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The Joy of Life

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Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death,
and upon those in the tombs bestowing life!

Anyone who has experienced the celebration of Pascha in an Eastern Orthodox church will have no doubt about the joyful heartbeat of the Christian faith. After forty days of plaintive tones, colors, and liturgical style, followed by a week of a daily round of long, intense services in black—waiting for the Bridegroom, following him to the foot-washing, last meal, crucifixion, burial, and vigil at the tome—the celebrant emerges, in the middle of the night, in white, with the only lighted candle in the building, to pass the light to all the worshippers, in preparation for procession around the temple, symbolizing the tomb, to proclaim the gospel from the steps of the entrance, announcing how the women, at the break of day, found the tomb empty, and then greets the community with the paschal greeting: “Christ is Risen!”, hearing the response “He is Risen indeed!”.

Paschal matins then begins, an abbreviated version of the usual service (all psalmody, an increased use of which had characterized the Lenten services, is omitted): the main hymnographic element is the canon, the nine biblical odes (from the song of Miriam in Exodus to the hymn of the three young men in the furnace in Babylon) seen in terms of the paschal mystery and interspersed with various hymns. For instance, in the first ode, the choir sings:

Let the heavens be glad and let the earth rejoice.
Let the whole world, visible and invisible, keep the feast.
For Christ is risen, our eternal joy.

The canon culminates in paschal version of the Magnificat, again interspersed with various hymns, beginning,

Shine! Shine! O New Jerusalem! The glory of the Lord has shone on you.
Exult now and be glad, O Zion.
Be radiant, O pure Mother of God, in the resurrection of your Son.

The canon concludes with a hymn which will be repeated throughout the paschal season:

The angel cried to the Lady full of grace: Rejoice, O pure Virgin.
Again I say: rejoice. Your Son is risen from his three days in the tomb.
With himself he has raised all the dead. Rejoice, all you people.

The service continues with various other elements, the reading of the paschal homily of John Chrysostom, and then the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. Finally, after forty or more days of fasting, the community gathers together (it is now after three in the morning) for a paschal break-fast.

There is no mistaking the joy of this paschal celebration. However, to understand this mysterious joy, fully and properly, we need to proceed cautiously and carefully. It will not do, for instance, to contrast a supposed focus on the resurrection in Eastern Christianity with the focus on Good Friday in Western Christianity, as if the resurrection could be separated apart from the cross. One must recall that for the first centuries, Pascha was celebrated as a unitary feast. Only later, during the course of the fourth century, did a full liturgy of space and time develop, refracting, as it were, the pure white light of Pascha into a spectrum of colors, so that each can be appreciated more fully, yet always holding them together, for they only exist together, in that pure white light of Pascha. (The same point can be made for the liturgical year as a whole: Christianity does not begin with Christmas; rather the birth of Christ is always ever seen from the perspective of Pascha, as is made clear, East and West, in hymnography and
iconography). Even now, when the resurrection is celebrated with such joy on the third day, the day itself and the feast is still called Pascha (not ‘Anastasis’).

The point being made here is a fundamental one: it is at the heart of the paschal hymn, given at the head of this paper, which is repeated countless times during the feast itself and for forty days thereafter: Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death. It is not, as is sometimes said, that he dies because he is human, but because he is also God he is able to arise from the tomb. It is, rather, by his death that he undoes death and shows himself to be God. To put it another way: Christ shows us what it is to be God in the way that he dies as a human being.

This theological statement of the gospel proclamation sums up the theology of the early councils: Christ, as ‘the image of the invisible God’ (Col 1:15; cf. Nicaea II), shows us what it is to be God (the homoousios of Nicaea I and Constantinople I), in the way in which he dies as a human being (the one concrete being [hypostasis] or one ‘face’ [prosopon] of Ephesus, Chalcedon, Constantinople II and III).

