

CHAPTER 2

A Phenomenological Approach
to the Resurrection

Faith seeks to understand what has been revealed, and to explore its implications for the conduct of Christian existence in the world. In addressing this task, theology, with greater or less success, calls on the tradition formed by scripture, Christian experience, Church doctrines, liturgical practice, scholarly exploration and moral responsibility. It aims to come up with a critically realistic account of what is believed, and why. Given the diversity of historical epochs, cultures and concerns, the task is unending. For a past age, Melchior Cano's ten *Loci Theologici* (1543-50) indicate the extent of the data.¹ In a general sense, at least, theology begins with a receptivity to what has been God-given and revealed, on terms and conditions not limited by any mundane horizon of possibility or expectation. To this degree, there is an implicit phenomenological recognition of what is being considered. We can take this further under the following four headings:

1. *The Phenomenological Turn*
2. *The Resurrection as Saturated Phenomenon*
3. *Five Aspects of the Resurrection-Phenomenon*
4. *Conclusion: Saturated Phenomenon or Mystery?*

The Phenomenological Turn²

Husserl, long recognised as a seminal figure in the development of phenomenological methods, recalled an abstract and ego-centred philosophy to return to "the things themselves" (*zu den Sachen selbst*). This was in large measure a reaction to jaded and generalised systems of thought that had lost their persuasive power. The alternatives are stark: either return to the phenomena and recover the wonder of experience in all its particularities, or end with a deracinated nihilism, unable to free itself from its own self-imposed limits. A new centre of gravity had to be sought to serve the genuineness of thinking. It would contest the nega-

tive bias inherent in the pretensions and projections of the omni-competent thinking subject. In such a setting, the self is the starting point; and the "given", the data, tends to be a mirror-image of the rational ego. But when the given phenomenon begins to be appreciated in its own right and in the conditions of its appearance, the intentionality of the all-competent rational subject is reversed. The centre of gravity shifts. A critical and even contemplative reverence for the given phenomenon becomes primary, thus allowing it first of all to be received on its own terms. The preconceptions and fixed points of our routine perceptions and representations are called into question, and our whole mode of perceiving is reordered. In this sense, what is given to consciousness may be metaphorically described as "iconic", for it shines with light from beyond the limited world of our habitual vision, even as it allows an endless play of perspectives.

An "idolic" mode of thinking stands in contrast to the "iconic" mode of disciplined receptivity to what is given. Grammatically speaking, this idolic form privileges the nominative case—as when "I" am always the subject of the sentence, or the accusative—as it affects "me", or the ablative—it is what is done "by me". By contrast, the iconic character of the phenomenon, in resistance to any reduction to a pre-established, all-governing ego, privileges the dative case.³ It is what is given, in its own terms, "to me". In its uniqueness, it presents a surplus and an excess of significance in the face of all abstract ideas and systems. "I" am not the all-comprehending ego, but the one to whom things have been given, appearing in their arresting and particular otherness. Predictably, we will be arguing that the event of the resurrection will be best described in this manner, for it is disclosed as a disruptive occurrence for the earliest witnesses and for believers in every age.

But before making this theological application, let us emphasise the general point: receptivity to the given and the mode of its given-ness is the necessary fundamental attitude. Admittedly, as expressed in the scholastic adage, *quidquid recipitur, recipitur per modum recipientis*, receptivity allows for different modes and capacities. There are different attitudes, moods, preoccupations and perspectives. This plurality of possibilities affects not only an endless variety of individuals, but also cultures, societies, historical epochs and the Church itself. Differing or contrasting modes of receptivity can conflict. The viewpoint of a reductively secular method constricts everything within its own self-limited horizon. To such an outlook, the resurrection is an impossibility, or at best a mythic expression of something more real and familiar. Such an attitude is dialectically opposed to that of faith. For the Christian believer, the resurrection is the focal phenomenon. Its significance affects every aspect of one's interpretation of the world. At the same time, it demands patience and inspires hope against the day when it will be revealed in its full evidence. Despite this irresolvable conflict, the histo-

rian can hardly deny the phenomenon of the Christian fact in world history, even if it is received only as already interpreted within the world already mapped out by secular rationality. Phenomenology, it might be presumed, is designed only for secular, not for religious, experience, let alone for the particularity of Christian experience. Theology, for its part, can pass over the phenomenality of faith by limiting itself to the demands of a doctrinal clarification or systematic coherence or moral praxis, and so abandon the field to secular phenomenology as inhospitable to unique events of revelation and the moral stance they inspire. Ideally, the Church would be an organized receptivity to the gift that called it into existence. But such an attitude can appear too insubstantial compared to the demands of doctrine, theological rationality, and of a clear communication of the Christian tradition of faith and morals.

Phenomenological methods and Christian faith, despite different intentionalities and modes of receptivity, share, to some degree, a common attitude. Phenomenology insists on attending to the given-ness and appearance as a necessary basis for all thought and analysis. Christianity, for its part, speaks of a special kind of given-ness, namely the self-giving of God in grace, and of a special kind of appearance, namely God's self-revelation in Christ. This likewise grounds all subsequent doctrine and theoretical analysis and self-referential concerns. For instance, grace does not presuppose human merit. In this reverse intentionality common to both phenomenology and Christianity, the subject does not possess what is other by drawing it to itself, but by being subjected to it. What is given or appears allows itself to be so given or so appear. The rational subject is not in possession of, but is possessed by, the demands of what is other—even to be constituted by it, at least on a new level of intentionality. The philosophical and theological attitude can, therefore, be analogically related, precisely in the domain of the given, and in the manner it is revealed. Both approaches converge in their sense of the extravagance at the heart of reality, a prodigality of the given that outwits the rational mind.

