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Ed. J. A. Mihoc & L. Aldea

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Reading the Fathers Today

John Behr

The call to 'Return to the Fathers' produced tremendous fruits over the course of the past century. I would like to take up that call here, but now in the context of the twenty-first century, to ask how, now, do we read the Fathers, for it seems that today this is one of the most important and difficult questions. In one sense, it has never been easier: we have great critical editions, translations and an abundance of secondary studies and instruments. But in another sense, it has never been more difficult or contested: *how* should one read their texts and why?

I would like to begin with what has become a standard presentation, used in many classrooms, on the discipline of reading historical, especially, Patristic texts, and how that has changed over the past century, and that is Elizabeth Clark's *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn*.[1] After reviewing changes in patterns of historiography over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, she turns her attention to what these changes mean for the study of pre-modern texts. She notes how 'late ancient Christian ("post-New Testament") studies . . . have idiosyncrasies foreign to other premodern disciplines: it developed under the aegis of a confessional theology and leaped somewhat precipitously from this orientation to that of social history and social theory in the 1970s and 1980s'.[2]

In her own graduate education, she recalls: 'Patristics . . . was a theologically oriented discipline that centered largely on the Church Fathers' Trinitarian and Christological expositions against "heretics". To bring ancient philosophy into relation with theology was as broad a disciplinary reach as I could then imagine would be professionally viable'.

[1] E. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).
[2] Clark, *History*, p. 158.

But she then notes, 'the social revolutions of the late 1960s merged in the 1970s with social science approaches that were implicitly (and sometimes overtly) aimed at undercutting the dominance of theology in the study of early Christianity—and in the years thereafter, cultural approaches were added in. Social formations, women, the poor, "heretics," and sexuality now were deemed suitable topics for investigation'.[3]

This was not so much an extension of the field of theology, to see how it could change the world, but, in her words, an escape: 'the race for social science provided an escape from a narrow philological and confessionally oriented theological orientation'.

Yet, she notes that these changes remained intriguingly oblivious to the 'literary/theoretical currents' at work refashioning departments of literature. Looking back several decades later, it has become clear to her that a basic point was neglected in this hasty refocusing on issues deriving from social studies: 'Overlooked in the rush for realignment was a point not then so obvious: that we do not possess the types of documents on which social historians of modernity work, but highly literary/philosophical texts that lend themselves well to theoretical analysis'.[4]

The opening of new horizons – 'our attention to grids and groups, networks, liminality, and "thick description,"' – nevertheless produced new insights and understanding, and so, she adds, 'I would not wish to return patristics to its traditional disposition'. But, she continues: 'Nonetheless, these social-scientific appropriations obscured the fact that scholars of late ancient Christianity deal not with native informants, nor with masses of data amenable to statistical analysis, but with texts—and texts of a highly literary, rhetorical, and ideological nature'.[5]

She thus proposes a return to dealing with the matter in hand – texts; and texts which possess a 'highly literary, rhetorical, and ideological nature'. But, significantly, not texts that evidence a theological concern.

As it is with texts that students of the Fathers deal, these texts 'should be read' she comments, 'first and foremost as literary productions before they are read as sources of social data'. Only by 'joining theoretical to social-scientific and theological-philological analyses' will we be able to 'enrich the field'.[6] As such, 'late

[3] Ibid., p. 160.
[4] Ibid., p. 158.
[5] Ibid., p. 159.
[6] Ibid.

ancient Christian studies' must, she argues, 're-envision' itself as 'a form of the new *intellectual* history, grounded in issues of material production and ideology, that has risen to prominence in the late twentieth-century'.[7] Not discounting the insights given by all the other historical disciplines – archaeology, numismatics and so on – what should be of most concern for us, Clark asserts, are 'issues of recent theory that pertain to *texts*'. And here, she would urge us to cede no ground whatsoever to contemporary theorists – she mentions Jacques Derrida, Fredric Jameson and Jean-François Lyotard – who 'have lately appropriated for their own purposes the rich texts of late Christian antiquity'.[8] As intellectual historians, scholars of late ancient Christianity enjoy an advantage, because it is their very profession to 'work with literary texts of a highly rhetorical and ideological nature'.[9]

Now, this call to an 'intellectual history' attuned to the textual nature of its material is indeed salutary. We can never forget that the material which we study, when reading the Fathers, is literary – of different genres, rhetorically structured in diverse ways, serving a multitude of purposes. If 'Patristics' had been mining these texts for particular topics – Trinity, Christology and so on, something to which I will return – we do indeed need to be reminded that we need to learn to read the texts themselves first, paying attention to their concerns, how they work and the rhetoric they employ.

