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The Phenomenology of Michel Henry and the Theology of John the Evangelist

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From the early centuries, the Evangelist John has been referred to as “the theologian.” And rightly so, for Christian theology, as we have come to know it, is inconceivable without his Gospel and especially its Prologue. Its words have provided the vocabulary for theological reflection thereafter, and it seems certain that, until the middle to the end of the second century, the annual celebration of Christ’s Passion, *Pascha*, was only celebrated by those who recalled how John had worn the distinctive headdress of the high priest in Jerusalem: the only disciple to remain at the foot of the cross, John was, for them, the high priest of the paschal mystery.¹ It is thus perhaps not surprising that it was especially in John, and his words about the revelation of Christ, the Word and Life, that Michel Henry found a vision of Christianity that resonated with the phenomenology that he had been investigating from his initial magnum opus, *The Essence of Manifestation*, through to his final Christian trilogy: first, *I Am the Truth: Towards a Philosophy of Christianity*, then several years later, during which time he read Tertullian and most importantly Irenaeus, *Incarnation: A Philosophy of Flesh*, and finally, appearing in print posthumously, *Words of Christ*.²

As the title of his first work indicates, what is of interest to Henry is “manifestation,” not the various phenomena themselves and their content, which are the proper study of the appropriate sciences (chemical phenomena for chemistry, historical for history etc.), but that which these sciences never take into account, that is, “what makes each of them a phenomenon: the appearing in which they show themselves to us—this appearing as such.”³ Modern phenomenology as practiced rigorously by Husserl, and even as carried out by Heidegger, remained, for Henry, too captivated by phenomena, as objects that appear in the world to a subject who observes them, to have considered the fact of “appearing” itself, that is, that which enables the

phenomena to appear. As such, Henry understood his work as a radicalization or reversal of phenomenology, rather than a turn towards Christianity or the mystical, the supposed “theological turn” in French Phenomenology.⁴ Yet, that this radicalized phenomenology should have led him to the study of Christianity is not surprising for, as he notes, the key terms of phenomenology—“givenness; showing; phenomenization; unveiling; uncovering; appearance; manifestation; and revelation”—are also central for religion and theology.⁵ As such, Henry does not present us with an account of the doctrines of Christian theology or a reading of Scripture such as we might expect. Instead Henry opens up the phenomenological structure of Christianity, as given to us especially by John, manifesting Truth in the generation of Life in the Living One, incarnate in or as flesh, and the call to Life given by Christ’s own words.

Michel Henry’s phenomenological analysis of the Christian revelation unveiled in particular by John is radically different, in its idiom and movement of thought, from the historical, scriptural, and theological disciplines in which John is typically read today. Most readers of John today tend to work within the historical horizon projected as the domain for their scholarship: John’s text is read either as reflecting or responding to that projected historical context (such as persecution, the parting of the ways between Christianity and Judaism, or tensions within the Johannine community), seeing this as the background for a developing understanding of the person of Christ, or else as framing its account of Christ in the narrative of the Gospel by deploying the literary forms (such as biographies) and frameworks or modes of thinking available in that context (such as Platonism, Gnosticism, or more recently and fruitfully apocalyptic), or a combination of both. Such accounts, as illuminating as they are, however, are only the first step in the hermeneutic of understanding, needing to be melded together, as Gadamer put it, with our own horizons. Early Patristic readers of John read him with just such a melding of horizons in their own time (yet one that I would argue is in continuity, historically and theologically, with John himself), reading the Gospel in a paschal and martyric light and elaborating, on the basis of the poetics of his text (and those of others, especially Paul), what is best described as a theo-anthropological domain of reflection. Henry, on the other hand, rejects in principle the historical and exegetical project undertaken by modern scholars, and instead, stimulated by the poetics and logic of John’s text (and Irenaeus and others), hears the Word addressed to us through Scripture as he reflects phenomenologically upon life, how it appears, and what it is to live in the *pathos* of the flesh, a horizon which is insistently in the present. Yet as different as Henry’s domain of thought is to other ways of reading John, he clearly attains insights similar to those that can be found through the historical and exegetical disciplines, especially pertaining to what it is to be born into life as a living human being sharing in the *pathos* of Christ.

Can, then, these different domains of thought be brought into dialogue with each other, even if not directly? Common to these discourses is a concern for revelation, or more specifically *apocalypsis*: indeed, this vocabulary (“unveiling,” “manifestation,” “appearance,” “revelation”) is, as Henry notes, common to both phenomenology and theology, and also scriptural exegesis as practiced by the apostles and evangelists themselves.⁶ The “apocalypse of the mystery” that is “the preaching of Jesus Christ” is “made manifest and made known through the prophetic writings” (Rom. 16:25–7), when Christ takes away the veil that lies upon Moses so that we, with unveiled face, can turn to the Lord to see his glory, and be changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another (cf. 2 Cor. 3.14–18). Similarly in the Synoptic presentation of Christ, it is only through the opening of the Scripture that the disciples are able to recognize Christ in the breaking of the bread (Luke 24), to know, that is, that his Passion—by which he offers us, in the present, to share in his living flesh—is not a defeat, as it appears to the world, but a victory and the source of life. And likewise for John: although that Jesus is the one spoken of by Moses and the prophets is known to the disciples at the outset (1:45), it is only once Christ has been glorified that the disciples are able to “remember” what had been written of him (12:16), and, by the guidance of the other Paraclete, the Spirit, be taught all things and remember all that he had said (14:26), and so chew the flesh that he now offers as the exalted Son of Man (6:35–66). Continuing in this vein, Irenaeus also speaks of the cross as unveiling the treasure, Christ himself, hidden in the Scriptures, which are otherwise read only as “myths” or narratives about the past, and which makes possible a participation in the eucharist that transforms our own death into a eucharistic offering “so that we should never mistake the true understanding of things as they are, that is, of God and the human being.”⁷

For Henry, on the other hand, it is the rigorous application of phenomenology that pierces the veil of the world that lies over our minds, enabling us to see through the lies of the world and so come to know truth and life, God as Life and ourselves as living ones in his life and sharing in the *pathos* of his flesh. Henry’s phenomenological analysis of the Arch-intelligibility of the Christian revelation does not proceed by analysing texts, for, as he argues, it is only because texts speak of a referent which *also* shows itself to us that texts can even speak of it, whether this is a showing in the appearance of the world, where even past historical events can “show” themselves to us in the unreal content of our thought, or whether it is Christ showing himself to us in the immediacy of our own *pathos* of life, which is ultimately his originary *pathos*, and calling us into life as enfleshed beings. Yet, for Henry, it is nevertheless by *reading* Scripture that we can be recalled, because of our originary identity with Christ as living ones in the Living One, from our absorption in the appearances of this world to encounter Christ in the *pathos* of life: Henry’s phenomenology is therefore also a reading of Scripture.⁸

As is increasingly acknowledged today, the apostles and evangelists read Scripture (the Old Testament) in the light of the Passion to encounter the Living One, the Word of God made flesh, and those following them continued to read Scripture (now both Old and New Testaments) in the Paschal light and a context of martyrdom and eucharistic celebration, being born into life and receiving the life-giving flesh of the Word. Similarly, through his phenomenological reading of Scripture (now primarily if not exclusively the New Testament) Henry finds life in the *pathos* of the flesh deriving from the Arch-*Pathos* of Christ himself, the First Living One, and his flesh.⁹ The question of how the *pathos* explored by Henry relates to the *pathos* that is the Passion of Christ is one that will be addressed shortly below. But for now, it is important to have established that Henry's phenomenological reading of Scripture rests upon its unveiling just as much as does the apostolic and early Christian practice of reading Scripture, as seen by a historically oriented reading of their texts. And Henry does this while also addressing head-on the need to lift the other veil, that lying over our own minds (cf. 2 Cor. 3:15), as also does the early Christian tradition, especially in the ascetic realm, so that we can turn to the Lord and see his glory, in the immediacy of the *pathos* of life, before the horizon, or veil, of the world spreads itself across our perception.¹⁰ By attending, then, through historical discipline, to how Scripture was read *as Scripture*, a space has opened up in which exegetes, theologians, and phenomenologists can together read Scripture *as Scripture*, chewing its cud, as Origen puts it, to be nourished by the Word.

