

Being Some-Body in the Body of Christ: Dimensions of Embodiment in a Christian Perspective

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The pandemic and the political and societal reactions regarding its threats to human health have revealed different, from a Christian perspective problematical, perceptions of the human existence as body or, if we look a bit more closely, rather *in* or *with* a body. The guide to our well-being in times of the pandemic seems to neglect the bodily constitution of human being. The advice to stay at home and interact only virtually on social media leaves our actual bodies as a complex and multidimensional means of relation and interaction behind. Being a body has been confined to the privacy of our homes — shared and in touch with only a few others, or even no-body. At the same time the measures, at least those taken by the UK government, give an unmatched example of the unchallenged estimation of the body almost as a cult object in our self-perception, self-presentation and, particularly important in these times, our representation in the social media. The one and only exemption from the rule of staying at home (apart from shopping essentials, but we are encouraged to do that from home in any case) is ascribed to an hour of ‘exercise’ — not to an hour of getting sunlight or fresh air, not to an hour of social contact outdoors at a safe distance, not to a change of scenery etc. With this, we seem to be in accordance with trends of healthism and fitness waves, with all attempts to turn the ravages of time into anti-ageing and eternal youth in the way certain areas of modern and postmodern medical sciences promote it. Both perspectives — the way we deal with the threat of the virus: protecting our bodies in switching from bodily presence to virtual representation, and the way we consider the health of our bodies as a project in conducting our lives — are in danger of operating with human bodies as objects to be controlled, shaped, enhanced, and fitted in. Thus, they focus on a very limited picture of what it means to be a living body.¹

¹ At the beginning of the Corona crisis in Europe 2020, the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, amongst others, ventured the assumption that the Corona crisis reveals the only value of postmodern society as the protection of the ‘bare life’ (*zoë*, in opposition to ‘qualified life’/*bios*), resulting in a continuous state of anxiety/angst and a sense of general

The following reflections try to engage with a broader perspective on the corporeality of human life, arguing that the characteristics of bodily being provide the matrix for understanding what it means to be human. At first, we will explore common characteristics of human life as bodily life, such as its locatedness and location, its relationality, its finitude and mortality, its vulnerability and its exhaustibility. We will ground the broader perspective on being a body in conversation with anthropological perspectives of the Hebrew Bible. The following section 'Being Some-Body' takes into account that these common features of bodily life do not appear to us as an objective, external knowledge, but always as our experience of ourselves, inextricably connected to our sense of self. All these common features are only actual in the particularity, uniqueness of bodies as the personal identity of a body in and for the world. Being body and being somebody appears to be in inseparable union for human beings. Again, we engage with anthropological perspectives of the Hebrew Bible and explain the characteristic feature of creaturely being as the core function of *leb*, the heart, that correlates the physiological, emotional/affective, cognitive and volitional dimensions of the embodied self. Human bodies live in replying to the creator's address in the givenness of the world — they are the location and mode of the created freedom that characterizes human being. The third section 'The Body of Christ — Incarnation, the Body on the Cross and the Resurrected Body' explores further aspects of the theological value and appreciation of bodily being in reflecting on the implications of God's salvific engagement with bodily being in the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of the Word/*Logos*, the second person of the Trinity for the understanding of what it means to live as a human body. Has this theological value been replaced by spirituality, in contrast to bodily being, by Christ's ascension and the pentecostal arrival of the Spirit? In two final sections the paper unfolds implications of the meaning of being a body for Christian identity. In 'The

insecurity. Without agreeing with Agamben's conclusions which are close to the denial of the pandemic and to related conspiracy theories, it seems important to me to see nevertheless the problematic narrowness in the perception of what it means to save or protect lives as displayed in the restrictions and measures taken by governments to control the spread of the virus. Along the lines of this paper, the differentiation of *zoë/bare life* and *bios/qualified life* is already a problematic one. There is no 'bare' life that can be protected as there is no living body that is simply defined by its anatomy and physiological processes. For Agamben's analysis see his guest commentary 'Nach Corona: Wir sind nurmehr das nackte Leben' (After Corona: We are Only the Bare Life) in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 18 March 2020.

Body of Christ — gathered around Word and Sacrament', we explore briefly the understanding of the church as the body of Christ from a Lutheran perspective, with its implications for bodily communication in word and sacrament. The following section 'Our Bodies in the Body of Christ — Temple of the Holy Spirit' establishes foundations for an 'embodied spirituality' that values the desires of a human body as the occasion of God's transforming salvific action in reorienting the desires towards God's desire of communion with creation and the enjoyment of created bodily life in all its dimensions. Thus, notions of spirituality — or of the spirit behind a lifestyle — that neglect the embodiment of mind, soul and spirit of human beings and try in one way or other to leave the body as the mode of creaturely being behind, are to be rejected.

Being body: A broader perspective

Vis-à-vis the 'excarnate'² way of life that is globally enforced on people by the pandemic, albeit in different shapes and details of restrictions, it seems important to regain a broader perspective on human embodiment than the notion that bodily vulnerability puts human life in jeopardy and that this risk can be dealt with by regarding the body as an object, subject to all kinds of bodily enhancement strategies. The Biblical understanding of the human condition as a 'living soul/body' (*nepheš hajjah*) offers a perspective that perceives human life as a holistic experience of the body. As an organism in its environment, the body is defined by its boundaries in time and space — the location of the body. Without being somewhere (and not everywhere) one would be nowhere. The locatedness of the body is given in the experience of touch — be it the touch of other living bodies or the contact with dead matter. Bodies encounter touch — there are no bodies without touch.³ Only recently research on the human sense of touch has gained more

² I borrow this term from Richard Kearney, professor of philosophy at Boston College, who, according to *The Economist*, calls the process that led to a remarkable increase of virtual social interaction over the recent years 'excarnation'. He assesses this situation as a 'crisis of touch' that leaves people skin-hungry.

³ In his recent monograph on human embodiment, Paul Griffiths shows convincingly the fundamental role of touch in the constitution of flesh (which — in his terminology — is the living body in contrast to inanimate, non-living bodies): 'Without touch there is no flesh. [...] Without the fleshly touch of others, flesh rapidly becomes body: it dies.' Paul J. Griffiths, *Christian Flesh* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018), p. 5. Building my argument upon perspectives of the Hebrew understanding of being human,

attention: in the 1990s the neurons that detect affective touch, called the C-tactile (CT) afferents, were discovered and confirmed as playing an important role in the human perception of pain.⁴ We cannot dig deeper into the findings of this branch of brain research here, but the importance of skin-to-skin-touch, established so far, is widely experienced by its absence during this pandemic, as for example stated by *The Economist's* edition on the pandemic in February, highlighting that touch is 'the only sense crucial to humans' survival'⁵. This little glimpse into recent developments in this area of brain research already allows us to emphasize that the boundaries of the body that establish the here-and-nowness of the body through the sense of touch are porous. Far from being closed borders, leak-proof and sealed off, the boundaries of the body are places of traffic. Continuous exchange with its environment, communication in different modes, takes place at these boundaries and characterizes the life of the body. This exchange takes, for instance, the form of ingestion and excretion — literally a partial incorporation of the environment, transforming the outside world into the body-unit. Without such an exchange there is no body. The understanding of the human body that characterizes the scriptures of the Hebrew Bible points to this important feature of bodily existence when, in the story of creation, the clay sculpture, made by the Creator-potter from the soil of the earth (formation), about to become the first human, receives God's *ruach* as the breath of life (animation) through the nostrils and thus becomes *nephesh hajjah* — a living body.⁶ This clarifies, that the Hebrew *nephesh* does not describe a concept of the, possibly even immortal⁷, soul as a distinctive