We may go further. A phenomenological attitude must be for reflective faith a "first theology". We are not speaking of a preamble to faith in a rational or logical sense, but of a standpoint on the level of receptivity and attitude. Moreover, the resurrection of the crucified One is the first moment in this "first theology". For it is the culminating gift of God in which all else is interpreted. It is a self-giving disclosure that saturates the meaning of revelation and the tradition that serves it. We are not so much asserting the primacy of experience over thought or belief. For, along with the variety of experiential elements in the signs, symbols, analogies and sacraments of faith, there is an experience of "non-experience". The risen One is no longer seen as once he was. There is a rupture in experience—a void, an emptiness and an ending in the

fabric of experience. But it is a void and a death that only Christ can fill. Only he can be the non-experienceable plenitude saturating all possible experience. Where astrophysics has found it necessary to postulate "dark matter" and even "dark energy" to account for the mass and expansion of the cosmos, the risen body of Christ and the gift of his Spirit alone can account for faith's vision of the new creation and its energies, along with the demand for continuing conversion and hope for what is not seen: "Now hope that is seen is not hope" (Rom 8:24).

To focus on the phenomenon of the resurrection is to gather together many dimensions of receptivity to it. Believers hearken to the Word and ponder the inspired text. They celebrate the sacraments, and participate in a community of faith and witness, as they are carried forward, giving and receiving, within the cumulative tradition of doctrine, theological reflection, mystical experience, moral responsibility, and so on. The phenomenon of the resurrection of the crucified Jesus saturates all else with its significance: "in him all things hold together" (Col 1:17).

As a bridge between this section and the following, Newman's words are vividly relevant: referring to the prodigality of God's self-giving, he writes,

We all confess that He is infinite . . . but, we ask, what is infinity? . . . The outward exhibition of infinitude is mystery; and the mysteries of nature and of grace are nothing else than the mode in which His infinitude encounters us and is brought home to our minds. Men confess that He is infinite, yet they start and object, as soon as His infinitude comes in contact with their imagination and acts upon their reason. They cannot bear the fullness, the superabundance, the inexhaustible flowing forth, and "vehement rushing," and encompassing flood of the divine attributes. They restrain and limit them to their own comprehension, they measure them by their own standard, they fashion them by their own model.⁴

The phenomenological attitude involves being receptive "to the superabundance, the inexhaustible flowing forth" of the gift of God, beyond the limits of human comprehension. We are now in a position to be more specific in applying this to the resurrection, the better to appreciate its unique significance. The writings of Jean-Luc Marion⁴ and others are a special resource in this regard.

The Resurrection as Saturated Phenomenon

A critically elaborated account of the radically "given" quality of what is disclosed is found in Jean-Luc Marion's influential trilogy, *Reduction and Givenness* (1989), *Being Given* (1997) and *In Excess* (2001).⁴

The overflowing or "saturated" significance of the phenomenon imposes itself on the subject. It is given to such an extent that the subject is more like a witness to an event than an agent of its construction. To make this point, Marion coins a word to highlight the passivity and receptivity of the subject in regard to what is given, namely, *l'adonné*, "the one to whom it is given", the recipient of the self-giving in question.

As was remarked above, "Grace", the gift of God in all its forms, is most expressed in the grammar of the dative case. The gift is given to the believer; it is not simply "there" to be inspected or possessed, as something taken for granted. It gives itself, communicates itself, to the subject, and re-constitutes it in a new awareness: "for those who are in Christ, there is a new creation" (2 Cor 5:17). In this instance, as in others more generally, what is given is primary—not the preconditions laid down by our rational capacities. In this regard, true thinking must be aware of the modes of given-ness at its foundations. It is less thinking "about" something, and more thinking from *within* what is given, by responding to it, and by allowing to appear what is arrestingly "other". This phenomenological return or "reduction" to the given provokes a kind of theological conversion in its method and style. It understands itself first of all as a "theology of disclosure";⁸ beholden, humbly and reverently, to what is given. It is marked by contemplative receptivity to the data of faith. As I suggested in the previous chapter, present developments in a phenomenological philosophy can be a rich resource for theology—especially as it regards the event of the resurrection, the culminating gift that illumines the whole trajectory of God's self-giving in Christ.

Understandably, there will be some theological uneasiness over such an approach. There is the danger of collapsing everything into a fideistic subjectivism which would be an obstacle to the full development of the theological intelligence and wisdom. At the other extreme, some may be rightly wary of an objectivism that overwhelms the role of the believing and thinking subject. Admittedly, a disclosive theology inverts habitual patterns of intentionality that presume the subject is in possession before anything appears to it, as previously mentioned. A phenomenological style puts the emphasis on the self-giving "object". As a result, any activity on the part of the subject is conceived in terms of receptivity and responsiveness so that rationalistic pretensions no longer occupy centre-stage. What is vigorously precluded is a notion of the subject as a detached monad projecting itself onto what is other.⁹ For the subject is the one who is "subjected" to what is overwhelmingly other, and made a witness to it by being stripped of all pretensions to comprehend or constitute what is given.¹⁰ In its receptive role, the subject becomes a luminous indicator of what is given, to function as a screen on which the phenomenon is registered in its originality.¹¹ In this manner, the sub-

ject is reconstituted, as it were, by being drawn into the saturated field of the phenomenon. Its role is to disclose the "visibility" of what has been given from beyond its vision.

