transformed, through the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ over death (1 Cor 15:54-55). Christ resurrected is Christ being-for-others.

The resurrection effect is never far from Paul’s words. Revelation, as it were, is his “daily bread,” (Matt 6:11) so to speak. Melting even like candy in the mouth, as it were, Paul savours the mystery of Christ raised from the dead. In effect, he has found happiness to take refuge in Christ (Ps 34:8), nurturing his language of faith with prayer and proclamation. To use our theological imagination, we could envisage Paul taking time to write and preach on the meaning of the resurrection of the dead, meditating on the sense of the Parousia (the Second Coming, the return of Christ) and contemplating the coming of the reign of God. Such preaching and prayer will no doubt wet his appetite, unleashing his soul, to taste the goodness of the Lord (Ps. 34:8).

We want to suggest that the resurrection effect is an encounter with the Risen Christ’s bodiliness. Led by the Spirit, in perseverance and hope to serve God, Paul rejoices in the resurrection of Christ. Paul’s whole being, his strength, body, soul, thoughts and emotions, are set towards a life of responsibility, mystery and truth: the expiating and self-giving love of Christ. This is at once a difficult freedom and a difficult adoration. How then does he find
the good sense to bring out the meaning of the mystery of Christ, that “We will not all die” (1 Cor 15:51)? To come to such an understanding speaks at once of divine wisdom working in hidden ways in Paul’s mind, heart and soul. The ‘hidden ways’ are a key aspect of mystery and truth; of God’s action in and through the Spirit to form us into persons-in-Christ.

Righteousness and Emotivity: the language of hope

Paul’s language of faith is naturally punctuated by the language of hope: “as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything” (2 Cor 6:10). Moreover, Paul’s encounter with the risen Christ testifies to an ethics of righteousness. This is not something new in itself. Knowing Christ re-orientes Paul back towards the good truth of the Hebrew Bible: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart” (Deut 6:4-6). The word of God brings us a step closer to the mystery and meaning of the resurrection effect. The effect of Christ crucified and risen from the dead re-orientes Paul’s identity, consciousness, emotions and being towards the good truth of the love of God. By turbulently entering into Paul’s life, stirring his mind and heart with an ethical and Trinitarian practice of faith, God “was pleased to reveal his Son” (Gal 1:15-16). The resurrection effect initiates a life of the Spirit; a bodiliness stirring reason and emotion. Now Paul walks “according to the Spirit” (Rom 8:4) leaving footprints and traces of a Trinitarian way in which the practice of Christ may come alive though a Pauline ethics of righteousness. So Paul will testify, “We know that all things work together for the good for those who love God, who are called to his purpose” (Rom 8:28).
Now let us reflect upon the meaning of God’s ‘purpose’. What does God want from us? How might we welcome God in our hearts so that God might delight in us and make a home in our innermost being? The divine ‘purpose’ itself is a revelation of ‘bodiliness’. Paul teaches us to hope in the hope of the risen Christ: “For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience” (Rom 8:24-25). Such hope takes on a Trinitarian character of adoring God’s act of raising Jesus from the dead, of groaning with the Spirit through the trials of creation, and of claiming the joy of knowing the risen Christ in the light of his word and call.  

Paul’s language of hope teaches us about the value and meaning of relating with God. Let us do a bit of theology then. To suggest that there is something ‘eschatological’ or meaningful and hopeful about our life suggests that God wants to visit us, no matter how weak, broken and lonely we are, carrying gifts of understanding, strength, wisdom and compassion. In other words, God wants to enter into our minds and hearts to inspire or re-orient our thoughts and emotions with the good truth that love remains. For example, how we strive to hope in God in the midst of loneliness and suffering may well reveal a broken heart or a crushed spirit (Ps. 34:18). Where experience begins to let us know about the pain and tragedy of human life, we may find ourselves on the verge of lament and tears. But gaining value and meaning from the language of hope, gives us perseverance and strength to face times where fear threatens hope and loneliness distils into hostility and depression. 