I do not follow Griffiths's terminology: the Hebrew term *basar*, flesh, indicates precisely the perishability and mortality of human flesh, viewed apart from God's life sustaining breath. Human flesh refers to the decay of human bodies when they are separated from the creative or sustaining source of life. Cf. Isaiah 40.6 'All people [Hebrew: *basar*, flesh] are grass. Their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass.'

⁴ Cf. Emily Kuehn, 'Research into our sense of touch leads to new treatments for autism' [accessed 24.02.2021].

⁵ Daryn Ray, 'The pandemic made the world realise the importance of human contact'; cf. also Dacher Keltner, 'Hands On Research: The Science of Touch' [accessed 24.02.2021].

⁶ Cf. Bernd Janowski, *Anthropologie des Alten Testaments: Grundfragen — Kontexte — Themenfelder* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), p. 50 and Gerhard von Rad, *Das erste Buch Mose/Genesis*, 9th edition (Altes Testament Deutsch 2–4) (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1972), p. 53.

⁷ Cf. Karin Schöpflin, 'Seele', TRE 30 (1999), 737–40 (p. 739).

aspect of humanity in the way we might associate it with Platonic philosophy or certain strands of Roman-Catholic theology.⁸ *Nepheš hajjah* is the result or product of God's creative act in 'building the body' and 'enlivening it' by God's breath.⁹

More important for our observation of the porosity of human boundaries is the Hebrew understanding of the body as a synthesis, an organism of different limbs, in which each of the different limbs can be used *pars pro toto* for the body as a whole — in the body's physiological sphere and in its social sphere.¹⁰ *Nepheš*, physiologically the throat, is the channel

⁸ Promoting a holistic image of the human being as body, this article will not focus specifically on the body-soul-relation or body-soul-spirit/mind-relation as a distinctive feature of human existence with its implied dualisms of body and soul or mind, flesh and spirit, inner person and outer world, etc. This seems to be broadly supported by biblical studies not only with regard to the Hebrew Bible but also according to studies of the Gospel of John, or the writings of Paul. For an overview of the development in support of the exegetical view of the human being as a singular whole, neither a dichotomous nor a trichotomous being, see Joel B. Green, *Body, Soul and Human Life: The Nature of Humanity in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), pp. 4–16. In contrast, for a recent anthropological account of humans as soul-body compounds, see Joshua R. Farris, *An Introduction to Theological Anthropology: Humans, Both Creaturely and Divine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020).

⁹ With Janowski, *Anthropologie*, p. 50, I understand *nepheš hajjah* as the product of God's creative act against Loretz's understanding that the living human is a compositum of soil (*adamah*) and *nepheš*. This disagreement has obvious implications for understanding death: whereas in Janowski's understanding death occurs when the relation between God and the creature is interrupted in a way that God's breath is withdrawn from the creature, in Loretz's interpretation death means the dissociation of the components soil and *nepheš*.

¹⁰ For examples see Janowski, *Anthropologie*, pp. 142–45. Revisiting the anthropology of the Hebrew Bible, it struck me how effectively this language-use mirrors the entanglement of the emotional/social and physiological sphere in its reciprocal influences, and, with the possibility to use each organ as *pars pro toto* for the entire person in a certain emotional/physiological state, the complexity of personal identity in a network of processing information, a communicative system, rather than a body machine with its simple logic of a one way channel of causes and effects to which we are used in modern medicine. Whereas this entanglement can

for breath as well as for food and drink. At the same time, it is the location of the voice, another mode of the, in this case, explicitly communicative exchange of the body with its outside world. *Nepheš, pars pro toto* for the human being, indicates the body's need for constant exchange with its environment — and the Hebrew Bible does not shy away from describing the social threat of hate and bullying as the drowning of the *nepheš* — in a situation of social exclusion, the body finds itself in life-threatening waters.¹¹

Both observations — bodies experience their own locatedness and location by touching other bodies, being touched by other bodies or by contact with objects, and bodies are open to the outside world, the others, in constant exchange — show that bodies are no self-enclosed, no self-sufficient beings; they are not their own self-contained bubble.¹² Being body is being in relation. The body senses in their specific capacities of perceiving the outside world and acting in response to the received perception, might even let us ask, whether bodies are to be described as fundamentally communicative beings. Over the course of the last 50 years, a broad strand of German (Protestant) theology has understood human being as constituted by (communicative) relations — the human being, called into life, addressed by God and called to respond. This has shifted theological

be seen in contrast to the notion of the soul, the life of an independent 'inner person', as the human distinction, it seems to display some convergence with the sciences, especially the neurosciences and their insight into the fundamental embodiment of the mind. Cf. Green, *Body, Soul and Human Life*, pp. 33 and 38–46.

¹¹ Cf. Psalm 69. 1,3,4: 'Save me, o God, for the waters have come to my neck [Hebrew *nepheš*] [...] I am worn out, calling for help [...] many are my enemies without cause, those who seek to destroy me [...]' In the following the social misery of the one who prays is described, then follows the petition for rescue from the deep waters.

¹² The notion of the constant exchange of the human body is in sharp contrast with the modern sense of being human, that locates human dignity 'in self-sufficiency and self-containment, sharply defined personal boundaries, the highly developed idea of my 'inner person,' and the conviction that my full personhood rests on my exercise of autonomous and self-legislative action' (Green, *Body, Soul and Human Life*, p. 12). The fundamental porosity of the body's boundaries contradicts an understanding of human beings as individuals, 'buffered selves', with a firm sense of the boundary between self and others, inner and outer world. For a comprehensive discussion of the construction of the modern understanding of being human see Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).

discourses from substance ontological perspectives to an explicit relational ontology which reflects not only the anthropological¹³ and theological¹⁴ perspectives of the Reformers more accurately, but also the world view of Scripture. More recently, this seems to be equally emphasized in debates about embodiment in the philosophy of mind.¹⁵ The development of language in the human species seems to rely on the bodily development that is implied in the location of the larynx, due to which human beings have a much bigger spectrum of different sounds available, especially vowels, than for example chimpanzees. Michael Tomasello, former director of the Max Planck institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, describes the human ability to perceive each other as intentional agents, the capacity for shared intentionality, as distinctive for being (or becoming) human.¹⁶ Shared intentionality requires the ability to follow another person's direction of view, an ability humans acquire at about the age of nine months. This bodily development (characteristic for the human species) proves to be an important feature for the development of the brain structures that enable communication and thus for human intersubjectivity. Apart from confirming the general intersubjectivity and communicative relationality as constitutive for being human, this also shows the reciprocal influences in the development of 'body' and 'mind' in the evolution of humanity and underscores the inseparability of body and mind or soul/self. Research on language acquisition shows that language is learned by being addressed in the first place, i.e. in a responsive manner. For the theologian, this structure of human development might appear as corresponding to the ontological

¹³ Put on top of the theological agenda by the instructive analysis of Luther's anthropology: Wilfried Joest, *Ontologie der Person bei Luther* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967).