Yet intelligence and further exploration are not thereby put to sleep. Take, for example, the phenomenon of one's own birth. A response of gratitude is called forth, as is an endless effort of interpretation of the personal and communal meaning of such an unobjectifiable event.¹² It provokes an exploration of both the past that preceded it, of the present as it occurs, and of the future it gives rise to—even though the event of my "being born" fits into no prior project on my part—and perhaps not on the part of my parents!

As we shall see later in regard to the resurrection, the subject-object polarity is an inevitable point of reference. Yet, as we shall argue, the extremes of both objectivism and subjectivism are spurious totalities. Each of these rigid categorisations is incapable of appreciating what is given or the manner in which it provokes the response of thought or action. In an earlier and perhaps more obvious sense of "saturation", an approach to the given can be so "saturated" by preconceptions and concerns that the given is immediately subjected to one's own interests. In that case, it would be merely raw material to be transformed into an acceptable conceptual and rational form by the self-contained subject. In the sense of Marion and others, however, the phenomenon is "saturated", not by one's prior attitudes, notions and tastes, but in its overbrimming significance. Its inexhaustible freshness leaves thought ever at a loss to objectify what has so disclosed itself. The prior dominance of any philosophical ordering principle—either in an empiricist, subjectivist or idealist sense—is thus radically called into question by the excess of the "saturated phenomenon".

Five Aspects of the Resurrection-Phenomenon

To return to our main point: theology can serve the mystery of the resurrection by calling on the resources of phenomenology. Here, we are limiting ourselves mainly to the writings of Marion.¹³ He makes his point in reference to five especially saturated phenomena: an event, a painting, the flesh, the face, and, in a way that tends to combine all four, revelation.¹⁴ All five such instances have this in common, namely, a primordial self-giving.¹⁵ None of them is constituted by the subject, but each appears in its original and self-imposing impact. Thus, the subject comes to itself in a new consciousness only through the self-giving otherness of the phenomenon concerned.

Janicaud has objected to an unwarranted intrusion of theological perspectives into phenomenological methods.¹⁶ But that is not our problem. In fact, Marion has conveniently posed the question:

Could not theology, in virtue of its own demands, and solely in view of formulating them, suggest certain modifications of method and operations to phenomenology? . . . Could not theology's demands allow phenomenology to transgress its own limits, so as finally to attain the free possibility at which, from its origin, it claims to aim?¹⁷

I think so.¹⁸ Theology can only be enriched by a more phenomenological method. And, in its turn, it can enrich that method with possibilities deriving from attentiveness to the singularity of positive revelation.¹⁹ Still, the general phenomenological principle stands. The saturated phenomenon shows itself by giving itself, and in a more intense and saturated manner in the case of theology.²⁰ Let us then apply some instances of Marion's saturated phenomena to the resurrection.

The Resurrection as Revelation

For our theological purposes, it is best to start with the phenomenon of revelation,²¹ and then offer a brief exposition of the phenomena of event, art, flesh and face. Philosophy's difficulties in dealing with religion, let alone divine revelation in history and the singularities it contains, are well known and understandable. Though metaphysical perspectives can accommodate mythic and symbolic expressions, the historic particular is off the page. The speculative impossibility of anything being God-given is often entrenched in philosophical systems and the ideologies they support.²² An idealist, subjectivist or empiricist system must have difficulty with the singular phenomenon of any self-revelation of a transcendent Other.²³ With some theological abandon, Marion focuses on Christ as the phenomenon saturating the whole of the New Testament and Christian life.²⁴ For Christ is given in a way that exceeds all expectations. He gives himself by way of an excess. The density and expansiveness of the resurrection of the crucified One outstrips quantitative assessment of any kind. Moreover, there is a qualitative intensity inherent in the Christ-event that makes it "unbearable" (Jn 16:12). The resurrection appearances are a troubling irruption.²⁵ The whole frame of previous relationships is radically rearranged: the Word becomes flesh, and in that flesh he is crucified and raised from the dead.²⁶ A plurality of horizons converge and collide in the inexhaustible excess confronting any human expression of the event (cf. Jn 21:25). The singularity of Christ's appearances overflows the expressive range of all the terms, genres, symbols, concepts, testimonies and descriptions related to time and place and form.²⁷

The self-revealing phenomenon is presented to faith, not to theoretic understanding. What is perceived in the excess of the given phenomenon leaves the believer tongue-tied. Because intelligence is at a loss to

frame what has been received in faith into any conceptual system, it is a sense dazzled and rendered sightless:

Standing before Christ in glory, in agony or resurrected, it is always words (and therefore concepts) that we lack in order to say what we see, in short to see that with which intuition floods our eyes . . . God does not measure out his intuitive manifestation stingily, as though he wanted to mask himself at the moment of showing himself. But we, we do not offer concepts capable of handling a gift without measure and, overwhelmed, dazzled and submerged by his glory, we no longer see anything.²⁸

Marion is making a point. Still, the event of revelation, with its form revealed on the face and in the flesh of the risen One, does not so stun and overwhelm contemplative intelligence that understanding necessarily atrophies. Insights, judgments, artistic expression and verbal forms, however limited in their respective contexts, can positively nourish and direct the contemplation of faith. An appropriately critical realism is governed by the imperative to allow the Christian phenomenon to disclose itself in its own evidence and on its own terms. For Christ is encountered as the revelation of a love and the source of life, at once within the world and beyond it. The excess of light overbrims the capacities of meaning.²⁹ There is a play of appearance and disappearance, of presence and absence, of self-revelation and concealment.