The language of hope is itself a revelation of the paschal mystery, the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ. From Paul, we discern that the ‘good’ truth of the resurrection effect
upon his life is a “persecuted truth”: “[a]t the very moment where all is lost, everything is possible”. Waiting for Parousia, for the return of Jesus the Christ, Paul, “a prisoner in the Lord,” (Eph 4:1) testifies, “I consider that the sufferings of the present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us” (Rom 8:18). Hence, to be a follower of Christ is a “costly” existence and reality. This is because of the inherently paschal or sacrificial character of Jesus the Christ. Let us reflect then, what does it mean to have something ‘costly’ or ‘sacrificial’ such as love live ‘in’ us, all the better, therefore, to lead us to having a sense of the resurrection effect.

*To be a Prisoner in the Lord: the language of love*

The presence of a loved one will at times penetrate and stir our being. “Excitement ‘happens’” revealing our potential for personal growth, human affectivity and Christian living, namely for hope and values to enter the deepest parts of consciousness. Naturally we want to find a pathway, and the presence of a beloved offers more than a chance. Before the beloved, receptivity, hospitality and intimacy await to emerge and transform into love. An epiphany of grace invites us into a stirring proximity; a “subjectivity” of “never close enough”. Where the contours of love begin to form and sculpture an endearing faith and hope, our wounded heart may for the first time see the beloved, smiling upon our innermost being and soul, delighting with great joy to find a home already furnished in our hearts.

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13 Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, 82.
Love indeed makes us very vulnerable to the Other. Just as we grow through love, we may also become easily hurt by an action or comment of a loved one. Growing in love, we learn to bear one another’s weaknesses, developing perseverance, humility and goodness. Indeed, the weakness of the Other becomes our strength to love more deeply. The language of love can help us to have a sense of Paul’s intriguing and fascinating encounter with the risen Christ. Just as it is demanding and disrupting, it is also a movement towards beauty; beholding the glory of the risen Lord. This is but a life ‘otherwise,’ beyond being and being-for-others, “yonder, yonder, yonder.”\(^\text{14}\) Paul has made a radical turnabout from “despair” to “give beauty… back to God, beauty’s self and beauty’s giver”.\(^\text{15}\) The Spirit of Christ, stirring and orienting Paul’s life towards an encounter with ‘beauty’s self and beauty’s giver,’ makes a possible and impossible demand on his soul: to witness to the mystery of the resurrection and Parousia, Christ’s return. Furthermore, as we too begin to follow Paul along the path of the risen Christ, we may learn that the path is eternal, mysterious, ancient and well-trod by saints and sinners alike. We may even here their chant and prayer: “Peace, peace, to the far and the near, says the Lord; and I will heal them” (Isa 57:19).

Paul is a servant of the gospel of the risen Christ (Eph 3:7). His grace is Christ Jesus. The resurrection effect has made him “a prisoner,” a hostage, “in the Lord” (Eph 4:1). In other words, the turbulence and glory of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead has now visited Paul to such an extent that his whole world is immersed in the turbulence of change and the glory of the Lord, namely witnessing to the Gentiles that “Christ has been raised from the dead” (1 Cor 15:20). Transfigured by encountering Christ’s person and word on the way to Damascus, the path of vulnerability and transformation has begun. Finding strength in weakness, discovering the risen Christ as “the revelation of God” and responding to Christ’s “invitation

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of divine grace and generosity,” Paul realises the cost of being ‘privileged’ with seeing the risen Christ (Gal 1:16; 1 Cor 15:7). He must set out to be a “person-in-Christ,” to learn the language of faith, hope and love, suffering for the Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians and Thessalonians by the suffering of Christ. The challenge now for Paul is to translate his revelation of Christ in terms of a Trinitarian praxis or ethics of righteousness. Speaking the language of faith, hope and love, he testifies to the beauty, goodness and truth of Judaism and the Jewish people to the Gentiles. There is no sense of conversion of Paul to another religion. He always remains Jewish, bringing the value of Judaism as well as the Jewish people through the person and spirit of Christ to the Gentiles. His mission is one of righteousness, proclaiming a spirituality or life of meaning, hospitality and intimacy with Christ close to the heart. It is not surprising then that Paul states in his letter to the Romans: “But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness” (Rom 8:10).