¹⁴ Cf. Christoph Schwöbel, 'God as Conversation: Reflections on a Theological Ontology of Communicative Relations', in *Theology and Conversation: Towards a Relational Theology* ed. by J. Haers and P. de Mey (Leuven: University Press, 2003), pp. 43–67.

¹⁵ For a broad philosophical approach cf. Charles Taylor, *The Language Animal: The Full Shape of the Human Linguistic Capacity* (Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016).

¹⁶ See Michael Tomasello, *Becoming Human: A Theory of Ontogeny* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019). See also Green, *Body, Soul, and Human Life*, p. 41. It is important to note that all these features do not exclusively apply to humans. Brain research confirms that certain animals possess many of these capacities, too.

structure of the relational constitution of being human as called into life, addressed by God and called to respond.¹⁷

The body's openness and its fundamental relatedness to the outside world as a constitutive feature of bodily being imply the fragility or vulnerability of bodies. Being dependent on the constant exchange with others in the world, even ingesting these, can turn out in harmful ways. Bodies are vulnerable and wounded. They are exposed to the dangers and risks¹⁸ of illness and they are ill. They experience pain and bear scars. In a world of climate change and the global pandemic the public awareness of the fragility of human existence is reflected in the perceived omnipresence of risks and danger in public discourses and in the endeavour to contain risks and insure our lives against all contingencies. At the same time, the attempt at containing risks and systematically insuring oneself against risks supports a general notion of the possibility of comprehensively safeguarding one's life against all kinds of perils and dangers.¹⁹ This notion gains persuasive power through the enhanced technical possibilities of predicting dangers and calculating risks, and the medical progress that seem to suggest that human life undisturbed by illness or decay is within reach of realistic technical-medical development.²⁰ This is intensified since we tend to interpret many dangers as risks: the passive encounter with threats which the body is subject to come to be understood as intentional commitments to risky, dangerous situations. Thus, the fundamental vulnerability is perceived as an intentional matter of choice: if I choose the right lifestyle the risks of contracting an illness can be minimized.²¹ In contradiction to such an

¹⁷ Cf. Gregor Etzelmüller, 'Verkörperung als Paradigma theologischer Anthropologie', in *Verkörperung als Paradigma theologischer Anthropologie*, ed. by G. Etzelmüller and A. Weissenrieder (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2016), pp. 219–44 (p. 231).

¹⁸ For the differentiation of danger and risk, see Niklas Luhmann, *Risk. A Sociological Theory* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2005).

¹⁹ For an analysis of the sociological and political implications of risks in a globalized world cf. Ulrich Beck, *World Risk Society* (Cambridge, UK and Malden, MA: Polity Press, 1999).

²⁰ For this understanding of sickness and death as questions of technical mastery, see Yuval Noah Harari, *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*. (London: Penguin Vintage, 2016), especially pp. 24–34.

²¹ Mikkel Gabriel Christoffersen, *Living with Risk and Danger* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019) has pointed out how problematic these perceptions of human vulnerability as manageable risks appear within the framework of a relational theology, that takes the

understanding of the — at least theoretically — infinite capacity for enhancement of the body, the Hebrew Bible emphasizes that the body's fragility and vulnerability includes the physiological, mental, and social sphere of a body's life. The body is ill, groggy, unwell, when life's fundamental relations — to oneself, to others, and to God — are harmed or broken.²²

Moreover, bodily existence is finite existence: it starts in the womb with the fusion of an egg and a sperm cell and ends in the tomb when its vital processes have come to an end and it decomposes to dust. Bodies are being born and die. They come to life and decay. There is no bodily experience that does not relate back to the givenness of the body as its presupposition. There is no bodily experience that does not rely on the continuous vivifying 'breath of life', maintaining the body as a living being, a creature. When this breath of life is withdrawn the body returns to the dust from which it was made. The Hebrew Bible describes *adonaj* as the one who can close the womb (cf. Genesis 30.1–2) or open it up (cf. Genesis 30.22), a remarkable bodily image for the fact that life itself — its initial gift and its sustenance — is not under human control. Already in their mother's womb the fruit of the womb is addressed by God, receiving their unique identity in a name: 'The Lord called me before I was born, while I was in my mother's womb he named me.' (Isaiah 40.1) Not only physical existence is in this way referred back to

creatureliness of human beings seriously: relying on relations that are set not by human beings, but for human beings by God, implies inevitably the possibility of losing these relations in one way or the other. In response to these tendencies in the postmodern world, Christoffersen presents a 'Theology of Risk and Danger' in a Trinitarian framework, which rightly understands the management of risk and danger not as a human project but as embedded in God's agency in creation, incarnation and redemption, and perfection.

²² For instance, this is displayed clearly in Psalm 102. The psalmist refers to their own status in describing an illness in its bodily symptoms (vv. 3–5), and in its social dimensions (vv. 6–8). Both dimensions are not separated in a sequence (i.e. social exclusion as the explanation for psychosomatic implications, or the other way around, somatic suffering as the cause of social exclusion). Rather both dimensions are envisaged closely connected and framed by the psalmist's cry for help, asking for *adonaj*'s presence, God's visual and auditory attention (vv. 1–3) and by their lament (vv. 9–11) about God's anger which has thrown the psalmist away to a place where they wither away like grass. The entire set of fundamental relations of the human being — to God, to oneself and to other human beings or creation as a whole — is suffering and endangered in this illness.

something given, but personal identity itself — an important aspect of being a body to which we will turn in the next section.

