

READING SCRIPTURE WITH MOLTSMANN: THE CRY OF DERELICTION AND THE TRINITY¹

Cameron Coombe
University of Otago, Aotearoa New Zealand

ABSTRACT

Jürgen Moltmann's proposals for the doctrine of the Trinity have generated much critical response. His readers have rarely attended, however, to the exegetical basis on which Moltmann establishes his trinitarian interpretation of the cry of dereliction. Those who have contested Moltmann's interpretation of the cry on the basis of Scripture make appeals to Luke and John to rein in the overly Markan shape of Moltmann's doctrine of the Trinity. But these appeals overlook the value of Moltmann's project for a truly canonical doctrine of the Trinity. While Moltmann employs a dubious historical Jesus methodology to establish the theological priority of Mark's passion narrative, this article argues that his doctrine of the Trinity in *The Crucified God* allows readers of Scripture to behold Mark's unique witness to the triune God.

KEYWORDS

Jürgen Moltmann, cry of dereliction, Mark, Trinity, hermeneutics

INTRODUCTION

In Mark 15:34, Jesus cries out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (cf. Matt 27:46).² For Jürgen Moltmann, this cry must hold a central place in Christian theology. As he writes in a later preface to his foundational *The Crucified God* (CG):

1 I thank Otago University Graduate Research School for providing a Postgraduate Publishing Bursary to support this work. I also thank Christopher Holmes for invaluable guidance and feedback on an earlier draft of this article.

2 All scriptural quotations in this article are from the NRSV.

This cry of abandonment is either the end of every theology and every religion, or it is the beginning of a truly Christian theology We want to produce an answer to the question about God with which Christ dies. But he dies with this open question. So a truly Christian theology has to make Jesus' experience of God on the cross the centre of all our ideas about God: that is its foundation.³

Specifically, Moltmann aims to uncover what the cry reveals about the triune God. Such a connection between the two can already be seen in the historical development of the doctrine of the Trinity, which "speaks of God in respect of the incarnation and the death of Jesus and in so doing breaks the spell of the old philosophical concept of God," a concept which the cry has made untenable.⁴ Moltmann's proposals for the doctrine of the Trinity have generated much critical response.⁵ His readers have rarely attended, however, to the exegetical basis on which Moltmann establishes his interpretation of the cry.⁶ Those who have contested Moltmann's interpretation of the cry on the basis of Scripture make appeals to Luke and John to rein in the overly Markan shape of Moltmann's doctrine of the Trinity.⁷

These appeals, however, overlook the value of Moltmann's project for a truly canonical doctrine of the Trinity, one which prioritises the unique theological insights of each biblical witness to the Trinity ahead of any attempt to harmonise tensions between these witnesses. In this case, the cry of dereliction's background in Ps 22 and its narrative context both suggest that although Mark's focus is not on an intra-trinitarian separation between

3 Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, trans. R. A. Wilson and John Bowden (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), x. Henceforth, *CG*.

4 *CG*, 215.

5 See for example Paul D. Molnar, "The Function of the Trinity in Jürgen Moltmann's Ecological Doctrine of Creation," in *Divine Freedom and the Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity: In Dialogue with Karl Barth and Contemporary Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2002), 197–233; Dennis W. Jowers, "The Theology of the Cross as Theology of the Trinity: A Critique of Jürgen Moltmann's Staurocentric Trinitarianism," *Tyndale Bulletin* 52, no. 2 (2001): 245–66.

6 But see Anthony Clarke, *A Cry in the Darkness: The Forsakenness of Jesus in Scripture, Theology, and Experience* (Oxford: Regent's Park College, 2002), 69–72; William Stacy Johnson, "Jesus' Cry, God's Cry, and Ours," in *Lament: Reclaiming Practices in Pulpit, Pew, and Public Square*, ed. Sally A. Brown and Patrick D. Miller (Louisville, KN: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 80–94.

7 Clarke is a notable exception, evaluating Moltmann's interpretation on the basis of Mark. He has also observed the readiness of others to interpret the cry of dereliction on the basis of the other gospels rather than in its narrative context. Clarke, *Cry in the Darkness*, 49–50.

Father and Son, he nonetheless presents a kind of “enmity” (Moltmann) between Father and Son in the Father’s will for the Son’s death and the Son’s reluctance to go to the cross. There is therefore also in the cry of dereliction a kind of separation between Father and Son, as well as the unity of will that Moltmann recognises in the Son’s giving of himself on the cross. While Moltmann employs a dubious historical Jesus methodology to establish the theological priority of Mark’s passion narrative, his doctrine of the Trinity in *CG* allows readers of Scripture to behold Mark’s unique witness to the triune God.