Yet this saturated phenomenon *par excellence* continues to give itself through its manifold effect in the life and mission of the Church.³⁰ The self-disclosure of Christ that once enabled a privileged seeing on the part of chosen witnesses has passed into the tradition. Compared to their "seeing", faith is the experience of "not seeing", but believing—to that degree, an experience of non-experience. But faith is neither a form of blindness nor a surrender to nothing or to no one. The self-giving of the risen One saturates all the "senses" of faith. Faith hearkens to the Word.³¹ It breathes the Holy Spirit. It is strengthened by the testimony of privileged "eye witnesses" and the cumulative evidence of transformed lives. It sacramentally eats the body and drinks the blood of the risen Christ. It tastes with the savor of mystical wisdom. It enjoys the flickering illuminations of theology itself. Through all this, the self-giving phenomenon of Christ draws believers into its field. It summons to a conversion that is never fully attained. It amounts to a rebirth in a new world of praise, thanksgiving, communion, compassionate intercession and confident prayer.

This self-revealing phenomenon of the resurrection implies levels of manifold self-giving. It affects the life of the Church in its every aspect. In this respect, the revelatory impact of the resurrection event is such

that it is not one act of divine self-revelation among many, but the culminating act of self-revelation that defines the meaning of revelation itself. To that degree, the resurrection is not a particular instance of a general notion of revelation, but the particular self-disclosure of God that defines what Christian revelation might mean. A full account of this would need to include the following aspects of the phenomenon of the resurrection:

- Jesus gives himself by appearing to the chosen disciples
- He is given in his full-bodied, but transformed physicality, marked by his empty tomb
- He is given as the one who has given himself for the life of the world
- He is given as one given by the Father out of love for the world
- He is given as the Son who has received all things from the Father
- He is given as one who has unconditionally given himself unto death on the cross
- He is given as the source of the Spirit
- He is given in the word of scripture and in the celebration of the sacraments
- He is given so as to draw all who receive him into his own self-giving existence
- He is given as the one who is to appear in eschatological evidence

With the resurrection in mind, we now turn to other kinds of saturated phenomena,³² namely, the event, the aesthetic form, the flesh and the face.

The Resurrection as Event

In its singular and expanding impact, a phenomenal event is not circumscribed by any concept of reality or anticipation. Needless to say, it bears little resemblance to the mass production of "events" for any limited purpose (e.g., entertainment, sport, religious gatherings, political rallies and so forth). For an event in the saturated sense is inexpressible in its scope and implications. It occurs outside any calculus of cause and effect. The origins and effect of such events can never be fully grasped, despite their expanding impact.³³ In its "excess" and unrepeatable particularity, the event disrupts any metaphysical theory or comprehensive explanation.³⁴ For example, the tragedy of the First World War is still largely inexplicable in destructiveness. It overflowed the bounds of any horizon of rationality.³⁵ More positively, the historical emergence of Christianity, and, indeed, other world religions, are events of world-shaping proportions. Attempts to reduce such events to a circumscribable object serve only to blind rationality to the overwhelming character of what has taken place. Claude Romano helpfully distinguishes a mere

event from a far more significant happening.³⁶ A factually-recorded event is impersonal in its objectivity. It has no existential import. It is datable as a *fait accompli*—an innerworldly empirical fact. In contrast, there is an event of another kind. This happens beyond all previous calculations and intimately involves those caught up in it. Its impact leads to world-changing decisions. For the world of one's previous life is reconfigured, and made newly meaningful and significant, outside the logic of cause and effect. Obvious examples would be, say, religious or moral conversion, a devastating grief or failure, or falling in love, or even a deeply significant friendship. Events in this sense give rise to a certain "anarchy", as the fixed points of previous horizons are dramatically shifted. As a result, the full significance of the event in question can only emerge with time, as it awaits a future to unfold.³⁷ The self is caught up in an incalculable existential venture, not as a passive recipient, but as an active participant; and as inspired to a new level of action. In this respect, it is not a matter of projecting new possibilities on an already established world, but of being involved in a new register of existence—within a world newly understood. Something has occurred from outside any previous individual horizon. A convenient example, again, is one's own birth—or that of others. For each birth is an event that occurs as given from beyond, yet at the same time it opens possibilities that are not predetermined against any settled horizon.³⁸

The resurrection of the Crucified is pre-eminently such an event. By any showing, it is a world-changing occurrence. It radically shifts the death-bound horizon of existence to open it to the promise of eternal life already anticipated in the act of God's raising Jesus from the tomb. The origin and outcome of the resurrection transcends the world of previous calculations. Yet it "saturates" with Easter significance the lives of Christian believers to affect their sense of the universe itself: "if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new" (2 Cor 5:17). This "new creation" is presented in various ways as a new spiritual birth, the beginning of a life that looks to an eschatological fulfilment (1 John 3:2). The Christian, to accommodate Romano's usage, is an *advenant*, one caught up and carried forward in an adventure of life, to a degree unimaginable within the horizon of previous existence.