Since the body lives by resources which it does not produce itself, exhaustion as the result of the body's activity and the need for rest and re-creation are part of bodily existence. Circadian rhythms are written into every cell of the body and characterize every process of bodily existence.²³ The body cannot give itself what it needs, when its exhaustion cries for rest and re-creation. It has to receive it. Activity and passivity, work and rest, finite creativity and passive re-creation characterize the body's course of life. Pointedly, Psalm 127 (verse 2) reminds us of the limits of human achievements, viewed on their own. ('It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil, for he gives sleep to his beloved.') The Sabbath, as the day of rest, is inscribed into the order of creation, resetting humans and the entire creation to the fulfilment of the seventh day — 'God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good' (Genesis 1.31) — an occasion for recreation through *adonaj*, on whose enlivening breath all bodies rely. The holiness of the Sabbath consists in being welcomed back into the order of creation, in which the creature owes the creator everything and acknowledges this relation in praising the creator and creation.²⁴ It is no coincidence that obeying the rhythm of work and rest, weekdays and Sabbath, is also the reminder of Israel's liberation from the slave house of Egypt (Deuteronomy 5.15) — characterizing God's people as free from the demands 'to be what you achieve'. Turning back to the most immediate, fundamental response of the creature to the givenness of life, namely the praise of its creator, at the end of the work, and in this way giving opportunity to be restored, re-created by God shapes human bodies' deepest rhythms.

From this perspective, the fundamental relation of the Creator to God's creature envelops even the mortality of human bodies, as the natural fact of the given finitude. Its acknowledgement therefore — be it as harmful and difficult as it may be — is wisdom (Psalm 90.12), a wisdom that the body's

²³ For the characteristic 'circadian rhythms' that can be described as the inner clocks 'that permit organisms to optimize physiology and behaviour in advance of the varied demands of the day/night cycle' (p. 1) and are found in every living being, cf. Russell G. Foster & Leon Kreitzman, *Circadian Rhythms: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

²⁴ For an account of the human exhaustibility and the anthropological meaning of the Sabbath cf. Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropologie des Alten Testaments*, newly edited by B. Janowski (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2010), pp. 197–208.

ageing, withering, vulnerability and suffering always already encounters and bears witness to even if it is not acknowledged in an explicit way.²⁵

We can note here already, the finitude of the body that is implied in the body's dependence on a source of life and life's maintenance by powers from outside exposes bodies to the seductive question of the serpent: 'Did God really say: "You must not eat from any tree in the garden"?' (Genesis 3.1) with its fake promise of eating the fruit and becoming like God the Creator who has the power to define good and bad from scratch (Genesis 3.4). The promise of such independence from God the Creator, denying the givenness of life by ingesting whatever pleases and is desirable no matter what, and in this way ignoring the given order of creation seems to be key to the body's fallibility (and fallenness). It does not only lead to destroying the foundational relation to the Creator, it also damages the many relations to the creature's created environment, denying them the respect owed to their createdness. Instead, the sinner perceives them (be they other living bodies or the inanimate world) only as material for the body's self-supply, and thus, ends up in the self-deception of self-sufficiency.²⁶

²⁵ The connection of death and guilt though leads to a more complex picture of the tension between God and death and the meaning of the human death for the human being after the fall in the Hebrew Bible. Thus, the untimely death, i.e. not to be granted to die in good old age and full of years, satisfied by the richness of one's life, is an occasion for lament and petition. Cf. Wolff, *Anthropologie*, pp. 152–77, and Janowski, *Anthropologie*, pp. 80–83.

²⁶ I can only indicate this understanding of 'original sin' here as it develops in correspondence with its foundations in a relational ontology as the violation/damage of the created relational network that constitutes bodily life. Luther's account of the '*homo incurvatus in se*' in his Lecture on Romans describes this dislocation of the human being in relation to God, to the others and to oneself: 'Our nature, by the corruption of the first sin, is so deeply curved in on itself that it not only bends the best gifts of God towards itself and enjoys them (as is plain in the works-righteous and hypocrites), or rather even uses God himself in order to attain these gifts, but it also fails to realize that it so wickedly, curvedly, and viciously seeks all things, even God, for its own sake.' ('Ratio est, Quia Natura nostra vitio primi peccati tam profunda est in seipsam incurua, vt non solum optima dona Dei sibi inflectat ipsisque fruatur (vt patet in Iustitiariis et hipocritis), immo et ipso Deo vtatur ad illa consequenda, Verum etiam hoc ipsum ignoret, Quod tam inique, curue et praeue omnia, etiam Deum, propter seipsam querat.' WA 56: 304, 25–29.) This disoriented relation ends up in the human being not

Being some-body

All these general, classifying descriptions of what it means to be a body so far seem to miss an important insight into the constitution of being a body, namely its particularity and — in this particularity — its identity: all general characteristics of being a body are only there as a particular, unique (and complex) ensemble of a personal identity. This uniqueness applies to our bodies in their appearance, in their specific response to being spoken to, their way of addressing others, in their way of perceiving the world around them and of acting upon it. It also applies to the specific ways of a body's perception of itself in and through those we encounter. Every experience of a body is the experience of one's own body, and only through one's own body one experiences the bodies of others. There is no body-free ('excarnate') experience of ourselves, the others, and the world around us. My body is my particular 'being for me' and it is my presence in the world. My body is uniquely mine.²⁷ As Paul Griffiths simply notes:

The history of a body of flesh is the history of a life. Its principle of organization, what makes it the fleshy body it is and not some other, is the principle of a life. Its boundaries, temporal and spatial, are the boundaries of a life.²⁸

— a particular life, one is tempted to add.

acknowledging God as God but wanting to be God themselves. 'Non potest homo naturaliter velle deum esse deum, Immo vellet se esse deum et deum non esse deum.' (Martin Luther, *Disputatio contra scholasticam theologiam* (1517), WA 1:225,1.) For a consistently relational account of sin cf. Christoph Schwöbel, 'Changing Places: Understanding Sin in Relation to a Graceful God', in *Sin, Forgiveness, and Reconciliation: Christian and Muslim Perspectives*, ed. by L. Mosher and D. Marshall (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2016), pp. 23–39.

²⁷ For understanding the body as my particular being for me and in the world see Joachim Ringleben, 'Body and Corporeality: II. Dogmatics', in *RPP* 2 (2007), 145–46 and Kirsten Huxel, 'Body and Corporeality: III. Ethics', in *RPP* 2 (2007), 146–47. The mind-body problem with its problematic dualism, going back to Descartes and the different attempts to interpret the unity of body and soul following the phenomenological approach refers to the existential twin dimensions of the experience of the self/I and the experience of the world/outside. For details see the entry 'Body and Soul', in *RPP* 2 (2007), 147–52.

²⁸ Griffiths, *Christian Flesh*, p. 2.

With the following 5 aspects I will try to unfold a little more (but still very briefly!) what the body's experiencing of itself as one's own entails.

