

The Significance of the Cross for the Doctrine of the Trinity in the Theology of Jürgen Moltmann

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Abstract

The distinctive claim Moltmann makes in his second major work, *The Crucified God*, is that the two characteristic features of Christianity, the cross and the Trinity, are inseparable and thus must always be thought together. It is only in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity that the cross can be properly understood, and only in the context of the cross that the doctrine of the Trinity has any ground. The core of Moltmann's innovations derive from the latter. That is, for Moltmann the cross is of central significance to the doctrine of the Trinity.

This thesis consists of two chapters of exposition followed by three chapters of analysis and discussion, a final comparative chapter, and then a conclusion. The first two chapters trace the development of the significance of the cross for the doctrine of the Trinity through *The Crucified God* and *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, respectively. Chapter three begins the discussion by outlining and assessing Moltmann's methodology. The latter half of the chapter provides a case study of his use of Scripture by looking at the function of Mark 15:34 in his theology. Chapter four discusses Moltmann's innovations regarding divine passibility. After clarifying the grounds on which he rejects divine impassibility and, for him, the related Chalcedonian distinction between divine and human natures in Christ, it critically assesses his rationale for divine suffering and addresses his claim that there is enmity between Father and Son in the crucifixion. Chapter five discusses Moltmann's construal of the relationship between immanent and economic Trinity. It begins by addressing the ambiguous relationship between history and eschatology in this area of his theology. Then it provides a critical assessment of Moltmann's construal of this relationship in light of Karl Barth's doctrine of the Trinity. Chapter six expounds and discusses a passage from Hans Urs von Balthasar's *Theo-Drama* which provides a helpful mediating position between Moltmann's proposals and classical theism. The thesis concludes with a commendation of the value of his *theologia crucis* for hermeneutics, of his theology of divine passibility for a global, twenty-first century theology, and of his trinitarian panentheism as a potential alternative to classical theism for imagining the God of Jesus Christ.

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Abbreviations of Works Written by Moltmann

<i>BP</i>	<i>A Broad Place: An Autobiography.</i> Translated by Margaret Kohl. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2009.
<i>CG</i>	<i>The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology.</i> Translated by R. A. Wilson and John Bowden. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993.
<i>CoG</i>	<i>The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology.</i> Translated by Margaret Kohl. London: SCM, 1996.
<i>CPS</i>	<i>The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology.</i> Translated by Margaret Kohl. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993.
<i>ExpTh</i>	<i>Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology.</i> Translated by Margaret Kohl. London: SCM, 2000.
<i>FC</i>	<i>The Future of Creation: Collected Essays.</i> Translated by Margaret Kohl. London: SCM, 1979.
<i>GC</i>	<i>God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God.</i> Translated by Margaret Kohl. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993.
<i>SL</i>	<i>The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation.</i> Translated by Margaret Kohl. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992.
<i>TH</i>	<i>Theology of Hope: On the Ground and Implications of a Christian Eschatology.</i> Translated by James W. Leith. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993.
<i>TKG</i>	<i>The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God.</i> Translated by Margaret Kohl. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993.
<i>WJC</i>	<i>The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions.</i> Translated by Margaret Kohl. London: SCM, 1990.

The Christian faith consists above all in the confession of the Holy Trinity, and it glories especially in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

–Thomas Aquinas

The scriptural basis for the Christian belief in the triune God is not the scanty trinitarian formulas of the New Testament, but the thoroughgoing, unitary testimony of the cross; and the shortest expression of the Trinity is the divine act of the cross, in which the Father allows the Son to sacrifice himself through the Spirit.

–Bernhard Steffen, cited by Jürgen Moltmann¹

Introduction

Jürgen Moltmann, born in Hamburg in 1926, is a theologian who has exercised considerable influence in modern trinitarian theology. Along with Wolfhart Pannenberg, he is perhaps the foremost German Protestant theologian in the twentieth century to follow Karl Barth in his contention that the Trinity is at the heart of Christian theology, leading the way for a new generation. The distinctive claim he makes in his second major work, *The Crucified God*, is that the two characteristic features of Christianity, the cross and the Trinity, are inseparable and thus must always be thought together. It is only in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity that the cross can be properly understood, and only in the context of the cross that the doctrine of the Trinity has any ground. The core of Moltmann's innovations derive from the latter. That is, for Moltmann the cross is of central significance to the doctrine of the Trinity. Statements like the following are characteristic of his theology:

When the crucified Jesus is called the 'image of the invisible God', the meaning is that *this* is God, and God is like *this*. God is not greater than he is in this humiliation. God is not more glorious than he is in this self-surrender. God is not more powerful than he is in this helplessness. God is not more divine than he is in this humanity. The nucleus of everything that Christian theology says about 'God' is to be found in this Christ event (*CG*, 205).²

I have restricted the scope of my thesis to two of Moltmann's major works, *CG* and *The Trinity and the Kingdom*. Because his output is voluminous, writing a thesis of this length does not permit enough space for a full exploration of Moltmann's works.

In *Theology of Hope* (1964), his first major work, Moltmann claims that "From first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present" (*TH*, 16). Such an eschatological orientation is seen most clearly in the

¹ Quotes on previous page from Thomas Aquinas, "De Rationibus Fidei," in *S. Thomae Aquinatis Opuscula Theologica*, vol. 1, ed. Raymund Verardo, 253-268 (Turin and Rome: Marietti, 1954), 253, cited in Bruce D. Marshall, "Trinity," in *The Blackwell Companion to Modern Theology*, ed. Gareth Jones, 183-203 (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 191; and Bernhard Steffen, *Das Dogma vom Kreuz. Beitrag zu einer staurozentrischen Theologie* (Gütersloh, Germany: Bertelsmann, 1920), 152, cited in *CG*, 241.

² Unless otherwise stated, all italics are original for in-text citations of Moltmann's works.

resurrection of Christ. Moltmann continues this theme into *CG* and develops it across the scope of his theological career.

CG (1972), Moltmann's next major work, arose out of critical responses to *TH*, as well as Moltmann's desire to grapple more seriously with human suffering. Whereas *TH* was founded on "the *raising* of the crucified Christ," in *CG* Moltmann was "inescapably reminded of the other side of that foundation: the *cross* of the risen Christ." He writes, "Hope without remembrance leads to illusion, just as, conversely, remembrance without hope can result in resignation" (*CG*, ix). Nonetheless, like *TH*, "The whole of theology was drawn as if by a magnifying glass into a single focus" (x). This time that single focus was the crucifixion. In *CG* Moltmann takes the cross beyond its conventional location in soteriology, situating it firmly in christology and the doctrine of the Trinity. Indeed, he consistently endeavours to think through these three areas of theology together.

In *CG*, Moltmann develops two fundamental conclusions for the doctrine of the Trinity that have followed him throughout his career. First, Moltmann sees in the cross the panentheistic unity of God and history, immanent and economic Trinity. He presents a radical reading of Karl Rahner's maxim, often referred to as "Rahner's rule": "The economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity, and the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity" (*CG*, 240).³ The immanent Trinity denotes God in himself (*in se* and *ad intra*) and the economic Trinity denotes God for us, in relation to creation (*pro nobis* and *ad extra*). This terminology can be misleading as *immanent* is usually employed in opposition to *transcendent*. However, here it is the immanent Trinity that is transcendent. The immanence of the immanent Trinity refers not to God's immanence to creation but God's immanence to himself.⁴ It is this traditional distinction that Moltmann repudiates, striving to understand the two together. Second, closely following his first conclusion, Moltmann rejects the traditional doctrine of divine impassibility, God's inability to suffer. For Moltmann, the cross requires that Christ suffers not only in his human nature, but in his divine nature also. Indeed, he contends

³ Cf. Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. by Joseph Donceel (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 22, "*The 'economic' Trinity is the 'immanent' Trinity and the 'immanent' Trinity is the 'economic' Trinity*" (emphasis original).

⁴ So Moltmann, *TKG*, 151, "The economic Trinity designates the triune God in his dispensation of salvation, in which he is revealed... The immanent Trinity is the name given to the triune God as he is in himself."

that this absolute distinction between divine and human nature, later clarified and applied to the person of Christ at the Council of Chalcedon, was originally developed to secure soteriological claims. If God is prone to suffering in his divine nature then created natures have no hope of being ultimately redeemed from suffering and death. But Moltmann rejects the distinction and argues instead that it is necessary to speak of the suffering of the trinitarian God of love whom we encounter in the cross. Although there are some antecedents in Moltmann's earlier theology it is not until *CG* that he extensively addresses the relationship between the cross and the Trinity. Nor does his later work surpass *CG* in the attention he gives to the relationship in this work.

In *TKG* (1980), his first in a series of "systematic contributions to theology," Moltmann substantively develops the earlier proposals of *CG*.⁵ By this point he has abandoned the single focus methodology of *TH* and *CG*, instead developing theology "in a particular systematic sequence," though without any attempt to produce a complete "system." Unlike conventional systematic theology then, *TKG* is the beginning in a series of "contributions" (*TKG*, x). Here Moltmann has moved beyond the *theologia crucis* methodology of *CG*. His aims are more modest, though he maintains his distinctively speculative and polemical approach. While advancing his earlier commitment to divine passibility, the greatest development in thinking through the relationship between cross and Trinity in *TKG* is his more mature construal of the relationship between immanent and economic Trinity. Here Moltmann traces the suffering of God he sees in the cross event back to God's life before the world began. On the basis of God's close relationship to the world which Moltmann sees in the cross, he finds that God's suffering with creation begins with the act of creation itself. This leads him to develop an alternative concept of divine freedom. Moreover, in *TKG*, Moltmann maintains his rejection of "theism," which he presented in *CG*. Moltmann employs this term for concepts of God that he deems do not derive from the cross of Christ and as such are contrary to revelation. Developing this critique, in *TKG* Moltmann rejects what he identifies as "monotheism," a polemical term by which he characterises trinitarian theologies which for him are not sufficiently trinitarian, particularly in the area of divine unity. However, although the development of this

⁵ *CPS* (1975), Moltmann's third major work, did not receive as much attention as the popular and popularly debated *TH* and *CG*. In this work, his focus was pneumatology, a significant lacuna in his earlier works, despite his professed trinitarian orientation in *CG*.

theme is certainly informed by the cross, it does not derive directly from the cross as his identification of immanent with economic Trinity or his embrace of divine passibility does. To allow adequate space for discussing these latter two aspects of Moltmann's theology I have thus omitted discussion of his rejection of monotheism and his alternative proposal for divine unity.⁶

Already in *TKG* it is the Trinity itself, rather than the relationship between cross and Trinity, which is the focus. Moltmann's later works, too, though not diverging from but indeed developing his earlier proposals, proceed from different starting points and deal largely with different content. Nonetheless, his proposals in *CG* and *TKG* should be seen in context. Where possible, I have highlighted important antecedents in earlier works and developments in later works, most often in the footnotes. I have also attempted to clarify some of Moltmann's more ambiguous claims with reference to works where similar topics are treated more thoroughly or from a different angle.

In researching for this thesis I have encountered many voices who are critical of Moltmann's theology. While critical engagement is something Moltmann invites, and, indeed, something essential to the task of theology, it is often disheartening to reach the end of a chapter or article engaging with his theology only to find an almost complete dismissal of his proposals. As Richard Bauckham observes, "too many criticisms of Moltmann are based on careless reading and misunderstanding of his work."⁷ In chapters three to six, where possible, I have subjected Moltmann's theology to critical analysis in comparing his proposals with those of select contemporary theologians who differ fundamentally in their convictions. However, I have also endeavoured to read Moltmann as sympathetically as possible, commending his theology where, if not consonant with the tradition and its reading of Scripture, it is at least internally coherent, whatever those standards are by which this coherence might be measured! I do not expect this small contribution to conclude the conversation in any way. Nor have I attempted to catalogue exhaustively all the critiques which have

⁶ On Moltmann's rejection of traditional conceptions of divine unity, see Randall E. Otto, "Moltmann and the Anti-Monotheism Movement," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 3:3 (2001): 293-308. Karen Kilby also provides a thoroughgoing critique of the closely related social trinitarian trend of which Moltmann is a part in her "Trinity, Tradition, and Politics," in *Recent Developments in Trinitarian Theology: An International Symposium*, ed. Christophe Chalamet and Marc Vial, 73-86 (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2014).

⁷ Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, reprint (London: T. & T. Clark, 2006), x.

been levelled against his theology. Rather, I have engaged with the critiques which I have seen widely and insistently represented in the literature, or those which I deem to advance the conversation in other ways.

This thesis consists of two chapters of exposition followed by three chapters of analysis and discussion, a final comparative chapter, and then a conclusion. In the first two chapters I trace the development of the significance of the cross for the doctrine of the Trinity through *CG* and *TKG*, respectively. In chapter three I begin the discussion by outlining and assessing Moltmann's methodology. In the latter half of the chapter I provide a case study of his use of Scripture by looking at the function of Mark 15:34 in his theology. In chapter four I discuss Moltmann's innovations regarding divine passibility. After clarifying the grounds on which he rejects divine impassibility and, for him, the related Chalcedonian distinction between divine and human natures in Christ, I offer a critical assessment of his rationale for divine suffering and address his claim that there is enmity between Father and Son in the crucifixion. In chapter five I discuss Moltmann's construal of the relationship between immanent and economic Trinity. I begin by addressing the ambiguous relationship between history and eschatology in this area of his theology. Then I provide a critical assessment of Moltmann's construal of this relationship in light of Karl Barth's doctrine of the Trinity. In chapter six I provide an exposition and discussion of a passage from Hans Urs von Balthasar's *Theo-Drama* which I argue provides a helpful mediating position between Moltmann's proposals and classical theism. Lastly, in the conclusion, I return to Moltmann's theology to offer some final reflections.