The Resurrection as Aesthetic Form

The phenomenon of art adds a further dimension. A great painting, for example, saturates our perceptions in an especially intense fashion. It cannot be merely a tasteful adornment to the décor of a room or a dwelling. Its aesthetic impact causes everything to be re-arranged in the living-space of our mundane experience. If the art-work is regarded as an item of decoration, something owned and catalogued as property, it

simply reflects one's own criteria of taste or status. A great work of art overflows any individual mode of appreciation because of its universal appeal. The painting dazzles the viewers' limited perceptions with a peculiar and inexhaustible excess, and so invites an endless contemplation that exceeds the flat manner of looking at an object.³⁹ Viewers, with their varying sensitivities and appreciative capacities, are drawn to behold what is framed to see the world anew. In this regard, a great painting possesses an iconic quality. It presents itself not so much as an arresting object within the routine scope of our vision, but is luminous with a light beyond the familiar.⁴⁰

Theology is indebted to Hans Urs von Balthasar for attempting to restore an aesthetic dimension into the heart of faith. The first volume of his *Herrlichkeit, The Glory of the Lord, Seeing the Form*, appeals to the aesthetic form of divine revelation itself. Before God's self-revelation is taken into various systematic expositions, it is first of all a glory, a beauty, and with its own attractive force. It comes as a *Gestalt*, an irreducibly concrete, whole and complete form. Beholding this form does not stop short at the limits of vision. It invites participation. Its radiance sweeps up the beholder into an *eros* and rapture, under the attraction of what is revealed in Christ.⁴¹ Von Balthasar writes,

The Gospel presents Christ's form in such a way that "flesh" and "spirit", incarnation to the point of suffering and death, and resurrected life, are all interrelated down to the smallest details. If the Resurrection is excised, then not only certain things but simply everything about Jesus' earthly life becomes incomprehensible . . . [his] death and resurrection . . . are comprehensible only if they are understood as the transformation of this earthly form by God's power, and not as the form's spiritualisation or apotheosis.⁴²

David Bentley Hart's theological aesthetics⁴³ is closely related to von Balthasar's approach.⁴⁴ The self-revealing phenomenon of beauty comes on its own terms and transfigures the world of our experience. The beautiful makes its own space, and keeps its own distance, for it eludes any fixed structure of apprehension or control.⁴⁵ The beautiful form gives itself, not as a pleasurable satisfaction, but as a summoning to self-transcendence in the light of the truth and value it represents. The beautiful crosses all boundaries, all types of being. It permeates creation in such a way as to subvert totalising ideologies, be they in mythic, conceptual or pragmatic form.

Hart's theological aesthetics are focused in the resurrection. The rhetoric celebrating the form of the risen One possesses "an infinite power of expression" eluding all efforts to silence it.⁴⁶ In reference to Luke 24:13-35, Hart remarks:

As the disciples who encountered the risen Christ on the road to Emmaus discover, Christ can now no longer be recognised as an available and objective datum, a simple given, but must be received entirely as a *donum*, as gift in the breaking of the bread, in the offer of fellowship given anew even when all hope of fellowship seems to have been extinguished.⁴⁷

For David Hart, as for von Balthasar, the resurrection does not figure simply as an aesthetic principle. It radically subverts all totalitarian pretensions, be they political, cultural or intellectual. The dehumanising forces of culture appear triumphant in the crucifixion. The cross is the final word in their effort to determine the form of the world.⁴⁸ Yet at that very point, the Word of God is definitively and inexhaustibly pronounced: Christ is risen.

I note, in passing, that the phenomenality of the resurrection has a bearing on a theology of Christian art. I would suggest that artistic creativity is not simply an illustration of faith in an extrinsic sense, but more an inner dimension of resurrection-faith itself. Artists speak generally of "inspiration" in some manner guiding their creative imagination of the form and its realisation in the work of art, be it figurative, literary or musical, or expressive in other modes. In terms of depictions of the resurrection, there are innumerable examples of great power (e.g. from Matthias Grünewald to, say, the contemporary Chinese paintings of He Qi). But there is a deeper aspect when it comes to the resurrection, where a phenomenologically attuned theology and contemplative Christian art meet. For when faith is met with the phenomenon of this world-transforming event, however depicted or expressed, only an artistically conscious faith can appropriately respond to it by devising a form expressive of what originally disrupted all mundane forms of expression. Art is, at it were, an inner moment in the phenomenality of the resurrection, be it in music, painting or even poetic expression.

The Resurrection as "Flesh"

The phenomenon of "my body" or "flesh" is saturated with a special sense of immediacy and unobjectifiable intimacy. While it is "mine", it is the field of communication with the other. The body or "flesh", so intimately constituting the subject, gives the possibilities of intimate self-giving and self-disclosure, as in the case of erotic or maternal love. In this sense, the flesh is a field of mutual indwelling, a being with and for the other. In the *eros* and generativity of love, my bodily being is re-experienced in the flesh of the other.⁴⁹ Embodied existence transcends the status of being simply a physical body in a material world. The human body is the zone of incarnated relationships.⁵⁰ For the body of

my conscious being is affected by and affecting the larger phenomenon of the world. It is at once my "natal bond" with the world, an immediate exposure to it, an immediate participation in it and a primal communication within it.⁵¹

In this respect, the phenomenon of the resurrection is a communication of the "body" of Christ in the Pauline sense, or "flesh" of the risen One in a more Johannine expression. In the Pauline vocabulary, of course, the "flesh" has negative connotations. Nonetheless, Paul envisages a transformed physicality in a bodily sense: "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ" (1 Cor 12:12). With the diversity of the many spiritual gifts, "... you are the body of Christ and individually members of it" (1 Cor 12:27). The shared breath or living atmosphere of the body is the Holy Spirit, the one Spirit manifested in the diversity of gifts. In this one Spirit, "we are all baptised into one body ... and made to drink of the one Spirit" (1 Cor 12:13). To change the metaphor, with some reliance on Merleau-Ponty, the Spirit of Christ is the "inspiration" and "expiration" of the risen One invigorating the whole body of Christ.