But what of Theology? Clark assures us, in her words, that 'Theology has not been abandoned, but finds a welcome place in this reconfiguration of late ancient Christian studies', and she cites Virginia Burrus as a confirmation of this point, in her reading of 'early Christian theological texts through the illuminating lens of critical theory'.[10] However, in Clark's recounting of the development of the discipline, 'theology' only appears together with philology, as when she notes how the social sciences challenged the 'narrowly philological and confessional oriented theological orientation' and when she urges us to filter everything through critical theory – 'joining theoretical to social scientific and theological-philological analyses' – to enrich the discipline.[11] 'Theology', for Clark, is a matter of Trinitarian and Christological expositions, directed against the 'heretics' and works together with philology and on a philological level. Such theology can still

[7] Ibid., italics original.
[8] Clark, *History*, p. 161.
[9] Ibid., pp. 161–2.
[10] Ibid., p. 161.
[11] Ibid., pp. 158–9.

find a place, but it must be subsumed under the critical theory that gives a new intellectual history its legitimacy.

But is this any more theology? And in what sense would it be theological? It is striking that in a discussion of Clark's book in the journal *Church History*, Virginia Burrus raises a telling question about understanding the discipline as 'intellectual history'. Burrus asks, with this new title, 'what pernicious binaries might be inadvertently reinstated. Ideas versus practices? Elite versus popular culture? Surely we do not want to go *there* again. I don't think Clark does'. 'Yet', she continues, 'by the same token, I am concerned with what might *not* be excluded by "intellectual history"—namely a fairly traditional version of Patristics focused primarily (if not exclusively) on the close study of the writings of the so-called Fathers, even if it is a version now newly and critically tuned to issues of power.'[12] Traditional Patristics, the close study of Patristic texts, is problematic for Burrus, even if critically attuned, for, as she puts it a few lines later, 'I worry about the potential loss of a *certain kind* of political traction.'

So, is there indeed room for theology when reading the Fathers in terms of a newly minted, critically attuned 'intellectual history'? What kind of theology would it be? And what would make it 'theological'?

Is there indeed such a thing as 'Patristic theology'?

Fragmentation

The problem is in fact even more complex, for the kind of confessional, philological theology against which Clark and Burrus are reacting – Patristics as a history of dogmatics – is itself, I would argue, deeply problematic. Certainly, there can be no going back to what had become 'traditional' Patristic study by the mid- to late twentieth century – scholarship exemplified in the standard textbooks of the era, for instance J. N. D. Kelly's *Early Christian Doctrines*. But neither can such works be taken as definitive of what constitutes a *theological* reading. In fact, looking back now at such works, it seems that even within the 'theological reading' they practised, a more fundamental breakdown had already occurred. Kelly's work, for instance, is divided up into chapters dealing with distinct topics, suggesting thereby that they are discrete topics: distinct chapters

[12] V. Burrus, 'Elizabeth Clark's *History, Theory*: A (Somewhat) Confessional Reading', *Church History*, 74:4 (2005), p. 814.

on 'Trinity', 'Christology', 'Soteriology', 'Exegesis' – categories derived from the systematization of theology over recent centuries.

Certainly, one cannot treat everything at once. But dividing up the work in this manner presupposes that the theology of those being presented is amenable to being dissected in this way. If we should then want to know what any particular figure, say Irenaeus or Athanasius, thought, we would need to synthesize select paragraphs in diverse chapters. But can this even be done once their work and thought have been dissected into later categories? The same point can, largely, be made for many of the monographs on particular figures, for all too often they proceed by what have come to be standard theological loci, without considering the coherence of all this, *as theology*.