Now let us think further to the underlying dynamics of how Paul expresses the language of faith, hope and love with his own inimitable paschal character; namely, testimony and meaning stirring in the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. On the face of things, we could rationally reflect that Paul is quite reckless in his faith. We may well ask whether Paul seems to embody an infantile emotionalism, a paranoid delusion or an illusional escapism? However, by proclaiming hope in the risen Christ, Paul does not run away from brokenness, pain and suffering. Rather, he attends to his wounds, one by one vigilantly through the language of love, ready at any moment to serve and help others.17

Memories of pain and suffering might easily darken and constrain our suffering. But Paul teaches us *how*, or better, *where*, to immerse our sufferings: *in* the very life of the risen Christ. So Paul demonstrates a key *in*-sight into the wounded human condition. He opens his emotions *in* the sufferings and wounds of Christ, fusing them with a sense of righteousness, vigilance and vulnerability. This is to say that Paul’s emotions have been stirred with the goodness and ethics of the risen Christ. We can then speak of Paul’s life, disrupted, transfigured and transformed, as an ethical metaphysical development of his emotions. In simpler terms, Paul, the robust prophet and apostle, has encountered radical and turbulent change. We also want to suggest at this point that there are three key emotions to consider in Paul’s language of faith, hope and love. In other words, we want to use a lens of ethical metaphysical emotivity to comprehend the resurrection effect upon Paul’s life, mission and consciousness. The three emotions are: melancholy, vigilance and spontaneity. Given as well that Paul’s mission to the Gentiles was one of ‘righteousness,’ bringing the good truth of Christ, we can accordingly refer to these emotions as ethical melancholy, ethical vigilance and ethical spontaneity, the better to bring out an ethical metaphysical (or phenomenological) perspective of the resurrection effect upon Paul’s life and mission.

*A Phenomenology of Pauline emotions: from Corinth to hell and back again*

The Swiss, Catholic Theologian, Hans Urs von Balthasar, provides an important insight into Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians: “The entire First Letter is a journey from the Cross to the Resurrection; and the Eucharist, which is no triumphal feast, belongs on this journey, ‘for Christ our Passover has been sacrificed’ (1 Cor 5:7).” Looking at Paul’s concerns with the Corinthians, their struggles towards building up a prayerful, hospitable and welcoming community, it would not be too hard to imagine that Paul had much to be melancholy and

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vigilant about the Corinthian church. Such stirring of emotions naturally brings about a “spontaneous experience of value,”¹⁹ that is to say a demand and hope that the Corinthians integrate Christ crucified (1 Cor 2:2) into their being and life. Consider, for example, Paul’s frustration with “the worship service (1 Cor 11-14)” in Corinth. Balthasar points to three major areas, “serious faults”²⁰ that demand an ethical re-habituation or change of behavior: “(1) lack of decorum (1 Cor 11:2-16); (2) lack of consideration for others, which is connected to the lack of reverence for the Eucharist (11:17-34); and (3) lack of order (1 Cor 12-14”).²¹

From Corinth

Describing the first ‘serious fault’ of the Corinthian community, Paul vents an aching concern. He refers of their ‘lack of decorum’ as “contentious” (1 Cor 11:16). His judgment here is very important as it witnesses to the spontaneous character of his emotivity and world of feelings. Emotions are spontaneously stirred. This is because they are attached to the things of the world we value in life. The spontaneity of Paul’s emotions, stirring in righteousness, love and prayer, reveal “the experience of value rather than on the value of experience”.²² This means that Paul is not a slave to the “explosive sphere” and excitements of his emotions.²³ Sure, this is and will always be a temptation for him, as it is naturally for us, for instance, to be consumed and addicted by the pulse and excitement of anger running through the body and at times causing mayhem in the heart and soul. We may well experience this where we take at face value Paul’s comment on women not wearing head covering in Church. The key here is not to let ourselves be distracted immediately by our twenty-first century eyes, and then make judgments about Paul’s concern for women to cover

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¹⁹ Wojtyła, The Acting Person, 249.
²⁰ Balthasar, Paul Struggles with His Congregation, 53.
²¹ Balthasar, Paul Struggles with His Congregation, 53.
²² Wojtyła, The Acting Person, 248.
²³ Wojtyła, The Acting Person, 237.
their hair in church and the cultural practice demanding it. We need rather to listen first to Paul’s emotion.