1. *The Crucified God*

1.1. The Dialectic of Soteriology and Christology

Before examining the radical claims Moltmann makes in *CG* for the doctrine of the Trinity, it is important to see the context in which he intends these claims to be read. From the very outset, Moltmann's aim is explicitly soteriological: "only the crucified Christ can bring the freedom which changes the world because it is no longer afraid of death" (1).⁸ Knowing the crucified Christ is knowing the salvation which comes from him, and vice versa.

In chapter one, Moltmann addresses the twin crises of relevance and identity for the contemporary church. The various sufferings of the twentieth century brought the relevance of the church, theology, and faith into question. Although some Christians were innovative, even radical, in expanding traditional theological and ecclesial boundaries in the attempt to remain relevant in a changing society, for many others this meant a complete break from the old Christianity that was otherwise inhibiting social progress. On the other hand, many who remained in the churches withdrew from their involvement in the world, decrying new ecclesial and theological developments as assimilations to modern society that compromised Christian identity. In view of this, Moltmann argues that "each of these crises is simply a reflection of the other; and... both crises can be reduced to a common denominator" (25). That common denominator is identity in the crucified Christ. This is the crucified *Christ* without whom there would be no church. Only thus can the church offer the world something beyond the contingencies of the contemporary. Yet this is also the *crucified* Christ whose identity is not in withdrawal from the world but in solidarity with the godforsaken. Only thus can the church move beyond its self-defensive preservation of a static identity and seek to find this identity instead in new tradition and new experience.

Moltmann's dialectic of relevance and identity in the crucified Christ illustrates the broader dialectic of soteriology and christology, which is implicit throughout *CG*. The church derives its relevance from its identity in Christ (christology) and expresses

⁸ All references to *CG* in this chapter are given as page numbers in parentheses.

this identity through its relevance in becoming new for the world (soteriology). The christological concern, the person of Christ, is inseparable from the soteriological one, the work of Christ. To say one without the other would be misleading. In chapter two, Moltmann demonstrates that Christ's identity in the cross confronts church and society, calling into question every human interpretation of the cross. Here Moltmann establishes the centrality of the cross to Christianity. In chapters three to five, he contends that the cross is fundamental to Jesus' eternal identity. In chapter six, he takes this a step further, exploring the implications of the cross for the Trinity. Finally, in chapters seven and eight, Moltmann comes full circle to address two more contemporary soteriological questions, the psychological and political liberation of humanity in light of God's identity in the cross. Although my focus in this thesis is on Moltmann's christological and trinitarian claims, the soteriologically oriented opening chapter and concluding chapters of *CG* should remind the reader that Moltmann consistently strives to situate his christology and doctrine of the Trinity in the sphere of soteriology, and vice versa.

1.2. The Cross as the Ground and Critique of Theology

In chapter two, Moltmann examines some of the different ways that the cross has been interpreted throughout history, claiming that the cross always stands beyond these interpretations as the ground of their possibility. As such, it is also their critique. First, the cross stands despite religious and humanistic rejections of it throughout history as "unaesthetic, unrespectable and perverse" (33). Such rejections inevitably strip Christianity of its uniqueness by removing that which defines it, reducing it to "one of the phenomena of world history" (37). Second, the cross stands as unique against Christian attempts to repeat it in the celebration of mass. The distinctiveness of Jesus' sacrifice cannot be repeated, but only witnessed to in proclamation. Third, while the cross has justifiably been a source of comfort for those who suffer throughout history, it must also be distinguished from these sufferings. Jesus did not suffer passively. He actively took the cross upon himself. Worse, as much as it has been a source of comfort to suffering human beings, the cross has also been misused by their oppressors to justify these sufferings through the promise of reward in the next life. When understood correctly, the cross not only comforts those who suffer but confronts their masters and rulers, calling them to repentance. For the slaves and underclasses, then,

it raises them up and liberates them from their suffering not only eschatologically but in the present too.

Fourth, the cross calls Jesus' followers to actively suffer in the world, as he did. But this is not just any kind active suffering. Following Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Moltmann contends that Jesus' suffering involves rejection: "Suffering can be celebrated and admired. It can arouse compassion. But to be rejected takes away the dignity from suffering and makes it dishonourable suffering" (55). Nonetheless, while other human beings can participate in Jesus' cross up to this point, they cannot participate in his unique abandonment by God. This is the one aspect of Jesus' suffering that sets it apart from all other suffering: "Jesus suffered and died alone. But those who follow him suffer and die in fellowship with him" (56). His suffering in abandonment is unique and unrepeatable, and it is significant apart from any significance that believers may accord to it.

Finally, this leads into the *theologia crucis* of Paul and Martin Luther, where the uniqueness of the cross is acknowledged and given its rightful, central place in the life of the church. The identity of Christ, indeed, of God, is located in the crucifixion. Moltmann pits this in opposition to "pure theory" of God, i.e., theology which attempts to arrive at an understanding of who God is apart from his relationship to the world (68). Rather, the cross means that theology "must become a *critical theory of God*" (69). As critical theology, *theologia crucis* does not merely reorient theology to God in the crucified Christ, commending yet another static identity of God at which to arrive. A true *theologia crucis* is dynamic, continually bringing the iconoclasm of the cross into the present and informing Christian praxis: "It does not state what exists, but sets out to liberate men from their inhuman definitions and their idolized assertions, in which they have become set, and in which society has ensnared them" (72).

1.3. Christology in Historical and Eschatological Context

Having established his *theologia crucis*, in chapter three Moltmann goes on to develop his christology. The person of Christ is at the centre of Christianity, but his identity is not always clear. This has been a problem with all christologies throughout the centuries: "they correspond so much to the needs of their age, place of origin and intended purpose that one cannot avoid the suspicion that they are illusory and artificial" (83). Moreover, Moltmann notes that christology has also often been a point

of contention among Christians. The dispute has centred on whether emphasis is given to Jesus' historical identity, "Jesusology," or his eschatological identity as the risen Christ, christology (83). But Moltmann contends that these are not mutually exclusive foci. Christology finds its legitimation in the historical figure of Jesus, and study of this historical figure finds its legitimation in christology which points to the eschatological lordship of God.

Many patristic theologians and some German Idealists⁹ undertook christology "from above," presupposing Jesus' divinity. The former understood God as the antithesis of finite being: eternal, immutable, impassible, etc. The latter reformulated the ontological proof for God's existence, arguing that God was not only substance but subject: "he is not thought of as the basis of something else, but for his own sake" (90). However, in either case, predicating an *a priori* divinity of Jesus tended to obfuscate his human identity. Christology from above thus "makes the particular features of the real, historical human being Jesus of Nazareth and the arbitrary occurrences of his life inessential" (91).

Alternatively, many modern Protestant theologians undertook christology "from below," focussing instead on the humanity of Jesus. Moltmann writes, "Since the Renaissance, the Enlightenment and the rise of modern technology, the relationship between man and nature in most fields has been reversed." That is, "The problem of modern man is no longer so much how he can live with gods and demons, but how he can survive with the bomb, revolution and the destruction of the balance of nature" (92). The value of christology is no longer in taking human beings beyond their finite limitations but rather in demonstrating how to live in the midst of these limitations. The metaphysical orientation has been replaced with an ethical one. Nonetheless, like christologies from above, these also proceed from an *a priori*, subsuming Jesus' history under contemporary anthropologies.

A better approach to christology is found in the Jewish messianic milieu of Jesus' own time, where the focus is on neither his divinity nor humanity but his eschatological identity: "Are you the one who is to come?" (Matt 11:3).¹⁰ Even here, though, christology's relationship to Jesus "must not be one of questioning, but of being

⁹ Moltmann mentions Hegel, Fichte, and Schelling.

¹⁰ All biblical citations in this thesis are taken from the New Revised Standard Version (1989), unless otherwise stated.

questioned; must not be one of demanding an answer but of giving an answer" (CG, 103). Christologies must be answers given in faith to Jesus' own question, "Who do you say that I am?" (Matt 16:15). However, no complete answer can be given according to present or historical categories, not even those provided already in the history of Israel. This is what the Jewish messianic milieu recognises. Jesus' identity is eschatological, situated in the future. Moltmann writes,

The life, words and actions of the Jesus of the synoptic gospels are centred not upon himself, but on the future which is called the 'kingdom of God'. His God and Father is to reveal him as the one who he truly is (104).

Similarly, "the centre of his existence is outside himself" (106). Christology is thus not defined only by incompleteness but, positively, by its orientation to Jesus' future, anticipating a decisive answer in new creation. Nonetheless, this negative aspect is still fundamental. It emphasises the nature of christology as "essentially unconcluded and permanently in need of revision" (106-107). As such, it complements Moltmann's earlier argument that the cross is the ground of theology which continually critiques it. It is not until the consummated kingdom that the incompleteness of theology epitomised in the cross finds its completion.

1.3.1. The Historical Significance of the Crucifixion

In chapter four, Moltmann frames his dialectic a little differently. He argues that the crucifixion must be examined from both the standpoint of Jesus' resurrection as well as his life before his death. If Jesus' death is defined completely by his resurrection then this "would rapidly lead to a Christ-myth in which the death of the bringer of salvation was an important fact, but not Jesus himself and what brought him to the cross." Conversely, if it is defined only by his life, "ultimately neither the death nor the life of Jesus would have any special importance beyond that of the comparable life and death of great prophets or demagogues" (112). As such, history must be undertaken theologically and theology must be undertaken historically.

The importance placed on Jesus' history is evident throughout church history. In the New Testament, "the experiences of Christ and the Spirit at the present moment were subjected to criticism and linked to the history of Jesus himself" (115). So, too, with its emphasis on *sola scriptura*, the Reformation sought to remind the church of its roots in Christ. Continuing with this Protestant conviction, the quests for the historical

Jesus also sought to ground Christian practice in the person of Christ. However, the quests went further than the Reformers, employing historical criticism to question the apostolic witness and the faith of the first Christians. This led to an impasse in New Testament scholarship, with some figures emphasising the fundamental differences between the preaching of Jesus and those who came after him, and others emphasising the overt similarities.

In contrast, Moltmann suggests that it is not so much historical criticism as it is the cross which is “the true critique of the kerygma of Christ” (119). Jesus differed from John the Baptist in that the content of his message was inseparable from his person. It was authoritative on the basis of the one who preached it and the hour at which he preached it, with the kingdom having come in his ministry. Jesus’ preaching has no meaning if abstracted from his person and time. Yet on the cross, “his preaching dies with him” (122). Moltmann writes,

He who proclaimed that the kingdom was near died abandoned by God. He who anticipated the future of God in miracles and in casting out demons died helpless on the cross. He who revealed the righteousness of God with an authority greater than Moses died according to the provision of the law as a blasphemer. He who spread the love of God in his fellowship with the poor and the sinners met his end between two criminals on the cross (125).

The cross is thus not only the basis of christology but its “basic problem” (125). It calls into question all the claims, explicit and implicit, made by Jesus.

Moltmann goes on to investigate the significance of Jesus’ death in theological-historical context. In his Jewish context, Jesus was a blasphemer. He claimed an authority greater than Moses and Torah. He claimed God’s authority to forgive sins and preached justification for sinners. As such, he was in conflict with the human authorities who saw in the law hope for the “exaltation of the righteous who suffer injustice on earth, and the putting to shame of the lawless and godless” (129). In his Roman context, Jesus was a rebel. His crucifixion was undertaken not by the religious authorities (the punishment for blasphemy was stoning) but by Rome. He was punished as an enemy of the state and its gods.

The most significant aspect of Jesus’ crucifixion, however, is his being forsaken by his Father on the cross, “the true inner pain of his suffering and death” (145). This theological aspect distinguishes him from all in history who came before him and all who would come after him. Socrates found liberty in his death. Zealot and Christian

martyrs found freedom and hope in their deaths. In contrast, according to the synoptic accounts of Jesus' distress in Gethsemane and Mark's account of Jesus' cry on the cross (Mark 15:34, 37), Moltmann argues that "Jesus clearly died with every expression of the most profound horror" (CG, 146). Later Christian tradition downplayed this aspect of Jesus' death by presenting Jesus as confident or triumphant on the cross, as is seen in a textual variant of Mark 15:34¹¹ and the passion narratives of Luke and John. So, too, Mark's use of Psalm 22:1 for Jesus' last words probably reflects theological concerns more than a historical account of Jesus' last words. Yet, this account nonetheless preserves the horror of the cross. Therefore, "it seems to be as near as possible to the historical reality of the death of Jesus" (147).

However, this is not merely an expression of a deeper psychological struggle. Moltmann is undertaking the task of *theological* history. Jesus' cry of dereliction demonstrates a profound abandonment by his Father: "Just as there was a unique fellowship with God in his life and preaching, so in his death there was a unique abandonment by God" (149). Moreover, because the identity of the Father is in his relationship to the Son, Moltmann understands that this abandonment in some sense also characterises the Father. It calls into question not only Jesus' existence as the one whom the Father has chosen, but his Father's existence as the one who is faithful to his Son: "in his rejection, the deity of his God and the fatherhood of his Father... are at stake" (151). This leads Moltmann to claim that the abandonment does not just take place on the plain of history but "within God himself," which he characterises with sharp terms like "*stasis*," "God against God," and "enmity" (152).¹²

1.3.2. *The Eschatological Significance of the Crucifixion*

In chapter five, Moltmann addresses the second part of the dialectic he established in the previous chapter, this time looking at the crucifixion from the standpoint of Jesus' resurrection. Without the resurrection the crucifixion would hardly be worth

¹¹ "My God, what hast thou to reproach me for?" (147). Moltmann does not provide a source.