Unveiling necessarily results in a "doubling," contrasting how things appear in this world and the reality that is revealed when the appearances are unveiled.¹¹ As this unveiling pivots upon the cross, the originary doubling is that of the proclamation of Christ crucified, the gospel: a stumbling block and foolishness, on the one hand, but on the other the power and wisdom of God (cf. 1 Cor. 1:23–4). And in the wake of this proclamation a series of other doublings follow: the text of Scripture, which had been read as narratives of the past turn out to be speaking of Christ and his cross; Christ, who had been known as the son of Joseph and Mary, turns out to be the eternal Word of God; the Eucharist, which appears to be bread, is his living flesh; Jerusalem, an earthly city, is our heavenly mother (cf. Gal. 4:26); and also regarding ourselves, for though we have "an earthly tent," we also "have a building from God, a house not made by hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. 5:1), with a name "written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the lamb who was slain" (Apoc. 13:8), a contrast, in Henry's terms, between being bodily sons and daughters of human parents yet, as living flesh, sons and daughters of God.¹²

John Ashton, in examining how the Gospel of John might be described as an "apocalyptic gospel," asserts that "for Enoch, and for apocalyptic writers generally, there are not two worlds but one: or rather the whole of reality is split into matching pairs (rather like the biological theory of DNA) in which

one half, the lower, is the mirror image (albeit in this case a distorting mirror) of the higher."¹³ In a similar manner, J. Louis Martyn describes John as having a "stereoptic vision," holding together, in the blending of times that characterizes John's Gospel, the Christ who had been present with his followers and who is also now, having ascended to heaven through the cross, still present with his community, testifying, with them, to others: "we bear witness to what we have seen" (John 3:11).¹⁴ This stereoptic vision can also be seen between the presentation of Christ in the Synoptics and that in John, which follows the movement of thought in the line from the Anaphora of John Chrysostom, "in the night in which he was given up or rather gave himself up": in the Synoptics Jesus is put to death and abandoned by his disciples, in John he voluntarily goes to the cross and the evangelist stands unashamed at its foot. Both are held together in the stereoptic vision of the fourfold gospel. A stereoptic vision might also well describe the relationship between the Gospel and the Apocalypse, written (if we take John to be the author of both, as did most Christians in the second century) by one who stood at the foot of the cross and at the throne in heaven, at the same time, for the cross is the throne from which he reigns: the Gospel, as a narrative climaxing in the apparent defeat of the cross, as it seems to the world, veils the victory of Christ under irony, double meaning, and the blending of times, while the Apocalypse in turn unveils the eternal and universal dimensions of the gospel.

Doubling is also a prominent feature of Henry's presentation of the Christian revelation. The "duplicity of appearing" that occurs on the world's stage means that "in Christianity everything is doubled"¹⁵: appearance and truth; body and flesh; the "me" given to myself in the *pathos* of life and the "I" that I project in this world. He continues a little later: "Everything is doubled, but if what is double—what is offered to us in a double aspect—is in itself one and the same reality, then one of its aspects must be merely an appearance, an image, a copy of reality, but not that reality itself—precisely its double."¹⁶ In exegetical terms, when the Scriptures are read as speaking of Christ, the lamb slain at Passover, for instance, is seen to be a "type" of Christ, bearing his imprint or stamp, such that the reality in fact precedes the type (for the seal precedes the imprint in the wax upon which it is stamped), even though the type appears first in the time of the world.¹⁷ For Henry, however, the image of reality is not simply a mirror image, or a even distorting mirror, but, in a harsher (Johannine) manner, a "trap" and a "lie," unfolding "a universe whose principle is hypocrisy."¹⁸ Does Henry, then, have a "stereoptic vision"? He clearly sees two different realms of appearance: that of life and that of the world. Identity, for Henry, is found in life: it is in the *pathos* of life, which is identical with itself in its self-affectivity, that we find our true identity, and indeed an identity, though derivatively, with God. In the world, all we have is the duplicitous doubling of this identity, the appearance of a body rather than the flesh. Is there, then, no reality to the body, to what appears in the world and the world itself? Is Henry's phenomenological presentation of

Christianity some kind of resurgence of Gnosticism, as has been claimed?¹⁹ Alternatively, is the Christ on the cross, appearing in the world and its history, a deceptive illusion, resulting in some kind of monism?²⁰ Or, to put the question as we raised it earlier: what is the relationship between the *pathos* that is the Passion of Christ, Pascha, and the *pathos*, or the Arch-*Pathos*, of which Henry speaks?

It is striking that Henry almost never speaks of the Passion—meaning the single event that encompasses the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension—nor the cross. In part this is no doubt because he is not reading the Gospels as narratives or biographies, dramas unfolding on the stage of the world and its history and leading towards their climax on the cross. In this, his work is akin to Origen's *On First Principles*, which also expounds the “principles” of Christian theology, including two full chapters on how the one Christ is spoken of as divine and human, without any mention there, or elsewhere in the work, of the Passion, apart from an allusive passage, if my reading of this is accepted.²¹ Henry's phenomenological analyses in his Christian trilogy culminate, rather, in the last paragraphs of *Words of Christ*, with Christ's words in Capernaum and the institution of the Eucharist celebrated across the centuries. Moreover, that Henry focuses primarily on Christ as “the Living One” (not surprising perhaps given his lifelong fascination with life and its own proper phenomenality) indicates that the Christ he presents throughout his trilogy is not, as he puts it, the Jesus who wandered from village to village, the proper subject for history,²² but rather, although he never quotes from this book, the one who speaks in the Apocalypse: “I am the First and the Last, I am the Living One, I was dead and behold I am Living” (Apoc. 1:17).

