

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

THE CALL AND THE GIFTED IN CHRISTOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE:  
A CONSIDERATION OF BRIAN ROBINETTE'S CRITIQUE OF JEAN-LUC MARION

In his recent article, 'A Gift to Theology? Jean-Luc Marion's 'Saturated Phenomena' in Christological Perspective', Brian Robinette has critiqued Marion's phenomenology for confining theology to a one-sided approach to Christology, one that stresses only the passive, mystical reception of Christ. To correct this imbalance, Robinette brings Marion into dialogue with those more active Christologies or 'prophetic-ethical' liberation theologies of Gustavo Gutierrez, Johann Baptist Metz and others that stress a life-praxis focused on confronting evil and suffering. In this essay I am arguing that Robinette has not fully developed the 'logic' of Marion's phenomenology of the 'call and the gifted', in which both a passive and an active element are operative. I explore more fully that very dynamic phenomenological process of the call-and-the-gifted as developed in Marion's work *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*. Once viewed in Christological perspective, and especially in light of Christ's death and resurrection, Marion's phenomenology entails an ethical trope consistent with the mission of Christ as rendered in Scriptural revelation, and thus the gap between Marion's work and the prophetic-ethical theologies of Gutierrez and Baptist Metz becomes narrowed.

## I. THE MYSTICAL AND THE PROPHETICAL-ETHICAL POLES

In a recent article Brian Robinette offers a trenchant critique of Jean-Luc Marion's concept of 'saturated phenomena' in relation to Christology.<sup>1</sup> Invoking the rich tradition of both the mystical and the prophetic-ethical poles within the Christian tradition, Robinette elaborates a Christology that accounts for not only the joy and contemplative peace we experience in an encounter with the living Christ but also for the ethical responsibility we are called to when confronted with the profound suffering and evil of this world. These are, respectively, the passive and active poles of Christian performance. The latter pole is the type of theology that has been so celebrated in contemporary trends of liberation theology as well as in modern Catholic theology exemplified by theologians such as Johann Baptist Metz, Gustavo Gutierrez, Edward Schillebeeckx and David Tracy.

Throughout the course of the article, Robinette brings Marion into conversation with these theologians in order to show an imbalance in Marion's understanding of saturated phenomena. In particular he believes that Marion's phenomenology of givenness emphasizes the more mys-

tical, contemplative experiences of saturated phenomena in which one waits to simply receive the gift of God's love – the passive pole of Christology. In this way, Robinette argues that Marion's phenomenology of saturated phenomena stands in need of correction by Christology's active pole.<sup>2</sup>

In response to the above interpretation of Marion, I argue that Marion's phenomenology of givenness in fact offers resources to account for the prophetic-ethical pole of Christian praxis. In particular I will argue that the doctrines of the call (*l'appel*) and the gifted (*l'adonné*)<sup>3</sup> in Marion represent something akin to passive and active poles in Christology, respectively; and as a result, the 'call' and the 'gifted' form inseparable poles within his thought. It is precisely the divorcing of these concepts that led Robinette to mistake Marion's project as one-sided.<sup>4</sup>

To build my argument, I shall first outline more fully shortcomings of Robinette's exposition of the 'call' in Marion and then develop a more thorough analysis of the 'logic' of the 'call and the gifted.' In the last section, by situating the 'call and the gifted' in the domain of Christology and Scripture, I will consider how a phenomenology of givenness can offer theology an active, prophetic-ethical mode of praxis.

## II. THE LOGIC OF THE 'CALL AND THE GIFTED': INSEPERABLE POLES

Robinette adduces several examples within Marion's work that illustrate the nature and function of the 'call'.<sup>5</sup> He considers this concept as a focus point in Marion's project, one which reflects a passive, uniquely Johannine mystical sensibility, or a 'contemplative letting be'.<sup>6</sup> He is also careful to note the Levinasian influences on Marion in this respect, and therefore the ethical possibilities latent in his work.<sup>7</sup> According to Robinette:

In his (not always uncritical) adoption of Levinas' thought, Marion asserts that to be a 'me' is to respond to a call or a summons . . . The contemplative 'letting be' in the aesthetic encounter is isomorphic with the 'letting be' of the Other – not as indifference, but as radical receptivity to his/her self-disclosure and call. Just as beautiful phenomenality invites a 'living into' beyond representation, so does the originality of the Other call me to a praxis of hospitality and responsibility.<sup>8</sup>