One further nuance needs to be noted. It is not simply from his dying as a human being that we confess him as God, but rather in the way in which he dies, that is, ‘in accordance with the Scriptures’ (1 Cor 15:3-5). It is a striking fact that in the Synoptic Gospels, the disciples continually fail to understand who Christ is. The one clear exception, Simon on the road to Caesarea Philippi, is the exception that proves the rule: after confessing Jesus to be ‘the Christ, the Son of the living God’—which Christ, importantly, observes is not known to Simon ‘by flesh and blood, but by an apocalypse of the Father’—Simon, the apparent rock, immediately betrays his real ignorance by attempting to prevent Jesus from going to Jerusalem to suffer, and is in turn rebuked by Jesus in the harshest language possible: ‘Get behind me Satan!’ (Matt. 16). It is emphatically not by being with Christ, hearing his words and seeing his deeds, that the disciples know his true identity. It is not, moreover, by seeing him on the Cross (for they hide in fear and deny him), nor seeing the empty tomb (for this is ambiguous: has someone stolen the body?), nor even by seeing the risen Christ that they finally come to know him. Each encounter with the Risen Christ includes various steps necessary for them to recognize him. Most clear (and echoing Paul’s only two uses of the technical formula: I delivered/traditioned to you what I received… 1 Cor 11:23–6 and 15:3–5) is the encounter on the road to Emmaus: it is only with the opening of the Scriptures, to show how the Christ must suffer these things to enter into his glory, and the breaking of the bread that their eyes were finally opened to recognize this stranger (Luke 24). Only by the apocalyptic opening of the book by the Slain Lamb in the heavenly liturgy is the Christian mystery of paschal joy and life revealed.

There is a movement of reflection needed to arrive at a properly theological level: from seeing Christ put to death on the cross, prompting fear and trembling (and denial), to seeing his death, in the light of the opened, unveiled Scriptures (especially, for instance, the words in Isa 53 about the suffering servant, though Christ’s words in Luke 24 and early Christian theology would affirm that it is the whole of Scripture which speaks this way), as the victory over death by his voluntary death. This is affirmed in each celebration of the anaphora of St John Chrysostom, when the priest says, ‘In the night in which he was given up, or rather gave himself up for the life of the world’. This is also a movement which is evident in the transition from the Synoptics to the Gospel of John, the Theologian, where, with the books opened from the beginning (with the Baptist pointing out ‘Behold the Lamb of God’, and Philip telling Nathanael ‘We have found the one of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote’, Jn 1:29, 45), Christ appears in exalted glory from the beginning and throughout the narrative. In the Gospel of John, Christ’s elevation on the cross is his exaltation in glory and it is from the cross that he bestows the Spirit (that is, the pure white light of Pascha, in John, embraces both Ascension and Pentecost, which are refracted into separate moments in Luke-Acts and later on in the liturgical calendar). The one on the cross (the last public image of him in this world) is the Lord of glory, and there he does not cry out, asking why God has forsaken him, as in the Synoptics, but says in stately majesty: ‘It is finished’ (John 19:30).
The joy of the resurrection, then, is joy in the affirmation that the one on the cross is indeed the Lord, trampling down death by his death. And, in turn, the celebration of Christ’s resurrection is not a welcome return to life of one we thought lost, as we might celebrate the return of one ‘saved from death’ by a medical intervention, or even the return to life of one dead, such as Lazarus, who will nevertheless still die. Nor is it the comfort one might find in a hope that life will resume, as before, yet in another time and place, deferred for now but better in that all our current sufferings will be removed when our life resumes.

It is, rather, the opening up of another form of life: life under the lordship of the crucified one, life as free self-sacrificial love, life that is the life of God himself. Recall, Christ shows us what it is to be God in the way in which he dies as a human being. Christ has not in fact destroyed death (we will all still die, after all), but rather, in the language of the letter to the Hebrews, he has destroyed the fear of death that has held us all captive (Heb. 2:14-15). As Maximus the Confessor put it, Christ has ‘changed the use of death’, so that rather than being passive victims of death, we are called to take up his cross, actively and freely, and so enter into a new manner of living, already now, in a life which, as entered into through ‘death’, can no longer be touched by death.

We have all come into existence with no choice on our part; ‘No one asked me if I wanted to be born!’ complains Kirillov in Dostoyevsky’s Possessed. It is, moreover, an existence in which whatever we do will die. We are, from the first, death-bound if not already dead. We have all come into existence with a breath of life (cf. Gen. 2:7, 1 Cor. 15), a breath that is inherently transitory, snatched and which will expire, no matter how secure we try to make it. As Christ says: If you try to preserve your life, you will lose it. But, he continues: if you lose it for my sake and for the gospel, you will gain it. (Mark 8:35, et par.). Christ has shown us what it is to be God in the way that he dies as a human being, by laying down his life in love. By showing us the way of life, and freeing us from the fear of death, we can now follow him in using our breath to live a life of self-sacrificial love, a life which is that of the Spirit himself, the life of God. Through the lordship of the crucified one, we have the possibility of grounding our existence in the freedom and love that Christ has shown to be the very being and life of God.