The body or flesh of the risen Lord, transformed itself, is also transformative in its effect. The Word became flesh; and in that flesh he is crucified, and raised from the dead.⁵² The flesh, with all its implied organic and social limitation, is still, after the resurrection, God's chosen field of communication. For the Christian phenomenon is not accessible to the order of thought alone. It is disclosed only in the phenomenality of body, flesh and "incarnation". St. Dionysius speaks of *patis divina*, "to experience the things of God" as transcending all thought and imagination. This venerable phrase has a strongly mystical overtone, and figures as such in the elaboration of negative theology. Nonetheless, the tradition it represents must never be separated from the bodily event of the resurrection of the crucified One.⁵³ Experiencing "the things of God" revealed in the death and resurrection of the incarnate Word presupposes the mediation of the flesh of Jesus and his risen bodily form. The primary Christian import of the mystical phrase, *patis divina*, suggests the possibility of interpreting it also as *patis humana et carnalis*—the experience of God in the flesh and body of Jesus Christ. In Tertullian's cryptic wordplay, *caro est salutis cardo*, the flesh (*caro*) of Christ is the turning point (*cardo*) of our salvation of our embodied existence. Christ is the form and source of incarnate, bodily communication. The risen Lord is, therefore, not simply the source of a new theology. Nor does Christian faith mean being involved in any ongoing theological seminar. It does mean being drawn into a new form of bodily existence, since God has made him "the head of all things for the church which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all" (Eph 1:22-23). The phenomenology of the body inevitably strains against excessively

spiritual interpretations. Yet the Church is the body of Christ. He is the head, and we the members. In the Johannine idiom, he is the vine and we the branches, as his flesh is given for the life of the world. His flesh/body is the field of Christ's relationship to the world, as both affected by and affecting the manifold phenomena of our incarnate co-existence. Though now transformed, his risen body continues to be his "natal bond" with the world. It expresses the immediacy of his exposure to the world in the process of its transformation in him. Through the body, he, the Word incarnate, is constituted in a primal communication with all incarnate beings, and continues to affect the material universe. In that transformed bodily being, he breathes his Spirit into all his members, so that there is one Spirit-vitalised body—even if Jesus himself is risen and his members are on the way to being transformed as he is.

Through incorporation into that subjective-body of Christ, his living flesh, the world is disclosed to his members in its original and eschatological significance. Consciousness is illumined with the "light of life" (Jn 8:12). Though Christ has come and remains in the flesh, his vitality emanates from the very life of God: "What came into being in him was life and the life was the light of all people" (Jn 1:3-4). The primordial generative mystery of the Father is thus revealed in the flesh: "Just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself" (Jn 5:26). In answer to Philip's request, "Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied" (Jn 14:8), Jesus replies, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father ... Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?" (Jn 14:10). Life flows from a source beyond time and space into the living flesh of Christ and those united to him. It constitutes the phenomenological condition of Christian corporate existence. In this regard, there results an extraordinary sense of inter-subjectivity and mutual indwelling within the incarnational field of communication. Jesus prays, "... that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me, and I in you, may they also be in us" (Jn 17:21).⁵⁴ The incarnate "Word of Life" (1 John 1:1) takes the form of a communal existence:

This life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us ... so that you may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:2-3).

The life of the vine flows into the branches (Jn 15:5), just as the head of the body governs the activity of each of its members. The incarnation, already reaching its fulfilment in him, is extended into a living corporate form of the Church. It determines a form of self-giving love for those who are "members, one of another" (Eph 4:25), "for no man

hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the Church because we are members of his body" (Eph 5:30). The Letter to the Ephesians does not hesitate to appeal to the most intimate, ecstatic and generative human experience of the body in spousal love to express Christ's relationship to the ecclesial body. Just as man and woman become "one flesh" (Gen 2:23; Mt 19:6; Mk 10:8), the risen One is one flesh with the community of believers.

Though Jesus is glorified in the flesh, he is still marked by the wounds of the cross, thus representing his compassionate involvement with humanity in its sufferings and with the whole groaning reality of creation (cf. Rom 8:18-25). The power of his resurrection reaches into the alienated and mortal sphere of our corporate existence, for "even when we were dead through our trespasses, [God] has made us alive together with Christ . . . and raised us up with him" (Eph 2:5-6). A new field of incarnate relationship is disclosed in the phenomenon of the resurrection, so that Christ's rising from the dead does not mean disincarnation, but a new form of incarnation. The former sphere of fleshly divisions is now relocated, as it were, in a new form of incarnate existence (Eph 2:14-22). Its vitality derives from Christ's self-giving love, in order that "we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love" (Eph 4:15-16). Physical existence is transformed—a bodily "mutation" has occurred, the life-blood of which is the love that possessed the head and conforms his members to him. His giving is embodied: "the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh" (Jn 6:51). By sacramentally assimilating his flesh and blood, given and outpoured for the life of the world, believers are conformed to his risen life: "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink" (Jn 6:55).