A rather glaring example of this problem in a monograph devoted to a particular locus – that of the Trinity – is evidenced by Richard Hanson, who, after concluding his mammoth landmark tome, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, notes, in an article summarizing his work, that through all the various debates 'the shape of Trinitarian doctrine finally achieved in the fourth century, then, was necessary, indeed we may say permanent. It was a solution, *the* solution, to the intellectual problem which had for so long vexed the church.'[13]

The problem to be solved is an intellectual one, that of establishing the doctrine of the Trinity. Yet, this is, for Hanson at least, a task separable from the exegetical practices of those whom he studied. For, as he puts it in the conclusion to his tome, 'the expounders of the text of the Bible are incompetent and ill-prepared to expound it. This applies as much to the wooden and unimaginative approach of the Arians as it does to the fixed determination of their opponents to read their doctrine into the Bible by hook or crook.'[14]

He clearly has no time for the exegetical practices of the theologians of this period by which they reached their conclusions: reading the Scriptures – the Law, the Psalms and the Prophets – as speaking of Christ.

He then continues with this rather perplexing statement:

> It was much more the presuppositions with which they approach the Biblical text that clouded their perceptions, the tendency to treat the Bible in an "atomic" way as if each verse or set of verses was capable of giving direct information about

[13] R. P. C. Hanson, 'The Achievement of Orthodoxy in the Fourth Century AD', in R. Williams (ed.), *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 142–56 (156).

[14] R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318–381* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), p. 848.

> Christian doctrine apart from its context, the "oracular" concept of the nature of the Bible, the incapacity with a few exceptions to take serious account of the background and circumstances of the writers. *The very reverence with which they honoured the Bible as a sacred book stood in the way of their understanding it.* In this matter they were of course only reproducing the presuppositions of all Christians before them, of the writers of the New Testament itself, of the tradition of Jewish rabbinic piety and scholarship.[15]

Their exegetical practice is simply wrong, even if it is a practice going back to the apostles themselves and their proclamation of the gospel, a manner of exegesis moreover shared with the rabbis, and which was, in fact, the common approach to sacred texts in antiquity.[16] And, more perplexingly, this was also the exegetical practice within which the doctrine of the Trinity was elaborated and has its meaning.

For Hanson, the doctrine of the Trinity was an 'intellectual problem' that was resolved in the fourth century, and which can now simply be called upon as a given of Christian theology. Dividing up the controversies of the early centuries by following the chapters in modern dogmatic textbooks, with the fourth century having established Trinitarian theology, it remained for the following centuries to do the same for the Incarnation – another given of Christian theology. Hanson never, as far as I am aware, addressed the question of what happens when one takes these supposed core theological elements out of the context in which they were composed and the practice of reading Scripture within which they had meaning, and places them in another context, in this case, that of systematic theology and a historical reading of Scripture.

Although Hanson's words are rather stark, the attitude they present is rather typical and examples could easily be multiplied. The problem, I would suggest, is in fact even more serious, inasmuch as the fragmentation of Patristic studies reflects a breakdown in the discipline of theology more generally. Looking back at the last century, it is hard not to be struck by the impression that, despite all the great fruits produced by several centuries of intense and diligent scholarly, historical and critical work – on Scripture, the Fathers, liturgy, art, asceticism, systematic theology and so on – the discipline of theology itself has fragmented into various sub-disciplines, fields working with such different presuppositions and methodologies that they no longer relate to each other and hardly even comprehend each other.[17] This fragmentation is especially true, and most grievous, in the case of the rupture between the study of Scripture, on the one hand, and systematic or dogmatic theology, on the other, with 'Patristics' included in the latter, at least when it was practised, until the mid- to late twentieth century, as the history of dogmatic theology.

[15] Hanson, *Search*, pp. 848–9, italics mine.

[16] Cf. J. L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible as it was at the Start of the Common Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 14–19.

Understanding the unity of the (singular) discipline of theology *as theology*, is, it seems to me, our greatest challenge today. If there is to be Christian theology today, there needs to be a re-integration of the diverse fields, *as theology*, and to do this, we need to understand the nature of this particular and peculiar discipline. Although, as any dictionary will note, the word is formed from the words *theos* and *logos*, it cannot simply mean speaking *about* God, in an manner analogous to the way in which, for instance, those who study 'geology' speak about the world and those who study 'biology' speak about the phenomenon of life and living creatures, if for no other reason than that God is not subject to our scrutiny, to be merely spoken *about*, described in abstract, uninvolved terms.[18]

Nor, less presumptuously, can theology simply be a philological reading of texts in which the word 'God' appears. If such philological reading is to be subsumed under an intellectual history attuned to critical theory, are its presuppositions such as to allow theology to be *theology*? Or will it be so tamed and domesticated as to no longer be *theology*, no longer have its own traction, rather than our own preferred 'political traction'?