Clearly Robinette situates the ethical possibilities in Marion's phenomenology within the domain of the passive. But one would think that in drawing out the influence of the Levinas, a philosopher noted for retaining an active ethical project,<sup>9</sup> Robinette would have also explored the more *active* ethical dimension of Marion's phenomenology of the 'call' – namely its inseparable relationship with the 'gifted'.<sup>10</sup>

To separate these two poles within Marion's phenomenology is tantamount to separating the mystical from the prophetic-ethical pole in Christological discourse. That Marion highlights the interplay between the passive and active is suggested not only in a recent essay of his but also, and here most systematically, in *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*.<sup>11</sup> On only one occasion does Robinette bring into focus this relationship, which results in an underdeveloped description of the dynamic interplay between the 'call' and the 'gifted'.<sup>12</sup> As a result, Robinette does not quite incorporate the balancing effect of the 'gifted' (*l'adonné*) within Marion's phenomenology.

I suggest, in contrast to Robinette, that a much more lively, active and prophetic type of charity is operative in Marion's phenomenology. Yet this type of prophetic charity can be thematized only once the 'gifted' has taken its rightful place alongside the 'call'. In book V of *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*,<sup>13</sup> Marion develops in

great detail the nature of the relationship of the 'call' and the 'gifted'. In particular, §26 and §28 represent especially fertile discussions, and it is to these sections that we now turn.

In §26, entitled 'To Receive One's Self from What Gives Itself', Marion introduces the nature and function of the 'gifted' and its interrelationship with the 'call'. As a rigorous phenomenologist, Marion describes how the 'subject' is born, how it 'receives itself from the given phenomenon and from it alone'.<sup>14</sup> The process of receiving intensifies when one goes beyond experiencing events of near-zero or poor intuition. Even phenomena that are merely adequate, meeting exactly our capabilities of perception do not properly reorient to us toward the phenomenal world; we still seek to master and constitute it as Husserl<sup>15</sup> and Kant<sup>16</sup> argued, setting up objects, other humans and ultimately God as our idols who only reflect our own preconditions for arrival.<sup>17</sup> Only by receiving saturating phenomena, or those experiences that overwhelm and surprise us, do our experiences of reality become radically altered.

As one encounters a saturated phenomenon, the givenness of phenomena requires a whole new vocabulary for philosophical reflection, according to Marion. With the impact of the saturated phenomenon, 'the gift will be radicalized into a *call*, and the receiver into the *gifted*'.<sup>18</sup> In opposition to phenomena poor or adequate in intuition, the 'call' as a 'saturated phenomenon' arises against the flow of the intention, decentering and countering the gaze of the receiver, and as such 'inverts the intentionality and submits the receiver to the presence of the call'.<sup>19</sup> From this intense encounter with a 'saturated phenomenon', the 'gifted'<sup>20</sup> is born, 'whom the call makes the successor to the 'subject,' as what receives itself entirely from what it receives'.<sup>21</sup> Yet, this relationship of the 'call and the gifted' becomes ever more complicated with the introduction of the 'delay' of the response.

In §28, Marion takes his cue from a statement in Jean-Louis Chrétien's book, *The Call and the Response*: 'All radical thought of the call implies that the call be heard only in the response'.<sup>22</sup> There is 'the delay of the responsal' which, for Marion, emphasizes two facts: first the 'call' must be responded to, and second, the 'call' must have specifically a 'gifted' to receive it. If either of these conditions is not met, the 'call' will be forever delayed. However, most (if not all) phenomena are simply delayed and eventually manifest themselves onto the stage of the 'gifted'. A delay always occurs because, 'the call can be heard only in the response', that is, after the fact. Furthermore, according to Marion, delays are inevitable because we enter the world where the 'call' always already

precedes our response. Thus no hearing can in advance outline a horizon of manifestation for it.<sup>23</sup> But how does this 'call', free from all predetermined conditions, give its identity to the 'gifted'? What does this dynamic interchange between the 'call and the gifted' look like?