1. The experience of a body as one's own implies the particular locatedness in time and space of a body as self-contiguous: the body has no separable parts — i.e. it cannot be at two different places at the same time. The body does not tolerate any interruptions in being this body. Thus, our body is the sturdy incorporation of the perspectivity of our life.
2. In its finitude the body entails individual determining features (such as skin or eye colour, size, or sex) some of which will in the course of the life of a body as somebody develop as more dominant than others, depending on the time and space, cultural setting, etc., in which one lives. Simone de Beauvoir's famous statement, 'One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman',²⁹ gives us a sense of the entanglement of bodily givenness, experience and its cultural meaning and overtones. There is no pure or naked body through which we could make experiences apart from the cultural framework in which we already always live. Rereading Simone de Beauvoir after almost 40 years also gives us some reassurance, that with regard to the question of embodiment, sex, and gender the Christian perspective has — at least partly — changed. With regard to the Christian interpretation of the body or human flesh, de Beauvoir writes:

The Christian is divided within himself, the separation of body and soul, of life and spirit is complete; original sin makes of the body the enemy of the soul; all ties of the flesh seem evil [...] And of course, since woman remains always the Other, it is not held that reciprocally male and female are both flesh: the flesh that is for the Christian the hostile Other is precisely woman [...] the fact of having a body has been considered, in woman, an ignominy.³⁰

3. The body is an inseparable unity of flesh and spirit. As personal identity the particular body is more than 'just body'. This is mirrored when we talk of expressions of the body, body language, etc. It culminates and is made explicit in the self-relation of persons, their self-awareness and then their self-reflexivity — a body-self or some-

²⁹ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), p. 18.

³⁰ de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, p. 168.

body. Being a body-self is the mode in which the dimension of the 'inner' person and the dimension of the 'outer' person are bound together, and which already indicates the problem of distinguishing between 'inner' and 'outer' person. It is, however, part of the experience of oneself as a body in the world that these two dimensions can be somehow out of sync, a clear indicator of both the dimensions. As an illustration we may turn to a contemporary literary example, Frances, main character (and first-person narrator) in Sally Rooney's '*Conversations with Friends*'. After having received quite unexpectedly the diagnosis of endometriosis, a chronic disease that would change her life, Frances talked to her boyfriend on the phone without revealing the news. 'I hung up the phone. After that I put some cold water on my face and dried it, the same face I had always had, the one I would have until I died.'³¹ Just a little further in the story, she reflects:

I looked out the window at the station. I had the sense that something in my life had ended, my image of myself as a whole or normal person maybe. I realised my life would be full of mundane physical suffering, and that there was nothing special about it. Suffering wouldn't make me special, and pretending not to suffer wouldn't make me special. Talking about it, or even writing about it, would not transform the suffering into something useful. Nothing would. [...].³²

4. Self-reflection never presents us with an objective image of ourselves, the 'naked truth' about ourselves. It is itself embodied³³ — an

³¹ Sally Rooney, *Conversations with Friends* (London: Faber & Faber, 2017), p. 274.

³² Rooney, *Conversations*, p. 275.

³³ Cf. Green, *Body, Soul, and Human Life*, pp. 42–46, including a set of examples related to areas of brain research and the philosophy of mind. The philosophy of mind, emerging from brain research, has changed the contours of the body-soul/mind problem significantly: 'If the capacities constitutive of the human being traditionally allocated to the immaterial soul are identified with neuronal processes, then the need underlying the attribution of an immaterial soul to the human being vanishes. In this case, one might conclude that what makes us singularly human is the complexity of our brain — or, better, the properties and capacities that have this

important insight the *embodied cognitive sciences* has made us take note of over the last ten to fifteen years. Self-reflection as a mirror of ourselves is always already coloured by our history, our bodies' capacities and particularities, our affections. In conversation with the work of the brain researcher Thomas Fuchs, the OT scholar Bernd Janowski has pointed to the stunning insight that the anthropological perspective of the Hebrew Bible does not present the brain as the mediator of our relations to the world, other persons and ourselves. The reflective and navigating 'organ' is not the brain. The Hebrew language does not even have a term for brain. The body's core relational 'organ' according to the Hebrew Bible is the heart, *leb*. The cognitive faculty of humans is located in the heart, which, of course, at the same time houses the emotions/affections and the will.³⁴ Instead of distinguishing between reason, will and feeling and three different organs for each of these faculties, the Hebrews are used to an understanding of the unity of these faculties of the self at the core of the person: the heart correlates the physiological, emotional/affective, cognitive and volitional dimensions of personhood, the embodied self. According to this view, the emotions are not the mirror of an inner life, secluded from the outside world, which 'burst out' or overflow from time to time. Rather, they are the way in which the body perceives the outer world as its own outer world, relates to it and responds to it.³⁵

complex brain as their anatomical basis. If human identity is grounded in consistency of memory, if the differentiation marks of the human person are the development of consciousness, individuality within community, self-consciousness, the capacity to make decisions on the basis of self-deliberation, planning and action on the basis of that decision, and taking responsibility for these decisions and actions, and if these have a neural substrate, then the concept of 'soul', as traditionally understood in theology as a person's 'authentic self', seems redundant.' (Green, *Body, Soul, and Human Life*, p. 27).

³⁴ Cf. Bernd Janowski, 'Das Herz – ein Beziehungsorgan: Zum Personverständnis des Alten Testaments', in *Dimensionen der Leiblichkeit: Theologische Zugänge* ed. by B. Janowski and Chr. Schwöbel (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlagsgesellschaft, 2015), pp. 1–45 (p. 1).

³⁵ Oswald Bayer, 'The Soul as Answer', in *Lutheran Quarterly* 33 (2019), 399–412, describes the soul (not the heart) as this core of human being in relations of the I, the self and their location in relation to God: 'the totality of my self as it lives in the duration of remembering and expecting in the countenance of the eternal God' (p. 406). The crucial eccentricity of my

This is illustrated in the immediacy of bodily and mental states and relations in emotions like fear, anger and wrath, joy and laughter. The response of the heart is by no means just immediate. Rather, it is *oriented* by its affections, by that which the heart perceives as what it longs for, or what it is attracted by and driven to. However, in its reasoning, the heart ‘then’ double checks the correlation between body and world (the ‘sincere’ heart), forms a ‘thought in the heart’, which culminates in an intention and a plan, orienting the human agency towards an aim. The heart is the continuous relation of feeling-reasoning-intending-and-acting as a communication of the body with its world. The proximity of this view of the function of the relational core in the body’s heart to insights of the Reformers into the attachment of the will to the affections, the bondage of the will, is obvious here.³⁶

5. In general, the heart’s response to its ‘being’ in every particular situation can affirm its own constitution in the relational set in which human bodies find themselves — to the creator, to their fellow creatures, creation and to themselves — or try and contradict it — self-deception in not honouring the creator, not respecting creatures and creation. With the heart at its core, the body-unit enables human freedom, the capacity to act (with the body, or with parts of the body, but — apart from very few exceptions — it is always the entire body, the person herself who is accountable and responsible for the act). This agency occurs in response to the perceived givenness of this particular body as a living being, a person in the world. Human bodies are the location and the mode according to which human beings experience the possibilities and limits of ‘created (i.e. non-absolute) freedom’.

The body of Christ

As we are bodies, hardwired to connect with other people in all dimensions of the wide range of embodied communication, we are creatures addressed

life, its givenness, in order to be redeemed and perfected, that is emphasized in Bayer’s account of the soul as the difference between I, self and the soul finds its reflection in our account here as the heart’s need of orientation.