So far from there being no place for the cross in Henry's reflection, it is rather that, while rarely speaking of it, the one whom he is concerned to present as the Arch-Intelligibility of Christianity is always and only the one who is known through the Passion, the Paschal Christ.²³ Like Paul, Henry is focused on Christ and him crucified (cf. 1 Cor. 2:2); and as with Paul he does not dwell on the way that the crucified one appeared in the world and to the world, but rather focuses on the one proclaimed (thus heard, not seen) as the wisdom and the power of God (cf. 1 Cor. 1:24). Indeed, so much is this the case that in *Barbarism* Henry can contrast the truth of arithmetic with the truth that is, simply, “the Christ on the cross.”²⁴ Likewise, in words which echo Athanasius, he can write, towards the end of *Incarnation*, of “the Parousia concealed on the wood of the cross.”²⁵ Finally, though more allusively, Henry speaks of how the coming of the Word in a visible body is “not dissociable” from the coming of invisible Life in its Word, “not dissociable from this flesh itself.” He then continues: “Its hidden reality now takes place in the Coming of the Word in its visible body, the eternal generation of the Only Son, first born in absolute Life's self-generation.”²⁶ This Coming of the Word in its visible body would seem to be nothing other than the Parousia of the Word upon the cross, visible indeed to the world, but only as dead, while invisibly

alive in the flesh generated as the very substance of life. The Passion is, to borrow de Boer's phrase, "the Apocalypse of God,"²⁷ the manifestation of the invisible reality that takes place in the heart of God himself, the self-generation of absolute Life in the eternal generation, through the Arch-Pathos, of the Arch-Son, the First Living One and Living Flesh. Upon the cross, the body of Christ is exposed to the world for all to see, or rather hear (in the proclamation); however "seeing" living and life-giving flesh, not a dead body, is only done in the field of life not the world (heard not seen), and so requires being called back to the life in which we already live before the world appears: "the world will not see me, but you will see me because I live and you also will live," as Henry quotes John.²⁸

For Henry, then, there is no stereoptic vision looking simultaneously to heaven and earth, above and below, as two distinct places, as there is in the Targums on Genesis, with the angels ascending and descending to compare Jacob on earth with his figure inscribed on the throne in heaven, an image that John transposes to the Son of Man as the one who bridges heaven and earth so that the angels ascend and descend upon him.²⁹ In the unity of the Paschal event as understood by John—whose Gospel does not narrate how Christ was put to death, nor present his Passion in terms of an atonement for sin, but rather affirms that he offers himself for the life of the world, a self-offering which is the paradigmatic expression of love—there is not simply a correspondence between heaven and earth, but a coincidence or identity: heaven and earth touch upon the cross; as clay is lifted up from the earth into heaven, heavenly bread, Christ's life-giving flesh, is brought down from heaven. Heaven, however, is clearly not, as Henry puts it, "interstellar space, in the astro-physical universe explored by cosmonauts" but is rather the Life that is invisible to the world, the Arch-Pathos of the First Living One, whose life pulsates at the heart of all living ones.³⁰ And so rather than saying that heaven and earth touch upon the cross, it would be better to say that the apocalypse of the cross reveals heaven as the realm of life inhabited by all those who live, though invisible to the world.

To adapt the image used by Origen (*Princ.* 2.6.6, itself borrowed from the Stoics), when a piece of iron, known by its particular properties (cold and hard), is placed in a fire, while remaining the iron it is, it is no longer known by the properties of iron but only by those of the fire (burning hot and fluid). So too, before the Passion Jesus Christ is known by certain observable properties and by them identified in various ways deriving from human perception (the carpenter from Nazareth, a teacher, and so on). Yet ascending through the cross into the heavens and to God, a "consuming fire" (Deut. 9:3; Heb. 12:29), he is known as the Word of God and his body, remaining what it is by nature, is now only known by the properties of God, beyond space and time, while the fire that is God now in turn has a body, though one not measured by the space and time of our world. Pascha is both *pathos* (as with Melito) and *passage* (as with Origen), the hour in which Christ departs from

this world to the Father (John 13:1), no longer present in a body seen by the world but instead received as the flesh which gives life to the world, though in the world this remains veiled as bread. This is indeed a “monism,” for in the end God will be “all in all.”³¹ And so doubling in Henry is not that of a correspondence between two different and self-subsisting realms, seen by a stereoptic vision that looks to two different places at once, but is rather that resulting from an unveiling effected by “the Apocalypse of God,” or, as Richard Hays puts it, “the eschatological *apokalypsis* of the cross.”³² And the stereoptic vision that this eschatological unveiling facilitates is to see, *in* “the sufferings of this present time” (and not elsewhere) the groaning of creation labouring in travail, awaiting “the *apokalypsis* of the sons of God,” who are foreknown by God and predestined by him “to be conformed to the image of his Son so that he might be the first-born of many brethren.”³³

Until the consummation, then, “the sufferings of this present time,” the time of the world and the world itself, are real, as is the heaviness of the body.³⁴ But “this present time” is only transitory, birth-pangs necessary for life to be born, but not remembered when the woman finally gives birth to a human being (cf. John 16:21). In the light of the eschatological *apokalypsis* of the cross, these sufferings are seen as preceded by and embraced in the *pathos* of life found in Christ, just as the Passover lamb is preceded by and embraced in the Paschal Christ.³⁵ As Henry puts it in the sentence concluding in the phrase we have previously cited: “Thus, finally, this flux, this seemingly absurd parade of modest pleasures and oppressive thoughts, is secretly oriented toward an agony, toward the ultimate transition from the ultimate suffering of despair to the eruption of an unlimited joy, as evidenced by the Parousia concealed on the wood of the cross.”³⁶ When the veil of the world is finally and fully lifted, and the sufferings of the present time give way to unlimited joy in the birth into life, we find that our true identity is, and always has been, as living enfleshed sons and daughters of God, living ones in the Living One. For now, however, although “our citizenship is in the heavens,” we still await from it our Saviour (Phil. 3:20); if we have died to the world, born into and from life that does not appear in the world, then “our life is hidden with Christ in God,” and so when he appears, we too “will appear with him,” not in the world or a different spatio-temporal place called heaven, but “in glory” (Col. 3:3–4).

It is in this context, exploring our life in Christ, that Henry comes to some of his most provocative statements. Perhaps the most dramatic, and seeming to imply a radical monism, is when he says that “*Life self-engenders itself as me,*”³⁷ or, in the saying of Meister Eckhart, of which he is so fond: “God engenders me as himself.”³⁸ To be born into life, however, “is not to come into the world. To be born is to come into life. ... To come into life means to come from life, starting from it, in such a way that life is not birth’s point of arrival, as it were, but its point of departure.”³⁹ So much is this the case for Henry, that he can also say that, as living, human beings are “*not* created.”⁴⁰ Henry

is not speaking, as we tend to, in a historical or scientific register, but in a phenomenological one, in which “the creation of the world ... consists in the opening of this horizon of exteriority,” in which something appears as other than it is in the self-affectivity of life, life which is nevertheless always prior to the appearance of the world.⁴¹ As such, creation is essentially secondary or subsequent to begetting, though (as with scriptural types of Christ) they appear first in the sequence of temporality and causality belonging to the world of appearance. As such, Henry claims that what is revealed in Christ “obliges us to find ... an entirely new and unusual conception of temporality—one that is the essence of Life’s own temporality.”⁴² Such ‘temporality’ would not be a distancing from itself, an ek-stasis, in the horizon of exteriority that is the temporality of the world, but, rather, a “radically immanent, inek-static, and pathos-filled [*pathétique*] temporality,” in which “there is neither before nor after in the sense we understand them, but rather eternal movement, an eternal flux in which life continuously experiences itself in the Self that life eternally generates, and which is never separated from itself.”⁴³