The delay in the response renders explicit the utter dependence of the identity of the 'gifted' on the 'call', as the former fully receives its identity from the latter: 'the gifted is defined entirely in terms of givenness because he is completely achieved as soon as he surrenders unconditionally to what gives itself – and first of all to the saturated phenomenon that calls him.'<sup>24</sup> By surrendering completely to the saturated phenomena, the 'gifted' receives itself as well as aiding (without altering) the phenomena to arrive into reality. In other words, Marion labels the 'gifted' (e.g. what comes after the 'subject' or the 'I' with various titles, but the most frequent are the stage, the prism or the filter through which saturated phenomena are enabled to burst forth into reality.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, the 'call' is dependent on the 'gifted' for it be able to come into phenomenality; in fact Marion thinks the 'gifted' possess such power and importance that he states, 'the gifted, inasmuch as finite, has nothing less than the charge of opening or closing the entire flux of phenomenality.'<sup>26</sup> In short, the 'call' is dependent on the 'gifted', which functions as a 'mechanism of a prism' through which the call arrives into phenomenality; while on the other hand, the 'gifted' is dependent on the 'call' because it is through its impact that the 'gifted' receives himself – the 'gifted' receives himself from what gives itself.<sup>27</sup>

Yet, all talk of whether saturated phenomena will enter into reality or not, or whether the delay will be deferred forever or not, seems a moot point in light of how important the 'call' is to our identity as 'gifted' ones. The 'call' constitutes one as a 'gifted' or receiver of saturated phenomena, which literally endows the 'gifted' with his identity. No longer does the 'I' or the ego constitute the identities of phenomena but just the opposite – one is constituted by one's encounter with saturating moments that surprise, decenter and invert one's intentionality. Since one is preceded by a 'call', one cannot avoid nor help but respond to it: 'The meaning invested by the responsal can be chosen, decided, arrived by accident, but the responsal is nothing like an optional act, an arbitrary choice, or a chance – in it we are, we live, and we receive ourselves.'<sup>28</sup> In other words, though the 'call' may be deferred or delayed temporarily, its power cannot be stopped from irrupting onto the scene of phenomenality via the prism of the 'gifted'.

Ontology, for Marion, is unambiguously relational, as evidenced by the ongoing interchange between the 'call and the gifted'. Marion, in fact, confers priority to relation as most constitutive of one's 'gifted-ness' over and above substance, will, consciousness or even being. John Manoussakis invites a similar interpretation of Marion's 'gifted' one:

Marion's phenomenology confronts the problem of individuation and demands a solution by giving priority to relation over nature, consciousness, being, and existence. Indeed, the gifted (l'adonné) is called to existence as a response to a call (l'interloqué) that calls it to being: '*Young man, I say to you, arise!*' The summon of the call, the resulting surprise, the call itself and its facticity – this fourfold of the phenomenology of givenness – imply a self given to oneself by an origin that precedes and predates it, and at the same time the paradox of a self who, in receiving itself, precedes also and predates itself. For this phenomenological account, therefore, the *principium individuationis* is the Other, the personal Other who, in relation with me, gives me to myself, a relational selfhood, in other words, a *prosopon*.<sup>29</sup>

For Christians, Christ's death and resurrection signifies the 'call' or the 'saturated phenomenon' that impacts us prior to the constitution of the 'I', transforming us into the *gifted* and giving 'me' to 'myself'. One's selfhood is not simply derived from the otherness of the Other, but of Christ himself.<sup>30</sup> This markedly Christological view of the 'call and the gifted' is charged with prophetic-ethical or active ethical implications. Marion's phenomenology manifests a style of thinking thus not confined to mystical, passive receptivity of Christ but rather one characterized by the dynamic and relational drama of the 'gifted' as the charitable missionary, servant and martyr who responds to and receives himself from the 'call' of Christ.

### III. THE CALL AND THE GIFTED IN CHRISTOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

In keeping with Robinette's analysis, we can frame the 'call and the gifted' more precisely around the question of Christology. The major burden of his article, as I noted, is to widen the scope of what constitutes saturated phenomena; Christ *is* the saturated phenomenon par excellence, yet Christ

does not exhaust all the possibilities of saturation. Robinette's analysis intends to correct an imbalance in Marion's phenomenology, namely that Marion disallows any serious consideration of negative saturated phenomena such as suffering or evil. So, both Christ *and* suffering saturate our experience, surprising and overwhelming the 'I'. This is precisely the moment where the performative life-praxis of Jesus of Nazareth figures so prominently for Robinette as a source of resistance to the realities of shocking pain, suffering and evil so prevalent in our world.<sup>31</sup> The life of Jesus is the locus of the prophetic-ethical pole of Christology; and it is this recovery of the life of Jesus that Robinette finds underdeveloped in Marion's ethical work.

One cannot deny the force of Robinette's argument on this point. If one were to skim through Marion's corpus, one would find little sustained consideration of the saturating effects of evil and, in turn, an absence of any sort of active ethical hygiene prescribed for overcoming those effects.