MOLTSMANN’S INTERPRETATION OF THE CRY

Moltmann begins his study of the cry in *CG* at the end of a chapter on Jesus’ death in the context of his life. The gospels show that Jesus can be understood as a “blasphemer” in conflict with the Jewish religious elite and their legalist understanding of the covenant, as well as a “rebel” in conflict with the Roman state and its gods.⁸ But to stop there would be to stop short of a properly theological investigation of the history of Jesus’ death. History must come together with theology in the study of Jesus’ life because the meaning of anything Jesus did can only be properly understood in light of his God and Father. To complete his investigation of Jesus’ death in the context of his life, Moltmann turns to Jesus’ cry on the cross.

Moltmann starts with the claim that Mark’s account “seems to be as near as possible to the historical reality of the death of Jesus.”⁹ This is not, however, to say that Mark has recorded the *ipsissima verba* of the dying Jesus. Mark’s use of Ps 22:1 to interpret the cry “is certainly an interpretation of the church after Easter.”¹⁰ The historical reality is probably something like the content-less cry in Mark 15:37. Nonetheless, the content which Mark gives to the cry captures the essence of the historical reality: “Jesus died with the signs and expressions of a profound abandonment by God.”¹¹ Moltmann argues for the historical priority of Mark’s account on two grounds. First, there is a rawness to Mark’s account which is mitigated by later witnesses. The later manuscript D^B, for example, has Jesus say, “[Why] hast thou reproached [or, taunted] me?”¹² But Moltmann also faults the Gospels of Luke

8 *CG*, 128–45.

9 *CG*, 147.

10 *CG*, 146.

11 *CG*, 147.

12 Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* 2nd ed.; (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 120.

and John for softening the harshness of Mark's witness. Luke underscores Jesus' trust and confidence in his Father, citing Ps 31:5 as Jesus' last words: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46). In John, a victorious Jesus proclaims, "It is finished" (John 19:30). Thus, Moltmann concludes, "the difficult reading of Mark is as close as may be to historical reality."¹³ The second basis for the privileged position of Mark 15:34 in Moltmann's theology is that Jesus' abandonment by God is attested elsewhere in the New Testament. Mark and Matthew anticipate Jesus' abandonment in their portrayals of Gethsemane (Mark 14:32–42; Matt 26:36–46). Further, according to Heb 5:7, Jesus approached his death "with loud cries and tears." Moreover, although he does not make this connection, Moltmann's claim that Paul also interprets Jesus' death in this way implicitly corroborates his argument for the historical priority of Mark's account. Paul's *theologia crucis*, epitomised in his use of the word *paradidōmi*, expresses Jesus' abandonment by his Father.¹⁴

Having established the historical reality of Jesus' abandonment, Moltmann attends to its theological significance. The gospels attest an intimate fellowship between Jesus and his Father, transcending Israel's mediated relationship to God in the covenant. Through his intimate relationship, Jesus proclaimed God's grace and the coming reign of God, demonstrating it in the present through the forgiveness of sins:

But anyone who lived and preached so close to God, his kingdom and his grace, and associated the decision of faith with his own person, could not regard his being handed over to death on the cross as one accursed as a mere mishap, a human misunderstanding or a final trial, but was bound to experience it as rejection by the very God whom he had dared to call "My Father" ... And this, in full consciousness that God is close at hand in his grace, to be abandoned and delivered up to death as one rejected, is the torment of hell.¹⁵

The unparalleled intimacy of Jesus and his Father in life is matched by an unparalleled abandonment and suffering in death.

As such, the meaning of Mark's citation of Ps 22:1 requires clarification. It is not the psalm that governs the interpretation of Christ's abandonment but it is Christ's death that elucidates the meaning of the psalm: "Jesus is not

13 CG, 147.

14 CG, 191, 241–44. Moltmann draws chiefly on Rom 8:32, interpreting this in light of 2 Cor 5:21 and Gal 3:13.

15 CG, 147–48.

making a claim upon the faithfulness of the God of Israel to his covenant,” but “he is laying claim upon the faithfulness of his Father to himself.”¹⁶ It is on the cross that this faithfulness is compromised. The implications here, then, go far beyond any that might be found in a non-christological interpretation of the psalm. For Jesus, in the cry of dereliction, “the deity of his God and Father is at stake.”¹⁷ This relates to a point Moltmann makes earlier. Because Jesus’ existence is bound up with that of his Father and his Father’s faithfulness to him, this divine abandonment also calls into question Jesus’ being as the Son. If his sonship consists in his relationship to his Father but this relationship is compromised in abandonment on the cross, then the deity of Jesus as the Son is also at stake.¹⁸ Such an event can only be described as “*stasis* within God,” a division between Father and Son “to the utmost degree of enmity and distinction.”¹⁹