In the risen Christ, communication in the flesh does not cease, but opens out to an unimaginable fulfilment. The mutual indwelling and openness to the other characterising the earthly experience of the flesh is now actualised in a new mode of mutual co-inherence: "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood, abide in me and I in them" (Jn 6:56; cf. 15:4, 6). In this paschal realm, believers "abide in the Son and in the Father" (1 John 2:24; cf. 3:24), and so inhabit a field of love in which earthly *eros* is subsumed into the *agape* of the divine self-giving: "God is love, and those who abide in love, abide in God, and God abides in them" (1 John 4:16). To the degree faith assimilates his flesh and blood and Spirit, there is new sight, hearing, touching, tasting, eating and drinking, feeling and indwelling—the new senses of faith, as Origen recognised so clearly.³⁵ Because of its unobjectifiable immediacy, the phenomenon of the flesh earths and embodies faith in the risen One with fresh direct-

ness. There is less risk of rising to a level of abstraction, either in thought or symbol, that ill serves what has been uniquely given.

The Resurrection and the Face of Christ

The phenomenon of the face is saturated with significance, in a more distanced manner compared to the intimacy of the flesh. George Orwell saw something of this experience in his verse tribute to the "crystal spirit" on the face of the young Italian militiamen with whom he served in Spain—and also in the terrifying emptiness written on the face of "Big Brother". Whenever he read a moving piece of writing, Orwell found himself conscious of "the face somewhere behind the page, which is not necessarily the actual face of the writer", but as he put it, "the face that the writer *ought* to have". Here he had Charles Dickens especially in mind.³⁶ This leads into the elusive but ever arresting phenomenon we here consider.

When "faced" with the other, I am not looking at something amongst other objects in the world, or at a "somebody" in the crowd. When someone looks at me, I am confronted with a striking otherness. It lays claim to my attention and concern. Here Marion is indebted to Levinas's widely influential account of the other, especially in his/her suffering. To be faced with this other is to feel the force of the question, "Where were you, given what you now see?" The face paradoxically makes visible the invisible totality of the other. It resists objectification. At the same time, this "you" calls for a respect and regard, in such a way as to render inhuman any gaze that is just a mere "looking at", as in the inspection of objects. The centre of gravity is shifted—not *here*, in the perception of the self-contained ego, but *there*, in the other, whose look stops us in our tracks. In this sense, the face of the other is a commanding presence.³⁷ The face of the other does not reflect back to me what I desire to possess or dominate. It takes me out of myself, into the disturbing world of responsibility, respect and love. The face is not a mirror in which I see myself, but more a window through which the light of arresting otherness breaks through. It calls forth a self-transcendence that goes beyond any symmetries of an "I and Thou" relationship. For this other who confronts me, face to face, breaks into my awareness as inviolable uniqueness: "thou shalt not kill"—despite the disruption of the secure world of the ego.

As regards the face of Christ, we have to admit that the New Testament, neither when speaking of the risen Jesus, nor at any stage in his earthly life, shows no interest in describing a face in any conventional terms. Icons, of course, and the long tradition of Christian art already referred to, have sought to serve revelation and faith by expressing, in Orwell's terms, the face somewhere behind the biblical accounts of Jesus deeds and words. But at its best, faith, seeking to find its best artistic

expression, is intent on the phenomenon of the face of Christ, the icon of the self-revealing God. Paul speaks expansively of Christ, "the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15). But the otherness of the transcendent must be allowed to appear on its own terms—looking us in the face, rather than being a projection of our look.⁵⁹ The only appropriate attitude when faced by the icon is prayer, adoration and self-surrender. The unenvisageable is rendered visible only to faith, hope and love. Surrender to this kind of evidence exceeds a full cognitive or conceptual comprehension. It enjoins a waiting and longing for its final appearance, typified in the earliest recorded Christian prayer, Maranatha, "Come, Lord!" (1 Cor 16:22; Rev 22:20).⁶⁰ The face of Christ as the one who is to come allows for a deferral and delay, filled with an endless diversity of significations through the course of history.

The face of Christ is not merely the face of any other that would call forth the biblical prohibition against killing, and so demand the reverence and care due to anyone bearing the image of God. For Christian faith looks upon the Jesus who has in fact been killed by human agencies. He has been raised up, as the embodiment of God's self-giving love: "They shall look upon the one whom they have pierced" (Jn 19:37). In this kind of gaze, faith lives in the world of dim reflections of the future "face to face" vision (1 Cor 13:12). Yet, in the bold Pauline idiom, there is already a kind of experience of the face of Christ who is turned toward us in a light from beyond this world: "For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine forth out of darkness', who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Cor 4:6). The most striking aspect of the face of Christ is not so much our seeing, but that of "being seen through". In its apocalyptic rhetoric, the Book of Revelation gives a visionary description of the face of Jesus with "eyes like a flame of fire" (Rev 1:14; 2:18), who declares, "I know your works", "your affliction and your poverty", and "where you live" (Rev 2:2, 9, 12, 19; 3:1, 8, 15). He identifies himself as "the living one, I was dead, and see, I am alive for evermore" (Rev 1:18). The transparency of all who encounter him pervades the Gospel accounts (e.g., Lk 9:47; 11:17; Jn 1:48). Before there are any "resurrection appearances", before the chosen witnesses see him, he sees them (e.g., Jn 20:27-29). They experience themselves as being "seen through", and so called to be. For faith to be faced by the crucified and risen One means to "lose face" in terms of world glory, and to be faced with glory of what is not of this world.