While this point must be conceded to Robinette, I think there are two moments in his overall argument that do not obtain. First, as mentioned above, he could have proffered a more comprehensive analysis of Marion's phenomenology of the 'call and the gifted' or of the passive and active dimensions in Marion's thought; and second, he could have opened up his Christology to encompass a fuller examination of the whole of Christ's mission. While Robinette provides a 'thick' description of the life-praxis of Christ, he privileges the life of Christ over and above the death and resurrection, and thus neglects the active, ethical implications these two pivotal events evoke when read phenomenologically.<sup>32</sup>

Before I move to a phenomenological read of the paschal events as recorded in Scripture, I want to make clear that I am developing Marion in a direction that has been dealt with in only a preliminary way in his own work. In both Marion's theological and philosophical works, the major theological questions he addresses are two: the possibility of revelation in philosophical discourse and the possibility of thinking or speaking about God as a gift of Love outside the constraints of Being. In neither of these areas does he systematically explore the meaning of the death and resurrection in view of ethical discourse;<sup>33</sup> I am therefore developing his work beyond its present articulation.

On the other hand, Marion's work suggests that theologians read all of scripture with a phenomenological eye. Hence, it seems that it is not without some warrant to interpret the death and resurrection as saturated phenomena.<sup>34</sup> In en-

couraging theologians to read Revelation he asks why theologians, 'do not undertake, or undertake so little (Hans Urs von Balthasar remains here insufficient and exceptional), to read phenomenologically the events of revelation recorded in the Scriptures, in particular the New Testament, instead of always privileging ontic, historic, or semiotic hermeneutics?'<sup>35</sup> In the ensuing paragraphs, I attempt two tasks. First I read scriptural events of the death and resurrection phenomenologically. Second, because I conclude that the death and resurrection constitute extremely rich examples of saturated phenomena, I show that they shall thus carry with them clear active, ethical implications in light of the logic of the 'call and the gifted'. To a fuller explication of saturating effects of the paschal events we now turn.<sup>36</sup>

Space permits me only to survey quickly the four characteristics of saturated phenomena. The four characteristics Marion lays out are: (1) invisible according to quantity or 'unforeseeable'; (2) unbearable according to quality; (3) absolute according to relation or without analogy; and (4) irregardable according to modality.

*Invisible* or invisible according to quantity, means for Marion, that a phenomena is unforeseeable and thus resists prediction.<sup>37</sup> This is the surprising and amazing factor involved in the saturating experience Christ's death and resurrection. Therefore, read phenomenologically, the death of Christ shocks and surprises, leaving the Apostles stunned. On only three occasions did Christ foretell his death, but this episode remained too unforeseeable for it to register with the Apostles (Luke 18.24). The resurrection also stunned and amazed. One only needs to recall the women who found the empty tomb, realized that Christ was risen and ran to inform Peter and the other Apostles (Luke 24). When Peter hears the news of the resurrection, he felt shock and amazement, prompting him to run to the tomb to see for himself (Luke 24. 1–12). Doubting Thomas also evidenced the impact of the shocking reality of the resurrection of Christ, for Christ had to actually appear and challenge Thomas face-to-face before he would believe (John 20.25–28).

The second characteristic saturated phenomena according to Marion, *unbearable according to quality*, determines the 'bedazzling' effect of phenomena that saturates the 'gifted' to the point of glory. The saturated phenomena leave nothing more than a trace of their impact after withdrawal; in other words, only a vestige of their power remain as they streaks across the 'gifted' with a glory too great and too weighty to be born.<sup>38</sup> The glory of the death and resurrection reflect this bedazzling quality, and it is on display at the moment of Christ's death on the Cross when the

earth could no longer bear the glory of Christ: the splitting of rocks, the tremors of an earthquake, the tearing of the curtain in the temple and the opening of tombs all show this (Matt. 27. 51–53). Also, the glory of the death blinded and bedazzled those who disbelieve according to Saint Paul, as ‘they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God’ (2 Corinthians 4. 4). The resurrection exhibited its own bedazzling glory on the Road to Emmaus: the disciples were blinded by the glory of his resurrected body, and the moment Christ became visible, he paradoxically disappeared (Luke 24. 16–32). This event suggests that even though Jesus walked with him and they could see him they could not recognize him as Jesus. They thought he was little more than a wise man or prophet with great insight into the Scriptures; yet once Christ’s real identity burst into phenomenality at the end of Luke 24, he overwhelmed the apostles – the weight of the glory pressed on the hearts of the apostles until eventually he become too much to bear, bedazzling them such to the point that Luke recorded them saying, ‘did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road . . .’ (Luke 24.32).