Paul is at once melancholy and vigilant about the Corinthians. He is saddened further by the “selfish happiness” and the lack of “decency” as they come together to eat and celebrate the Eucharist. In effect, Paul’s stirring of emotions evidence the values of formation, education and reverence towards building up the community of faith. Balthasar will assert, “No matter how you look at it, there is nothing out-of-date in this section”. We may well wonder then how the Spirit works in Paul’s emotions especially as they are so important for safeguarding values and being a bridge towards the soul.

A look into Paul’s ‘ethical melancholy’ unveils his attitude to the good news. Witnessing to the risen Christ, Paul’s ethical emotive state unveils his concern for the Corinthian community; he fears that they are losing sight of Christ’s suffering, death and resurrection; their lack of decorum and charity towards others are but symptoms of this. We learn that the Corinthians are not very good at sharing food. People either go home drunk or hungry (1 Cor 11:21). In terms of taking up an ethics of righteousness, Paul is instructing his community of faith to grow in discipleship, service, and the love of God and neighbor. Learning from Paul, we could follow him by putting our conscience into question, and allowing our emotions to stir inside of us with value (of the sacredness of the Other). We may then even begin to listen to the challenging questions of our conscience: Have you heard the word of God in the face of your neighbour today? Have you shared the bread out of your very mouth with those who are hungry? Did you abandon those who are dying? Our emotions need life and spirit, namely

an ethical orientation to the disrupting and terrible questions of the conscience. Although Paul’s concern for the Corinthians reveals to us ‘nothing out-of-date here,’ yet it also tells us of something un-heard of, surprising and overwhelming. Paul’s letter to the Corinthians unveils the mystery and the seeds of ethical conversion or super-individuation of the emotions to the life of the soul, fired in the kiln, so to speak, of the resurrection effect, the very act of God raising Jesus from the dead.

*To Hell*

The resurrection of Christ leads Paul to “the transcendent relation to truth”. In effect this means that Paul’s emotions, where stirred, spontaneously sets out a value upon righteousness and ethical behavior. This is a crucial starting point to journey towards truth and even daring to uncover it. Moreover, Paul will need to follow a paschal or sacrificial path, passing through anger, excitability, energy and pull of the “explosive sphere” of his emotions. This is a life otherwise, beyond the being of any self-interest. Above all, Paul discerns the glory of the risen Christ as a persecuted truth; a profound humiliation to suffer with Christ for the sins of the community. Taking up a stance of righteousness, the lack of decorum and contentious attitudes of the Corinthians must be addressed and challenged.

Paul’s heart, undergoing a super-individuation to teach the “super-craft of love” in “super-obedience” to God, will haemorrhage a telling and terrible uniqueness. The French-Jewish philosopher and Talmudic scholar, Emmanuel Levinas, who brings us back to our Jewish roots, gives a helpful insight in which we might now apply to Paul: “This uniqueness not

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27 Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, 118.  
assumed, not subsumed, is traumatic; it is an election of persecution”. \(^{32}\) Levinas explains persecution as expiation (suffering for others); a super-individuation turbulently inverting our identity from selfishness and egoism to otherness and the love of neighbour and God. It is a “voluntary” self-giving of compassion and “substitution” for others.\(^ {33}\) The ‘uniqueness’ of voluntarily sacrificing oneself for others is understandably traumatic. To draw a parallel in Christian theological terms, Paul must journey through hell with the Son, learning a super-individuation: a “super-obedience” to the Father’s will to answer “the craft” of the Corinthians “with the super-craft of love”.\(^ {34}\)

Let us return to Balthasar who gives a bold and grave reflection into the meaning of Christ’s descent to the dead. This will hopefully help us to have a sense of Paul’s suffering and the meaning it entails for his life and mission. Inviting us to enter into the drama of the Trinity and paschal mystery, Balthasar provides a horizon, as it were, to journey into the Spirit’s work in Paul’s life. Revealing the dramatic paschal road passing through hell towards the good truth of expiating love, Balthasar writes:

The dead Son’s passage through hell – when everything seemed already “consummated” on the Cross – is the expression of his “super-obedience” to the Father. The “super” means that hell did not appear within the incarnate Son’s visible horizon; that here “even obedience” receives “an impossible form”, which produces the “feeling” “that there is some mistake somewhere”; that obedience is, one last time, “overtaxed”, since the Father sends the Son into the farthest extremities “in order to answer the craft of the devil with the super-craft of love. ... The Son’s obedience even in death, even in hell, is his perfect identity in all contradiction”. \(^ {35}\)

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\(^{32}\) Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, 56.