Moltmann later draws out the trinitarian implications of the cry against classical theism. Unfortunately, the tradition, represented by Cyril of Alexandria and Thomas Aquinas, restricted their interpretation of the cry to Christ’s human nature and its soteriological significance. For them it was of no consequence for the intra-trinitarian relationships. They were committed to the distinction between Christ’s human and divine natures, consolidated at the Council of Chalcedon.²⁰ Moltmann, however, finds such a framework inhibitory because it pushes the biblical emphasis on the relationships between Father, Son, and Spirit into the background and brings the relationship between Christ’s two natures into the foreground. He opts instead to “begin from the totality of the person of Christ.”²¹ As such, he situates the cry of dereliction not in Christ according to his human nature, but in the relationship between Father and Son. Characterised earlier as “enmity,” in trinitarian terms this means that in being abandoned to death the Son becomes fatherless. In abandoning his Son to death the Father becomes sonless. Father and Son consist not only in their respective identities as Father and Son but in the negation of

16 CG, 150.

17 CG, 151.

18 CG, 124–25.

19 CG, 152.

20 CG, 228–29.

21 CG, 206. Cf. his critical discussion of Chalcedonian Christology: Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1990), 46–55.

these identities in the crucifixion, as well as the reconstitution of these in the resurrection.²²

HISTORICAL, CANONICAL, OR NARRATIVE CONTEXT: WHAT COMES FIRST?

David Bentley Hart, responding to Moltmann's trinitarian interpretation of the cry of dereliction, appeals to Jesus' last words on the cross in Luke: "The terrible distance of Christ's cry of human dereliction, despair, and utter godforsakenness—'My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?'—is enfolded within and overcome by the ever greater distance and always indissoluble unity of God's triune love: 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.'"²³ Others have suggested that Moltmann's reading of the cry is ruled out decisively by John 16:32.²⁴ After prophesying the disciples' abandonment of him at the cross, Jesus declares, "I am not alone because the Father is with me." If Moltmann had not sidelined Luke and John in his historical Jesus methodology then perhaps he would have engaged more seriously with the limits that they provide, intentional or not, for interpreting Jesus' cry of dereliction.

The grounds on which Moltmann argues for the historical priority of Mark are unconvincing. Luke and John certainly had theological motivations, however subconscious, for their distinct portrayals of Jesus' passion, as Moltmann shows, but it cannot then be said that Mark preserves a historical core which they omit. There is no way of telling that the cry of dereliction troubled Luke and John. It may have. Yet the same argument could also be used to propose that Mark was troubled by accounts of the crucifixion which emphasised Jesus' trust in the midst of suffering or his victory ahead of his trial. Moreover, Mark's concerns are certainly not with the *bruta facta*, as his citation of Ps 22:1 shows. His gospel, too, contains its own unique theological interpretation of Jesus' passion. This is what Cyril of Alexandria and Thomas Aquinas both recognised in reading Jesus' cry in Mark as a

22 CG, 241–49. But see his later softening of this characterisation: "For a brief moment I forsook you, so that you might become the brother of forsaken human beings ... I did not forsake you eternally, but was beside you in your heart." Moltmann, *Way of Jesus Christ*, 180.

23 David Bentley Hart, "No Shadow of Turning: On Divine Impassibility," *Pro Ecclesia* 11, no. 2 (2002): 205.

24 Johnson, "Jesus' Cry," 82; Bruce D. Marshall, "The Dereliction of Christ and the Impassibility of God," in *Divine Impassibility and the Mystery of Human Suffering*, ed. James F. Keating and Thomas Joseph White, O.P. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 246–98, at 274.

vicarious cry for sinful humanity.²⁵ Modern exegetes have also noted possible reasons for Mark's retelling of Jesus' death with the cry of dereliction. Thomas Schmidt traces the theme of the judgement of the Jews in Mark's gospel and argues that for Mark Jesus cries on behalf of Israel.²⁶ For Sharyn Echols Dowd, the cry of dereliction, following Jesus' unanswered prayer in Gethsemane (14:36), helps Mark's persecuted readers cope with the tension between God's will for human suffering and God's ability and willingness to deliver people from suffering.²⁷ While there is not enough space to assess each of these claims, it is enough here to demonstrate that the cry of dereliction in Mark is inseparable from the theological ends for which he intends it. A consistent application of Moltmann's methodology would require acknowledging the possibility that Mark *added* the cry to the tradition he received to underscore his theme of divine abandonment. Whether or not Mark's inclusion of the cry best represents the historical reality, the methodology that Moltmann employs cannot provide a satisfactory answer.