¹² Moltmann also quotes Goethe's "*nemo contra Deum nisi Deus ipse*" (152). That is, "nothing against God but God himself." The implied dualism in these statements is more poignant in Moltmann's earlier *TH*, 131,

Yahweh's coming glory shows itself in overcoming the experienced judgment and turning it to blessing... it shows itself in the overcoming of God by God— of the judging, annihilating God by the saving, lifegiving God, of the wrath of God by his goodness.

investigating, nor would it have received so much attention throughout history. Yet, Moltmann asks, “does the primitive Christian belief in the resurrection do justice to the life and death of Jesus, or has it put something else in Jesus’ place?” (161).

Jesus’ resurrection from the dead points to the future coming of God, where the world will be made new. It expresses his eschatological identity. Whereas, “In the modern historical sense we talk of *Jesus of Nazareth*, because in historical terms and temporality his origin should explain his future and his beginning his end,” in an eschatological sense, Jesus’ “future determines and explains his origin and his end his beginning” (164). Moreover, the resurrection of Jesus and his subsequent appearances to the disciples are a foretaste and anticipation of new creation. Jesus’ resurrection is not merely revivification. A revivified body would die again, as did Lazarus. Nor is it merely life after death, as in other religions. In Jesus’ resurrection, the eschatological defeat of death has been brought into the present, giving hope to human beings and liberating them for their future: “Without this eschatological consciousness of time, all the things that the Christian church claims and proclaims as being present: the forgiveness of sins, reconciliation and discipleship in love, are fundamentally impossible” (170).

Yet the resurrection is grounded in the crucifixion. Otherwise it is only an abstract hope for the world beyond. Indeed, it is in the crucifixion that new creation has been brought into the present: “The new and scandalous element in the Christian message of Easter was not that some man or other was raised before anyone else, but that the one who was raised was this condemned, executed and forsaken man” (175). Jesus’ crucifixion means that all can be included in the eschatological renewal. This must be seen in the context of the hope for a general resurrection in Daniel 12:2, which Moltmann understands as an extension of the Jewish hope that God’s righteousness will prevail. Even death cannot come against the Lord of all. However, Moltmann asks, “Is this symbol of the general resurrection of the dead a symbol of hope?” No, he argues, “For the unrighteous it is rather a symbol of fear. It would be better for them to stay dead. But for the righteous it is an uncertain hope, for no one can say with certainty that he is righteous” (174). It is only in the resurrection of the *crucified* Christ that all people can participate now in the eschatological renewal: “He [Jesus] anticipates the coming righteousness of God under the conditions of human injustice... [T]he ‘end of history’ is present in the midst of the relationships of history” (185). Understood this

way, the resurrection does not replace Jesus' crucifixion but it is the eschatological expression of the love already present in the crucifixion.

1.4. *Theologia Crucis* against Theism

While theological investigation of the cross usually focusses on soteriology, for Moltmann "this is not radical enough" (201). In chapter six, he seeks to understand what the cross means for God himself. Others have sought to do this before Moltmann, but he finds their contributions to be wanting. They either do not take the implications of the cross far enough, maintaining divine immutability and impassibility, or they operate with "a simple concept of God which is not sufficiently developed in a trinitarian direction" (203).¹³ Instead, Moltmann first aims to "begin from the totality of the person of Christ," rejecting the Chalcedonian distinction between human and divine nature (206). This framework has not only placed unnecessary limitations on how the crucifixion can be understood, but it has often also meant that the emphasis is placed on the relationship between the two natures, distracting from the biblical emphasis on the relationships between Father, Son, and Spirit. The former also precludes any implications of Jesus' passion for divine immutability or impassibility. Second, Moltmann aims to read the cross in a thoroughly trinitarian manner. He will "abandon the concept of God and... speak of the relationships of the Son and the Father and the Spirit at the point at which 'God' might be expected to be mentioned" (207).

1.4.1. *Theism and Theologia Crucis*

In chapter one, Moltmann distinguished between analogical and dialectical knowledge of God. Historically, analogical theology was an adaptation of the Platonic epistemological principle, "like is known only by like" (26). Knowledge of God could only be attained through that which was like him in some way, such as his creation, his acts, or his self-revelation. But this epistemology could not be applied absolutely. If so, God would not be able to reveal himself at all because, being known only through like things, "God is only known by God" (26). Thus Moltmann argues that analogy must be supplemented with dialectic: "God is only revealed as 'God' in his opposite: godlessness

¹³ Moltmann names Karl Rahner, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Heribert Mühlen, and Hans Küng on the Catholic side, and Adolf Schlatter, Paul Althaus, Karl Barth, Eberhard Jüngel, and H. G. Geyer on the Protestant side.

and abandonment by God” (27). Moreover, this is necessary because any likeness to God apart from the cross is self-deification. Human beings can only know God where he meets them, in his opposite. It is true that in knowing God human beings do not ultimately remain in this godlessness. They gain analogical knowledge in being conformed to the image of Christ. Analogy is still valid and necessary, then; it just begins with the dialectical knowledge of God revealed in his opposite.

This can be better understood in the context of Moltmann’s exposition of Luther’s *theologia crucis*, and his accompanying rejection of “theism.” Luther confronted the church for what he saw as the “misuse of [God’s] name for the purpose of a religious consummation of human wisdom, human works and the Christian imperialism of medieval ecclesiastical society” (208). Such abuse received its theological justification in the natural theology of his day following Peter Lombard and Thomas Aquinas, a *theologia gloriae* which inadvertently functioned to divinise human beings through their natural knowledge of God. Conversely, Luther proclaimed a *theologia crucis* where God is revealed not in the glorious things of creation as proclaimed by human beings but in his humility on the cross. Moltmann traces this natural theology back to Stoic philosophy, which affirmed (a) the presence of the divine Logos throughout the cosmos, and (b) the rational nature of all human beings, by which they come to know the Logos and thus the divine. Although the Christian expression of this made a sharp distinction between divine and creaturely being, underscoring the limits of reason, the distinction could still be bridged by means of the *analogia entis*, the analogy between creaturely and divine being. Significantly, in his theology Peter presupposed the “*excellencia* of man”: “His capacity is heightened by his power to reason for [sic] the visible to the invisible, from the many to the one, from realities to the one who brings about reality” (CG, 209).

However, for Luther, it is on the cross that the invisible God makes himself visible. While sinful human beings attempt to know God through natural theology, in their sin they misuse this knowledge for their self-divinisation, projecting human desires for glory and power onto the identity of God. Yet God has made himself known in weakness and suffering. Moltmann identifies this misuse of the knowledge of God

with what he terms “theism.”¹⁴ In theism, the doctrine of God is developed out of the limits of finite being: “it must embrace all the determinations of finite being and exclude those determinations which are directed against being.” Because finite being is mutable, passible, and mortal, etc., God is thus immutable, impassible, and immortal. While Christian theology distinctively reimagines God in light of the life and death of Jesus, for the most part it has maintained the theistic distinction between infinite and finite being. The tradition did this for soteriological reasons: “Otherwise finite being could not find a support and stay against the threatening nothingness of death, suffering and chaos in the divine being. Death, suffering and mortality must therefore be excluded from the divine being” (214).

Further along in *CG*, Moltmann provides a more complete genealogy of theism in interrogating the origin of divine *apatheia* (impassibility) and immutability in Christian theology. Plato popularised the notion that God is good and perfect, in contrast to the poetic depictions of the gods. He is in need of nothing and therefore does not change to become anything other than that which he is. Nor can he be affected by anything because change arises from deficiency. After Aristotle, suffering and emotion were also excluded from the divine being, but God still had will and thought. Here the doctrine of divine *apatheia* also took on an ethical dimension. The virtuous person imitated God and as such was not swayed by their passions. Later, Christianity adopted *apatheia* into its doctrine of God and gave it a distinctively Christian character that centred on divine love: “What Christianity proclaimed as the *agape* of God and the believer was rarely translated as *pathos*.” Rather, “true *agape* derives from liberation from the inward and outward fetters of the flesh (*sarx*), and loves without self-seeking and anxiety” so that “*apatheia* could be taken up as the enabling ground for this love and be filled with it” (269).

For Moltmann, the theistic concept of God does not derive from the cross. In the spirit of Luther’s *theologia crucis*, then, “the time has finally come for differentiating the Father of Jesus Christ from the God of the pagans and the philosophers” (215). Such a distinction, which the early church recognised, led to the development of the doctrine of the Trinity. But the rejection of theism must be decisive and ongoing because the

¹⁴ “Theism here primarily refers to that natural knowledge of God which is taken up by the Catholic and Protestant tradition in the article ‘*De Deo uno*’, and then more generally to monotheistic philosophy in its political, moral and cosmological significance” (281 n.36).

cross continues to confront every *theologia gloriae* in Christian doctrine. Theistic insights may be maintained where they aid proclamation of the crucified Christ, but where they obscure this they must be shed.

Like theism, the concept of God against which conventional atheism rebels is founded on the distinction between finite and infinite being. However, atheism does not embrace this concept of God but rejects it. From “an unjust and absurd world of triumphant evil and suffering without reason and without end it does not see the countenance of a God, but only the grimace of absurdity and nothingness” (219). Yet problems arise if the space left open by the absent God of theism is consequently filled with human beings: “Protest atheism is in error if it supplies a human genre or human society as its vanguard... with inherited theistic divine predicates, saying that it is immortal, that it is always right, that it grants security and authority, etc.” (223). For Moltmann, neither theism nor atheism adequately address the problem of suffering.

1.4.2. *The Chalcedonian Distinction between Christ’s Divine and Human Natures*

Moltmann goes on to analyse the Chalcedonian distinction between divine and human natures in the person of Christ, epitomised by Cyril of Alexandria. He understands this distinction to be a further expression of the theistic distinction between infinite and finite being.¹⁵ While Ignatius and early Good Friday liturgies could apparently speak unproblematically of the suffering of God in Christ, subsequent christology “came very near to docetism, according to which Jesus only appeared to suffer and only appeared to die abandoned by God” (227). This was because the fathers distinguished between the divine and human natures of Christ, locating his suffering in his human nature but

¹⁵ In the later *WJC*, Moltmann provides a more in-depth critique of the Chalcedonian doctrine. First, an anhypostatic human nature suggests the non-historicity of Jesus’ person so that “we cannot talk about ‘Jesus of Nazareth’” (51). Second, if Jesus is sinless in his human nature then this nature is also immortal and thus eternal. It is impossible to speak of either Jesus’ birth or death, undermining the soteriological value of the cross. Third, by situating Christ’s personhood in his divine nature it inevitably favours statements regarding his eternal history over those regarding his humanity. Fourth, the doctrine is based on *a priori* metaphysical concepts rather than the history of Jesus which emphasises the relationship of the Father and the Son. Finally, it was developed in the imperial context of “The church’s concern for orthodoxy in doctrine and liturgy, and for the exclusion of heresy,” which “was entirely in line with the emperor’s concern for a unified imperial religion” (54). Moltmann here instead opts for a “christology on the road” where “The church exists in contradictions and in conflicts” (55). Jesus’ humanity and divinity remain important, but they are dialectically related: “we have to look at Jesus’ humanity in order to know his divinity, and we have to contemplate his divinity so as to know his humanity” (69). Cf. *HTG*, 36-37.

excluding it from his divine nature. The distinction affirmed the participation of God in human nature by which human beings could participate in the divine nature, a divine nature which is immortal. But it also imposed limitations on understanding the cross. For example, despite persistently emphasising the unity of the two natures in the one person of Christ, Cyril of Alexandria interpreted Jesus' cry of dereliction as a vicarious cry for forsaken humanity, having nothing to do with his own forsakenness. So, too, Thomas Aquinas referred Christ's suffering to his human nature, but precluded all suffering from his divine nature.

Following Cyril, Chalcedon also affirmed the unity of the two natures in the one person of Christ. Christ's person is the second person of the Trinity. His divine nature is thus eternal. Conversely, Christ's human nature is anhypostatic, i.e., it has no personhood independent of the divine Son who became flesh. Yet this asymmetry between divine and human natures in the person of Christ meant that the same problem arose: suffering, death, and divine abandonment could not without difficulty be predicated of Jesus' divine person. In answer to this, theologians developed the doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum*. Both divine and human attributes and actions could be predicated of the person of Christ. The two natures were united in him, albeit without confusion: the divine nature remained divine and the human remained human. It was thus more exact to refer to a *praedicatio idiomatum*, as Melancthon did in Reformation times. Conversely, Lutherans emphasised the *communicatio* to the extent that "Christ and God form a unity not only in revelation, but in their very being" (233). This was a *communicatio idiomatum realis*, in contrast to Reformed christology which Lutherans renounced as a merely verbal *communicatio*. However, Reformed theologians questioned whether Lutheran christology necessarily produced a *tertium quid*, "a monster with fleshly Godhead and divinized flesh" (233).

For Moltmann, it is Luther's articulation of the *communicatio idiomatum* that better characterises the one person of Christ. Luther's christology allows for Christ's forsakenness and suffering to be predicated in a real sense of God, rather than isolated in Christ's human nature. However, Luther speaks too generically of God, neglecting to distinguish between the divine nature of God and the three persons of the Trinity. This results in "paradoxical distinctions between God and God: between the God who crucifies and the crucified God; the God who is dead and yet is not dead" (235). In

contrast, Moltmann intends to maintain Luther's core emphasis on the one person of Christ while presenting it in a more thoroughly trinitarian manner.