Integration

For theology does have its own discourse, its own language. But, as Rowan Williams notes, 'Theology . . . is perennially tempted to be seduced by the prospect of bypassing the question of how it *learns* its own language.'[19] And here, naturally, the Fathers, especially those of the early centuries, the beginning of the discourse, are in fact of primary help, as those who first began to speak this language.

Increasingly, over the last decade or so, attention has shifted to this task: not that of expounding the mind of the Fathers or their consensus, nor even

[17] Cf. E. Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

[18] Cf. J. Behr, 'What are we doing speaking about God: The Discipline of Theology', in A. Papanikolaou and E. Prodromou (eds.), *Thinking Through Faith: New Perspectives from Orthodox Christian Scholars* (Crestwood: SVS Press, 2008), pp. 67–87.

[19] R. Williams, *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p. 131.

using categories derived from systematizing a presupposed consensus – the Trinity, Christology, Pneumatology, exegesis and so on – in separation, but rather hearing how particular Fathers wrote theology, in a variety of contexts and genres – apologetic, anti-heretical, homiletic, poetic – employing a variety of exegetical practices to proclaim Christ in accordance with the Scriptures, making claims *about* creation, human beings and the work of God, and making claims *upon* their hearers.

Such an approach does not merely expound the Scriptures or expound upon the being of God and does not seek to find a consensus or the lowest common denominator, but rather, to borrow an image from Irenaeus, attempts to be attuned to the symphony that is being played through these distinct figures: a symphony that is both synchronically and diachronically diverse, enabling us to see the Catholic dimension of early Christianity not as an increasingly intolerant monolithic institution (which is still supposed even by those who reject its historic reality) on the one hand, but as the body which in fact embraces diversity; and, on the other hand, to see the heretics (again, in the earliest centuries – before imperial Christianity) not as those rejected by a supposedly intolerant episcopacy, but as those who, through their own intolerance, separated themselves from the Catholic body to form communities who agreed with themselves (such as Marcion) or distanced themselves from the broader body, thinking that they alone know better (such as Valentinus).[20] And, in reverse, it is noteworthy that when Irenaeus intervened in affairs in Rome at the end of the second century, it was not to demand that the Valentinians be excommunicated and their books burnt, in the name of an increasingly intolerant patriarchal orthodoxy intent on preserving its purity for its own purposes, as is often supposed. Rather, it was to urge that the great church should acknowledge the degree to which the Valentinians had already separated themselves from this community, and to promote toleration of diversity among those who remained together: for as Irenaeus reminded Victor, in the controversy over Quartodeciman practice, 'our divergence in the fast confirms our agreement in the faith'.[21]

This fact is important, for it means that the establishment of an 'orthodox' theological discourse by the end of the second century was not the result of power games (though it would increasingly have political dimensions in later

[20] For a full exposition of this, see my *Irenaeus of Lyons: Identifying Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
[21] Irenaeus of Lyons, *Ep. to Victor*, in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.24.12–17.

centuries), but has a properly *theological* grounding. This symphony of theology comprised different voices throughout time, each lending itself to the melody being played, with different timbres and tonalities, inflections and themes, and each in turn being shaped by the symphony.

Speaking theologically, moreover, this diachronically and synchronically polyphonous symphony is not, therefore, constructed by any individual voice or all the voices together, but is governed by its own rhythm and rules, so that, to use Irenaeus' words, it is God who 'harmonizes the human race to the symphony of salvation' (*Against Heresies* 4.14.2). Reading the Fathers 'symphonically' in this way, then, attunes *us* to the melody that is theology.

But rehearsing the symphony, as it has been played to this date, is not yet, however, theology; that would only begin when, having read attentively through the score of earlier movements, we take our own part in the ongoing symphony. It is noteworthy that those who have taken this further step in the twentieth century – such as von Balthasar or more recently Zizioulas – have been accused of transgressing disciplinary boundaries. Balthasar was criticized for being too influenced by contemporary questions, resulting in a certain 'eclecticism' and 'ahistoricism' in his 'audaciously creative' utilization of Patristic texts.[22] Zizioulas, likewise, has been criticized for being unduly influenced by modern, existential, philosophy, and of giving an inadequate reading of the Fathers, though in his case, it would seem to result from a perceived need to stay within the realm of 'patristic theology', claiming that his understanding of the 'person' is already developed in the work of the Fathers, and so laying claim to legitimacy and authority in this way, rather than clarifying the nature of the discourse of theology within which he would work as a systematic theologian.