\(^{33}\) Levinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, 56.


The Corinthians have not found the risen Christ at the centre of their life. They are a “divided community”. Paul illustrates, remarking “When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord’s supper. For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk” (1 Cor 11:20-21). If indeed the Corinthians are going to move from hostility to hospitality in their external relations, they must first undergo an interior movement from loneliness to solitude. Henri Nouwen points out: “As long as we are lonely, we cannot be hospitable because as lonely people we cannot give free space”. Loneliness is like a plague that disturbs our consciousness. Plainly, personal loneliness is “one of the most painful human wounds”. So we might imagine that Paul, writing his letter to the Corinthians, journeys into the hell of their existential condition of loneliness; they have not learnt yet to face loneliness with the solitude, prayer and reverence of the Eucharist. Let us now move on to study how Paul’s emotions may undergo a “Christic conversion” from everydayness to ethical transcendence, the very consummation of hope for Parousia.

Paul’s emotional state begins in spontaneity. The way his emotions are spontaneously stirred, depicts his value of reverence for the celebration of the Eucharist. His reflective sadness and grief, namely ethical melancholy, over the Corinthians lead to an ethical vigilance, or an ethical insomnia, when he may only come to sleep and rest where he has finally proclaimed to the Corinthians that they “are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Cor 12:27). This is to say that the Corinthians are called to a uniqueness of bodiliness: “If one member suffers, all suffers together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together

37 Jean Vanier, Community and Growth (Sydney: St Pauls Publications, 1980), 203.
38 Nouwen, Reaching Out, 72.
40 Kelly, Eschatology and Hope, 210.
with it” (1 Cor 12:26). So where a member of the community is wounded through the wounds of the Other, suffers through the suffering of the Other, or even enjoys through the enjoyment of the Other, the community member is witnessing to the bodiliness of Christ, an intimate hope for Parousia; an ethical spontaneity of seeing Christ face to face. In practical terms of pastoral ministry, taking up the bodiliness of Christ demands formation, education and the giving of a role in the community of faith. So it is not surprising then that Paul will point out: “And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues” (1 Cor 12:38). But for Paul to proclaim such a truth essentially means to pass through a hell of persecution and humiliation.

To witness to the truth of bodiliness and Parousia suggests a hyperbolic responsibility. The question is not to be or not be (for oneself), but to suffer by the sufferings of the risen Christ. Paul then must journey with Christ through a descent to a Corinthian hell of contentiousness, irreverence and babelling towards a vision of the resurrection effect; an Eden and paradise for spiritual gifts to mature and await Christ’s return. The behaviour of the Corinthians, particularly as it takes the form of inospitality and hostility to one another at the table of the Lord, stems from a self-interested or egoistic enjoyment (‘selfish happiness’) and excitability. People are only concerned with their world of bodily enjoyments, sensuousness, excitements and passions. At best, their hearts are trapped between ego and conscience. The face and pain of the neighbour beside them have yet to come to light. It may not be too difficult to imagine Paul praying for the Corinthians to recognise one another’s pain of loneliness in the hope that true fellowship and Eucharistic living may begin to emerge.
Indeed how hard it is to recognise the suffering and pain of another! There is no limit to human suffering just as there is no limit to love. The recognition of another’s pain is a sacred reality. At its deepest level, it reveals the resurrection effect upon our consciousness, being, mind, heart and emotions. To be exposed to the Other’s pain is to be a “hostage” or prisoner in the Lord; an unconditional state of “compassion,” “world pity” (ethical melancholy), proximity (ethical vigilance) and “pardon” (ethical spontaneity).\footnote{Levinas, Otherwise Than Being, 117.} At the very moment where the body is pierced, shocked, overwhelmed, traumatised and absolutely surprised by the Other’s face of pain and loneliness, the word of the risen Christ resounds. The ego’s attachments to bodily excitements, passions and appetites are disrupted. Moving from the life dominated by the ego to one pierced by the soul, the gluttony of passions begin to be tempered by the formation and education of the self’s identity and psyche. In other words, the self begins to take on a path towards a spiritual life, to realise that the self is not only leashed by the body, but also gifted to the psyche (the integration of our thinking and emotions) and inspired by the soul (our possibility for transcendence).\footnote{Wojtyla, The Acting Person, 221.}