Despite the problems with Moltmann's argument for the historical priority of Mark's passion account, his Markan reading of the doctrine of the Trinity remains valuable. On the one hand, there is one God, one Christ, and one Spirit—one Holy Trinity who speaks through Scripture. Mark, Luke, and John all witness to this Trinity. If Moltmann's doctrine of the Trinity is not fundamentally Lukan and Johannine as well as Markan—if it is not a Trinity of the whole Bible—then although he may be speaking of some God, it is certainly not the God of the Bible. On the other hand, however, appealing to Luke and John to keep Moltmann's interpretation of Mark in check inadvertently bars Mark's unique presentation of the relationships between Father, Son, and Spirit from being heard on Mark's own terms. While Moltmann implicitly excludes Luke and John in making Mark more historical, Hart and others implicitly exclude Mark in prioritising the cry's canonical context over its meaning in the narrative context of Mark. The validity of Moltmann's trinitarian interpretation of the cry of dereliction, then, should be assessed on the basis of the Markan narrative context.

25 CG, 228–29; see Marshall's in-depth treatment in his "Dereliction of Christ" 246–298.

26 Thomas Schmidt, "Cry of Dereliction or Cry of Judgment? Mark 15:34 in Context," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 4 (1994): 145–53.

27 Sharyn Echols Dowd, *Prayer, Power, and the Problem of Suffering: Mark 11:22–25 in the Context of Markan Theology* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 158–62.

THE CRY OF DERELICTION AND MARK'S USE OF PS 22

One of the key features of Mark's passion narrative is his use of Ps 22 to interpret Jesus' crucifixion. Clearly we cannot expect Mark to have read in the same way everything that we read in Ps 22, and there are other texts which he draws upon here, notwithstanding his sources for the life of Jesus himself. Yet not only is Ps 22 central to Mark's passion narrative but it is from this psalm that Jesus' cry of dereliction comes. Any serious investigation into the meaning of Jesus' cry must take into consideration this background. This has been argued persuasively by Holly J. Carey, who demonstrates that Mark invokes the whole psalm in his passion narrative and does not intend for his citation of Ps 22:1 to stand alone.²⁸ As Ps 22 points to David's vindication, so does Mark's citation of Ps 22:1 anticipate Jesus' vindication by God in the resurrection. Carey points to four main aspects of Mark's gospel that indicate this. First, Mark emphasises the unity of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. In the passion predictions, for example, the Markan Jesus pairs his death with his resurrection (8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34). Second, in other citations of Scripture throughout the Markan gospel, the evangelist often draws upon the wider context of the reference; such is the case with the citation of Ps 41:10 in Mark 14:18. Third, Mark employs the Righteous Sufferer motif, a motif common in other literature contemporary with Mark in which a righteous figure suffers but is ultimately vindicated by God. Other texts such as Wisdom of Solomon and the *Hodayot* of Qumran also drew upon Ps 22 to develop this motif. Finally, as I will show below, Mark cites and alludes to Ps 22 throughout the passion narrative. He clearly intends to interpret Jesus' death on the basis of the whole psalm rather than the cry alone.²⁹ Nonetheless, Carey is careful to underscore that Mark's invocation of the whole psalm, which looks to David's vindication despite abandonment, does not eclipse Jesus' suffering. Indeed, it is as clear in Mark as it is in Ps 22 "that the Righteous Sufferer is in true agony and distress, and that his wretched state is not alleviated at the very instant he calls on God."³⁰

28 Holly J. Carey, *Jesus' Cry from the Cross: Towards a First-Century Understanding of the Intertextual Relationship between Psalm 22 and the Narrative of Mark's Gospel* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2009).

29 On these four features see Carey, *Jesus' Cry*, chs 3, 4, 5–6, and 7, respectively.

30 Carey, *Jesus' Cry*, 4–5. There is no either/or between future vindication and present suffering because Mark is depicting both. Paul Foster appears to have misunderstood Carey here. Paul Foster, "Echoes without Resonance: Critiquing Certain Aspects of Recent Scholarly Trends in the Study of the Jewish Scriptures in the New Testament," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 38, no. 1 (2015): 100–102.