The third characteristic is that saturated phenomena arrive as *absolute according to relation*, or without analogy.<sup>39</sup> This characteristic perhaps describes the central argument of the book of Hebrews regarding the death and sacrifice of Christ: it was once for all, without analogy and thus the yearly sacrifice of the goat or ram no longer obtained grace for the New Covenant (Hebrews 9). Similarly, the resurrection represents an event without analogy, and especially the resurrected body, which defied all modes of normal embodiment with its disappearing and reappearing, walking through walls and disguising its physical appearance. No matter which way or from which horizon the death and resurrection are approached, one cannot possibly contain, fully perceive or fully tolerate these events. Marion writes, ‘Then, not only no single horizon, but no combination of horizons, could successfully tolerate the absoluteness of the phenomenon, precisely because it gives itself as absolute, that is to say, free from all analogy with common-law phenomena and from all predetermination by a network of relations, with neither precedent nor antecedent in the already seen or foreseeable.’<sup>40</sup>

The fourth and final aspect of saturated phenomena is *irregardable according to modality*. This feature communicates the prior status of saturated phenomena to objectification. Saturated phenomena possess an almost shapeless appearance, when compared to that of objects, and thus they resist objecthood. For Marion, ‘the saturated phenomenon must be determined as a nonobjec-

tive or, more exactly, nonobjectifiable phenomenon’.<sup>41</sup> The death, though considered an historic event with objective content, also reversed objecthood, especially when Saint Paul told the Corinthians that, ‘we always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body’ (II Corinthians 4. 9). A few lines subsequent Saint Paul informed the Corinthians of the similar power of the resurrection: ‘Because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence’ (II Corinthians 4.14). How can we consider the death of Christ an ‘object’ if we are to carry it in our bodies? How can we consider the resurrection of Christ an ‘object’ if it functions to raise one into his presence? These paschal events, as designated here, emerge as nonobjectifiable phenomena that cannot be put solely into language of objecthood. They are saturated phenomena. What of the ethical implications of this phenomenological hermeneutic?

One might object that I am undermining the methodological rigor of Marion’s phenomenology by *naming* the death and resurrection as saturated phenomena. I do realize that the ‘call’ always remains anonymous according to Marion, and only after the fact, after a delay, are we able to venture to name the ‘call’. It is by this venturing forth in faith to which the following is devoted.<sup>42</sup>

I shall here only suggest how the death and resurrection may be oriented within the domain of the ‘call and the gifted’. Christians are considered the ‘gifted’ or the receivers of the ‘call’ of the death and resurrection. Here the ‘call’ of the death and resurrection represent the ‘impact’ of the saturated phenomenon that the Christian, as the ‘gifted’ one, feels and responds to.

The ‘call’ functions literally to call the ‘gifted’. It does so continually and always originating from itself, thereby preceding the ‘gifted’ at all times; in other words, the ‘call’ is eternal for Marion, as I indicated in the previous section. Thrown into a world of ‘calls’, the ‘gifted’, next, hears a ‘call’ and responds to it. As this occurs, ‘the call shows itself in the response’.<sup>43</sup> Once the ‘call’ is received by the ‘gifted’, the ‘call’ emerges in and through the ‘gifted’ endowing it with its identity: ‘what gives itself (the call) becomes a phenomenon – shows itself – in and through what responds to it and thus puts it on stage (the gifted)’.<sup>44</sup>

In Christological terms, the prophetic-ethical pole manifests itself. The eternal ‘call’ of the death and resurrection (remember the Lamb of Christ was slain from the foundation of the world, e.g., Revelation 13. 8) continually calls the individual to receive it. Once an individual feels and receives this ‘call’, that receiver converts to a ‘gifted’ who thus

finds his identity in Christ's mission. The 'gifted' becomes Christ in a sense, and is thereafter named a Christian. The Christian dies with Christ to his sinful urges to exact evil and is resurrected with Christ to life and given the power to live a prophetic-ethical mission. The Christian as 'gifted', therefore, seeks to further allow the 'call' of the passion to manifest itself in his life-praxis. The givenness of the death and resurrection, thus, from this phenomenological reading, can be thought of as a 'call' that manifests itself in the life of the Christian as a 'gifted', moving the Christian to pattern his life on the gift of the death and resurrection. It is here at this moment we can reclaim what Robinette thought was lost in Marion: the active dimension or the prophetic-ethical life praxis of Christian spirituality.