Henry’s assertions seem to be very much at odds with traditional Christian theology, in which the fundamental distinction would be between God and everything else, created *ex nihilo*, and which would rather start by narrating the eternal generation of the second person of the Trinity, before turning to creation with its narration of creation and the fall, followed by a long history of salvation culminating with Incarnation and the Passion, which opens up the possibility for human beings to become, at the end (rather than the beginning), sons and daughters of God through baptism. Yet we must heed Skinner’s cautions about the “mythology of doctrines,” to consider whether the ways in which we are used to hearing various doctrines are in fact the best or even appropriate.⁴⁴ Ignatius of Antioch, for instance, is insistent that it is only by sharing in the Passion of Christ that he will be born into life as a human being, to “be found to be the pure bread of Christ,” and indeed “a word of God.”⁴⁵ His birth into life to become a human being is founded upon the Passion of Christ and sharing in it. And as such, when, with Origen, the language of the “eternal begetting” from the Father is used, it is so with respect to the Saviour and yet is an eternal begetting extended to the believer as well: they too are eternally begotten from the Father.⁴⁶ Even more striking is the affirmation of Maximus the Confessor, as paraphrased by Gregory Palamas: “the saints clearly state that this adoption and deifying gift, actualized by faith, is real. ... The divine Maximus has not only taught that it is real, but also that it is unoriginate (and not only uncreated), uncircumscribed and supra-temporal, so that those attaining it are thereby perfected as uncreated, unoriginate, and uncircumscribed, although in their own nature they derive from nothing.”⁴⁷ To understand this startling claim, it is helpful to return to the image of iron and fire, which we had used above in a Christological context: we ourselves, though coming into existence in the space and time of this world, have our end in the consuming fire that is God,

in which the earthy matter that we are, while remaining what it is, will only be known by the properties of the fire, as “uncreated, unoriginate, and uncircumscribed” by space or time. To enter into the eternity of God is not to enter at some moment of time, to be there thereafter, for there is no before or after in his eternity; we have to say that we are already there, and always have been, in what Henry describes as the “radically immanent, inek-static, and pathos-filled temporality,” in which there is neither before nor after, but an “eternal flux in which life continuously experiences itself in the Self that life eternally generates,” the Apocalypse of God at the cross, revealing Christ himself, as the First Living One, and us as living ones in him.

It might be the case that it was the “Arian” controversy that resulted in the uncreated/created distinction becoming the primary distinction for theology. However, even when writing later in the fourth century against Eunomius, Gregory of Nyssa would put the matter somewhat differently, and more akin to what we have already seen. Following the Apostle Paul’s distinction between things that are seen and transient and those that are unseen and eternal (2 Cor. 4:18), Gregory asserts:

Now, the ultimate division of all being is into the intellectual and the perceptible [Πάντων τῶν ὄντων ἢ ἀνωτάτω διαίρεσις εἰς τε τὸ νοητὸν καὶ τὸ αἰσθητὸν τὴν τομὴν ἔχει]; the perceptible nature is called by the Apostle “that which is seen.” For as all body has colour, and the sight apprehends this, he calls this world by the rough and ready name of “that which is seen” ... The common term, again for the intellectual world, is with the apostle, “that which is not seen”: by withdrawing all idea of comprehension by the senses he leads the mind [διάνοιαν] on to the immaterial and intellectual. Reason [ὁ λόγος] again divides this “which is not seen” into the uncreated and the created, inferentially comprehending it: the uncreated being that which effects the creation, the creation that which owes its origin and its force to the uncreated. In the sensible world, then, is found everything that we comprehend by our organs of bodily sense, and in which the differences of qualities involve the idea of more or less ... But in the intelligible world—that part of it, I mean, which is created—the idea of such differences as are perceived in the perceptible cannot find a place; another method, then, is devised for discovering the degrees of greater and less.⁴⁸

The distinction between the uncreated and the created finds its place within the overarching apostolic distinction between the seen and transient, on the one hand, and the unseen and eternal, on the other. The Apocalypse of God reveals the fundamental distinction between what is seen and unseen,

within which we are led by reason to distinguish between uncreated and created.⁴⁹ And the vision of God this opens up—unseen by the world, but running throughout Scripture—is not that of a later philosophical deism, with God considered in or by himself (or as three), prior to and independent of everything else, but rather a vision of God as presiding over the heavenly court, in the celebration of the heavenly liturgy: “God is in the congregation of gods” (Ps. 81:1). This vision pervades the Scriptures, and increases in the literature of Second Temple Judaism and apocalyptic works, to the New Testament proclamation that the crucified and risen Christ has been exalted to sit at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. 1:3), in the throne room beheld by John in his Apocalypse, in which the One who sits on the throne and the slain Lamb are offered “blessing and honour and glory and might unto the ages of ages” (Rev. 5:13).⁵⁰ It was not only in the opening of Scriptures that the apostles encountered Christ, but in the breaking of bread, and similarly for those who followed them, and so also for Henry, as he concludes his trilogy by turning to the words of Christ in Capernaum and “the unbroken memorial of this institution [of the Eucharist] across the centuries.”⁵¹ As Bryan Spinks says of this dimension of Christian worship:

In Christ the space of heaven and the region of earth are united. In the eucharist the worshipper enters heaven through Christ, and is represented by the High Priest. Here time and eternity intersect and become one, and this world and the world to come elide.⁵²

It is, perhaps, only when the liturgical context of the opening of the Scriptures is neglected that the distinction between created and uncreated becomes the primary marker for speaking about God and his creation.

The “doubling” that we have been exploring, resulting from the unveiling effected by the Apocalypse of God through the cross, simultaneously reveals that what we had thought to be real and our real condition is in fact a veil, occluding the truth about ourselves. Yet it is also a veil that is not only not dissociable from ourselves, but rather is oriented towards the final unveiling of our true condition as sons and daughters of God. As the Psalmist says, in the person of God: “I say ‘You are gods, sons of the Most High; yet all of you shall die like human beings’” (Ps 81:6–7). It is by sharing in the *pathos* of Christ that we not only die like human beings, but in fact become living human beings, sons of God. Likewise Isaiah: “I have begotten sons and exalted them,” then adding, “but they have rejected me” (Isa. 1:2). This rejection is not an episode in the history of the world—a “Fall” preceded by a time in paradise and followed by a long history of salvation culminating in the Incarnation (a Plan A followed by a Plan B, as it were)—but is again inseparable from the act of unveiling, for there is no unveiling unless there is a veil, so that the veil becomes the medium in and through which the unveiling occurs. In exegetical terms, when the Scripture is unveiled, we don’t see something else, but rather the Christ who has always

been there, as treasure hidden in the types and prophecies it contains which could not be understood prior to cross, as Irenaeus puts it (*haer.* 4.26.1). And as such the veil of the world is intrinsic to our arrival in life, the life which is itself, as Henry noted, always the point of departure.