1.5. The Trinitarian God of the Cross

Having addressed what he understands as the shortcomings of theism in the Christian tradition, Moltmann goes on to develop his alternative. Historically, the symbol of the cross and the doctrine of the Trinity have distinguished Christianity from other religions and systems of belief with which it came into contact. Moltmann thus poses the question, "Is there an inner logical connection between the two special features of Christianity, faith in the crucified Jesus and in the triune God?" (236). If not, then they can be understood independently of each other. But the answer is affirmative. Indeed, the cross can *only* be demonstrated as unique to Christianity in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity, as an event occurring not only in created history but in the trinitarian history between the Father and the Son. Conversely, lest it is to sink into irrelevance or obscurity, the doctrine of the Trinity must be articulated in terms of its roots in the historical event of the cross.

1.5.1. The Identity of the Eschatological God in History

Moltmann argued earlier that the full significance of Christ's crucifixion can only be understood from the standpoint of his resurrection:

As the New Testament shows, not only in the epistles but also in the gospels, Christian faith essentially reads the history of Jesus back to front: his cross is understood in the light of his resurrection, his way to the cross in light of the saving meaning of his cross, his words and miracles in the light of his Easter exaltation to be Lord (162).

Christ's eschatological identity in the resurrection as Lord is his identity in the crucifixion. On this basis Moltmann advocates reading the cross with a "reversed sense of time": "he died as the risen Christ and was made flesh as the one who was to come" (184).

Similarly, the New Testament characterises God as "him who raised Jesus from the dead" (Rom 8:11; cf. Gal 1:1). This identity is so prominent that

All earlier divine statements from the history of Israel, from the law of the covenant or from the state of the world in general fade into insignificance... in

comparison with this new eschatological definition given by God of himself (188).

Moltmann goes so far as to say that this prominence requires that the predicate “must therefore be understood as a divine name” (189).¹⁶

Applying his eschatological reversal of time, Moltmann asks, “What was the ‘God who raised Jesus’ doing in and during the crucifixion of Jesus?” (190). Paul certainly saw that he was there in some sense. As his famous claim suggests, “God was in Christ” (2 Cor 5:19, KJV). But to find in the cross the God who raised Jesus immediately confronts any *a priori* conception of God: “Must one not abandon all that has been imagined, desired or feared in respect of ‘God’ if one is to understand God thus in the crucified Christ?” (190). Moltmann draws out just what this might look like later on in *CG*. The identity of the Father, specifically in his abandonment of the Son, is constituted in the event of the cross.

This eschatological reversal also applies to the identity of the Son. Whereas in pre-Pauline theology, Jesus’ sonship is constituted in his resurrection (Rom 1:3-4),¹⁷ Paul situates this constitution in the broader context of Jesus being sent by the Father (Gal 4:4). Moltmann does not specify where this sending begins, whether with Jesus’ baptism, the incarnation, or before the creation of the world. He only claims that for Paul, “The foundation of the coming of Jesus is his being sent by God” (*CG*, 191).¹⁸ The

¹⁶ It is a divine name that identifies God with his acts in history in the same sense as “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery” (Deut 5:6).

¹⁷ Following the biblical scholarship of his time, Moltmann takes Paul here to be citing an adoptionist formula of the early church. There is not enough space in this thesis for a lengthy discussion of this notion. However, for a recent outline and critical assessment, see Matthew W. Bates, “A Christology of Incarnation and Enthronement: Romans 1:3-4 as Unified, Nonadoptionist, and Nonconciliatory,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 77 (2015): 107-27.

¹⁸ Although Moltmann supports an adoptionist exegesis of the pre-Pauline tradition in Rom 1:4, in his own theology he rejects adoptionism:

The qualification of his person to be the Christ of God and his enthronement as Kyrios could not be dated from his resurrection on, as though it had not happened before, or as though the earthly Jesus was merely the forerunner of the heavenly Christ. That would not do justice to the identity of his person but would tear him apart into two persons, one earthly and one eschatological (181).

Nonetheless, Moltmann predominantly situates Jesus’ sonship in his resurrection in *CG*: “His [Jesus’] office is upheld not by the incarnation of the eternal Son of God... but by the future of the kingdom which is inaugurated in and around him” (98). “His future determines and explains his origin and his end his beginning” (164). Yet the incarnation is not entirely absent from *CG*: “Following Philippians 2, Christian theology speaks of the final and complete self-humiliation of God in man and in the person of Jesus. Here God in the person of the Son enters into the limited, finite situation of man” (276). Admittedly, this aspect of Moltmann’s christology remains ambiguous in *CG*. In *TKG* he develops his

sonship of the one who is constituted Son of God in the resurrection is inseparable from his being sent and from the event of the cross. Paul reads the eschatological constitution of Jesus' sonship in the resurrection backwards into history. For him this constitution is "at work in the sending of Jesus by God and in his being given up by the Father" (192). Similarly, Mark also "depicted the divine Sonship of the risen Christ in the way of Jesus to the cross" (193). Jesus' eschatological sonship stretches backwards to his baptism (Mark 1:11) and, significantly, a Roman centurion confesses him to be the Son on observing his cry of dereliction and death, ahead of his resurrection (15:39). The identity of the Son, specifically in his abandonment by his Father, is also constituted in the event of the cross.

1.5.2. In Defence of Divine Mutability and Passibility

In contrast to the theistic rejection of mutability and passibility, Moltmann argues that it was indeed possible for Christ to suffer as God in his passion. First, divine immutability need only rule out passive mutability, i.e., "God is under no constraint from that which is not God" (229). But his freedom allows for an active mutability in which he can change himself or allow others to change him. Similarly, second, God's impassibility may mean that he does not suffer unwillingly, but it need not mean that he is incapable of suffering if he actively chooses it: "The justifiable denial that God is capable of suffering because of a deficiency in his being may not lead to a denial that he is incapable of suffering out of the fullness of his being, i.e. his love." (230).

In addition to this defence, Moltmann provides three main rationale for attributing suffering to God.¹⁹ First, the cross is central to God's revelation in history and, as per the eschatological reversal expounded in the previous subsection, central to his identity. Indeed, the identities of Father and Son are inseparable from this event. Moreover, it is the cross's centrality to the gospel which requires setting aside the Chalcedonian distinction between Christ's two natures, a distinction that was

doctrine of the Trinity to address the eternal origins of the trinitarian persons. He also explicitly addresses the relationship between the constitution of Jesus' sonship in the resurrection and his eternal sonship, writing,

Paul did not see this as being in any way a contradiction of the statement that Jesus is God's own Son in eternity. The temporally marked beginning of Jesus' ministry as 'the Son of God in power' and the statements about the pre-existence of the Son... stand side by side, without any attempt to reconcile them (TKG, 87).

¹⁹ On these see Bauckham, *Theology of Moltmann*, 47-53.

developed out of commitment to an *a priori* doctrine of divine impassibility. Second, since God is love he gives himself for his creation on the cross:

[A] God who cannot suffer is poorer than any man. For a God who is incapable of suffering is a being who cannot be involved. Suffering and justice do not affect him... But the one who cannot suffer cannot love either (222).²⁰

This leads Moltmann to rethink the traditional notion of God's omnipotence: "a God who is only omnipotent is in himself an incomplete being, for he cannot experience helplessness and powerlessness" (*CG*, 223).²¹

Finally, only divine suffering provides a legitimate theodicy. Protest atheists reject theism, characterising God as a "deceiver, executioner, sadist, despot, player, director of a marionette theatre." He is "sleeping, erring, bored, helpless and clownish" (221). For protest atheism, with which Moltmann agrees in its characterisation of the theistic God, the chief problem with the absolute distinction between finite and infinite being is that such a distinction "passes over the history of suffering of this world. Either it must be tolerated, or it will be compensated for by the second world in heaven." But, "This answer is idolatry" (225). It is idolatry because it confidently puts hope in God without admitting that the reality of suffering already means the end of God. It has failed to take seriously suffering's affront to God and thus worships no God at all. As shown above, any atheism which assumes that the answer to suffering lies with human beings makes the same idolatrous mistake as theism. Adapting the philosophy of Max Horkheimer, then, Moltmann suggests that the only reply to the suffering which theism and atheism alike attempt to alleviate is in the hope that the righteousness of God will

²⁰ As Moltmann states emphatically in *TKG*, 22,

If God is incapable of suffering, then... Christ's passion can only be viewed as a human tragedy... God is inevitably bound to become the cold, silent and unloved heavenly power. But that would be the end of the Christian faith.

²¹ Cf. Moltmann's citation of a passage from Elie Wiesel's *Night*, where Wiesel describes a Jewish youth being hanged and suffering for an hour in front of everyone at a concentration camp. When someone asks, "Where is God now?" Elie answers to himself, "Here He is—He is hanging here, on this gallows." Elie Wiesel, *Night*, trans. from French by Stella Rodway (London: Macgibbon & Kee, 1960). (The edition and material quoted here differ from that cited in *CG*. The citation in *CG* is incomplete). Moltmann responds,

Any other answer would be blasphemy. There cannot be any other Christian answer to the question of this torment. To speak here of a God who could not suffer would make God a demon. To speak here of an absolute God would make God an annihilating nothingness. To speak here of an indifferent God would condemn men to indifference (*CG*, 274).

prevail.²² Such a hope does not find its answer in the present but looks beyond the present to the future because no answer has of yet been decisively given: “Horkheimer’s critical theory is not content with any answer and keeps the question alive” (225). It is this question that Moltmann sees in Jesus’ cry of dereliction. And in Christ taking up this question, God himself joins in the human protest against suffering.

1.5.3. *The Constitution of Father and Son in the Cross*

After the patristic period, the doctrine of the Trinity became increasingly irrelevant in the Christian faith, “isolated speculation and a mere decoration.” In response to this, Moltmann proposes a new project where

We would have to find the relationship of God to God in the reality of the event of the cross and therefore our reality, and consider it there... in that case the nature of God would have to be the human history of Christ and not a divine ‘nature’ separate from man (239).

He finds support for his thesis in Rahner’s rule: “The economic Trinity *is* the immanent Trinity, and the immanent Trinity *is* the economic Trinity” (240). The rule emphasises the inseparability of God’s identity in himself from his identity in relation to creation. But Moltmann goes further than Karl Rahner and provides a more radical rule that centres the doctrine of the Trinity in the crucifixion: “The material principle [i.e., content] of the doctrine of the Trinity is the cross of Christ. The formal principle [i.e., form] of the knowledge of the cross is the doctrine of the Trinity” (241).

While in what follows from this rule it is not always clear what he is proposing, for Moltmann the emphasis certainly falls not on the origin of economic in immanent Trinity but on the economic or historical constitution of the immanent Trinity. He writes, “He [God] *is* love, that is, he exists in love. He constitutes his existence in the event of this love” (244). The cross is “an event concerned with a relationship between persons in which these persons constitute themselves in their relationship with each other” (245). Moltmann does not say that the trinitarian relations originate in the cross. In *CG* he leaves the question of origin unanswered. Rather, the respective personhoods of Father and Son are inseparable from the historical constitution they

²² Moltmann takes up Horkheimer’s concept of the “wholly other.” He admits that Horkheimer does not mention God but nonetheless finds this to be a helpful concept for theological reflection on the trinitarian God of the cross.

undergo in the crucifixion, a constitution which is ongoing until its consummation and completion in the coming kingdom of God. Thus, although for the early church and Karl Barth the immanent Trinity is “a closed circle of perfect being in heaven” (255),²³ for Moltmann,

The relationships in the Trinity between Father and Son are not fixed in static terms once and for all, but are a living history. This history of God or this history in God begins with the sending and delivering up of the Son, continues with his resurrection and the transference of the rule of God to him, and only ends when the Son hands over this rule to the Father (265).

Because Jesus reveals the Father, Moltmann sees a correlative association of the Father’s fatherhood with the crucifixion: “In the surrender of the Son the Father also surrenders himself, though not in the same way.” Although the Son suffers abandonment, he cannot suffer death. Only the living suffer.²⁴ It is rather the Father who suffers his Son’s death in grieving him. Such an interpretation avoids both patripassianism, which modalistically equates the suffering of the Father with that of the Son, and theopaschitism, which, although attributing suffering to God, does not do so in trinitarian terms. It also avoids paradox so that Moltmann does not have to say, “God is dead and yet not dead” (244). Father and Son experience different aspects of death, and this suffering is constitutive of their respective identities. In their mutual abandonment, the Son suffers “Fatherlessness” and the Father suffers “Sonlessness.” And if the Father is without his Son then he is no longer Father either: “he also suffers the death of his Fatherhood in the death of his Son” (243).²⁵ Father and Son not only become their opposites in losing each other, i.e., non-Father and non-Son, but their

²³ Cf. p.203, “For all his polemic against Luther’s distinction between the *deus revelatus* and the *deus absconditus*, Barth himself comes very close to the same sort of thing.” Moltmann writes this in relation to Barth’s distinction between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity, though he does not provide a citation for his characterisation of the fathers’ or Barth’s doctrines of the Trinity as a closed circle.

²⁴ In *CG* and *TKG*, Moltmann focusses on Jesus’ sufferings in Gethsemane and the crucifixion. Any post-mortem suffering that might be located in Christ’s descent into hell is already present pre-mortem: “in full consciousness that God is close at hand in grace, to be abandoned and delivered up to death as one rejected, is the torment of hell” (*CG*, 148). “Luther rightly referred Christ’s descent into hell to his dying forsaken by God and not to his preaching in the kingdom of the dead” (*CG*, 158 n.70; cf. *TKG*, 81, 234 n.34). Elsewhere Moltmann can speak of the suffering of Jesus in his descent into hell. See Jürgen Moltmann, “Descent into Hell,” trans. by M. Douglas Meeks, *Duke Divinity School Review* 33:2 (Spring 1968): 115-119; idem, “The Logic of Hell,” in *God Will Be All in All: The Eschatology of Jürgen Moltmann*, ed. Richard Bauckham, 43-48 (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2001).