Living Human Beings

While this might sound rather abstract or theoretical (or exaggerated), the immediacy, reality, and joyful vitality of this message is abundantly clear when we look at the way in which it was appropriated in the first couple of centuries of Christianity, paving the way for the paschal celebration and its hymnography with which we started this paper, and in turn gives us a clearer insight into the mysterious nature of its joy.

In the circles following the Johannine tradition, we can see much of this developed: in the paschal materials of Melito of Sardis and Ps-Hippolytus (much of which inspired, and is even incorporated into, the Byzantine hymnography with which we started this paper); and, even more interestingly, in the accounts of the martyrs. Irenaeus of Lyons, who through Polycarp of Smyrna stood very closely in the tradition of John, in a letter to their fellow Christians back in Asia Minor (preserved in Eusebius, EH 5.1-2), describes the events of a persecution that happened in Lyons around the year 177CE. The heroine of the account is Blandina, who, as a young slave girl — the epitome of weakness in the ancient world — embodies most dramatically Christ’s words to Paul: “My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9). She was so “weak in body” that the others were fearful lest she not be able to make a good confession. Yet, she

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was filled with such power that even those who were taking turns to torture her in every way, from dawn until dusk, were weary and beaten. They, themselves, admitted that they were beaten … astonished at her endurance, as her entire body was mangled and broken. (EH 5.1.1)

Not only is she, in her weakness, filled with divine power by her confession, but she becomes fully identified with the one whose body was broken on Golgotha. In the arena,

Blandina, hung on a stake (ἐπὶ ζυλου), was offered as food for the wild beasts that were let in. She, by being seen hanging in the form of a cross, by her vigorous prayer, caused great zeal in the contestants, as, in their struggle, they beheld with their outward eyes, through the sister, him who was crucified for them, that he might persuade those who believe in him that everyone who suffers for the glory of Christ has for ever communion with the living God. … the small and weak and despised woman had put on the great and invincible athlete, Christ, routing the adversary in many bouts, and, through the struggle, being crowned with the crown of incorruptibility. (EH 5.1.42-4)

Through her suffering, Blandina becomes identified with Christ: as with Paul (cf. Gal. 2:20) she no longer lives, but Christ lives in her: she is his body. Blandina’s passage out of this world is Christ’s entry into this world, and this is specifically described as a joyous birth. After describing her suffering, and that of another Christian called Attalus, the letter continues:

Through their continued life the dead were made alive, and the martyrs showed favor to those who had failed to witness. And there was great joy for the Virgin Mother in receiving back alive those whom she had miscarried as dead. For through them the majority of those who had denied were again brought to birth and again conceived and again brought to life and learned to confess; and now living and strengthened, they went to the judgment seat. (EH 5.1.45-6)

The Christians who turned away from making their confession are simply dead: their lack of preparation has meant that they are stillborn children of the Virgin Mother. But now, strengthened by the witness of others, they also are able to go to their death … and so the Virgin Mother receives them back alive, finally and joyfully giving birth to living children of God. When Irenaeus states, in one of his most often quoted yet much misunderstood lines, that ‘the glory of God is the living human being’, he is referring specifically to the martyr.2

The Virgin Mother, here, is the Church. This identification is based upon the verse in Isaiah following the account of the suffering Servant: ‘Sing O barren one, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you have not be in travail! For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her that is married’ (54.1), a verse which Paul had already read as speaking about ‘the Jerusalem above [who] is free, and she is our mother’ (Gal 4:26). The paschal hymnography quoted at the beginning of this paper likewise identifies Mary, the Virgin Mother, with the New Jerusalem and Zion, with the same emphasis upon joy: rejoice, exult, be glad!