As such, as Henry puts it, “the occultation of the condition of the Son coincides apparently paradoxically with the very genesis of this condition.”⁵³ Coming into life is itself the very occasion for an egoism, in which I consider myself to be the ground of my own life, directing my attention away from the source of life towards that which I can see, do, or perceive in the world that opens up before me, resulting in a doubling between, on the one hand, the “me” that is given to itself in life and that lives in the heart of Life, hidden in Christ, but which, on the other hand, forgetting itself by being absorbed in the world, appears as an “I” in the world. Yet the appearances of the world are a flux that Henry sees as being oriented towards the final unveiling of unlimited joy in the parousia of the Word on the cross. Similarly, Maximus the Confessor: “Together with coming-into-being, the first human being gave this power—I mean the natural desire of the mind for God—by use of the faculty of perception to perceptible things, activating, in the very first movement, an unnatural pleasure through the medium of the senses.”⁵⁴ From the very first moment we open our eyes, as living beings, our perception is caught by what appears and life disappears from such sight. Yet as Maximus goes on to explain, it is by the cycle of pleasure and pain in which we are then immersed, the cycle of genesis (coming into being) and corruption (death), that we are brought back to ourselves in the life that Christ offers, as, by his Passion, he “converted the use of death” so that we too might be able to “use death” as the means which “mystically leads to divine and unending life.”⁵⁵ It is only when the solution is unveiled on the cross that the problem is seen for what it is, but the problem is thereby turned inside out and becomes, instead, the means of sharing in the solution, so resulting in the living human being, “the glory of God,” as Irenaeus speaks of such, meaning a martyr following Christ in his Passion, and thereby bringing to completion God’s project announced in the opening verses of Scripture.⁵⁶

In all these ways, then, for Henry it is the Gospel of John and especially its Prologue that enables us “to understand *the unity and transcendental aim of Scripture*,” enabling a reading of Genesis as “*the first true and rigorous analysis of the human condition*.”⁵⁷ Flying in the face of science and philosophy, and indeed common sense, and despite all appearances, Christianity asserts that human beings are not beings of the world: “they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world,” says Christ (John 17:14). As living ones, they are, instead, sons and daughters of life and so sons and daughters of God. “You are gods, sons of the Most High,” says David (Ps. 81:6), the first words of which are quoted by Christ and applied to all those to whom the Word came (John 10:34). Thus, unlike every other way of understanding ourselves, “Christianity opposes a radically different human being, the Son of God, the

Son of Life, the new transcendental human being born within absolute phenomenological Life, engendered within this Life's self-engendering and drawing his essence from it alone—the human being resembling Christ, the human being in the image of God!"⁵⁸ It is only because being sons and daughters of God, living ones in the Living One, is, from the first, our true condition, that we can be recalled to it, just as it is only because he has always been a son that the prodigal can return to the father's house, his proper dwelling.

Finally, regarding the Prologue of the Gospel of John, the Christian tradition has consistently understood the becoming flesh, the Incarnation, of the Word as *the* moment of revelation *par excellence*, for by it "we have seen his glory" (1:14). But this is not as straightforward a statement as it is often assumed. Henry points out that there are three ways in which this assertion can be taken.⁵⁹ Either, first, it can be taken as saying that "the Word has taken flesh in order to reveal itself to human beings," in which case the revelation is a work of the flesh, or, second, the revelation is a work of the Word, leaving unanswered why the Word needs flesh for this revelation. The first line of interpretation is, indeed, the way in which the verse has been understood by many theologians and scriptural scholars: it is "an episode in the biography of the Word," to use a phrase (meant negatively) of Rowan Williams, in which the Word, by becoming flesh becomes human, as a being physically visible in the world.⁶⁰ Or, as Henry puts it, "the coming of the Word in human flesh is interpreted as the way in which the invisible Word of God shows itself to men and women by making itself visible to them in the form of an objective body. Becoming-visible in a visible-body would [then] be the principle of the Word's revelation."⁶¹ But, as Henry comments, there are two overwhelming difficulties to this line of interpretation. First, that if this were so, then "what would show itself to them in this appearance would really still be only a body like theirs, about which nothing would allow them to know that it is precisely not the body of an ordinary man but of the Word." It is not enough to see, physically, Jesus, living in first-century Judea (or now in our historical reconstructions), to see the Word of God.⁶² This is, as Henry puts it, a "banalization of Christ."⁶³ This is indeed a position sketched out by Athanasius in *On the Incarnation*, as Henry notes, but it is taken only to be transcended. As part of his account of the rationale, the *logos*, of the Passion, Athanasius suggests that as our minds were caught by things of sense perception the Word had to take a body to catch our attention, as it were. Yet it is only by what he does (not how he appears) that we learn "that he is not a man only but God and the Word and the Wisdom of the true God," primarily and paradigmatically upon the cross, such that he is thereafter no longer an object of physical sight.⁶⁴

The second difficulty raised by Henry is that, quite simply, this is not what John says: "For John does not say that the Word took on a body, or assumed the appearance of one. He says that it 'was made flesh'."⁶⁵ John does

not speak of a body, but flesh, and not of appearance, but becoming that flesh. Moreover, John does not say that the Word became human, and therefore took on flesh along with other attributes (such as a soul, reason, and so on). John in fact overturns our understanding of what it is to be human. In our usual understanding, “flesh” is that which refers only to our materiality and animality, that which we have in common with animals, from which we are distinct by having other faculties, such as the ability to think and form ideas, the possession of *logos* lacking in animals, and so which characterizes us as human, rational animals. In this case, however, “becoming flesh” would be to become less than human! Rather, as Henry puts it, if the Christian tradition takes the “becoming flesh” as the way in which the Word became human, then, “*the human being is defined as flesh.*”⁶⁶

“Incarnation,” then, does not speak of the addition of a heterogeneous element to the Word, enabling the Word to appear in the world, but rather of the Word itself becoming flesh, and in so doing redefining what it is to be human. Thus, the third alternative offered by Henry for understanding the connection between revelation and becoming flesh is that the flesh is not the means of a revelation understood as an appearance in the world, but is itself the revelation: “It is of itself, in itself, and by itself, that [the Word] was made flesh.”⁶⁷ If the Word reveals God to us through the flesh, then in turn our relationship with God must also take place through the flesh. “It is by identifying himself with the Word’s flesh (with the body of Christ, *corpus Christi*) that the Christian human being may identify himself with God.”⁶⁸ The “flesh” that the Word, Jesus, becomes through the Passion, is the life-giving flesh of Christ offered in the Eucharist, which to be received as life-giving requires sharing in his Passion, to be born into life as a living human being, the glory of God.⁶⁹ The Incarnate Word of God is heard, not seen, and received as life-giving flesh in those who live in his *pathos*.

There are, then, many points of convergence between the phenomenological reading of John given by Michel Henry and that of the early Christian reading of John, when approached not under the burden of Skinner’s “mythology of doctrine,” but rather when read through a disciplined historical reading, especially in the light of the paschal tradition which they held to have been initiated by John, the high priest of the Paschal mystery, standing at the foot of the cross, at the throne in heaven. Finally, both Henry and Origen, in their own ways, come to the same insight, that it is precisely by standing there, at the very heart of the mystery, that John is able to unveil the *pathos* of life. As Henry puts it, John’s “plan, at first glance unrealizable, is to validate Christ’s affirmation of his status as Son by placing himself as it were at the interior of this affirmation and in being coextensive with its movement. More radically: by placing himself at the interior of the very condition of Christ and in identifying with it.”⁷⁰ It is as the disciple who alone stands at the foot of the cross (and at the throne in heaven) that John speaks, having become identified with Christ. As Origen put it, to understand

the firstfruits of the Gospels which is John, one must also have leant on his breast and received Mary to be his mother also, and so “be shown to be Jesus,” standing at the foot of the cross and hearing the words “Behold your Son”: “for indeed everyone who has been perfect ‘no longer lives but Christ lives in him’ and since ‘Christ lives in him’ it is said of him to Mary, ‘Behold your son,’ the Christ.”⁷¹ For his early followers and readers, John is the High Priest of the Paschal mystery, and for Henry he is the one who initiates us into the Arch-gnosis, the gnosis of the simple, that is the Arch-intelligibility of Life itself. Bringing these different readers of John the Theologian together, then, not only enables us to see points of comparison and convergence, but the possibility of undertaking a constructive theology, both hermeneutically and phenomenologically grounded, centered in the *pathos* of life and its flesh and a much deeper understanding of the mystery of Incarnation.