There is an obvious connection between the promise of David's vindication in Ps 22 and Jesus' resurrection. Aside from this, however, there are three things that Mark's use of Ps 22 suggests about the nature of Jesus' abandonment. First, it provides no indication that Jesus' abandonment consists in his separation from the Father. Rather, as Ps 22 develops it is clear that David's abandonment consists in the fact that God "has allowed this to happen and does nothing to help."³¹ God has abandoned David to being despised and mocked by his enemies (Ps 22:6–8), and to physical pain and a deteriorating body (Ps 22:14–15). So, too, God remains silent in the face of Jesus' pleas for help (Mark 14:36; Ps 22:1–2), Jesus is mocked and derided by those around him (Mark 15:16–20, 29–32; Ps 22:6–8), his clothes are divided by the soldiers (Mark 15:24; Ps 22:18), and he cries out on the edge of death, as does David (Ps 22:15). That is, the Father has abandoned Jesus not in separating from him (whatever Mark would have meant by that!) but in allowing him to undergo these evils without intervening. That this is the only place in the gospels where Jesus addresses his Father as *theos* does not mean he is any more distant from the Father than he otherwise has been.³² Jesus' Father is still *ho theos mou*.³³ Moreover, Jesus refers to his Father as *theos* elsewhere in Mark, such as in other citations of Scripture (for example, 10:6; 12:26). The validity of reading the nature of Jesus' abandonment as God's "non-intervention"³⁴ is confirmed when recalling Jesus' claim that the dead are alive to God (12:26–27). Regardless of just what the Markan Jesus means by this, its significance for his own resurrection is clear in that although he dies, like the patriarchs he remains alive to God in some way, even ahead of his resurrection.

Second, in the context of Israel's lament tradition, David and Jesus cry out in faith. Lament

is not intended as a reflection on human suffering but as a candid utterance of the reality of human distress spoken out of the depths

31 Richard Bauckham, "God's Self-Identification with the Godforsaken in the Gospel of Mark," in *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 254–68, at 257; cf. John Yocum, "A Cry of Dereliction? Reconsidering a Recent Theological Commonplace," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 7, no. 1 (2005): 76–77. I am assuming that David is the implied speaker of Ps 22 since it is likely that Mark would have followed the superscript (Mark 12:35–37).

32 Pace Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 80.

33 So Bauckham, "God's Self-Identification," 258.

34 Yocum, "Cry of Dereliction," 77.

of the heart, in the radical hope that the faithful God, who identifies with the suffering people will respond out of the depths of the divine compassion so as to make a way into the future for them.³⁵

The words of the cry itself in “my God” not only reveal Jesus’ ongoing relationship to his Father but his faith despite abandonment. In the latter half of the psalm David clings to the promise of his vindication (Ps 22:19–31), a parallel to which can be seen in Jesus’ resurrection predictions (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:34). It is on both sides of the cry then—what it conveys regarding God and what it conveys regarding Jesus—that the relationship between Father and Son continues.

Third, however, David’s complaints to God in Ps 22 illustrate in precisely what way the Father is present to Jesus in his abandonment. Some commentators have noted the “hostile withdrawal” of God in Ps 22, “effectively handing the psalmist over to evil powers.”³⁶ David’s complaints culminate in the accusation, “you lay me in the dust of death” (Ps 22:15), revealing that it is “God’s active enmity” against David which “has turned the world on its head.”³⁷ While there can be no question of the ongoing relationship between Father and Son at the cross, the question of the complicity of at least one party is thrown into sharp relief by Mark’s setting for Ps 22. But for a more complete understanding of the meaning of the cry we must turn to the Gospel of Mark itself.

THE CRY OF DERELICTION IN THE CONTEXT OF MARK

That Mark takes up the confrontation between David and God in Ps 22 to portray the relationship between Father and Son throughout his gospel is evident in two respects. First, Mark emphasises God’s will for Jesus’ death, sometimes in disturbing ways. Mark alludes to this theme early on in his gospel in Jesus’ baptism. Here God identifies Jesus as God’s beloved son (1:11), an appellation that Mark includes two other times (9:7; 12:6).

35 Henry L. Novello, “Jesus’ Cry from the Cross: Towards a True Apophaticism,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 78, no. 1 (2013): 43.

36 Matthew Boulton, “Forsaking God: A Theological Argument for Christian Lamentation,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 55, no. 1 (2002): 61–62.