The death and resurrection pierces the Christian's side through its impact, empowering and strengthening him to resist, as Christ did, the imperialistic ambitions of all those power structures in the world reprehensible for inflicting evil and pain on the marginal. In receiving Christ's death and resurrection as a saturated phenomenon, we become preeminently 'gifted' as Christians, 'whose function consists in receiving what is immeasurably given to him, and whose privilege is confined to the fact that he is himself received from what he receives.'<sup>45</sup>

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Let us, in conclusion, return to Robinette's concern for a life-praxis that confronts evil. He argues that Marion's rendering of the saturated phenomenon emphasizes a passive, Johannine sensibility mostly to the exclusion of an active, prophetic-ethical aspect which calls Christians to fight evil and assuage suffering. To compliment Marion's passive reception of Christ, Robinette brings Marion into dialogue with the very active, political and ethical theologies of Gustavo Gutierrez, Johann Baptist Metz and Edward Schille-beeck, among others.

While any theologian or philosopher can benefit from conversation partners who offer a strong prophetic-ethical voice, Marion has constructed a phenomenology adequate enough for the theologian to develop an active ethics. In light of Marion's doctrine of the 'saturated phenomenon', the theologian reads the life, death and resurrection phenomenologically, as a phenomenon that *gifts* the Christian with the identity of Christ, *calling* him take up his Cross and live as Christ lived. Christ can not only be contemplated and enjoyed in the mystical, Johannine sense, Christ also saturates and overwhelms the 'I', transform-

ing it into a 'gifted' named Christian. It is in this way that I hope the wide gap Robinette sees between Marion and a Gutierrez or a Baptist Metz has become considerably narrowed.

#### Notes

1 Brain Robinette, 'A Gift to Theology? Jean-Luc Marion's 'Saturated Phenomena' in Christological Perspective', *Heythrop Journal* 48 no.1 (2007), pp. 86–108.

2 John Milbank has recently leveled a criticism that also critiques the absence of ethics in Marion, but in more unequivocal terms than Robinette. Milbank writes of Marion's conception of the gift: 'For this reduced gift which is not identifiable object, derived from no known source, and passes to no known willing recipient, can only be 'recognized' in a fashion that can make no conceivable difference to actual ethical life.' See *Being Reconciled: Ontology and Pardon*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 156. I must demur from this characterization of Marion's phenomenology of givenness. He does allow for the possibility of an ethical, theological and Trinitarian rendering of the gift but simply refrains from developing this possibility coming from 'revealed theology' within the scope of his philosophical project. Marion writes, 'Revealed theology could, on the other hand, be defined as a thought of the gift without reciprocity because without transcendent condition external to it. I cannot, however, evoke it here – first, out of respect of the distinction of disciplines and the fact that I stick strictly to philosophy, and above all, because to unravel this thought of the gift as such, it would be necessary to engage in an examination of Trinitarian theology, outside the scope of phenomenology as well as of metaphysics.' See Marion, *Being Given*, pp. 114–15.

3 For a clear exposition of the 'gifted' or *l'adonné* see Kevin Hart, 'Introduction' in *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*. ed., Kevin Hart (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), esp. pp.1–3 and p. 16. For a sustained, and to my mind accurate, reading of both the call and the gifted, in which the gifted is raised to the status of both Creator and Savior, or active agent and passive receiver, see Thomas A. Carlson, 'Blindness and the Decision to See: On Revelation and Reception in Jean-Luc Marion.' in *Counter-Experiences*, pp. 153–179. Much of my argument runs parallel to Carlson's essay.

4 One caveat: I do recognize that Marion's active ethics take on an inflection of charitableness that shrinks from the outright political overtones of a Baptist Metz or Gutierrez, or even of the ethical urgency of Levinas. Marion's ethics instead represents the voice of the martyr, a kind of activity akin to Martin Luther King Jr., for example. Consequently, Marion's phenomenology of givenness is surely less militant in the way it overcomes evil than most liberation theologies. Yet, despite the disparity in the means of 'overcoming' the saturating phenomena of evil between these two disparate intellectual persuasions, Marion's position does not constitute a banality in the face of evil. On the contrary, the 'call' of God demands that Christians assume the identity of Christ as a 'gifted', advancing the

Kingdom of Christ over against the evil and suffering of the Kingdom of Satan.