¹ This article is largely drawn from Chapter 7 of my forthcoming book, *John the Theologian and His Paschal Gospel: A Prologue to Theology* (Oxford: OUP, 2019); see chap. 2 for the figure of John. It should be noted that when I speak of Christ’s “Passion,” I refer, as do early Christians, to the whole (singular) event of death-resurrection-ascension.

² Michel Henry, *L’essence de la manifestation* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963; second edition 1990); trans. Girard Etzkorn, *The Essence of Manifestation* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973); *C’est moi la vérité: Pour une philosophie du christianisme* (Paris: Seuil, 1996), trans. Susan Emanuel, *I Am the Truth: Towards a Philosophy of Christianity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003); *Incarnation: Une philosophie de la chair* (Paris: Seuil, 2000), trans. Karl Hefty, *Incarnation: A Philosophy of Flesh* (Evanston Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2015); *Paroles du Christ* (Paris: Seuil, 2002), trans. Christina M. Gschwandtner, *Words of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012). I will refer to the English translations given, but occasionally note a particular French expression or turn of phrase significant for Henry. Henry uses italics and capitals frequently; in what follows I have reproduced his italicization, without specifically noting it, and generally followed his use of capitalization when discussing his work.

³ Henry, *Incarnation*, 22.

⁴ For the “theological turn,” see Dominique Janicaud, *Phenomenology and the “Theological Turn”*: *The French Debate*, trans. Bernard Prusak (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 70-103. See also, Peter Jonkers and Ruud Welten, *God in France: Eight Contemporary French Thinkers on God* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), which includes a useful summary essay on Henry by Welten, “God is Life. On Michel Henry’s Arch-Christianity,” *ibid.* 119-42, as does Christina M. Gschwandtner, *Postmodern Apologetics: Arguments for God in Contemporary Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 125-42.

⁵ Henry, *Incarnation*, 23. Cf. Henry, *I Am the Truth*, 13, 23.

⁶ Cf. Behr, *John the Theologian*, Chapter 2.

⁷ Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against the Heresies* (*haer.*), 4.26.1 and 5.3.2. Ed. and French trans. A. Rousseau, et al., *SC haer.* 1-3 ed. and French trans. A. Rousseau and L. Doutreleau, *SC 263-4*, 293-4, 210-11 (Paris: Cerf, 1979, 1982, 1974); *haer.* 4 ed. and French trans. A. Rousseau, B. Hemmerdinger, L. Doutreleau and C. Mercier, *SC 100* (Paris: Cerf, 1965); *haer.* 5 ed. and French trans. A. Rousseau, L. Doutreleau and C. Mercier *SC 152-3* (Paris: Cerf, 1969); trans. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (eds.), *Ante-Nicene Fathers 1* (Edinburgh, 1887; repr. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987).

⁸ For an examination of the way in which Scripture is used (surprising frequently) in French phenomenology, and calling for a greater attentiveness to hermeneutics, as exemplified by Paul Ricoeur, see Christina M. Gschwandtner, “Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, and Scripture: Marion, Henry, and Falque on the Person of Christ,” *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 17.2 (2018): 281-97.

⁹ The question naturally arises whether Henry’s reading of Scripture resembles that of the Valentinians, whom Irenaeus (*haer.* 2.13.3) accused of projecting their own inner states onto the heavens, a conclusion reiterated by David Dawson, commenting that Valentinus turns the drama of Scripture into a “psychodrama,” so that “In the end, this state of being [wrought by the *Gospel of Truth*] is the speaker’s own; as a visionary, Valentinus’s ultimate concern is neither for textuality nor language in general, but for the personal subject or self.” David Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 171, 165. This, however, is beyond the scope of this study; suffice it to say that Henry is reading Scripture as a phenomenologist, not a visionary, and is doing so in company with Irenaeus (as are we).

¹⁰ Cf. Douglas Burton-Christie, *The Word in the Desert: Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

¹¹ For a broader examination of the theme of “doubling” from Plato to Plotinus, via Thomas, Gnosticism, and Mani, see Charles Stang, *Our Divine Double* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

¹² For a full exposition of this doubling, see Origen’s exposition of how Scripture should be read in *On First Principles (Princ.)* 4.3.6-15. Ed. and trans. John Behr, *Origen: On First Principles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

¹³ John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007 [1991]), 327.

¹⁴ J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, 3rd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003 [1968]), 130, 138.

¹⁵ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 194.

¹⁶ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 195.

¹⁷ See, for instance, the words of Nicholas Cabasilas: “It was not the old Adam who was the model for the new, but the new Adam for the old. ... Because of its nature, the old Adam might be considered the archetype to those who see him first, but for him who has everything before his eyes, the older is the imitation of the second. ... To sum it up: the Savior first and alone showed to us the true human being, who is perfect on account of both character and life and in all other respects” *The Life in Christ* 6.92-4 (trans. mod.). Nicholas Cabasilas, *Life in Christ*. Ed. and French trans. M.-H. Congourdeau, SC 355, 361 (Paris: Cerf, 1989, 1990); trans. C. J. deCatanzaro (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1974).

¹⁸ Henry, *I am the Truth*, 195.

¹⁹ Most forcefully by Jad Hatem, *Le sauveur et les viscère de l’être: Sur le gnosticisme et Michel Henry* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2004); see also Joseph Rivera, *The Contemplative Self After Michel Henry: A Phenomenological Theology* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2015), 153-66.

²⁰ Rivera, *The Contemplative Self After Michel Henry*, 162, would see in Henry not so much a Gnostic dualism, but a “qualified monism in the particular sense that it prioritizes the interior non-temporal world at the utter expense of the exterior temporal field of the world” (italics original). See also Emmanuel Falque, “Is There a Flesh Without Body? A Debate with Michel Henry,” *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy*, 24.1 (2016): 139-66, and, “Michel Henry théologien (à propos de *C’est moi la vérité*),” *Laval théologique et philosophique* 57.3 (2001): 525-36. Falque would see in Henry a monism akin to Spinoza, developing from a “monism of life” in *I am the Truth* to a “carnal monism” in *Incarnation*.

²¹ Origen, *Princ.* 2.6.3, for comment on this passage, see Behr, ed. and trans., *Origen: On First Principles*, lxvi-lxxvii, and for *On First Principles* as an “apocalyptic work,” *ibid.*, lxxx-lxxxviii.

²² Henry, *I am the Truth*, 5-6.