²⁵ Cf. p.218, God “has revealed himself and constituted himself in nothingness.”

respective fatherhood and sonship is defined by these opposites. Moltmann sees the constitution of Father and Son in the cross in that to be Son is to be abandoned by the Father, and thus also to be non-Son. To be Father is to abandon the Son, and thus also to be non-Father. As such, the identities of Father and Son contain their negations in history.

1.5.4. The Constitution of the Spirit in the Cross

Pneumatology is not a major feature of *CG*. Moltmann's presentation of the constitution of the Spirit's personhood is therefore not as pronounced. Indeed, he never explicitly affirms that the Spirit's personhood is constituted in the crucifixion in any way analogous to the constitution of Father and Son. Nonetheless, he emphasises the Spirit's connection with the crucifixion.

The Spirit arises from the unity of the Father and the Son. On this Moltmann appeals to Jesus' willing assent to the crucifixion in his prayer in Gethsemane, and Gal 2:20 where Paul makes Jesus himself the subject of *paradidōmi*: He is "the Son of God, who loved me and *gave himself* for me."²⁶ The Son thus does not passively participate in the crucifixion. He actively gives himself up, which demonstrates his shared will with the Father. In this unity Moltmann situates the Spirit:

[W]hatever proceeds from the event between the Father and the Son must be understood as the spirit of the surrender of the Father and the Son, as the spirit which creates love for forsaken men, as the spirit which brings the dead alive (244).

It is "the event of Golgotha, the event of the love of the Son and the grief of the Father from which the Spirit who opens up the future and creates life in fact derives" (247). The origin of the Spirit in *CG* is even more ambiguous than that of the Son. This statement seems to suggest that the Spirit comes into being in the crucifixion. Whether or not this is the case, Moltmann is emphasising the inseparability of the Spirit from the united will of Father and Son in Christ's going to the cross.

1.5.5. The Soteriological Significance of God's Constitution in Nothingness

In the Spirit, Father and Son are taken beyond their negation to the eschatological consummation of their personhoods. Their shared love from which the Spirit derives

²⁶ Cf. Rom 8:31-32, where the Father is subject, with Rom 1:24, 26, and 28.

overcomes the abandonment of the Son in which they are separated. The future in which God overcomes the negations of “Fatherlessness” and “Sonlessness” has come into the present through the Spirit, in Jesus’ resurrection.²⁷ This is not to say that the pain of the crucifixion no longer matters in light of the coming kingdom. Here Moltmann’s soteriological orientation and his rejection of theism as soteriologically destitute is especially relevant.

In theism, the changeable, mortal, and corruptible creation is delivered by an unchangeable, immortal, and incorruptible God. If he were passible then there could be no hope for salvation from passibility. But Moltmann sees this as problematic because “the positive position does not arise magically or miraculously from the negation of the negative.” Indeed, a salvation conceived in terms of the negation of suffering “also negate[s] the relative goodness of creation and the transitory and mortal happiness of this life.” Eschatological consummation becomes “terrifying and boring” (230). Rather, God only truly negates suffering in taking it on himself on the cross. That is, he does not offer human beings redemption from suffering by transporting them to a reality that never has known nor ever will know suffering, but he takes on this suffering himself and overcomes it so that creation, which suffers already, can follow him: “Only if all disaster, forsakenness by God, absolute death, the infinite curse of damnation and sinking into nothingness is in God himself, is community with this God eternal salvation, infinite joy, indestructible election and divine life” (246). The constitution of Father and Son in their negation thus functions soteriologically in allowing for the panentheistic inclusion of human beings in the trinitarian relations: “the Father delivers up his Son on the cross in order to be the Father of those who are delivered up.” (243). So, too, Christ “humbles himself and takes upon himself the eternal death of the godless and the godforsaken, so that all the godless and the godforsaken can experience communion with him” (276). On the cross, because the Father’s own Son undergoes a unique and even greater abandonment than all the divine abandonments of human beings, these divine abandonments are included

²⁷ Cf. *TH*, 198,

The experience of the cross of Jesus means for them [the disciples] the experience of the god-forsakenness of God’s ambassador – that is, an absolute *nihil* embracing also God. The experience of the appearance of the crucified one as the living Lord therefore means for them the experience of the nearness of God in the god-forsaken one, of the divineness of God in the crucified and dead Christ – that is, a new totality which annihilates the total *nihil*.

in Christ's. Yet because even this abandonment is overcome in the resurrection, all creation can find in the resurrection restoration and hope for the coming kingdom.

1.6. Conclusion

In this chapter I have demonstrated how Moltmann understands the cross as central to christology and the doctrine of the Trinity. He opens *CG* by addressing the problem of relevance and identity for the contemporary church, a problem he links to the relationship between soteriology and christology. But in the cross these are inseparable. Through his critical engagement with historical and contemporary interpretations of the cross, Moltmann's own *theologia crucis* comes to the fore. The cross is that which distinguishes Christianity from all other historical phenomena. It is unique and unrepeatable in that Jesus actively suffered, was rejected, and was abandoned by his God. Because it is unique it stands beyond and continually confronts every human theology and theory, both inside and outside the church.

In his christology, Moltmann explores the relationship between Christ and the crucifixion. Jesus himself problematises christology as it can only be undertaken in response to his question, "Who do you say that I am?" Even then, the answers given are provisional because the ultimate answer is still to come. This complements *theologia crucis*, which continually confronts idolatrous appropriations of the cross. Moreover, because the crucifixion takes place in Jesus' own history it not only calls into question the church's theology but the identity of Jesus and his Father as well. It takes place as an event within God. The crucifixion also grounds proper interpretation of Jesus' resurrection, directing hearers of the gospel to the universality of God's love as manifested in the cross, a love for the blasphemous, rebellious, and godforsaken.

Moltmann goes on to contrast *theologia crucis* with alternative concepts of God. In the cross, God reveals himself in his opposite: suffering and helplessness. This differs from theistic concepts of God, which are developed out of the limits of finite being, and from particular forms of atheism which substitute God with human beings. Indeed, because God is love it is necessary that he suffers on the cross. He remains immutable and impassible but he actively chooses to allow his creation to affect him. The Chalcedonian distinction between divine and human natures in Christ is a further expression of the theistic distinction between infinite and finite being. It obscures the

reality of Jesus' suffering in the cross by confining it to his human nature, whereas the biblical narrative does not suggest, let alone necessitate, such a qualification.

Finally, Moltmann presents his proposals for the doctrine of the Trinity. Following the pattern he sees in the New Testament, the eschatological identity of Father and Son in the resurrection must be read backwards into the crucifixion. Here Moltmann finds the negation of Father and Son in the crucifixion. But the Spirit is constituted in their united will, and takes them beyond this negation into the resurrection. On the cross the Son takes on and overcomes human godforsakenness so that in his resurrection creation can become new creation and be reconciled to God.

2. The Trinity and the Kingdom

2.1. Relevant Continuities with and Developments of CG

As with *CG*, in *TKG* Moltmann's doctrine of the Trinity remains grounded in christology: "The present book is an attempt to start with the special Christian tradition of the history of Jesus the Son, and from that to develop a historical doctrine of the Trinity" (19).²⁸ Indeed, Moltmann devotes a whole section, "The History of the Son" (61-96) to this christological centre of the Trinity. Nonetheless, in contrast to *CG*, *TKG* is more consciously derived from the whole trinitarian history of the life of Jesus. Because Christ is never known in isolation from the Father and the Spirit, "The history of Jesus the Son cannot be grasped except as part of the history of the Father, the Son and the Spirit" (16).²⁹ This means that Moltmann explicitly moves from the christological focus of the cross as the primary ground for his doctrine of the Trinity in *CG*, to the broader ground of the trinitarian history of Christ in *TKG*.

With this broader starting point, Moltmann explores aspects of the Trinity which are left relatively unaddressed in *CG*. Richard Bauckham writes,

It seems as though in *The Crucified God* Moltmann meant to say that the Trinity is actually constituted by the event of the cross. If so, he quickly retreated from that position to the view that God is eternally Trinity.³⁰

In *TKG*, Moltmann affirms the eternal processions (162-170, 182-7),³¹ and he can state that Jesus' sending "includes the whole coming, the whole appearance and activity of

²⁸ All references to *TKG* in this chapter are given as page numbers in parentheses.

²⁹ Historically, "the dogma of the Trinity was evolved out of christology." At the same time, however, Jesus' history is always trinitarian. Thus, the doctrine of the Trinity "is the theological premise for christology and soteriology" (*TKG*, 129). In his later theology, especially *SL*, Moltmann devotes greater attention to the doctrine of the Trinity's ground in pneumatology. See Laurence W. Wood, "From Barth's Trinitarian Christology to Moltmann's Trinitarian Pneumatology," *Asbury Theological Journal* 55:1 (2000): 51-67.

³⁰ Bauckham, *Theology of Moltmann*, 155. Many others have made this observation regarding *CG*. The strongest is perhaps from John W. Cooper, "Moltmann's Perichoretic Panentheism," in *Panentheism – the Other God of the Philosophers: From Plato to the Present*, 237-258 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 241: "the Trinity is actualized at the cross. Without the cross there would be no Trinity."

³¹ Cf. Moltmann's developing understanding of this relationship in *CPS*, 54:

If [the foundation of Jesus' mission] is in God himself, does it then correspond to God, or does God only appear in this manner, a manner which perhaps does not correspond to him at all? If

Jesus seen in the light of his divine origin" (71). "God himself finds in Christ his eternal counterpart" (86). Father and Son still constitute their identities in the cross but this is an ongoing constitution which begins before the crucifixion. Moltmann also pays more attention to pneumatological questions. In *CG* he prioritises christology and its relation to the doctrine of the Trinity. The focus of his pneumatology is post-crucifixion.³² In *TKG* this eschatological location remains,³³ but the Spirit is not reduced to eschatology: "The Father eternally 'breathes out' the Holy Spirit" (182). Moreover, the Spirit is a distinct subject, like Father and Son: "If the Spirit is only termed the unity of what is separated, then he loses every centre of activity. He is then an energy but not a Person. He is then a relationship but not a subject" (142).³⁴ As such, the Spirit is at work in the crucifixion. He does not merely arise out of it, but is prior to it so "The common sacrifice of the Father and the Son comes about through the Holy Spirit" (83).³⁵

we push our question further back like this, then we cannot find anything in God which is antecedent to the sending of Jesus and in which this sending was not included. As God appears in history as the sending Father and the sent Son, so he must earlier have been in himself.

Nonetheless, the concept of origin for Moltmann is not completely unproblematic. "This thinking in terms of origin derives from cosmology and can therefore only be haltingly applied to the mystery of the Trinity." While nonetheless employing the concept of origin, in accordance with his broader doctrine of the Trinity such thinking must avoid "monarchical reduction" and emphasise "the equally primordial character of the trinitarian Persons" (*TKG*, 166).

³² Although cf. Moltmann's discussion of P. Kuhn's Jewish theology in which God suffers in history with Israel through his Shekinah (*CG*, 272-274).

³³ "[I]n the whole of the New Testament the Spirit is understood eschatologically" (88).

³⁴ Moltmann takes this a step further in rethinking the trinitarian *taxis* historically and eschatologically:

In the sending, delivering up and resurrection of Christ we find this sequence: Father – Spirit – Son. In the lordship of Christ and the sending of the Spirit the sequence is: Father – Son – Spirit. But when we are considering the eschatological consummation and glorification, the sequence has to be: Spirit – Son – Father" (94).

Moreover, in the eternal *taxis*, which becomes a process in history, "It is even difficult to perceive that the second Person has any priority over the third Person of the Trinity. Word and Spirit, Spirit and Word issue together and simultaneously from the Father, for they mutually condition one another" (170). Rethinking the trinitarian *taxis* in these ways allows Moltmann to present a radical restatement of the Spirit's subjecthood: "In this respect [i.e., eschatologically], the Spirit is not an energy proceeding from the Father or from the Son; it is a subject from whose activity the Son and the Father receive their glory and their union" (126).

³⁵ Nonetheless, while Moltmann extends the scope of his pneumatology in *TKG* significantly, it is not until *WJC* and *SL* that he develops an understanding of the Spirit's role in the cross that can complement his earlier focus on the Father and the Son. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Spirit's connection to the crucifixion is already highlighted. Jesus surrenders himself "through the eternal Spirit" (Heb 9:14). So, too, in the Gospel of Mark Jesus warns his disciples to pray, lest they fall into temptation: "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Mark 14:38). Here, the Spirit makes Jesus' self-surrender possible so that "The value of the sacrifice does not depend solely on the one surrendered. It has to do with the mode of the surrender too" (*SL*, 63). Moreover, as the Spirit of unity, the Spirit is the one who brings the crucifixion beyond itself into the resurrection as one event:

In *TKG* Moltmann also develops major themes and concepts from *CG*. He includes a longer survey of the literature on divine passibility, beginning with the patristic theologian Origen. Moltmann goes on to examine more modern voices such as Abraham Heschel and rabbinic/kabbalistic theology, various nineteenth and twentieth century Anglican theologians, Spain's Miguel de Unamuno and his theology of the *congoja* of Christ and the world, and Russia's Nikolai Berdyaev and his theology of God's suffering in freedom (23-47). When it comes to the relationship between immanent and economic Trinity, Moltmann now bases his identification of the one with the other in the notion that God is a living God, rather than attempting to base this exclusively in the cross. As the living God, he constitutes himself in relation to his creation:

We shall start from the assumption that the relationship between God and the world has a *reciprocal* character, because this relationship must be seen as a living one. Every living and life-promoting determination of someone else has its origin in self-determination, and it reverberates on that self-determination. A purely one-sided relationship is not a living relationship at all (98).³⁶

Nonetheless, the cross still plays a central role in this identification:

The cross is at the centre of the Trinity. This is brought out by tradition, when it takes up the Book of Revelation's image of 'the Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world' (Rev. 5.12). Before the world was, the sacrifice was already in God. No Trinity is conceivable without the sacrifice of love, without the crucified Son (83).³⁷

"Looked at pneumatologically, Christ's death and rebirth belong within a single movement." They are "the birth-pangs and birth-joys of the Spirit" and "the sowing and growth of a plant" (*SL*, 65).