\textit{And back again}

The resurrection effect ethically re-orient or even mutates our emotions. Understandably, the challenge of Christic conversion brings turbulence upon our sense experiences.\footnote{Kelly, The Resurrection Effect, 80.} For Paul, the Corinthians must face the eternal question for all ages: “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another? (Matt 11:3). There is something very ancient and eternal about this question. To ask this question and begin to respond speaks of the very Jewish understanding of life uniting with responsibility: “It is life, ageing of life, and unexceptional responsibility, saying”.\footnote{Levinas, Otherwise Than Being, 54.} What indeed should we say? Is our “patience for ageing” thwarted
by our self-interest, personal passions and focus on my future and what I, I, I can achieve before I, I, I pass from this competitive, cut-throat and bent world? Are we called to be “Angels in America” or Angels in Australia? Perhaps some of us could be prophets (1 Cor 12:27-29)! Yet surprisingly, we may at times be called to prophesise, or speak and sing the language of angels, of speaking and singing in tongues a new language to the Lord, building up the community of faith and love (1 Cor 13:2) as we groan in the groaning of the Spirit of all creation. This language of love begins with the word of the risen Christ coming to mind in the face of the neighbour, the one sitting beside us at table, hungry and thirsty for new life.

So then how might Paul envisage a hope for change, transfiguration, conversion and transformation for his beloved Corinthian community? Perhaps it begins by nurturing the question in the deepest part of the heart, “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another? (Matt 11:3). This is a question of redemption and freedom beckoning another question, ‘Why then do we need and have to pass through Christ for grace, life and the promise of peace and healing?’ Perhaps, a more challenging way to present our question is to ponder how we encounter the risen Christ. Paul himself tells us compellingly how through bodiliness and responsibility: suffering by the suffering of the Other (1 Cor 12:26). This is the ground and condition of (im)-possibility to ‘interpret’ Christ’s grace (the ethics of Christ as grace for us). We may also speak here of such bodiliness as touch-ability, that is to say, the very ground and condition of being vulnerable to the Other’s wounds and cry for healing. The ability to be touched by the poor or hungry one in our midst demands a difficult freedom and adoration; a life of ‘world pity’ (ethical melancholy), ‘proximity’ (ethical vigilance) and ‘pardon’ (ethical spontaneity).

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45 Levinas, Otherwise Than Being, 54.
Paul’s ability to show the Corinthians that responsibility based on bodiliness/touch-ability is an important gospel insight (cf, Matt 25:40). We seem to live in an environment where barriers are being put up to prevent the bodiliness of suffering with the suffering of the Other or enjoying the joy of the Other. If self-interest blocks our ethical mode of bodiliness, how then can we be touched and surprised by the face of our neighbour? Else would suffering push us at some stage to have need for the Other? However, where we are spontaneous enough to value the Other’s needs and fears, we may awaken our deeper self towards a desire to do something senseless or impossible like spontaneously forgiving the Other whose misstep has caused us great suffering and grief. And where the face of the Other shocks us enough, our spontaneity can be ethically attuned towards some kind of transfiguration or fission between ethical melancholy and ethical vigilance. Nonetheless, as the self interprets the cry of pain from a haemorrhaging heart, will God’s word come to mind? A spontaneous stirring of emotions of ethical melancholy and ethical vigilance may tell us affirmatively, giving hope for Parousia and the desire to respond to Christ’s word in the Other’s face. Accordingly, the excitement and spontaneity of feeling the grace of the resurrection effect could animate a hope for healing and the promise of peace.