5 Robinette, 'A Gift to Theology?', esp., pp. 91-2 and 95-8.

6 Robinette, 'A Gift to Theology?', p. 92 and 96.

7 Robinette, 'A Gift to Theology?', p. 91 and especially p.97.

8 Robinette, 'A Gift to Theology?', pp. 91-2.

9 For a thorough introduction to the active, 'prophetic' nature of Levinas' ethics, see Jeffrey Kosky, *Levinas and the Philosophy of Religion* (2001), especially part I.

10 While Robinette is right to acknowledge Marion's appropriation of Levinas, one must also stress the fact that Marion explicitly removes his project from the ethically 'accusative' gestures manifest in Levinas. Whereas Levinas stresses a kenotic living-for the 'Other,' Marion seems content to describe ethics as both 'active' but also profoundly passive and receptive in nature. We come to be an ethical being through our reception of the Other, which is a distinct development, not a contradiction of Levinas. In other words, it may be true Marion develops his Levinasian heritage, but he does not entirely subvert it. A passage from *Being Given* helps to underscore this: 'We no longer understand ourselves, in the nominative case (intending the object – Husserl), nor in the genitive (of Being – Heidegger), nor even in the accusative (accused by the Other – Levinas), but in terms of the dative: I receive *my self* from the call that gives me to myself before giving me anything whatsoever.' Marion also devotes an essay in *Prolegomena to Charity*, 'The Intentionality of Love', to developing Levinas in a similar direction. See *Being Given*, p. 269 and *Prolegomena to Charity*, trans., Stephen E. Lewis (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), pp. 71–101. Also, see the following excellent resources for the difference between Levinas and Marion on ethics: Christina Gschwandtner, 'Ethics, Eros, or Caritas? Levinas and Marion on Individuation of the Other' *Philosophy Today* 49 no.1 (2005), pp. 70–87; Anselm Kim, 'Naming the Unnameable God: Levinas, Marion and Derrida' *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* 60 no.4 (2006), pp. 99–116; Derek J. Morrow, 'The Love 'Without Being' that Opens (to) Distant Part Two: From the Icon of Distance to the Distance of the Icon in Marion's Phenomenology of Love' *Heythrop Journal* 46 no.4 (2005), pp.493–511.

11 Marion has defended himself against the claim that the interchange of the 'call and the gifted' is a simply passive one. Marion argues that it possesses both a passive and an active pole, the point for which I am precisely arguing. For Marion's more recent essay in defense of the active and passive dimensions of the gifted, see Jean-Luc Marion, 'The Banality of Saturation', trans. by Jeffrey Kosky in *Counter-Experiences: Reading Jean-Luc Marion*, ed., Kevin Hart (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), pp. 385–389.

12 Robinette quotes Marion: 'For as face, he faces me, imposes on me to face up to him as he for whom I must respond . . . I have therefore received (and suffered) a call [*un appel*]. The face makes an appeal [*un appel*]; it therefore calls me forth as gifted'. See Robinette, 'A Gift to Theology?', p. 91. The Marion quote is from *Being Given*, p.267.

13 For an excellent summary and review of the whole book, *Being Given*, see John Caputo, review of *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, by Jean-Luc Marion, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 74 no.4 (2006), pp. 986–989.

14 Marion, *Being Given*, p. 262.

15 Marion's basic thesis can be considered at many points a direct inversion of Husserl's understanding of givenness. See *Being Given*, pp.11–14; 184–192. Also, for an argument that critiques Marion's understanding of givenness in Husserl by showing that there are resources in Husserl for the 'excess' of the givenness of objects see, James K. A. Smith, 'Respect and Donation: A Critique of Marion's Critique of Husserl.' *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 71 no.4 (Fall 1997), pp. 523–528.

16 In addition to Husserl, Marion is also consciously setting up his phenomenology of the 'gifted' in direct contrast to Kant. He writes, 'Kant's determination of the transcendental I was and still is, even in its aporias (§ 26), the counter-model of the gifted.' See *Being Given*, p. 278.

17 Marion, *Being Given*, pp. 189–199.

18 Marion, *Being Given*, p. 266.

19 Marion, *Being Given*, p. 267.

20 Marion also employs the term 'interloqué' as the category that describes the receiver just before he becomes the gifted. Marion defines the interloqué as the 'addressee' or 'the one taken aback or surprised.' See Marion, *Being Given*, pp. 266-68; and esp. fn.28, p. 370. Yet, after the receiver encounters a saturated phenomenon, he becomes the 'gifted' the *l'adonné* or the 'unto whom.' See Marion, *Being Given*, p. 287.