Secondly, Moltmann can speak of the unique suffering of the Spirit. Because the Spirit who gave Jesus power in his ministry goes with him to the cross, "the Spirit who was Jesus' active power now becomes his suffering power." Thus, "The sufferings of Christ are also the sufferings of the Spirit, for the surrender of Christ also manifested the self-emptying of the Spirit" (*WJC*, 174). Yet the Spirit's suffering is nonetheless distinct from Jesus': "The Spirit is the transcendent side of Jesus' immanent way of suffering" and "the Spirit binds itself to Jesus' fate, without becoming identical with him" (*SL*, 62). Moltmann has already argued that it is not the Son but the Father who suffers death in grieving. So, too, the Spirit suffers the Son's death but in yet another way: "what the Spirit 'experiences' – though we must not overstress the metaphor – is surely that the dying Jesus 'breathes him out' and 'yields him up'" (*SL*, 64; Mark 15:37; John 19:30).

³⁶ Cf. 64, "His [Jesus'] history is the history of the reciprocal, changing, and *hence living* relationship between the Father, the Son and the Spirit," emphasis added.

³⁷ Cf. 160, referring to *CG* Moltmann writes,

In order to grasp the death of the Son in its significance for God himself, I found myself bound to surrender the traditional distinction between the immanent and the economic Trinity,

The basis of the relationship between immanent and economic Trinity in the living God is also complemented by Moltmann's emphasis on divine love in *TKG*. If God is love, as the cross attests, then love requires him to communicate himself not only to that which is like him, his Son, but to his Other, creation. And in his love he also seeks to be loved: "If God is love, then he does not merely emanate, flow out of himself; he also expects and needs love" (99).

Another theme which Moltmann develops in *TKG* is his critique of theism. Here, however, he has extended this critique to "monotheism," a term he uses to denote what he deems to be subordinationist or modalist doctrines of the Trinity, including most Western trinitarian theology after Augustine. This direction is already evident in *CG*. Following Karl Rahner, Moltmann distances his doctrine of the Trinity from those which "first describe the unity of the nature of God and then distinguish between the three divine persons or hypostases, as in that case one is essentially dealing with four beings." He refers to such thinking derisively as "monotheistic" (*CG*, 240). But the cross necessitates that trinitarian unity be rethought: "the unity contains not only identity of substance but also the wholly and utterly different character and inequality of the event of the cross" (*CG*, 244).³⁸ In *TKG* Moltmann significantly develops his doctrine of trinitarian unity, presenting collective unity as an alternative to substantial unity (129-150, 171-178).

2.2. The Relationship between Immanent and Economic Trinity

Moltmann advocates a position of no compromise on the identity of immanent with economic Trinity:

The thesis about the fundamental *identity* of the immanent and the economic Trinity of course remains open to misunderstanding as long as we cling to the distinction at all, because then it sounds like the dissolution of the one in the other (160).

according to which the cross comes to stand only in the economy of salvation, but not within the immanent Trinity.

³⁸ Cf. also Moltmann's critique of the "earthly eschatology" of the church in *TH*, 159:

The world is led by the one Church to the Christ who is one with the one God, and is thus brought to unity and salvation. The eschatological expectation of what has 'not yet' happened becomes a noetic expectation of the universal disclosure and glorification of what has already happened in heaven.

Moltmann decries such thinking because it dehistoricises the biblical narrative.

Thus “there are not two different Trinities.” Rather, “There is only one, single, divine Trinity and one, single divine history of salvation. The triune God can only appear in history as he is in himself, and no other way” (153). Nonetheless, Moltmann still employs some kind of distinction between economic and immanent Trinity, which will become clear in the following.

2.2.1. *The Trinity and the Act of Creation*

It is on the cross that God enters into the suffering of his creation. Yet while this is the culmination of his suffering in history, to the extent that Father and Son lose their respective fatherhood and sonship, it is not, in historical terms, the first instance of divine suffering. On the cross Moltmann sees the confirmation of God’s suffering throughout *all* history: “From the foundation of the world, the *opera trinitatis ad extra* correspond to the *passiones trinitatis ad intra*” (160). That is, if the cross reveals God’s solidarity with human beings in suffering then it also reveals that this suffering begins not in the crucifixion but with the creation of the world. Whereas creation is traditionally understood as an outward act, external to God, Moltmann asks, “can the omnipotent and omnipresent God have an ‘outward’ aspect at all?” (108). No, he responds. Before the creation of the world there is only God. And if there is only God then there is no outside, lest something else compete with God for this ontological space. It is therefore necessary for the Creator to limit himself: “In order to create something ‘outside’ himself, the infinite God must have made room for this finite beforehand, ‘in himself’” (109). As such, God’s suffering and constitution in history begin at creation.

To make this move, Moltmann must reconceive divine freedom. He asks, “Is the suffering God free or is he a prisoner of his own history?” In the nominalist concept of divine freedom, which Moltmann associates with Karl Barth, God “is compelled to nothing. He can do and leave undone whatever he likes. His creative and suffering love is founded on his groundless decision” (52).³⁹ But Moltmann finds this dissatisfactory: “The reasoning ‘God could’, or ‘God could have’, is inappropriate... God’s freedom can never contradict the truth which he himself is.” Thus, “not to reveal himself and to be

³⁹ Moltmann continues, “Karl Barth tried to get over the nominalist doctrine of *potentia absoluta*, especially in his criticism of Luther. None the less, in his doctrine of God’s primordial decision a nominalist fringe remains” (52).

contented with his untouched glory would be a contradiction of himself” (53). Significantly, the nominalist concept of freedom does not correspond to God’s suffering in love on the cross. It understands God’s freedom formalistically, not materially. But Moltmann sees in the cross a priority of God’s love over his freedom: “The theology of the divine passion is founded on the biblical tenet, ‘God is love’” (57; 1 John 4:16). God’s freedom must therefore be understood in terms of the love which is in the cross, “a self-evident, unquestionable ‘over-flowing of goodness’” and “therefore never open to choice at any time” (*TKG*, 55).

Such an understanding of divine freedom differs markedly from the nominalist concept: “For the loving God, nothing is a matter of indifference. Before an equivocal, an undecided God, nothing is significant” (152). If choice is above love in the divine nature then the decisions God executes in his freedom become arbitrary. Moreover, if freedom is prior to love then “God has two natures,” the immanent nature of freedom and the economic nature of love (54). Thus,

The notion of an immanent Trinity in which God is simply by himself, without the love which communicates salvation, brings an arbitrary element into the concept of God... Consequently this idea safeguards neither God’s liberty nor the grace of salvation (151).

Moltmann proceeds to state his position positively, providing six theses based on the tenet, “God is love.” First, “Love is the self-communication of the good.” As self-communication it can give itself completely to the other without being dissolved in the other (57). Second, “Every self-communication presupposes the capacity for self-differentiation.” In communicating himself God both differentiates what is communicated from himself and also identifies it with himself. His self-communication is not possible as a “solitary subject” but only as Trinity: “If God is love then he is at once the lover, the beloved and the love itself” (57). Third, in self-communication God seeks his Other by creating and caring for the world. Freedom is defined in terms of love so “Love not only has the potentiality for this, but the actual tendency and intention as well” (58). Fourth, God’s free love for the world arises from the Father and Son’s necessary relation of love. The Father creates out of his love for the Son and the Son redeems out of his love for the Father. Whereas intra-trinitarian love is love of “like for like,” God goes beyond this to create and love his Other because “Like is not enough for like.” Nonetheless, this love for the Other takes place within the mutual love of

Father and Son and is thus “no different from the love he himself is in eternity” (58-59). Fifth, the act of creation requires God’s self-limitation and is therefore internal as well as external. In desiring that the world freely respond to him, God limits himself in giving creation the freedom to deny him. In this he opens himself up to suffering from his creation, which subsequently becomes suffering with and for his creation. Finally, because God suffers with the world, his own deliverance from suffering is in the world’s deliverance from suffering, and vice versa.

While grounding God’s freedom in the love of the cross, however, Moltmann is careful not to make the creation of the world an external or internal necessity to God’s being. On the one hand, “it is impossible to conceive of a God who is not a creative God” and “God cannot find bliss in eternal self-love if selflessness is part of love’s very nature” (106). Yet,

If we lift the concept of necessity out of the context of compulsive necessity and determination by something external, then in God *necessity* and *freedom* coincide; they are what is for him axiomatic, self-evident. For God it is axiomatic to love, for he cannot deny himself. For God it is axiomatic to love freely, for he is God. There is consequently no reason why we should not understand God as being from eternity self-communicating love. This does not make him ‘his own prisoner’. It means that he remains true to himself (108).⁴⁰

For Moltmann, then, the cross demonstrates that the history of creation in the economic Trinity belongs to God’s own history. That which has been called the immanent Trinity must be understood as already open for the inclusion of creation and indeed directed already towards creating the world.

2.2.2. The Doxological Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity

An interesting innovation Moltmann introduces in *TKG* is the idea that immanent and economic Trinity can be distinguished doxologically. Traditionally, the doctrine of the immanent Trinity attends to God’s intra-trinitarian life or his being, whereas the doctrine of the economic Trinity attends to God’s work *ad extra*. Moltmann can thus acknowledge and uphold this distinction, albeit in a different way that is in accordance with his identification of economic with immanent Trinity: “In doxology the thanks of the receiver return from the goodly gift to the giver. But the giver is not thanked merely

⁴⁰ Cf. 151, “He is not compelled to love by any outward or inward necessity.”

for the sake of his good gift; he is also extolled because he himself is good" (153). Doxology recognises the immanent Trinity because it recognises that God's work has its source in God himself. However, this does not compromise the identity of economic with immanent Trinity because "doxological terms remain inescapably bound to the experience of salvation and do not go speculatively beyond it" (153). Doxology finds the ground of the cross in God's immanent life without recourse to a concept of divine freedom that is prior to divine love. Following this, Moltmann proposes a new rule: "*Statements about the immanent Trinity must not contradict statements about the economic Trinity. Statements about the economic Trinity must correspond to doxological statements about the immanent Trinity*" (154). The first part of the rule concerns the inseparability of the doctrine of the (immanent) Trinity from the human experience of salvation, which God himself experiences in his history with creation. The second part of the rule concerns the necessity of recognising the being of God, "the transcendent conditions which make the experience [of salvation] possible," in the doctrine of the (economic) Trinity (153).

Through his doxological doctrine of the immanent Trinity Moltmann develops his earlier pneumatology and eschatology. The relationship between doxology and the Trinity is not merely epistemological. The (immanent) Trinity is both recognised and *constituted* in doxology. That is, the Spirit constitutes the Father and the Son through the praise of the redeemed: "the joy of responsive love in glorification through the Spirit determines the inner life of the triune God from eternity to eternity."⁴¹ Moreover, doxology "always ends with the eschatological prospect," looking to the coming of the kingdom. God's constitution takes place in history but also looks forward to its eschatological consummation when "What remains is the eternal praise of the triune God in his glory" (161). Moltmann has already expounded this eschatological constitution in *CG*. In *TKG* he maintains this position but more explicitly links it with the immanent Trinity. The coming of the kingdom is an "inner-trinitarian process."

⁴¹ Cf. 127,

In *glorification* through the Spirit... we find the order of the Trinity reversed. In the wake of glorification, the song of praise and the unity proceed *from the Spirit through the Son to the Father*... He [the Spirit] achieves the glorification of God through the new creation's praise and testimony. He creates for the Father in heaven that joy on earth which finally gives him bliss. It is through the Spirit that the Father receives his honour and his glory, and his union with the world.

“Eschatology... is not simply what takes place in the Last Days in heaven and on earth; it is what takes place in God’s essential nature” (92). As such, when the Son has defeated death, and his sonship, with the Father’s fatherhood, has been consummated in his handing over of the kingdom to the Father, “the economic Trinity is raised into and transcended in the immanent Trinity” (161).

2.3. Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown how Moltmann develops his understanding of the significance of the cross for the doctrine of the Trinity in *TKG*. Most relevant to this thesis is his construal of the relationship between immanent and economic Trinity. Moltmann locates divine suffering not only in the event of the cross but in the creation of the world. To create, God limits himself and makes himself vulnerable to creaturely suffering. Moreover, because God is love his decision to create the world is not based in choice but a free assent to the necessity inherent in love. Moltmann maintains that the immanent Trinity may be known doxologically, as praise focusses not just on the gift of salvation but the giver of the gift. This anticipates the eschatological immanent Trinity when God will be in full fellowship with his creation and the economic Trinity will be complete.