**Conclusion: Waiting for Parousia**

For Paul, the ‘body of Christ’ is a great mystery that must be proclaimed. The risen Christ’s uniqueness can be seen in a way we understand his real divinity uniting with his real humanity. “In the form of God” (Phil 2:6), Christ exposed, humiliated and chosen expiates for others. His very “obedience to the point of death … on a cross” (Phil 2:8), evidencing his divine nature, unveils his real and also our humanity - the inter-subjective humanity of being a hostage, prisoner and “slave” (Phil 2:7) for others. So the very uniqueness and exclusivity of Christ’s passion, death and resurrection in the paschal mystery implies a universal path of
inclusivity: the formation of our being human(e)! A Pauline habitus or practice of faith and wisdom suggests that we too need to take a humane path along the road to Damascus, as it were, opening ourselves to the voice and vision of God coming upon us and into us by providential accident upon the road.

Paul is insistent to lead the Corinthians towards a sense of the risen Christ. The Jesus he knows is the Christ who teaches us how to be human and how to grow more and more as a likeness of God. Knowing Christ is to draw away from the illusions that give no room and need for God and neighbour. We can, for example, live in the illusion that there is no poverty; no one is hungry or thirsty because I am neither hungry nor thirsty. It seems on the face of things we are likely no different to the Corinthians.

To conclude, let me share with you a recent story from last Autumn, 2012, whilst on sabbatical at the University of Portland, Oregon in America. In many ways, Portland feels like a paradise with all its physical beauty, welcoming hospitality and bountiful fruits, fresh berries and vegetables. Equally evident also are the faces of those suffering the grief and pain of poverty and homelessness.

In Portland city, I saw one young homeless man. It appeared to me he was trying to pick up something, perhaps an imaginary coin or cigarette butt from the ground. Could he also be searching for something else, grasping who knows for humanity, a smile or a piece of bread? Seeing this young man certainly pained my heart. In a more immanent way, I was challenged to reflect: how then can we expiate for others, especially the poor one? Certainly, having a sense of responsibility may help to re-orient our lives. The break-up or disruption of the ego in oneself - judging oneself as failing in responsibility and care – could reflect the beginning
of some ethical melancholy. Feeling the Other in the heart or as the heart yet also testifies to a need for bodiliness and truth: the face of the risen Christ. The action of the Portland homeless young man shocked me enough to open a feeling in the heart and reflect in a melancholic way about one aspect of a persecuted truth: how guilty we are before our neighbour. Perhaps this is our human(e) condition of madness, of coming to terms with our failure to treat the Other as sacred. Encountering the homeless man led to more questions. How then might we develop the courage and confidence (the vigilance and spontaneity) to have a sense of hope for Parousia, for Christ to return to us before our neighbour, the poor one in our midst, so that we can respond to a lonely smile or to hunger in spite of fear or apathy? Is this then the resurrection effect, the desire to become committed to learn the language of faith, hope and love?

Responding to this last question, let us suggest three key moments for faith, hope and love to come to mind. First, acknowledging our guilty condition. Second, being open for Christic conversion; the condition of being a prisoner and hostage in Christ. And third, to understand that there is a theo-drama of comedy and tragedy at play in our everyday lives. The comedy is to suddenly realise we ought to be responsible. The tragedy is that it is all too late. However, where we walk away from the Other with an ache of guilt, treading on hopelessness, a sense of hope may well begin to grow through a spontaneous moment of melancholy and vigilance. The risen Christ has visited us; of course too late for us to realise! We seem almost ill-prepared to notice the divine word and path towards Christic conversion. Nonetheless, the risen Christ has called us to an extreme passivity, to the time of an unthematisable (incomprehensible and mysterious) reign of God: a time where we forget about having! Indeed, where we wait for Parousia, wounded by the wounds of the Other, guilty that we have done nothing, there is hope to share our life with the one who is truly at table with the
Lord, namely the poor one whose eyes offer the ‘yes’ of existence, an ancient vintage maturing since the days of Creation! Waiting for Parousia, the glory of the resurrection effect, may we hear Paul’s blessing in a time of love borne in patience, kindness, rejoicing, fellowship, truth and eternity (1 Cor 13:4-8): “Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways. The Lord be with you all” (2 Thess 3:16).