²³ Kevin Hart, “‘Without World’: Eschatology in Michel Henry,” in Neal DeRoo and John Panteleimon Manoussakis, eds. *Phenomenology and Eschatology: Not Yet in the Now* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009), 167-92, at 179, notes that: “Henry’s philosophy of Christianity is eschatological through and through,” though for Hart this results in a Christology that “inclines sharply to monophysitism” (177), a “philosophy [that] is at heart Neoplatonic” (*ibid.*), and which “disassociates history and eschatology, including the *historia salutis* and the *ordo salutis*, so completely as to risk becoming Marcionite. That the incarnation takes place in Jewish flesh is overlooked completely,” differing from Balthasar “in his bypassing of the Passion as central to eschatology, and in the soteriological significance of the Passion” (178). Henry no doubt appears so when laboring under Skinner’s “mythology of doctrines” (for which see Quentin Skinner, “Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas,” *History and Theory* 8 (1969): 3-53; reprinted in a much abbreviated and extensively revised version in his, *Visions of Politics*, vol. 1, *Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 57-89) and a corresponding presupposition about how Scripture is read. For further analysis see Behr, *John the Theologian*, Introduction, Chapter 2. As we will see in this article, Henry’s approach, as different as it is in its phenomenological approach, yet has much in common with early Christian theology.

²⁴ Michel Henry, *Barbarism*, trans. Scott Davidson (London: Continuum, 2012), 125.

²⁵ Henry, *Incarnation*, 250; cf. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation (Inc.)* 19: while the disciples fled at the time of the crucifixion, “what is most wonderful, even at his death, or rather at the very trophy over death, I mean the cross, all creation confessed that he who was made known and suffered in the body was not simply a human being but Son of God and Savior of all. For the sun turned back and the earth shook and the mountains were rent, and all were awed. These things showed the Christ on the cross to be God and the whole of creation to be his servant, witnessing in fear the advent [*parousia*] of the Master.” Ed. and trans. John Behr, *St Athanasius: On the Incarnation* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2011).

²⁶ Henry, *Incarnation*, 258.

²⁷ Martinus C. de Boer, “Apocalyptic as God’s Eschatological Activity in Paul’s Theology,” in Ben C. Blackwell, John K. Goodrich, and Jason Maston, eds., *Paul and the Apocalyptic Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 45-63, at 51.

²⁸ Henry, *I Am the Truth*, 85; John 14:19, ... ὑμεῖς δὲ θεωρεῖτέ με, ὅτι ἐγὼ ζῶ καὶ ὑμεῖς ζήσετε, usually translated as “you will see me; because I live you will also live.”

²⁹ John 1:51. See *Genesis Rabbah*, 68.12.6. Jacob Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah: The Judaic Commentary to the Book of Genesis: A New American Translation*, 3 vols., BJS 104, 105, 106 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1985).

³⁰ Henry, *Words of Christ*, 41.

³¹ 1 Cor. 15:28; cf. Origen, *Princ.* 3.6.2-3.

³² Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 169.

³³ Rom. 8:18-19, 29. For discussion and critique of the eschatological dimensions of Henry’s phenomenology, see Kevin Hart, “‘Without World’: Eschatology in Michel Henry,” and Jeffrey Hanson, “Phenomenology and Eschatology in Michel Henry,” in *Phenomenology and Eschatology*, 153-66.

³⁴ As Falque (“Is There a Flesh Without Body?” 157) points out: “it does not suffice to recognize ‘the pain that is produced by climbing this sloping road’ [the *pathos* in which Henry sees the flesh]; it is also necessary to recognize the weight of our own body (with its kilos, we dare to say!) without which this pain would never be experienced and which is necessary to climb to the summit of this town or countryside” But Flaque presses too hard the distinction he wishes to make; as we have seen, Henry asserts, “what is doubled—what is offered to us in a double aspect—is in itself one and the same reality” (*I am the Truth*, 195). In the world the weight of the body is real, as is the hardness of the iron, but not when seen in God, the consuming fire.

³⁵ As Origen points out regarding the Transfiguration: when the disciples see Moses and Elijah speaking with Christ about his exodus they fell on their faces, knowing that one cannot see the face of the one who speaks with Moses on the mountain and live (cf. Exod. 33:20), but “after the touch of the Word, lifting up their eyes they saw Jesus only and no other. Moses, the Law, and Elijah, the prophetic element, became one only with the Gospel of Jesus; and they did not remain three as they formerly were, but the three became one.” *Commentary on Matthew*, 12:43; ed. Erich Klostermann and Ernst Benz, GCS 40, *Origenes Werke*, 10, two parts (Leipzig: Hinrichs Verlag, 1935, 1937) partial trans. in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10. Cf. John Behr, *The Way to Nicaea* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001), 171-2. See also Melito, *On Pascha* 35-45, the first full exposition of “typology”; Alistair C. Stewart, ed. and trans., *Melito of Sardis, On Pascha, with the Fragments of Melito and Other Material Related to the Quartodecimans*, 2nd edn. (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2016).

³⁶ Henry, *Incarnation*, 250.

³⁷ Henry, *I Am the Truth*, 104.

³⁸ Quoted in *I Am the Truth*, 104, modified; Eckhart immediately turns the saying around, and Henry quotes it in both ways in different places; The French at this point in *I Am the Truth* has the first form (“Dieu m’engendre comme lui-même”); the translation gives the second form (“God engenders himself as me”). The saying is from Meister Eckhart’s German Sermon 6 (ed. Quint) or 65 (ed. Pfeiffer); the full context is as follows: “The Father bears his Son in eternity like himself. ‘The Word was with God and God was the Word’: the same in the same nature. I say more: he has borne him in my soul. Not only is she with him and he equally with her, but he is in her: the Father gives birth to his Son in the soul in the very same way as he gives birth to him in eternity and no differently. He must do it whether he likes it or not. The Father begets his Son unceasingly, and furthermore, I say, he begets me as his Son and the same Son. I say even more: not only does he beget me as his Son but he begets me as himself and himself as me, and me as his being and his nature. In the inmost spring, I well up in the Holy Ghost, where there is one life, one being, and one work.” *The Complete Mystical Works of Meister Eckhart*, trans. Maurice O’C. Walshe, revised by Bernard McGinn (New York: Crossroad, 2009), 331. Henry’s earliest, and fullest, engagement with the writings of Eckhart is in *Essence of Manifestation*, § 39-40, pp. 309-35.

³⁹ Henry, *I Am the Truth*, 59-60.

⁴⁰ Henry, *I Am the Truth*, 103.

⁴¹ Henry, *Words of Christ*, 84.

⁴² Henry, *I Am the Truth*, 158.

⁴³ Henry, *I Am the Truth*, 159-60.

⁴⁴ See footnote 23 above.

⁴⁵ Ignatius of Antioch, *Romans*, 4, 6, 2. Ed. and trans. Alistair Stewart, *St Ignatius of Antioch: The Letters* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2013): He writes to the Roman Christians urging them not to impede him in his coming martyrdom: “It is better for me to die in Christ Jesus than to be king over the ends of the earth. I seek him who died for our sake. I desire him who rose for us. Birth-pangs are upon me. Suffer me, my brethren; hinder me not from living, do not wish me to die. ... Suffer me to receive the pure light; when I shall have arrived there, I shall become a human being (ἐκεῖ παραγενόμενος ἄνθρωπος ἔσομαι). Suffer me to follow the example of the passion of my God.” (*Romans*, 6).