3. *Crux Probat Omnia*: Moltmann's Methodology

3.1. Methodology in *CG*

3.1.1 *Christocentrism and Crucicentrism*

A number of writers have noted that in *CG* Moltmann derives his doctrine of the Trinity from christology. Specifically, for Moltmann, "The *crucified* Christ is the inner criterion of all theology. Take that away and there is nothing specifically christian about the church, or about its faith and theology."⁴² In this, Moltmann follows Karl Barth.⁴³ With Luther, he repudiates any natural theology that would supplant the God who is revealed in the cross. Nonetheless, Moltmann arrives at quite different conclusions to Barth because, unlike Barth, he rejects the distinction between immanent and economic Trinity. This allows him to affirm in the cross the divine suffering of Father and Son and their constitution in history. Moltmann's theological methodology in *CG* is indeed christocentric, but his christocentrism is crucicentric.⁴⁴

First, the crucified Christ calls all theologies into question: "[B]ecause of its subject, the theology of the cross, right down to its method and practice, can only be polemical, dialectical, antithetical and critical theory" (*CG*, 69). "It does not state what exists, but sets out to liberate men from their inhuman definitions and idolized

⁴² Carl E. Braaten, "A Trinitarian Theology of the Cross," *Journal of Religion* 56:1 (1976): 113-121 (114, emphasis added). Cf. also Gerald L. Bray, *The Doctrine of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 193, "The influence of Barth's christocentric trinitarianism can be seen most strongly in the work of Jürgen Moltmann"; and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "Jürgen Moltmann: Trinitarian Panentheism," in *The Trinity: Global Perspectives*, 100-122 (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 103, "Christology is the starting point of the Trinitarian doctrine for Moltmann."

⁴³ E.g., Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1, ed. and trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), 119 (henceforth *CD* I/1), "Revelation in fact does not differ from the person of Jesus Christ nor from the reconciliation accomplished in Him. To say revelation is to say 'The Word became flesh'"; *CD* I/1, 380, the doctrine of the Trinity is an answer to "the manifestation of Jesus Christ understood as the revelation of the Logos. It is trying to discuss the deity of this revealed, incarnate Logos." See Henri Blocher, "Karl Barth's Christocentric Method," in *Engaging with Barth: Contemporary Evangelical Critiques*, ed. David Gibson and Daniel Strange, 21-54 (New York: T. & T. Clark, 2008).

⁴⁴ While *staurocentric* seems to be more commonly represented in the literature, *crucicentric* is sometimes employed instead. The latter is preferable because (a) it is faithful to the Latin root *centrum*, in contrast to *staurocentric* which combines one Latin and one Greek word (although *centrum* derives ultimately from Greek, the meaning of the Greek root is very much removed from the Latin *centrum* and the English *centre* which are invoked here), and (b) its similarity to words like *crucifix* and *cruciform* makes it more readily accessible to a wider audience.

assertions" (CG, 72). A theology of the cross requires that theology is always in flux because the same theological truths can be liberatory and in line with the gospel in one context but oppressive and opposed to the gospel in another. Whereas devotion to the cross provided solace for the poor and marginalised because they were closer to the crucified Christ than those who exercised power over them, "Too often, peasants, Indians and black slaves have been called upon by the representatives of the dominant religion to accept their sufferings as 'their cross' and not to rebel against them" (CG, 49). Moltmann points out that Luther, for example, though developing his *theologia crucis* to highlight the abuses of the church, did not apply this same critique to society in the Peasant Wars. Rather, he commended the peasants to accept their suffering (CG, 66). This means that Moltmann's theology must also be self-critical from the start, lest, like Luther, it be used by himself or others for ends foreign to the cross of Christ. Significantly, the critical nature of the cross is not limited to human theologies. It extends to God himself. Because Christ's life ends in suffering, abandonment, and death, the cross disputes both the claims he made throughout his life and his Father's faithfulness to him. It is thus the "basic problem" of christology and theology (CG, 125). *Theologia crucis* is a critical theology that confronts church and society, as well as the God in which these have their basis.

Second, Moltmann undertakes theology dialectically. In contrast to the analogical principle, "like is known only by like," the staple of classical Western epistemology, Moltmann sees in the cross the workings of the dialectic, i.e., "Every being can be revealed only in its opposite. Love only in hatred, unity only in conflict."⁴⁵ Thus, "God is only revealed as 'God' in his opposite: godlessness and abandonment by God" (CG, 27). However, Richard Bauckham claims that Moltmann does not clearly explain or justify this principle. If God is only revealed in his opposite then revelation does not take place. What is revealed is not God but his opposite! Rather, Moltmann seems to employ dialectic to say that God is revealed in the *context* of his opposite: "God is revealed in his opposite because he is love which identifies with what is alien to him," i.e., godforsaken human beings.⁴⁶ God's love is known when it is encountered

⁴⁵ F. W. J. Schelling, *Über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1964) 8913-15, 89, cited in CG, 27.

⁴⁶ Richard Bauckham, "Moltmann's Eschatology of the Cross," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 30:4 (1977): 301-311 (305). Cf. *ExpTh*, 69-73.

where there is no love. Moreover, this is dialectical because God reveals himself in both his opposite and his likeness. He reveals himself in his opposite according to the crucifixion but he reveals himself in his likeness according to the resurrection. In the resurrection, God has not only become like human beings, revealing himself in his opposite, but as they become like him, he reveals himself in his likeness. It is in the differentiated unity of the cross – crucifixion and resurrection – that Moltmann’s dialectical method has its basis. It follows that *theologia crucis* is not unfettered, pure criticism. If the criticism is the intended end rather than one stage in the dialectic then it soon loses its Christian character because it is abstracted from the cross of the risen Christ. Such a criticism cannot offer the world anything beyond its own vicissitudes. Moltmann’s dialectic means that critical theology grounded in the cross is eschatologically oriented.

Third, on the cross Jesus identifies with godforsaken humanity. If this is who God is then all theology is necessarily soteriological. That is, theology must seek to know God in connection to the exigencies of concrete, creaturely existence and seek God’s deliverance of human beings into new life. This means both that theology is informed by human experience so that, for example, Moltmann’s personal experiences of guilt and suffering guide his project in *CG*, and that theology is oriented to the liberation of the godforsaken. Moltmann thus addresses contemporary issues such as the identity and relevance of the church (chap. 1), and the psychological and political liberation of humanity (chaps. 7 and 8). Overlooking such ends means potentially forfeiting commitment to the cross in theology. Significantly, this soteriological orientation underpins Moltmann’s almost categorical rejection of metaphysics, which he sees as abstract and speculative.⁴⁷

3.1.2. *Too Much Cross?*

Carl Braaten has critiqued Moltmann’s central methodological focus on the crucified Christ. *CG* “suffers from the occupational hazard of systematic theologians in particular—the tyranny of the single category.”⁴⁸ Moltmann admits as much. In writing

⁴⁷ E.g., *CG*, 65-81, 207-219, 227-235; *TKG*, 10-20, 129-151, 191-202. See Daniel E. Rossi-Keen, “Jürgen Moltmann’s Doctrine of God: The Trinity beyond Metaphysics,” *Studies in Religion/Sciences religieuses* 37:3-4 (2008): 447-463. Puzzlingly, Rossi-Keen makes little reference to Moltmann’s *theologia crucis*, which is the ground for his rejection of metaphysics.

⁴⁸ Braaten, “Trinitarian Theology of the Cross,” 120. Similar critiques have been lodged by others. For example, John Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University

CG, “The whole of theology was drawn as if by a magnifying glass into a single focus: *the cross*” (*CG*, x). This “tyranny,” however, allegedly restricts Moltmann’s theological trajectory. Whether Braaten’s attribution of *theologia crucis* to Paul is more or less correct, his observation is worth noting:

The writings of Paul are the main source for the *theologia crucis* in the New Testament, and Paul is not the whole of the canon. His theology cannot even determine the sole norm of what is Christian. The theology of the cross does not provide theology with all its epistemological presuppositions, its faith contents, and its ethical implications. The multiplicity of New Testament confessions and theologies cannot be unified by reduction to a theology of the cross.⁴⁹

By making the cross his sole focus in *CG*, Moltmann has failed to faithfully represent the diverse biblical witness to Christ. I will return to Moltmann’s use of Scripture later in the chapter. Here it is enough to wonder with Braaten to what extent Moltmann’s doctrine of the Trinity is viable if it is derived from a “single category.”

Nonetheless, while “The death of Jesus on the cross is the *centre* of all Christian theology” for Moltmann, “It is not the only theme of theology, but it is in effect the entry to its problems and answers on earth” (*CG*, 204). As Christiaan Mostert writes of Moltmann’s theology,

God is defined by more than the cross. But whatever else is to be said about the God whose self-revelation finds its sharpest focus in Jesus Christ cannot, without significant loss, be said at any great distance from the place where that terrible cry of God-forsakenness was uttered.⁵⁰

Throughout *CG*, Moltmann consistently asserts the differentiated unity of the cross in crucifixion and resurrection. It is “from a cross *and resurrection-centered* christological vantage point” that Moltmann derives his conclusions.⁵¹ This is particularly evident in Moltmann’s eschatological reversal of history.⁵² Moreover, whereas in *CG* Moltmann

Press, 1994), 51, writes, “For Moltmann it is the separation of God-forsakenness which is treated almost in isolation from other aspects of the passion narratives.”

⁴⁹ Braaten, “Trinitarian Theology of the Cross,” 120.

⁵⁰ Christiaan Mostert, “Moltmann’s Crucified God,” *Journal of Reformed Theology* 7 (2013): 160-180 (166).

⁵¹ Stephen Williams, “Moltmann on Jesus Christ,” in *Jürgen Moltmann and Evangelical Theology: A Critical Engagement*, ed. Sung Wook Chung, 104-125 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012), 122, emphasis added. See *CG*, 204. Though critical of Moltmann’s proposals, Williams acknowledges that Moltmann does not derive his theology exclusively from the cross.

⁵² See subsection 1.5.1. of this thesis.

focusses on the crucifixion, he had already given considerable attention to the resurrection, the ground of Christian hope, in his earlier *TH*.

It is also notable that two other methodological considerations not derived directly from the crucifixion inform *CG*. First, as can be seen in his dialectical method noted above, Moltmann maintains the central theme of *TH*, the eschatological nature of history in its openness to the future. This, like *theologia crucis*, requires that all theology be seen as provisional. Because Christ is being constituted in history, “the centre of his existence is outside himself” (*CG*, 106). The church’s “christology is essentially unconcluded and permanently in need of revision” (*CG*, 106-107). Amid the horrors of great suffering, in the resurrection God reveals his righteousness and confirms his promise that this righteousness will be consummated in his coming kingdom where the world will be put to right. In the meantime, theology witnesses to that hope in the present, albeit in an ever-provisional way.

Second, Moltmann asserts that interpretation of the cross must be governed by the doctrine of the Trinity: “The material principle of the doctrine of the Trinity is the cross of Christ. The formal principle of the knowledge of the cross is the doctrine of the Trinity” (*CG*, 241). That is, only in its theological context, the unique Christian witness to God as Trinity, can the cross begin to be properly understood. According to Moltmann, those before him who had similarly sought to make the cross central to their doctrine of God had failed to do so in an adequately trinitarian manner (*CG*, 200-204). This does not mean that, in contrast to the dynamicity of *theologia crucis*, Moltmann here reverts to an ahistorical principle in the eternal trinitarian persons. The Trinity, too, provides an ever-moving ground from which to engage theology as Father, Son, and Spirit continue to constitute themselves in history and bring the church into a renewed understanding of the gospel. Moreover, the Trinity not only determines the shape of *theologia crucis* but the inverse is also true. Although this symmetry is not evident in Moltmann’s formula, it is clear that he presupposes it in *CG*.⁵³ Like crucifixion and resurrection, the relationship between the doctrines of the cross and the Trinity is dialectical. Otherwise Moltmann would be restricted to interpreting the cross according to more traditional trinitarian tenets, many of which

⁵³ Further down, on the same page, Moltmann seems to basically equate the two: “the theology of the cross must be the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of the Trinity must be the theology of the cross” (*CG*, 241).

he rejects. Braaten's critique, then, oversimplifies Moltmann's method in *CG* in overlooking its dialectical and trinitarian setting.

Yet, although the crucifixion is not the exclusive theme of Moltmann's *CG*, it remains to be shown whether he interprets it in a theologically responsible way. For Daniel Castelo, Moltmann lacks context, i.e., "a narrative of God's history with his people," where the cross does not convey God's constitution in history but it is "one other instance of God's steadfastness and fidelity to the covenant." This means that "For the uniqueness that the cross of Christ must elicit for the theological task, it is a concept no more noteworthy than the incarnation or resurrection."⁵⁴ Similarly, for Kevin Vanhoozer, "Jesus Christ reveals God neither *de novo* nor *ex nihilo*."⁵⁵ The new covenant is not new for God himself, from whom all new things come, but it is new for his people, in which the Gentiles are now included. Here it is not so much Moltmann's focus on the cross as it is what he does with it theologically that is the problem. I will discuss this in more detail in the next chapter.⁵⁶

3.2. Methodology in TKG

3.2.1. Experience and Dialogue

In *TKG*, Moltmann develops his earlier methodological commitments. Following the soteriological orientation of *CG*, he opens with a discussion of the role of experience and practice in theological epistemology. Whereas Friedrich Schleiermacher made human experience a central category in theology, Moltmann follows Barth in rejecting this because it makes theology about human beings instead of God. However, he maintains that experience is valid insofar as it takes into account the inverse, God's experience of human beings. Specifically, divine suffering means that God is known in the context of human suffering: "If a person once feels the infinite passion of God's love which finds expression here," i.e., in suffering, "then he understands the mystery of the triune God" (*TKG*, 4).⁵⁷ Moltmann also affirms that theology should be oriented to

⁵⁴ Daniel Castelo, "Moltmann's Dismissal of Divine Impassibility: Warranted?" *Scottish Journal of Theology* 61:4 (2008): 396-407 (405). Castelo cites Phil 2:6-11 and Heb 1:3-4 as biblical examples of the threefold incarnation-crucifixion-resurrection pattern of Christ's life that the fathers recognised.