37 Ellen F. Davis, “Exploding the Limits: Form and Function in Psalm 22,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 17, no. 53 (1992): 98. Nonetheless, it should be noted that there is some doubt as to whether David is accusing God here or his enemies. See Nancy L. de Claissé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 235.

Together with Ps 2:7 and Isa 42:1 as possible intertexts, Mark is probably also invoking Gen 22 here.³⁸ God acts as Abraham who sacrifices his beloved son Isaac/Jesus. If this is the case, then Mark presents God as the chief agent of Jesus' death. The first explicit reference to Jesus' passion, however, is in 2:20 when Jesus foretells his being "taken away" (*apairō*). Significantly, the use of *apairō* here is often understood as a divine passive, that is, a passive verb indicating divine agency. Although we should be careful not to take every passive verb as a divine passive,³⁹ Mark gives space for his readers to understand both human beings and God as the possible subjects of *apairō*. This is seen most clearly in 14:21, where Jesus identifies agents both human and divine at work in his death: "For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed (*paradidōmi*)!"⁴⁰ Moreover, whereas Mark uses *paradidōmi* with Judas (3:19), the chief priests and scribes (10:33), and Pilate as subject (15:15), in 9:31 the subject is ambiguous. Jesus is handed over *to* human beings (9:31), "an unnecessary detail if the implied subject of the verb is also human."⁴⁰

The role in his death that Jesus ascribes to God in the second passion-resurrection prediction (9:31) can also be seen in the first prediction (8:31). Here Mark colours Jesus' passion with the divine *dei*. It is God who wills the Son's suffering, rejection, death, and resurrection. Mark confirms this theme when Jesus claims that his death is in accordance with the Scriptures (9:12; 14:21, 27, 49).⁴¹ While it is not always clear which texts Mark is invoking in these claims, it is notable that allusions to Scripture occur in other Markan uses of *dei*. Elijah must come (9:11; Mal 4:5–6) and wars must take place (13:7; Dan 9:26). Ironically, even the negative use of *dei* in 13:14, "when you see the desolating sacrilege set up where it *ought not* to be," recalls that

38 Matthew S. Rindge, "Reconfiguring the Akedah and Recasting God: Lament and Divine Abandonment in Mark" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 130, no. 1 (2011): 755–74. However, see R. T. France's critical discussion in *The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 81–82.

39 See Beniamin Pascut, "The So-Called *Passivum Divinum* in Mark's Gospel," *Novum Testamentum* 54, no. 4 (2012): 313–33. However, Pascut does not address Mark 2:20.

40 Ira Brent Driggers, "God as Healer of Creation in the Gospel of Mark," in *Character Studies and the Gospel of Mark*, ed. Christopher W. Skinner and Matthew Ryan Hauge (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), 81–106, at 97.

41 France, *Mark*, 334; cf. W. J. Bennett, Jr., "The Son of Man Must . . .," *Novum Testamentum* 17, no. 2 (1975): 113–29; Jane Schaberg, "Daniel 7, 12 and the New Testament Passion-Resurrection Predictions," *New Testament Studies* 31, no. 2 (1985): 209–11.

“desolations are decreed” according to Dan 9:26.⁴² Outside of Mark’s uses of *dei*, probably the most explicit reference to God’s will for Jesus’ death in Mark’s gospel occurs in 14:27 where Jesus cites Zech 13:7 to predict the disciples’ abandonment of him. The citation opens with a statement concerning God’s role in Jesus’ death: “I will strike the shepherd.” While this text functions primarily to point to the disciples’ abandonment of Jesus, it also presents God as the direct agent in Jesus’ death. So, as Jesus’ death approaches, he accepts it as God’s will (14:36). Significantly, he beseeches God to take away his cup, a symbol which elsewhere in Scripture denotes divine judgement (for example, Ps 75:8; Isa 51:17; Jer 25:15).

Coming full circle to the cry of dereliction in 15:34, then, Mark has prepared the gospel’s readers for Jesus’ abandonment by portraying God as not only complicit in Jesus’ death, as with David’s impending death in Ps 22, but also as willing it. This is intensified by Mark’s presenting Jesus’ abandonment by God as the climax to a string of earlier abandonments by those who were close to him. Jesus is estranged from his family (3:20–35), rejected by his hometown (6:1–6), betrayed by Judas (14:10–11), forsaken by his disciples (14:48–50), disowned by Peter (14:67–71), condemned by the crowd (15:6–15), and taunted by those crucified with him (15:32).⁴³ As Matthew Rindge argues, “God becomes the final, and perhaps the most significant, character to reject Jesus.”⁴⁴ Carey makes the critical observation that Mark presents Jesus’ abandonment by human beings so as to portray their inability to “fully grasp Jesus’ purpose.” But, he writes, “If we include God in this group of people, does this imply that he doesn’t ‘get it’ either? Or are these people validated in their decision to reject and abandon Jesus?”⁴⁵ This does not necessarily follow, however, from the connection Mark draws between Jesus’ abandonment by humans and by God. For Mark, although the purposes of God and the purposes of human beings may ostensibly converge, they are not the same (14:21).