Going back several decades, we can see the same conviction, with a further dimension, given first-hand, in the letters of Ignatius of Antioch. Taken underfoot and under guard from Antioch to Rome, to be martyred there, Ignatius wrote a letter to the Roman Christians imploring them not to interfere with his coming trials or, for instance, not to try to keep him alive by bribing the authorities. While journeying slowly but surely towards a gruesome martyrdom, he nevertheless embraces his fate with joy, exclaiming:

It is better for me to die in Christ Jesus than to be king over the ends of the earth. I seek him who died for our sake. I desire him who rose for us. Birth-pangs are upon me. Suffer me, my brethren; hinder me not from living, do not wish me to die. … Suffer me to receive the pure light; when I shall have arrived there, I shall become a human being (ἄνθρωπος). Suffer me to follow the example of the passion of my God. (Rom 6)

2 Irenaeus, Against the Heresies, 4.20.7. Cf. Behr, Irenaeus of Lyons (OUP, 2013).
Compared to our usual patterns of speech, life and death are here reversed: he is not yet born, not yet alive, not yet human. Having merely come into mortal existence, involuntarily, Ignatius clearly sees his impending martyrdom, his voluntary death in conformity to Christ, as a freely chosen birth into existence as a human being.

This striking claim would seem to be based in the relationship between the Gospel of John and Genesis, both of which open with the words ‘In the beginning’. In the creation account of the first chapter of Genesis, having spoken everything into existence—Let there be; it is; it is good—God announces his own project, not in the imperative voice, but the subjunctive: ‘Let us make a human being in our image and likeness’ (Gen 1:26). From what we have seen, in Ignatius and Irenaeus, Christ’s words from the cross, in John and only there, ‘It is finished’, speaks of the completion of the creative act begun in Genesis, confirmed, unwittingly, by Pilate (again, only in John): ‘behold the human being’ (John 19:5).

This brings out a further dimension in the point we considered earlier, that it is in the way in which he dies as a human being that Christ shows us what it is to be God. All men and women, as all other created beings, die. But in the way in which he dies, Christ shows us not only what it is to be God, but also what it is to be human: one who lives through self-sacrificial love. Christ as ‘the image of the invisible God’ (Col. 1:15) alone manifests this reality within creation, and it is to the stature of Christ, the ‘mature’ or ‘perfect’ humanity he exhibits (cf. Eph 4:13), that we are invited. Moreover, and rather startlingly, the only thing said in the opening chapter of Genesis to be God’s own express and considered purpose—his own project, to make a human being—is the only thing for which he does not say ‘Let it be’. It is rather we, women and men, who give the ‘fiat’ to God’s own project, by grounding our existence in the freedom and love that is God’s own, to become ‘living human beings, the glory of God.’

It has to be emphasized that what is sketched out here is a theological vision, not immediately perceptible to the human eye. The Roman citizens sitting in the amphitheatre as Blandina was being brutalized assuredly did not look upon her as the embodiment of Christ. The letter itself points out how it was specifically those in the arena alongside her who saw this. And, to be more accurate, it is in fact Irenaeus who saw these events through the eyes of his theological understanding, and who wrote about them, interpreting them, so that we, the readers, might look upon Blandina, and our own sufferings, in this way. This movement was described earlier with the words from the anaphora of John Chrysostom—‘in the night in which he was given up, or rather gave himself up, for the life of the world’—or as the movement from the Synoptics to John. It is vital to recognize what is involved in this movement to a theological vision, and to hold both sides together (as Chrysostom does, rather than scratching the first clause). Christ’s paschal victory, as noted earlier, has not brought an end to suffering and death, but rather has turned this inside out, as we have attempted to show. Both dimensions are held together beautifully in a hymn from John of Damascus (to whom is attributed much of the paschal material quoted at the beginning), used in the funeral service of the Orthodox Church:

I weep and I wail when I think upon death, and behold our beauty, fashioned after the image of God, lying in the tomb, disfigured, dishonored, bereft of form. O marvel! What is this mystery which befalls us? Why have we been given over unto corruption, and why have we been wedded to death? Of a truth, as it is written, by the command of God, who gives the departed rest.