Conclusion: Saturated Phenomenon or Mystery?

In the foregoing pages, we have attempted to present the resurrection as a saturated phenomenon, by exploring the approaches opened up by

Marion, Henry and others. As a phenomenon of revelation, the resurrection represents a culminating moment in the self-revelation of God. As an event it saturates in its intensity and expansiveness our view of the world and of the universe itself. As the manifestation of divine beauty and art, the resurrection contests the world made ugly by despair and evil. In the flesh of the risen One, our own enfleshed or incarnate lives have already entered the realm of an eternal life of communion. On the face of the risen Jesus, we discern, in a clouded way, God's glory and our true selves.

This has all meant perceiving in the risen Jesus a phenomenon that saturates our perceptions of the world in any number of respects. We realise that a phenomenology restricted to clearly determined philosophical limits will contest this theological extension of what are otherwise regarded as mundane phenomena. On the other hand, the Church is a phenomenon in world history, and it would seem unrealistic not to appreciate it as such, and to explore what has called it into being. We appreciate too that a theology, more habituated to a propositional and systematic exposition, may find this exposition too primitive. Yet what is at stake is not only the distinctiveness of the focal Christian phenomenon, but also its salvific efficacy and impact. Our procedure has not been designed to bypass the demands of systematic theology, but to awaken it to a new freshness. For example, in the humble form of its "givenness" as a phenomenon to Christian experience, the resurrection has a trinitarian density. It cannot be located outside the self-giving of Jesus unto death, and his self-disclosure to his chosen witnesses. Nor can it ignore the originating dynamic of the Father's giving and glorification of his Son for the world's salvation. Finally, and most obviously, it can never be appreciated at all unless the Spirit had been poured out as its primary witness, forming Christian consciousness into an ever new awareness of the Resurrection and the Life.

As was said in the preface to this book, our efforts to attend to the resurrection effect for theology are not simply a matter of making room for the resurrection in an already overburdened theological curriculum. We are not trying to fit it more neatly into a theological system or even to come up with a new theology of the resurrection. Rather than trying to locate the resurrection in some specific area of theology, we are suggesting that theology, in all its endeavours, needs to be located "within the resurrection" and be suffused with its light, to become, in a word, more "resurrectional" in mood and methods. Admittedly, the more phenomenologically specific it is, the more Christian faith is likely to experience itself as the "foolishness" that Paul speaks of (1 Cor 1:18-25). The erudite "scribe" or the rationalist "debator of this age" (v. 20) will find that the actuality or possibility of the resurrection event cannot be rationally entertained. But a genuine Christian apologetics must not apologise for the particularity of what has been given to faith. Nor must

it concede that it is "irrational"—when it is only such to a rationality that cannot allow God to act in the scandalous bodiliness of raising the crucified Jesus from the dead.

This understanding of the saturated phenomenon is not unrelated to the polyvalent and originally biblical word "mystery". In current common usage, it refers to a puzzling phenomenon that demands investigation and, for the adept investigator, the detection of an eventual solution. When all questions are answered, the puzzle is solved, and the book ends when the "mystery" is no more. In contrast, and in a completely different context, Paul can speak of "the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his [God's] saints . . . Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:26-27). The language of Christian doctrine refers to the "mysteries of faith"—the Trinity, incarnation, grace and the beatific vision. These are the revealed objects of faith; for reason unaided could not deduce them. On a more devotional level, there are the "mysteries" of the life of our Lord, or the once fifteen and now twenty mysteries of the Rosary, as various aspects of Christian revelation have become the subject of contemplation. On a more theological plane, say in the theology of Karl Rahner, "mystery" is a fundamental notion expressive of God's self-communication to the human spirit.⁴¹ The mystery in this sense is not something to be solved, but something so given, and so self-giving, that it constitutes the basic horizon of life and existence itself. The many "mysteries" of faith are aspects of the one self-giving mystery of God, which, even as it communicates itself in the Word and Spirit, remains ever beyond any finite grasp. To see God is to be given a vision of the inexhaustible infinities of the divine reality: even though the blessed participate in the life of God, the divine mystery is not lessened, but more positively appreciated in its boundless excess.

Why not speak more simply, then, of the "mystery" of the resurrection rather than make this phenomenological detour? Would not that word say more than any quasi-philosophical term could suggest and say it better? In response, I would simply suggest that that the term "mystery" and its specific Christian and theological meaning is best recovered and even intensified by the approach we are taking. To the degree we treat the phenomenality of the resurrection, it will be less likely to be reduced to a particular truth of faith that transcends the limits of reason, or be located outside the consciousness of the believer (and theologian) as an object of some kind to be inspected at will and be assigned a place in some larger scheme. In a sense, a genuine phenomenology is about restoring a sense of mystery, and more so in the instance of saturated phenomena, but most of all in the case of the resurrection of the Crucified.

Finally, different kinds of phenomenality need to be recognized. In

the scriptural texts, as in the four Gospels, the letters of Paul and so forth, there are different kinds of disclosure. In the celebration of the liturgy and its sacraments, in mystical experience and other modes of Christian life, the mystery of Christ reveals itself in a variety of ways.