Second, Mark presents a complex picture of Jesus’ willingness to suffer and die. On the one hand, Jesus predicts his passion throughout the gospel

42 Biblical backgrounds for Jesus’ claim that the gospel must be proclaimed to all nations before his return (13:10) and Peter’s vow not to deny Jesus (14:31) are less clear. Nonetheless, on the former see *kêrussô* in Joel 4:9 (LXX) and Zech 9:9 (LXX).

43 William Sanger Campbell, “Why Did You Abandon Me? Abandonment Christology in Mark’s Gospel,” in *The Trial and Death of Jesus: Essays on the Passion Narrative in Mark*, ed. Geert van Oyen and Tom Shepherd (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 99–117.

44 Rindge, “Reconfiguring the Akedah,” 761.

45 Carey, *Jesus’ Cry*, 158.

without any sign of hesitancy (8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34); he rebukes Peter for opposing his mission which consists in suffering (8:32–33; cf. the similar pattern in 9:32–34; 10:35–37); rather, his disciples are to follow his model in giving themselves, even to death, for him (8:34–35; cf. 9:35–37; 10:38–45); he actively gives his life for the people (10:45; 14:22–24); despite his reluctance he chooses his Father’s will for his death (14:36); he rises to meet his betrayer in the garden (14:42); and again he accepts God’s will to be taken by the crowd (14:49). On the other hand, when Jesus comes to Gethsemane Mark’s readers suddenly learn from Jesus himself that he is distressed, agitated, and deeply grieved considering his impending trial (14:33–34). He petitions God to take his cup away from him (14:36). This unanswered prayer is compounded by the fact that he had earlier taught his disciples, “All things can be done for the one who believes” (9:23; cf. 10:27; 11:22–24). In 13:18, Jesus had directed his disciples, “Pray that it may not be in winter.” As Dowd notes, “The prayers of the community may even be directed toward altering the events of the eschaton.”⁴⁶ Accordingly, then, Jesus prays in 14:36, “Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me.” There is no contingency here like the parallels in Matthew, “if it is possible” (26:39), and in Luke, “if you are willing” (22:42). Yet despite his faith, Jesus’ prayer goes unheeded until the resurrection. He must first undergo death. Moreover, even after coupling this plea with submission to God’s will in the same verse, Mark writes in 14:39 that Jesus again begs God for his deliverance. Moreover, again, after submitting to God’s will in this second prayer, Jesus cries out to his Father on the cross. Although he submits to God’s will he carries to the grave his reluctance to die.

MOLTMANN, MARK, AND AFFIRMING CANONICAL DIVERSITY

This short exploration of the meaning of the cry in the context of Ps 22 and the Gospel of Mark converges at interesting points with Moltmann’s interpretation of the cry. First, contra Moltmann, I have argued that there is no basis in Mark for interpreting the cry as a separation between the Father and the Son. Second, however, my exploration of the relationship between the Father and the Son on the way to the cross in Mark recalls Moltmann’s attribution of enmity to this same relationship. The Father wills and brings about the Son’s death, something which, as Mark’s narrative progresses, we find that Jesus is increasingly pained by, to the point of beseeching his Father for an alternative. Jesus does not lose faith in God, he accepts his

⁴⁶ Dowd, *Prayer*, 157, see also 151–58.

cup, and yet he remains reluctant unto death. Third, this also means that the separation between Father and Son at the cross should not be dismissed so easily. Like Moltmann, Jesus and God for Mark are certainly *separate* in the sense that Jesus is reluctant to suffer and die whereas God wills it. They are separate in a similar sense to that which the dyothelitism of later orthodoxy recognises. Conversely, like Mark, for Moltmann Jesus is certainly *united* with God in his self-giving: “In the cross, Father and Son are most deeply separated in forsakenness and at the same time most inwardly one in their surrender.”⁴⁷ The separation of Father and Son on the cross takes place within a greater unity. Indeed, Moltmann must make this claim unless he is suggesting that God ceases to be in the crucifixion, which is not his suggestion. It is as Father and as Son that Father and Son become non-Father and non-Son. That is, their identities undergo negation at the cross but it is a negation within identity, not a negation that can ever compete with the original Father-Son relationship by which it is possible and within which it takes place.