21 Marion, *Being Given*, p. 268.

22 Marion, *Being Given*, p. 287. Marion takes his quote from the Chretien's work, *L'appel et lat response* (Paris: 1992), p. 42.

23 Marion, *Being Given*, p. 287. See also this following illustrative example: 'In effect, no only am I born as if from a call, but this call even precedes my birth, which constitutes only its first responsal. Before my birth, words were said around me and I heard them without understanding; even before my conception, words were exchanged by others, words ranging from joy to violence and from which I no doubt come.' See Marion, *Being Given*, p.290.

24 Marion, *Being Given*, pp. 282-83.

25 Marion names the gifted or *l'adonné* also the screen, the filter or the prism through which the call manifests itself into phenomenality. For a fuller explication of this, see Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given*, 264-65; 287; and *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*, trans. by Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2002), pp. 50-52.

26 Marion, *Being Given*, p. 307.

27 Marion, *Being Given*, p. 296.

28 Marion, *Being Given*, p. 288.

29 John Panteleimon Manoussakis, *God After Metaphysics: A Theological Aesthetic* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007), pp. 41–42.

30 Of course Christ is very 'distant' or 'other' with regard to our experience of him. Just as there remains an eternal distance between the Father and the Son so is there one maintained between the human encounter with the living Christ. See, Marion *Idol and the Distance: Five*

*Studies*, trans., Thomas A. Carlson (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), pp.111–114; 198–253.

31 Robinette, 'A Gift to Theology?', p. 103.

32 I realize that the in Christology the death and resurrection must not be isolated from the life of Jesus Christ. If one were to refer to Anselm's classic work on the atonement, *Cur Deus Homo?*, one would find that the perfection of the life of Christ was just as necessary as the death and resurrection for making right the injured honor of God. What I am stressing at this point is simply what was not emphasized in Robinette's article: the death and resurrection.

33 Though it is not without precedent to talk about the death and resurrection as illustrative of his phenomenology of givenness, Marion offers little reflection on their significance. For his brief discussions of Christ's death and resurrection, see *God Without Being: Hors Texte*, trans., Thomas Carlson (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 147 and 174; *The Idol and Distance*, pp. 127–28 and 174–77.

34 Marion distinguishes between the disciplines of phenomenology and theology. See fn. 4 above. Yet at the same time, Marion encourages revelation to be read in a phenomenological manner, concluding that if Christ as revelation were to come he would descend in the form of a 'saturated phenomenon'. For a defense of the legitimacy of reading theological themes in a phenomenological manner, see Merold Westphal, 'Vision and Voice: Phenomenology and Theology in the Work of Jean-Luc Marion', *International Journal of Philosophy of Religion* 60, (2006): pp. 117–137; and Jeffrey L. Kosky, 'Philosophy of Religion and Return to Phenomenology in Jean-Luc Marion: From God Without Being to Being Given', *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 78, (Fall 2004), pp. 629–647.

35 Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*, p. 29.

36 Merold Westphal has demonstrated how the transfiguration of Christ can be read as a saturated phenomenon. See 'Transfiguration as Saturated Phenomenon', *Journal of Philosophy and Scripture* 1 no.1 (Fall 2003), pp. 26–35.

37 Marion, *Being Given*, pp. 199–202.

38 Marion, *Being Given*, pp. 202–206.

39 Marion, *Being Given*, pp. 206–209.

40 Marion, *Being Given*, p. 211.

41 Marion, *Being Given*, p. 213.

42 Marion does indeed offer a possibility of naming the anonymous call from the perspective of paternity. This happens in such a way that while the call is named the anonymity of the call is not compromised. Marion explains it thus: 'The name by which the child is called is only the father's response to a nameless call. The anonymity of the call (and of the child) neither contradicts nor interdicts paternity, but constitutes its terrain, stakes, and condition of possibility. the father will therefore be born into his own paternity to the extent that he responds to the child's anonymous call with a naming response. This nomination is laid out in a history: first, the father gives his own name (last name), then the first name (Christian name), both borrowed; next he gives real identity, through word, speech, and language, then through the community, religion, 'Weltanschauung', etc. Continually giving him a name through the indefinite succession of his responses, the father will never annul the anonymity of the initial call enact by the child.' See Marion, *Being Given*, p. 301.

43 Marion, *Being Given*, p. 282.

44 Marion, *Being Given*, p. 287.

45 Marion, *Being Given*, p. 322.

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