⁴⁶ Origen, *Homilies on Jeremiah* 9:4: “The Savior is eternally begotten by the Father, so also, if you possess the “Spirit of adoption” [Rom 8:15] God eternally begets you in

him according to each of your works, each of your thoughts. And being begotten you thereby become an eternally begotten son of God in Christ Jesus” (καὶ αἰεὶ γεννᾶται ὁ σωτὴρ ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς, οὕτως καὶ σὺ ἐὰν ἔχῃς “τὸ τῆς υιοθεσίας,” αἰεὶ γεννᾶ σε ἐν αὐτῷ ὁ θεὸς καθ’ ἕκαστον ἔργον, καθ’ ἕκαστον διανόημα, καὶ γεννώμενος οὕτως γίνῃ αἰεὶ γεννώμενος υἱὸς θεοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ). Ed. Erich Klostermann, rev. P. Nautin, GCS 6, *Origenes Werke* 3, 2nd edn. (Berlin, 1983); ed. and French trans. P. Nautin et al, SC 232, 238 (Paris: Cerf, 1976, 1977); trans. John Clark Smith, FC 97 (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1998).

⁴⁷ Gregory Palamas, *Triad* 3.1.31: ... ὡς καὶ τοὺς αὐτῆς εὐμοιρηκότας δι’ αὐτὴν ἀκτίστους, ἀνάρχους, καὶ ἀπεριγράπτους τελέσαι, καίτοι διὰ τῆ οἰκείαν φύσιν ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων γεγονότας. Ed. Παναγιώτης Κ. Χρήστου, Ὁ Γρηγόριος Παλαμάς: Συγγράμματα, 1, 2nd edn. (Thessalonika: [publisher not identified], 1988).

⁴⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius* 1.270-3. Ed. W. Jaeger, *Contra Eunomium libri*, GNO 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2002 [1921, 1960]). Trans. by Stuart Hall in L. F. Mateo-Seco and J. I. Bastero, *El “Contra Eunomium I”* (Pamplona: Universidad de Navarra, 1988).

⁴⁹ Note the words of Simone Pétrement: “In the Old Testament the world was so narrowly and directly dependent upon God that God himself ... was in turn almost tied up with and chained to the world. ... The image of the cross is an image that liberates. ... *The cross separates God from the world.* If it does not separate him absolutely, at least it puts him at a very great distance. It puts him much further away than the distinction between Creator and creature could do. ... It is indeed, as Paul sees, something that is profoundly new, ‘a scandal to the Jews and folly to the Greeks.’” *A Separate God: The Christian Origins of Gnosticism*, trans. C. Harrison (New York: HarperCollins, 1990), 37.

⁵⁰ The literature on this is vast. A full and excellent survey of the primary literature, from ancient Canaan to the New Testament and apocalyptic literature, together with many further references to modern studies, can be found in Paul B. Sumner, “Visions of the Divine Council in the Hebrew Bible,” PhD thesis (Malibu, CA: Pepperdine University, 1991), several revised chapters of which can be found online at <http://www.hebrew-streams.org/works/hebrew/council.html> (accessed 19 December 2015).

⁵¹ Henry, *Words of Christ*, 124.

⁵² Bryan D. Spinks, *The Sanctus in the Eucharistic Prayer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 206.

⁵³ Henry, *I Am the Truth*, 135.

⁵⁴ Maximus the Confessor, *Ad Thal.* 61 (ed. Laga and Steel, 85): Ταύτην δὲ τὴν δύναμιν— λέγω δὲ τὴν κατὰ φύσιν τοῦ νοῦ πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν ἔφεσιν— ἅμα τῷ γενέσθαι τῇ αἰσθήσει δοῦς ὁ

πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος πρὸς τὰ αἰσθητὰ κατ' αὐτὴν τὴν πρώτην κίνησιν διὰ μέσης τῆς αἰσθήσεως ἔσχε παρὰ φύσιν ἐνεργουμένην τὴν ἡδονήν. Ed. Carl Laga and Carlos Steel, *Maximi Confessoris Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, CCSG 7, 22 (Turnhout: Brepols. 1980, 90)

⁵⁵ *Ad. Thal.*, 61 (ed. Laga and Steel, 95, 99)

⁵⁶ Irenaeus, *haer.* 4.20.7: “The glory of God is the living human being, and the life of the human being is to see God” For a full exploration, see Behr, *John the Theologian*, Chapter 4.

⁵⁷ Henry, *Incarnation*, 229; *Words of Christ*, 85.

⁵⁸ Henry, *I Am the Truth*, 100.

⁵⁹ Henry, *Incarnation*, 16.

⁶⁰ Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*, 2nd edn. (London: SCM Press, 2001 [1987]), 244: “Rather paradoxically, the denial of a ‘history’ of transactions in God focuses attention on the history of God with us in the world: God has no *story* but that of Jesus of Nazareth and the covenant of which he is the seal. It is a matter of historical fact at least that the Nicene *verus Deus* was the stimulus to a clarification of the *verus homo* in the century and a half after the council: the Word of God is the condition of there being a human identity which is the ministering, crucified and risen saviour, Jesus Christ; but the existence of Jesus is not an episode in the biography of the Word. It remains obstinately—and crucially—a fact of our world and our world’s limits.”

⁶¹ Henry, *Incarnation*, 16.

⁶² As for instance Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 404 (italics original): “Those who deny that ‘we’ in ‘we have seen his glory’ (1:14) are the eyewitnesses correctly point out that to ‘see his glory’ cannot refer merely to the sight of Jesus with the physical eyes that all who came into contact with Jesus had. However, this does not mean that it has no relationship to such empirical contact with Jesus. The preceding context of this statement reads: “The Word became flesh and lived among us...” Whether the ‘us’ in this case are humanity in general or the eyewitnesses in particular, there is undoubted reference here to the physical presence of the Word in the midst of physical humanity. In this context, to ‘see his glory’ must surely be to recognize his divine glory *in his physical presence*.” Likewise for John 2:11: “The glory was revealed—and therefore seen—then and there, in a named place where something happened” (Ibid. 405).

⁶³ Henry, *Incarnation*, 17.

⁶⁴ Athanasius *Inc.* 15-16; Henry, *Incarnation*, 17, 258. Cf. John Behr, *The Nicene Faith*, 2 vols. Formation of Christian Theology, 2 (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary

Press, 2004), 1.198-200. It should be noted that when he comes to deal with the resurrection, Athanasius does not even mention the resurrectional appearances as related in the Gospels, but rather focuses on those who are now his body, taking up the faith of the cross: they are his body.

⁶⁵ Henry, *Incarnation*, 17.

⁶⁶ Henry, *Incarnation*, 11.

⁶⁷ Henry, *Incarnation*, 18.

⁶⁸ Henry, *Incarnation*, 14.

⁶⁹ Cf. Behr, *John the Theologian*, Chapter 3, treating John 6, and Chapter 5, analyzing the Prologue as precisely a “paschal hymn.”

⁷⁰ Henry, *Words of Christ*, 62 trans. mod.

⁷¹ Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 1.23. Origen, *Commentary on John*, 1.23. Ed. Erwin Preuschen, GCS 10, *Origenes Werke* 4, (Leipzig, Hinrichs, 1903); trans. R. E. Heine, FC 80, 89 (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1989, 1993).