Already at the crucifixion, for Moltmann, the Spirit who derives from this unity of Father and Son goes forth to justify the godless. It is only as such that “this history of God contains within itself the whole abyss of god-forsakenness, absolute death and the non-God.”⁴⁸ If the identities of Father and Son also contain their negation, then their shared identity in negation contains all the negations that are the sufferings and deaths in the history of the world. But these negations do not remain because the relationship between Father and Son is reconstituted in the resurrection, also reconstituting the world as new creation until this is completed eschatologically. Moltmann’s doctrine of the Trinity is certainly not derived from Mark alone and his concern is with theological interpretation rather than simply exegesis. Nonetheless, his doctrine of the Trinity in *CG* takes a Markan shape through his characterisation of the relationship between Father and Son at the cross as one of enmity and of separation in unity.

We return now to the appeals made to Luke 23:46 and John 16:32 in response to Moltmann’s interpretation of the cry of dereliction. Theological interpretation of Scripture must recognise that the four evangelists not only differ in their portrayal of Jesus’ history but they differ in these portrayals because they have differing theological reasons that underpin their inclusion, exclusion, and ordering of different sayings and pericopes.

47 *CG*, 244.

48 *CG*, 246.

For example, Luke clearly presents Jesus' passion differently from Mark and Matthew. For Luke there is little sign of Jesus' reluctance to go to the cross. Jesus still prays his prayer in Gethsemane but it is contingent on the Father's will (22:42). The emphasis falls on Jesus' trust and obedience, which Luke accentuates in omitting the Markan *perilypos*, "deeply grieved," applied to Jesus (Mark 14:33; Matt 26:38). For Luke it is the disciples who are "sleeping because of grief (*lypē*)" (22:45), a subtlety omitted by Mark and Matthew. (The text-critical evidence for the authenticity of Luke 22:43–44, in which Jesus sweats blood in anguish and is comforted by angels, is uncertain).⁴⁹ Indeed, it is human sin rather than Jesus' death that demands grief (23:28–29). On the cross, Jesus still prays according to a psalm of lament. It is not the cry of dereliction, however, but an expression of David's trust in spite of suffering that the Lukan Jesus takes up: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (23:46; cf. Ps 31:5). Luke seems to have little interest in reproducing the reluctance of Jesus that Mark attests. That it is most likely he depended on Mark in developing his account only further underscores his differing theological reasons for his particular portrayal of the passion. As Stephen C. Barton writes, "The respective gospel writers had an evident sense of freedom—of *obligation* even—to retell the story of Jesus in ways significantly different from (and, from their respective points of view, implicitly better than) their predecessors."⁵⁰

Notwithstanding other objections to Moltmann's proposals for the doctrine of the Trinity⁵¹ and the historical Jesus methodology with which he attempts to establish the cry's historical and theological priority, the major strength that I see in Moltmann's project is that he engages Mark in a way that brings the Second Gospel's unique portrayal of the relationships between Father, Son, and Spirit to the forefront.⁵² Moltmann's interpretation of the cry of dereliction does not pretend at a biblically derived doctrine of

49 For an overview of the recent discussion see Claire Clivaz, "The Angel and the Sweat Like 'Drops of Blood' (Lk 22:43–44): P⁶⁹ and f¹³," *Harvard Theological Review* 91, no. 4 (2005): 419–40, esp. 420–25.

50 Stephen C. Barton, "Many Gospels, One Jesus?," in *The Cambridge Companion to Jesus*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 170–83, at 174, emphasis in original.

51 See above n. 5.

52 In this article I have focussed predominantly on Mark's and Moltmann's portrayal of the Father-Son relationship, which is the focal point of Moltmann's extended treatment of the cry in *CG*, an orientation maintained in much of his subsequent reflection on the cry. For a more pneumatologically-orientated reading of the cry, see his *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 62–65.

the Trinity that draws equally on all parts of Scripture. Rather, such an approach challenges readers of the fourfold gospel to hear the different, even conflicting, emphases of the evangelists as witnesses to Christ. Nor is this to say that the rest of Scripture plays a subordinate role in its contribution to the church's doctrine of the Trinity, nor even that this doctrine should be the product of theological interpretation of Scripture alone. It is to say that we should always be ready to hear afresh each unique witness to the triune God, none of which can ever exhaust the mystery that is Christ (John 21:24–25).