³⁶ The role of the faculty of affections in human agency and its implications for the freedom resp. bondage of the will plays an important part in the theological account of Philipp Melanchthon. For his approach see Philipp Melanchthon, *Loci communes* (1521), in *Melanchthon and Bucer*, ed. by W. Pauck. (London: S.C.M. Press, 1969), especially ‘The Power of Man, Especially Free Will’, pp. 22–30.

by the creator God in order to communicate, to respond in relation to the one who called us into life, to our fellow creatures and to creation as a whole. God's will is to maintain this original creative and sustaining conversation with us — even as sinners whose main concern (that what we attach our heart to) is not to tune into this conversation, receiving orientation in God's communication with us and then acting upon it. In contrast, we seek to sing our own song, create our own special creation of life, try to sustain it in a boundless desire to make it our own, ingest it and gain self-sufficiency — developing our bodies into something like a safe bubble. God's will to communicate with God's creatures, to maintain the relation of free and self-giving love that is the very ground and the goal of creation, even when we try to withdraw our bodies from this relation, is actualized unsurpassably in the incarnation of the *Logos*.

'Anyone who has seen me, has seen the Father' (John 14.9) is the hermeneutical baseline of the Gospel of John, rephrasing the certainty of faith, that Jesus Christ's life, Christ's *body* as it were, in its tiniest beginnings in the womb of Mary, in all his bodily interaction in the course of his life, his words, his hands, his wandering, his eating and drinking, even his exhaustion and fear, up to his miserable pain and death on the cross is the true image of God.

God as body? Aren't we used to the opposite notion, that we are bodies (with the hope of — finally — escaping the prison of the body in God's new creation), but that God certainly is not body, but transcendent? The Hebrew Bible does not shy away from body language when it comes to events of encounter with God. God is walking in the garden, God speaks and has a face (which seems to be overwhelming for the creature under the constraints of time and space and therefore dangerous to see) etc.³⁷ Coming from God's incarnation in Christ, we should not brush this picture aside too readily, since it does not seem to fit with God's holiness, or our understanding of transcendence and immanent bodies. God's presence comes along with glimpses of embodiment, addressing the human who encounters God in such a way that God can be addressed and makes Godself available for the human being. This is never a fully bodily presence (it rather works *pars pro toto*) but it makes sure, that God is — for a time in a certain place — present, perceivable, and available. This availability is not under human control and — and that is an important difference to the incarnation of Christ — it never

³⁷ Cf. Philipp Stoellger, 'Vom dreifaltigen Sinn der Verkörperung', in *Verkörperung als Paradigma theologischer Anthropologie*, ed. by G. Etzelmüller and A. Weissenrieder (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2016), pp. 289–316, especially his reflections on God's embodiment in section 6, pp. 303–08.

gives God into human hands. Although present, God's transcendence is maintained.

If we take the Christological dogma seriously that the Father and the Son are of the same being, we have to refrain from an understanding of the incarnation, describing an incorporeal God taking on flesh (as a kind of disguise) for a certain period of time, a messenger, delivering some brilliant and challenging ideas, a few healing touches and the spirit of a new community to enhance humanity's understanding of God. The incarnation makes the decisive point: God's real presence in this world is bodily presence. And this presence is not opposed to God's transcendence, but rather the way in which transcendence and immanence are related, namely in the very being of God as God's will to be in communion, with us. The incarnation calls the idea of being *saved from* our bodies — to become solely spiritual beings — into question. Instead, it inscribes an unsurpassably value of bodily encounter into the process of salvation. God wants to meet us in the midst of the particularities of our bodily experience. Human bodies do not only provide the location and the occasion for revelation and salvation, they are indispensable for the transformation itself and inextricably connected to it.

This is most clearly demonstrated in the Gospels' witness to Jesus of Nazareth's ministry: fleshly born to Mary (and Joseph), in the rather uncomfortable — but very physical — surroundings of a stable, as a male Jew in first century Israel (in whom God's history of the covenant with the Jewish people becomes disclosed as an intrinsic — not just an accidental — feature of God's very story). The story of his public appearance begins in encountering the movement around John the Baptist, in the cleansing waters of the river Jordan. People are touched — even those who were untouchable — and healed from bodily diseases, people are addressed and invited to move literally away from their former existence, wine is enjoyed, and fish given to the hungry, banquets are held and hospitality is celebrated. Food and drink establish a new human community³⁸, including the bodily comforts of rest and foot massage. Encountering Jesus was far from an experience that solely engaged the mind with a new understanding of God and the world. Encountering the love of God in the person of Christ means

³⁸ For an interesting account of eating in connection with thanksgiving (for the gift of food and the labour involved in its preparation) and lament (as our eating is inevitably involved in the economy of death and slaughter), fasting and eucharistic eating as well as abuse of food and drink which also lays the ground for a Christian ethical account of food and consumption (Griffiths calls it the 'hagiography' of eating), see Griffiths, *Christian Flesh*, pp. 103–21.

encountering the caress and joy of being touched by God in the broadest sense of 'body touch', engaging all the senses. Where God's kingdom has begun, broken bodies walk tall. By Christ's body the communication between God and humans, God's goal for creation, becomes real. And even where Jesus's message establishes a new culture, the better justice (rather than healing a natural/physiological deficiency), this often happens corporeally, rather than only mentally. Sermons are followed by meals even where there is not much to eat. As our bodies are both naturally given and socially/culturally constructed, so is the body in the centre of healing that Jesus provides for cultural wounds.³⁹ John's narration of Jesus's encounter with the woman caught in adultery (John 8.1–11) intertwines both dimensions skilfully: the woman stands in the middle of the accusing crowd, her body exposed to the threat of her accusers to stone her. The absence of the accusing bodies and of their threats at the end of the scene depicts the liberation that salvation brings — the woman in her own space, being looked at only by Jesus who does not condemn but gives her an identity freed from her sin. The bodily encounter with Jesus lets the woman experience that the sinner does not remain imprisoned in her sin in Jesus's presence.

The seriousness of the incarnation, Christ's bodily existence, is disclosed in the general direction of Jesus's life towards death. His humanity entirely embraces the finitude of human bodies to their very end. Moreover, in the details of the painful death on the cross it also embraces the vulnerability of human bodies and its actual woundedness. God's will to communicate with God's creatures, extends to sharing the utmost pain and suffering. The cruelty of the scene leaves no doubt: there is no cry of suffering, no choked whimpering, no muffled sob of fear of human bodies that is not known by experience, first-hand, by the incarnate God. The full humanity of God incarnate is disclosed in the suffering of his body and in his final breath. On the cross, Christ offers himself, his own body, to God's agency.