(Sticheron from Aposticha, Friday Vespers, tone 8)

3 The Byzantine hymnography for Holy Saturday makes the same point regarding the completion of creation in Christ’s rest on the Sabbath: ‘Moses the great mysteriously prefigured this present day, saying: “And God blessed the seventh day.” For this is the blessed Sabbath, this is the day of rest, on which the only-begotten Son of God rested from all his works, through the economy of death he kept the Sabbath in the flesh, and returning again through the resurrection he has granted us eternal life, for he alone is good and loves humankind (lit: loves anthropos).’ (The ‘doxasticon’ for vespers).
Death is indeed a tragedy, an outrage, and the apparent subversion of all God’s intentions for his creature. This cannot be minimized. Yet, as we continue to reflect on our common fate, in the light of Christ’s Passion, that mourning turns into joy as we begin to see the mystery of Christ unfolded, in that it was we who subvert God’s intentions, by living for ourselves and so committing ourselves to death, but that even this apostasy is nevertheless embraced within the overarching economy of God, in which life comes through death.

Finally, one further striking aspect of the joy spoken about above is the emphasis that it gives to the heavenly rejoicing, especially for the Virgin Mother, the New Jerusalem and Zion. The Gospels also speak of the joy in heaven, when a sinner here below repents or converts; and invites us to enter into the joy of the Master. Perhaps the greatest image of this joy, as an eternal joy, is described in Proverbs in a passage in which Wisdom, understood by early Christians to be Christ, speaks of herself: ‘When he established the heavens, I was there … I was beside him, like a master workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world, and delighting in the sons of men’ (Prov. 8:27, 30—31).

‘They will seek death but not find it’
The Christian experience and proclamation of joy is grounded in this mysterious paschal inversion of the relation between life and death. Though it has always found itself at odds with the world and the happiness it offers, it is perhaps almost incomprehensible today, because of our capability to almost indefinitely preserve ‘life’ and defer death, for our understanding of life and death have undergone profoundly techtonic changes over the past century.

We think we know what life is, for after all, are we not alive, living? But when we begin to analyze life, we find that it is surprisingly evanescent, always receding from our sight. If we focus on that which we can see, looking at things as they show themselves in this world, we don’t in fact see life. We can look at living beings, living organisms, but we don’t see the life in them. And when we try to do so, we end up examining things that do appear: neurons, electric currents, amino acids, cells, chemical properties—all the things with which biology deals—everything apart from life itself. With our attention focused on things as they appear in this world, life simply becomes the lowest common denominator, applying not only to human beings but also to protozoa and bees (as if such things can tell us what life is, Henry asks drolly).

If we want to say, yes, such things are living beings, but human beings are more than that, then we would probably say, following a tradition that goes back to the beginning of human thought about such things, that human beings are more than living beings, that humans are living beings endowed with logos, with reason and language, and today we would no doubt add, creativity, being in relationship and so on, and draw out the conclusion that a flourishing human life means the enjoyment of all this and more… Thinking we know what life is—that which we already live—when we hear Christ saying that he has come that we might have life abundantly, we risk thinking that Christ has come so that we might have more of what we already have, that our definition of a flourishing human life is already sufficient. And we will probably fall into thinking that eternal life or the life of the resurrection will be a continuation or resumption of the kind of life that we think we now live, that to which we give so much of our time to supporting, but now set free from all the worries that beset us daily in the struggle for survival, so that we can finally enjoy, unburdened, all that we have.

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But if we take this path, to accept this definition of life—as the lowest common denominator for all living beings—and that we humans are more than simple living beings, having further dignity in all those things in which we pride ourselves, then we would also have to say that life is less than human, or even stronger, that life is inhuman.

But this is not how Christ speaks: the Christ who says ‘I am life’ (John 14:6); the one who speaks of others as simply dead: ‘let the dead bury their dead’ (Luke 9:60); the one who says, if we want to gain life, we must first lose it. As Christ speaks of life, it is not less than human, it is in fact, as we have seen, nothing other than the life of God; it is Christ himself, the one who shows himself not as yet something else in this world, but as the very life of the world and the very light of the world.

Life, then, for Christianity, is something more or other than what biology studies, more than or other than what we think that we are engaged in, in our daily lives. Life is something that we must acquire, must enter into, must be born into, as witnessed by Ignatius and Blandina, the martyrs who are ‘living human beings, the glory of God’ as Irenaeus put it.⁵

And here’s the rub. For we now (in the modern Western world) have come to live in a manner quite other than our forebears. We not only hope, but have come to expect, that our life even now will be free from pain, sickness, and suffering, that we have escaped the conditions endemic to human life as our ancestors knew it, and that we can continue to grow in attaining a form of life completely free of such limitations.