Alan Brown's rather impassioned defence of Zizioulas, from his supposed critics in the so-called 'Anglo-Orthodox school of patristic theology', arguing that the critique that Zizioulas' work fails 'the unspoken presupposition that *Orthodox theological speech should be submitted to the bar of the patristics monograph*', is rather misplaced.[23] There is indeed no reason simply to repeat what certain Fathers have said, but if one is not going to rehearse, with care and accuracy, particular movements of this symphony, then one must provide an account of what it is one is in fact doing.

[22] Cf. B. Daley, 'Balthasar's Reading of the Church Fathers', in E. T. Oakes and D. Moss (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 202.
[23] A. Brown, 'On the Criticism of *Being as Communion* in Anglophone Orthodox Theology', in D. Knight (ed.), *The Theology of John Zizioulas* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 35–78 (67), italics original.

In this continuing engagement between the task of reading the Fathers, and reading the Fathers *today*, with concern for contemporary questions and philosophical movements, one particularly fruitful area for engagement seems to be the strain of phenomenology that has undergone a 'theological turn' in recent decades, especially that of Michel Henry, with his phenomenology of life, and Jean-Luc Marion, with his analysis of saturated phenomena. Indeed, Marion's analysis of saturated phenomena provides, as recently suggested by Tamsin Jones, an intriguing model for Patristic texts and their reading – received as a pure given, but opening out onto an endless interpretation, as we encounter the phenomenon of God's revelation which exceeds any reduction.[24] The correlation between that which appears and the appearance, between the 'intuition' and one's 'concept' of it, need not only be determined as adequation, in which lies 'truth', or inadequation, as in the understanding of the phenomenon from Kant to Husserl, but, Marion argues, it can also be encountered as the 'excess' of 'saturation'. And this recognition opens a way to avoid the 'idolatrous' impulse of philosophy to determine and reduce concepts to static formulations, ones that, moreover, take their measure from the capacity of the thinking subject.

The 'nonmetaphysical method of philosophy—phenomenology, but a phenomenology thoroughly secured', as elaborated by Marion,[25] does not impose 'conditions for the possibility of phenomenality, the horizon, the constituting function of the I', whether through Kant's categories or Husserl's intentionality,[26] nor does it begin with the subject (even Heidegger's authentic *Dasein*), nor does it privilege Being, but rather, it begins with the givenness of what shows itself, and in the case of the saturated phenomenon:

> it alone truly appears as itself, of itself, and starting from itself, since it alone appears without the limits of a horizon and without reduction to an *I*. We will therefore call this appearance that is purely of itself and starting from itself, this phenomenon that does not subject its possibility to any preliminary determination, *a revelation*. And—we insist on this—here it is purely and simply a matter of the phenomenon taken in its fullest meaning.[27]

[24] T. Jones, *A Genealogy of Marion's Philosophy of Religion: Apparent Darkness* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), p. 158.
[25] J.-L. Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness* (trans. J. L. Kosky; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. x.
[26] Marion, *Being Given*, p. 4.
[27] J.-L. Marion, 'The Saturated Phenomenon,' in D. Janicaud, J.-F. Coutrine and J.-L. Chrétien (eds.), *Phenomenology and the 'Theological Turn'* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), pp. 176–216 (212–13).

Marion's saturated phenomena – the Event, the Idol, the Flesh, the Icon – culminates in the figure of Christ, whose manifestation 'counts as paradigm of the phenomenon of revelation according to the paradox's four modes of saturation',[28] as Event (saturating according to quantity, unable to be accounted), as Idol (saturating according to quality, being unbearable by the look), as Flesh (saturating according to relation, being absolute) and as Icon (saturating to modality, being unable to be looked at), 'precisely because as icon He [Christ] regards me in such a way that he constitutes me as his witness rather than as some transcendental *I* constituting Him to its own liking'.[29]

The subject, the constituting I, has been displaced, however self-aware it has become through critical theory (to gain a 'political traction' of one's own liking), to be replaced by one who is given, gifted, called (beyond being?) by Revelation itself. Christ, once again (and rather than 'Christology'), is again the subject of revelation, of *theology*, and theology itself is revelatory (rather than 'revelation' being one of the many topics studied by theology) and so, perhaps, Patristic texts should be read as themselves saturated phenomena in a *theological* reading.