The death of the body is followed by the resurrected body of Christ, bearing all the signs necessary to identify the body as the body of the crucified one. This seems to be one crucial point of the bodily resurrection: the body is the mode of personal identity throughout all discontinuity. Therefore, it is not a heavenly restored body that Mary and the disciples, men and women, encounter after the resurrection, but the body that still shows the wounds to be inspected on invitation (John 20.24–29) — while at the same time its true identity can be hidden for those who encounter him at least until they encounter him — truly bodily, when he takes the bread as he used to do it, gives thanks, blesses it and breaks it (Luke 24.13–34). A second aspect might be the here-and-nowness which is part of God's

³⁹ See also Green, *Body, Soul, and Human Life*, pp. 48–50.

presence amongst us (at least, in this world). As personal presence it is not a free-floating unrecognizable virtuality. Rather, it remains true, that God has bound his presence — freely — to the body of Christ. The gospels emphasize clearly: the resurrected crucified one is not a ghost nor a story made up by his desperate followers (which should make us cautious to interpret the resurrection as a resurrection into the kerygma, as Willi Marxsen did in accordance with Bultmannian thought, rather than as a resurrection of the body — raised by God the Father — that still shows the signs of the torture on the cross, even though, as we will see, even ‘the kerygma’ or the Gospel is in any case not ‘without a body’ or disembodied.)

Gathered around Word and Sacrament

Has the theological value of embodiment become obsolete in the community of disciples after Christ’s ascension through which he gave way to the coming of the Advocate, the Holy Spirit? (‘But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.’, (John 16.7)). Are we now entering the ‘body free’, disembodied, stage of spiritual renewal, transcending the limits and weaknesses of the body? We have already seen that we would undermine that Jesus of Nazareth’s mission appreciated the body, enabling bodily healing processes, be it physical healing, be it the social healing of the community of humans by the means of the bodily, physiological processes of eating and drinking. In its very beginnings in the mission of Jesus Christ the new creation is established in interaction of bodies that implies a transformation of the human society by the Holy Spirit.

Thus, it seems almost trivial to answer the question if with Pentecost we are entering the disembodied stage of spiritual renewal in the negative and to point to the Church as the ‘body of Christ’. However, in the current climate and with regard to a number of decisions of church leaders and congregations one is almost tempted to emphasize, there is no body of Christ without bodies.⁴⁰ This relation of Christ’s body as his ‘availability’ for the

⁴⁰ Particularly the Pauline corpus with its juxtapositions of inner and outer man (e.g. in 2 Corinthians 4), life according to the Spirit and life according to the flesh (or ‘mortal bodies’) (e.g. in Romans 8) seems to underscore the notion of a dichotomous or trichotomous view of human persons (especially in the perception of those not engaged in the specialized scholarly discussion of biblical studies) and the idea that the renewal and transformation of the Christian leads from a mortal, fleshly body known as the outer human to an everlasting, spiritual being in the presence of God, already actualized as the inner human here and now in the process of

believers in the Spirit is what we try to explore in this section. The body of Christ is to be found where Christ's — God's — Spirit is.

But isn't it the Spirit's big advantage to be free, not bound to a body and therefore able to blow wherever it pleases (John 3.8)? Without a body, our image of the Holy Spirit would come dangerously close to that of a drifting ghost, being here, there and everywhere, without ever to be grasped, arbitrary in its appearances, unidentifiable — certainly not much of a help to gain certainty and orientation, to evoke trust and reflect God's faithfulness. Since it is Christ's spirit, the body to which the Spirit has bound himself is the Word, i.e. the *Logos*, the Gospel, as its witness to the destiny of Jesus of Nazareth evokes faith in those who listen. The body of the Spirit is the *viva vox Evangelii* — and indeed, we cannot talk of the living voice of Scripture as the body of Christ without referring to the bodies of the believers, the mouth and voice of the preacher, who gives sound to the word of Christ as the truth of God the Father,⁴¹ the members of the congregation, whose ears the Spirit has popped, whose heart the Spirit has transformed into a listening heart, responding in trust and faith. The living voice of the Gospel can, of course, take different shapes⁴² — in the sacraments it connects even more explicitly

transformation. We will turn to the question of the meaning of the embodiment of Christian believers in the last section of this paper.

⁴¹ Cf. WA 28: 166,31. See Alexander Kupsch, *Martin Luthers Gebrauch der Heiligen Schrift: Untersuchungen zur Schriftautorität in Gottesdienst und gesellschaftlicher Öffentlichkeit* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), p. 118.

⁴² Even though the living voice of the Gospel can take different shapes it still remains crucial — at least for Luther — that it is vividly proclaimed, shouted into the world, in a way that keeps its character as witness in the form of personal communication alive: as the truth of the word has become the truth for the preachers who lend their own voice to the proclamation of the Gospel, so it can become the truth for the hearts of the listeners when and where the Spirit vivifies the witness and transforms it to a communication that evokes faith. Luther therefore can insist that preaching is actual proclamation, oral communication (and actually not written on paper, in the sense of dead letters, an essay about God rather than a witness of being addressed by God and being called to respond to that address). This criterion of the proclamation of the Gospel as personal communication, relying on a relation of trust enabled by the Spirit, so that Christ's word actualizes the Father's love for listeners here and now, remains crucial even if the means and tools of communication in the twenty-first century differ significantly from those of Luther's Wittenberg. Today's question therefore remains: which modes of communication of the word, which means for this

to the body. When, in the Eucharist, the word is accompanied by the bodily act of *receiving* bread and wine as Christ's body and blood, so that the communicants taste and see that the Lord is good (Ps. 34.8) and are incorporated into God's communion with God's people, it is quite obvious that there is no way around the physical gathering of believers without endangering the vital connection of word and element in embodied communication. Likewise, when in the water of baptism, the child (or adult) joins in the death of Christ, is cleansed and raised to a new existence in Christ, these sacramental acts and words, received by a living human being, become the body of the Spirit, who, in its self-giving, grants faith and brings the baptized body to life.

What the sacraments present in a concentrated, condensed mode (or better, what God creates as the body of Christ, when bodies receive God's self-giving in the sacraments) is true for worship as a whole (and expands beyond particular occasions of worship when and where the Spirit illuminates the word of Scripture to create and maintain faith): worship is the designated place where human bodies are exposed to God's word, where they are addressed by God the Father through the Son, God's Word, and granted a listening heart by the Spirit, where they are called by their name and invited to respond in all dimensions of being a body. They respond with their lips in prayer, be it urgent, hasty petition, tearful lament, heart-warming thanks, or uplifting, spine-straightening praise, in the tunes of their hymns, in the harmonies (or cacophonies) of their joint voices. They enact their response in their gestures, sitting or kneeling, standing or walking, — perhaps even dancing? — in receiving and ingesting bread and wine, Godself, to strengthening the entire person, newly received earthly life as a glimpse of the life to come, when God grants life in its fullness, and, of course, when they are sent out with the blessing, commissioned to live the life of the witness of God's grace in the midst of their world. Worship is God's communication with bodies through the body of Christ in word and sacrament. As such worship embodies God's story with our bodies, from created and beautiful bodies to tempted and disoriented, fallen and miserable, suffering, tearful, lonesome bodies, bodies, curved in on themselves to uplifted, straightened, light-footed and communicative bodies, bodies transparently radiant of their perfection in communion with God.

communication are appropriate to the hope that it speaks to the listeners in a way that affects and attracts the listeners' hearts as God's self-giving to us? Cf. Luther's sermon on 7 September 1522, WA 10 (vol III): 305,1.