And perhaps even free from death, for very few people today (again in the West) see death. We know that people die, and we see their bodies. But compared to the situation a century ago, there is a marked difference. At the beginning of the twentieth century, most people had one or more of their siblings die during their childhood, and one or more parent dying before they reached adulthood (and now, our parents live on till we ourselves are beyond the life-expectancy of previous ages). Deceased siblings, parents, friends, and neighbours were kept at home, in the parlour or on the dining table, being mourned and waked by friends and neighbours, washed and prepared for burial, until being taken from home to church, where they would be commended to God and interred in the earth, after which family and friends return home to eat a meal in their memory at the same table. This was, moreover, a regular feature of life, such that it was experienced even monthly in the small communities of towns and villages.

Today, however, the corpse is removed as quickly as possible, to the care of the death-professionals, the morticians, who embalm the body, to make it look as good as possible, so that, when placed under rose-tinted lights in a funeral home, they look alive, in the hope that we might make a comment such as “I’ve never seen them looking so good”! The casket is then often closed during the funeral service. Or, as is increasingly happening today, there is no funeral service: the body is disposed of in a crematorium, and then, later on, there is a ‘memorial service,’ in which the person is celebrated without being bodily present.

All this betrays a very ambiguous, and disturbing, attitude to the body: no longer seeing death, our focus is now ever more on the body. We exercise and look after our body more than any previous generation, and we might do so under a veneer of Christian theology, arguing that ours is an ‘incarnational faith’ in which the body is the temple of the Spirit. But then at death, when the coils of the moral flesh are discarded, we think of the ‘person’ as liberated from the limitations of the body. Today, we live as hedonists and die as Platonists!

In a very real sense, then, we no longer see death today. We don’t live with it, as an ever-present reality, as has every generation of human beings before us. To put it most extremely: today we must be killed in

⁵ Cf. Henry: “To be born is not to come into the world. To be born is to come into life.” I Am The Truth, 59.
order to die. What we call ‘life’ is capable of being sustained indefinitely by machines in an ICU; they must be switched off for the patient to die.\footnote{Cf. Jeffrey Bishop, \textit{The Anticipatory Corpse: Medicine, Power, and the Care of the Dying} (Notre Dame, 2011).} One cannot help but recall the warning in the final book of Scripture: ‘And in those days, they will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death will fly away from them’ (Rev. 9:6).

There was been much discussion, in the latter part of the last century, of our ‘denial of death.’ But it would seem to me that the problem is deeper and more difficult. If it is true that Christ shows us what it is to be God in the way that he dies as a human being, then, quite simply, if we no longer see death, we no longer see the face of God. If we don’t see death, our horizons are purely imminent: it is about this life, and its perpetuation, it’s being ‘saved’ through medical intervention of the doctor, the one whom Foucault called the ‘high priest’ of modern society. If don’t see death, we have no basis for coming to understand that life in fact comes through death. Like cancer, which is ultimately cells which refuse to die, we have become a cancerous society!

What, then, is to become of the proclamation of joy in such a world? This is perhaps the most serious question that can be raised today. Perhaps one of the greatest tasks today, for this joy to be experienced, is to take back death. Towards the end of the twentieth century, birth was ‘taken back’: what had become an intensely medicalized episode (sickness?), with all births administered in hospital, under medication, with the family excluded, was reclaimed so that it was once more possible for the father to be present and the birth to occur at home. So also death needs to be reclaimed. The desacralization of the beginning and end of life result in a hedonization of life, in which there might be pleasure and happiness, but not the mysterious joy spoken about and experienced in Christianity.

And yet it remains a fact that we all still will die, however much we might chose to pretend otherwise. And therefore the paschal joy proclaimed by Christianity also remains a possibility for all. We might prefer to deny the reality of death, but the fact that we are embodied beings means that we cannot do so forever. ‘Alone, the body remembers that it is finite; alone, it roots us in its limits, our last frontier (for how long?); and even if—especially if—it forgets, the body alone still prevents us from being God to ourselves and others.’\footnote{Hervé Juvin, \textit{The Coming of the Body}, (New York: Verso), 177.}