There are, needless to say, many unanswered questions: two issues in particular dominate current discussion about Marion's saturated phenomena and the completion of these phenomena in the phenomenon of Revelation. First, who or what is the subject to whom the phenomenon appears, if not to an I, and how does this subject, however understood, receive this revelation without re-inscribing the phenomenon in a horizon necessarily subjective? And, second, what is the place of hermeneutics in this analysis of saturated phenomenon, or as Jones puts it: 'What is the actual relation between allowing the given to appear as such without any interpretation by the subject, on the one hand, and the subject's actual experience of this appearance itself, on the other? Or in other words, how can we talk of the appearance itself while totally bracketing out the subject?'[30]

Perhaps more careful attention to the symphony of the Fathers (their synchronic and diachronic polyphony), approached now with a keener sense of the saturated character of revelation, may provide some answers. Tamsin Jones, for instance, has brilliantly analysed how Marion appeals to the Fathers univocally, as offering 'a homogenous unit of authoritative source material for Marion to mine—a continuous tradition of an orthodoxy in which Marion would also like to be placed'.[31] In particular, Marion conflates the *apophasis* of Gregory of Nyssa

[28] Marion, *Being Given*, p. 236.
[29] Ibid., p. 240.
[30] Jones, *Genealogy*, p. 117.
[31] Ibid., p. 15.

with Dionysius or rather surreptitiously introduces ideas particular to Gregory under the name of Dionysius, where in fact closer attention to the particularity of Gregory's *apophasis* would have allowed for a clearer exposition of the endless character of entering into the saturated nature of revelation. Likewise, Jones points out how Marion's translation of Dionysius' use of the term αἰτία – 'cause' – as *Requisit* (the requested or the required one) is, in fact, a great example of creative interpretation, not needing authorization by claiming, as Marion does, that this is what the term originally meant for Dionysius.[32]

With regard to the question of the place of the subject addressed by Revelation and the role of hermeneutics, the very development of the discourse of Christian theology has much to offer, inasmuch as answering the call of 'the God who reveals himself through the cross'[33] requires the death of the one who hears: I no longer live, but Christ lives in me (Gal. 2.20) – a death which is alone an entry into life (as Henry's phenomenology of life) and the completion of God's creation of the human being through the creature's own fiat, answering a call that is only heard exegetically (through the opening of the Scriptures), not by another technique or method of reading or exegesis, but by focusing on Christ as the subject, the self-interpreting Word exegeting the Father (cf. Jn 1.18), providing the categories and horizons of his own intuition – revelation-rather than being reduced to those of a thinking subject, and heard liturgically, though the breaking of bread, in which his companions, those who share in the broken bread, become his body – so that he disappears from sight.

Although Marion reflects on this, beautifully but briefly, in his essay, 'They Recognized Him And He Became Invisible To Them',[34] I am not sure that he (or Henry) has fully appreciated two points. First, the extent to which, and the implications of the fact, that the Christ he speaks of, the Christ of the canonical Gospels, is always already revealed within this hermeneutical structure. Certainly, it is Christ himself who grounds or constitutes this revelation, on his own terms; the Gospel is that of God, not of man (to borrow from Paul (Gal. 1.12), the one whom Luke interpreted). But Christ is not simply there before the disciples' eyes waiting to be recognized by the intuitions he supplies; it is, rather, specifically *in the Gospel of Luke* that he appears on the road to Emmaus. And likewise now to those who stand in the same tradition of opening the scriptures and breaking bread.

[32] Ibid., pp. 157–8.
[33] Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius* 3.3.30 (GNO 2.118.20–21).
[34] Jean-Luc Marion, 'They Recognized Him and He Became Invisible to Them', *Modern Theology*, 18:2 (2002), pp. 145–52.

Second, that the excess of this saturated revelation can only be received through the death of the subject, sharing in his passion, to become his body, so that he disappears from sight (rather than remaining to be adored in the Eucharistic gifts, the high-point of saturated phenomenon for Marion), for it is alone the death of the subject which breaks down all their attempts to constitute their world, and instead allows them to become clay in the hands of God, to become (finally) flesh, created by God (rather than themselves).

Yet, despite such questions, such theologically attuned phenomenology does, it seems to me, open a space for a theological reading of Patristic texts – texts that are devoured today in the battle of critical readings – and also an approach for explaining what makes such reading theological and revelatory (phenomenologically), and, indeed, what is *theological* about Theology.