Temples of the Holy Spirit

Inasmuch as we talk of our bodies as the limbs of the body of Christ, the Church, we can speak of the believers' (individual) bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit, bodies transformed by God's grace — as Paul does in 1 Cor. 6.19–20: 'Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your bodies.' We can follow here once more the logic of the listening heart. It does not produce its own orientation in apparently absolute freedom, ignoring its creatureliness and its foundational relationships. The transformation that has taken place in the body of the believer (and has to take place again and again, if we agree with Luther's notion of human beings as '*simul iustus et peccator, simul iusta et peccatrix*', sinners and justified persons at the same time⁴³), is the presence of the Holy Spirit in the believers' hearts as the foundational orientation of the human creature. It is the Spirit who orients human creatures towards their consummation in communion with God and thus locates their body in their true place in time and space, as God's beloved creatures, created to be redeemed and perfected, created together with all the other creatures, human and animal bodies and plants, with creation as a whole.⁴⁴

⁴³ Human beings are sinful viewed on their own, and justified by God's grace in the work of the Holy Spirit that creates faith as the relationship that transfers the sinner to the place of the justified — this movement has to be understood as the foundation of the life of faith in each and every moment of faith. Faith is at no time progressing away from this initial spark. In this perspective, the notion of growing faith, the formation of faith as a process of development, or — conversely — of an ongoing, gradually progressing purification of the human being in the process of sanctification becomes problematic. Christians do not grow *towards* faith but grow *in* faith. *They grow in* faith, not: their *faith* grows (continuously).

⁴⁴ Here we could, of course, ask again: if the work of the Holy Spirit is the reorientation of the human heart, the inner core of human beings, do we fall back into the logic of the inner work of the Holy Spirit, liberating the inside, while leaving the body as the outside of personhood behind? Do we not find this notion in Paul's theology, for instance in the image of the clay jar, containing a treasure — an image that seems to sit well in the framework of Platonic thought? Annette Weissenrieder's instructive contribution to the question of the embodiment of the inner human beings according to 2 Corinthians 4 has shown persuasively the constitutively reciprocal relation between the inner human being and the outer human being. This relation cannot be allocated in a timely order as if the outer human being would have

Located in this set of relations, the heart's desires gain new ground and fresh aims. We have described the disoriented hearts' desires as desiring what maintains one's self, secures one's survival, feeds one's self-maintaining powers, gains self-salvation and consumes what it desires, in short, as living at the expense of others. A heart grounded in God's passionate love for God's creatures which responds to this love in faith and trust is not less desiring. It is not the desires themselves that embody sin. It is their aim to gain self-stability. The reoriented heart of the body that is the temple of the Holy Spirit desires the body of the other in all dimensions and in whatever modes of loving attention, wishing that the other (as the other!) will be part of my future. The reoriented heart honours and praises God in enjoying God's gift of human relatedness and relation, without consuming it and making use of it only as a means of self-preservation. The desires of the body that is the temple of the Holy Spirit do not join into relationships that expect their fulfilment through exploitation. Instead, they expect their flourishing from God, and respect the personal — bodily — integrity and freedom of the other as God's creature, rather than exercising power and control. Desires that are directed towards the self-relation of the body that is the temple of the Holy Spirit, will bear witness to the gift of embodiment, respecting its finitude, its gifts and joys as well as its pain and suffering, and its direction towards death, as much as its destiny to be perfected not by its self-sustaining or self-enhancing powers, but by God's fulfilment of human bodies in God's communion with newly created bodies in God's realm where there will be no more pain or suffering, tears or death. In their body's life, in its finitude and its particularity, they encounter Christ's cross, as they offer their body to God's agency trusting in God's new creation and hoping for

to die so that the inner human being could live. Rather, this relation is to be understood in the dialectical way of the life of the — in itself dying — body: precisely *in* the body, the clay jar made by the creator God in order to give God's own life to it, *in* its finitude and createdness, that becomes the place of God's transforming, life-donating action, human beings encounter God — in analogy to Paul's theology of the cross, disclosing God's victory. The inner human being would then not be liberated from the body but actualized in the body's fragility its constitutive relatedness towards the triune God. This dependence of the human being, visible as the body's life, does not first and foremost disclose a human weakness, but a treasure: the event of salvation in Christ. Cf. Annette Weissenrieder, 'Verkörperung des inneren Menschen? 2 Korinther 4,16 im Lichte antiker medizinischer und philosophischer Traditionen', in *Verkörperung als Paradigma theologischer Anthropologie*, ed. by G. Etzelmüller and A. Weissenrieder (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2016), pp. 183–218 (esp. pp 202–05).

fulfilment. A body, temple of the Holy Spirit, that desires what it desires from God, the creator, redeemer and consummator of creation, as a gift of grace, responding in its desires to God's desire to be in communion with creation, loves God in, with and under the joys of its bodily love. This keynote of newly oriented creaturely bodies before their God can already be recognized in its multiple vibrations and echoes, when Martin Luther (in the explanation of the first commandment in his Large Catechism) explains that having a god refers to 'that for which we are to look for all good and in which we are to find refuge in all need'⁴⁵ and adds (in the explanation of the first article of the Creed in the Small Catechism) faith in God the creator means:

I believe that God has created me together with all that exists. God has given me and still preserves my body and soul: eyes, ears, and all limbs and senses; reason and all mental faculties. In addition, God daily and abundantly provides shoes and clothing, food and drink, house and farm, spouse and children, fields, livestock, and all property — along with all the necessities and nourishment for this body and life. God protects me against all danger and shields and preserves me from all evil. And all this is done out of pure, fatherly and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness of mine at all! For all of this I owe it to God to thank and praise, serve and obey him (...)⁴⁶

Regarding — apart from this one true God — no one and nothing else as God, being enabled to do so by the Holy Spirit's illumination, sets our bodies free to be some-body in the body of Christ: to desire and to be desired and to enjoy created life in all its bodily dimensions and particularities in communion with fellow bodies before God.

⁴⁵ 'A 'god' is the term for that to which we are to look for all good and in which we are to find refuge in all need. Therefore, to have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe in that one with your whole heart. As I have often said, it is the trust and faith of the heart alone that make both God and an idol. [...] For these two being together, faith and God. Anything on which your heart relies and depends, I say, that is really your God.' *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. by R. Kolb and T. J. Wengert, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), p. 386.

⁴⁶ *The Book of Concord*, p. 432.