⁵⁵ Kevin Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 418.

⁵⁶ See subsection 4.4.1.

⁵⁷ Cf. Moltmann, "Jürgen Moltmann," in *How I Have Changed: Reflections on Thirty Years of Theology*, ed. Jürgen Moltmann, trans. by John Bowden, 13-21. (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press

practical concerns. But such an orientation must proceed from faith, which consists in prayer and reflection as well as practice: “There must be no theology of liberation without the glorification of God and no glorification of God without the liberation of the oppressed” (*TKG*, 8). Moltmann thus reminds his readers that although theology is necessarily soteriological, it cannot properly be soteriological without recourse to divine subjectivity as well as human subjectivity and thinking as well as practice. While his appeal to divine experience is certainly influenced by the cross, in *TKG* Moltmann begins to move beyond this starting point to posit divine experience as a necessary presupposition of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Perhaps the most important methodological principle informing the significance of the cross for the doctrine of the Trinity which Moltmann hones in *TKG* is that of dialogue. He already aimed at this in *CG*, a book which was “not meant to bring the discussion to a dogmatic conclusion, but to be, like a symbol, an invitation to thought and rethinking” (*CG*, 6). This is more pronounced in *TKG*, which is the first in his series of “systematic contributions to theology.” Here Moltmann develops theology “in a particular systematic sequence,” though without any attempt to produce a complete “system.” *TKG* and future works are thus “contributions” (*TKG*, x). Such contributions do not aim for objectivity. Rather, they participate in ongoing, critical dialogue, seeking the coming kingdom in the present.⁵⁸ Moltmann’s appropriation of sources reflects this. He targets his critical theology in *CG* and *TKG* at dominant voices such as Augustine, Thomas, and Barth, whose towering theologies often inadvertently silence marginalised voices in the tradition. This is thus not so much a concern with authorial intention as it is with how these theologies have functioned in church and society, as is clear from the obvious influence they exert on Moltmann’s theology. Hegel, who is certainly not a marginalised voice in theology, also contributes considerably to Moltmann’s conclusions.⁵⁹ Moltmann’s reliance on Hegel perhaps

International, 1997), 20, “It should be possible to verify theological statements by empathy with the experiences of others, whether individual or collective.”

⁵⁸ Cf. Joy Ann McDougall, *Pilgrimage of Love: Moltmann on the Trinity and Christian Life* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), vii, who writes that Moltmann read through her work as it was in development and instead of rejecting her critiques encouraged her to engage even more critically with his proposals.

⁵⁹ On the relationship between Hegel and Moltmann see Brian Spence, “The Hegelian Element in von Balthasar’s and Moltmann’s Understanding of the Suffering of God,” *Toronto Journal of Theology*

reflects his need to draw on an alternatively robust system to decentre other dominant voices. But Moltmann also enjoins quieter voices, historical and contemporary, inside and outside the church, to participate in the conversation on the Trinity. For example, he invites input from Jewish (*CG*, 270-274), atheist, and Marxist voices (*CG*, 219-227). In *TKG*, too, Moltmann devotes much space to particular theologians, sometimes obscure, from different communities around the world who have found comfort in the suffering of God (*TKG*, 23-47). He draws upon Joachim of Fiore, “counted as an ‘Enthusiast’ and an outsider,” to understand the relationship between the Trinity and the kingdom (*TKG*, 203-209). Again, however, while Moltmann’s dialogical approach accords with a commitment to the cross, it cannot be reduced to this commitment. It certainly derives from many personal and theological factors.

If the accusation of Moltmann’s methodological reduction to the cross in *CG* is to nonetheless be maintained, it is at least clear that in *TKG* (and his many later works) he has moved beyond this focus and drawn upon other aspects of theology to inform his pursuits. If Moltmann views *TKG* and further volumes in his systematic contributions series as participation in dialogue as opposed to a theological system, how much more then should *CG*, a view of Christian theology from an avowedly particular angle, be seen as a participation in this dialogue.

3.2.2. *The Non-Systematic Nature of Moltmann’s Methodology*

What this sketch of Moltmann’s theological methodology in *CG* and *TKG* does reveal, however, is the piecemeal and generally non-systematic nature of Moltmann’s theology. Indeed, George Hunsinger contends that *TKG* is a “methodological mishmash”:

When Moltmann wants to appeal to experience to validate a theological claim, he appeals to experience. When he wants to invoke the testimony of Scripture, he does so. When a general philosophical definition makes sense to him, he brings it in. When he needs a more specifically theological argument, he does not hesitate to construct one.⁶⁰

14:1 (1998): 45-60; Samuel M. Powell, *The Trinity in German Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 173-258.

⁶⁰ George Hunsinger, Review of *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, by Jürgen Moltmann, in *The Thomist* 47:1 (1983): 129-139 (129). In an otherwise critical review, Hunsinger goes on to affirm Moltmann:

It is not until *ExpTh* (2000), the final volume of his systematic contributions, that Moltmann develops a detailed theological methodology. He writes,

Up to now these questions about method have not greatly interested me, because I first wanted to get to know the real content of theology. For me, what was more important was the revision of theological issues in the light of their biblical origins, and their renewal or reworking in the challenge of the present (*ExpTh*, xiv).

Moltmann explicitly rejects devoting too much space to methodological questions. "Never content with being anything less than programmatic,"⁶¹ he is more concerned with the soteriological end at which theology aims and the process of dialogue this requires than the scientific conditions for its possibility. Moreover, this is mirrored by Moltmann's disregard for "correct theological notions." Rather, across his career he was "much too preoccupied with the perception of new perspectives and unfamiliar aspects" (*ExpTh*, xv). Elsewhere he reflects, "My theological virtue has not been humility, but only curiosity and imagination for the kingdom of God."⁶² Commitment to a methodology might have restricted his exploration of new content and the way he engaged certain voices. This is not to say that Moltmann's theology is bereft of all methodology, implicit and explicit. It is clear from the above that he consciously develops *CG* and *TKG* according to particular methodological commitments. However, these commitments (*theologia crucis*, dialectic, dialogue, etc.), as well as a focus on theological content, result in a theology of cross and Trinity that invites critical engagement, imagination, and understanding, as opposed to unthinking assent to a defined methodology.⁶³

He does not, for example, allow any general philosophical or psychological considerations to obscure the biblical witness to Christ's resurrection and its consequences... Here it is the particularity of the biblical witness, however difficult or contrary to experience it may be, which Moltmann takes as the basis for constructing his general understanding of Christian hope (130).

⁶¹ Douglas B. Farrow, "In the End is the Beginning: A Review of Jürgen Moltmann's Systematic Contributions," *Modern Theology* 14:3 (1998): 425-447 (426).

⁶² Moltmann, "Jürgen Moltmann," 20.

⁶³ It is true, as Richard Clutterbuck, "Jürgen Moltmann as a Doctrinal Theologian: The Nature of Doctrine and the Possibilities for its Development," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 48:4 (1995): 489-506, writes, that

Moltmann has to be called a doctrinal theologian for his proposals are never expressed merely as theological opinions; they are addressed to the churches and are claimed as necessary doctrinal adjustments for the corporate life of the Christian community... *The Crucified God*

3.3. Mark 15:34 and Moltmann's Use of Scripture

Before discussing the content of Moltmann's doctrine of the Trinity in the following chapters, his approach to Scripture requires attention. The value of his conclusions must be assessed in light of his treatment of the biblical witness to God in Christ.

3.3.1. Overview

Moltmann would later explicitly extend his dialogical method to Scripture itself. Responding to Bauckham's critique of his exegesis in *CoG*, Moltmann writes, "Richard Bauckham has taken me to be an exegete, and I am not one." Moltmann instead styles himself as "a theological partner in dialogue with the texts which I cite, not their exegete."⁶⁴ This is because he seeks to avoid losing sight of the God to whom Scripture testifies in getting caught up in the correct interpretation of texts. Elsewhere, he admits of having become "critical and free" towards Scripture so that he takes it "not as an authoritative blueprint and confining boundary," but rather as "a stimulus to my own theological thinking" (*ExpTh*, xxii). Thus for the later Moltmann, as Kevin Brown observes, "all sources are suspect in their authority," including Scripture.⁶⁵

While the development of this approach can be seen in *CG* and *TKG*,⁶⁶ in these earlier works Moltmann presupposes the theological authority of Scripture in the tradition of the Reformation. It is Scripture through which the church's theology is

demands that Christian doctrine become more self-consistent by following the implications of a stauro-centric doctrine of God, whilst *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* identifies a misplaced emphasis on the unity of God in the Western tradition as the cause of a disaster in theology and practice which can only be reversed by the adoption of a more explicitly trinitarian doctrine of God (490-491).

This is certainly in tension with some of the statements Moltmann makes regarding his theology, examples of which I have cited above. However, conversely, if Moltmann's theology is properly dialogical then we would expect to see him making strong proposals. If this were not the case then there would be little to dialogue with in Moltmann's theology. All critiques would have to be dismissed as it is difficult to critique that which does not stand on any theological commitments at all!

⁶⁴ Moltmann, "The Bible, the Exegete and the Theologian: Response to Richard Bauckham," in Bauckham, *God Will Be All in All*, 231.

⁶⁵ Kevin Brown, "Moltmann's Use of the Bible," *Diglotting*, 28 January 2013 <<http://diglotting.com/2013/01/28/moltmanns-use-of-the-bible/>> (18 August 2015). Cf. Donald Macleod, "The Christology of Jürgen Moltmann," *Themelios* 24:2 (1999): 35-47, "The two means of verification normally open to Christians are Scripture and tradition. Neither of these seems particularly important to Moltmann" (35-36).

⁶⁶ Cf. Jürgen Moltmann and Hans Küng, "Editorial," in *Conflicting Ways of Interpreting the Bible*, ed. Hans Küng and Jürgen Moltmann, vii (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1980), published in the same year as *TKG*, who write, "Dialogue with the Bible, dialogue with each other about the Bible, and dialogue with him to whom the truth of the Bible testifies are for us the heart of ecumenism."

redirected to its source in Christ. This leads Joy McDougall to conclude that since *TH*, “Moltmann has unwaveringly turned to the biblical witness as the chief source and *norma normans* for his theology.”⁶⁷ For example, in *TKG* he consistently draws upon Scripture to inform his innovations in his doctrine of the Trinity and to subject other trinitarian theologies to critique. He rejects Barth’s “monotheistic” doctrine of the Trinity on the basis of Scripture: “According to the New Testament... [Jesus’] history is the history of the reciprocal, changing, and hence living relationship between the Father, the Son and the Spirit” (*TKG*, 64).⁶⁸ Nonetheless, Moltmann does not reduce his doctrine of the Trinity to what is attested in the biblical texts. This is because “the New Testament does not contain any developed doctrine of the Trinity” (*CG*, 241; cf. *TKG*, 16). In *CG*, Mark 15:34 plays a major role in Moltmann’s understanding of the significance of the cross for the doctrine of the Trinity. Other key texts include Rom 8:31-32 with Gal 2:20, Rom 1:4 with Mark 15:39, and 2 Cor 5:19. The conclusions Moltmann draws from these contribute to the further development of his doctrine of the Trinity in *TKG*.

Yet how Moltmann conceives of the relationship between the historical Jesus and Scripture is a significant ambiguity in *CG* that somewhat undermines his commitment to the authority of Scripture. While Moltmann is certainly committed to the inseparability of theology and history so that the study of history must be undertaken theologically if it is to be undertaken at all, this does not result in a blanket affirmation of every theological interpretation of history. Rather, all theological interpretation of history must be grounded in the event of the cross. The task of christology, then, understanding and proclaiming Christ in ever-new contexts, is necessary, though the further it strays from the historical Jesus who was crucified the less legitimacy it has (*CG*, 83-87). Thus, “every Christian must ask whether his faith in Jesus Christ is true and is in accordance with Jesus himself, or whether Christian tradition offers him or itself something different instead, an idea, a spirit or a phantom” (*CG*, 115). Evidently, for Moltmann this Christian tradition which must be critically interrogated extends to the New Testament itself, as I will show below. There is not enough space in this thesis to attempt a thorough assessment of Moltmann’s use of

⁶⁷ McDougall, *Pilgrimage*, 11.

⁶⁸ Cf. *TKG*, 94, “A theological doctrine of the Trinity can only be biblically justified if the history of God to which the Bible testifies, itself displays trinitarian forms.”

Scripture. Nonetheless, Moltmann's interpretation of Mark 15:34 serves as a suitable test case because it illustrates his appropriation of historical Jesus research and his understanding of the relationship between theology and exegesis. It also plays a central role in the development of his theology.⁶⁹

3.3.2. *The Problem of the Historicity of Jesus' Divine Abandonment as Attested in Mark 15:34*

Moltmann's interest in the cry of dereliction is in part due to his belief that Mark 15:34 (cf. Matt 27:46), in contrast to the accounts of Luke and John, "seems to be as near as possible to the historical reality of the death of Jesus" (*CG*, 147). That is, "Jesus died with the signs and expressions of a profound abandonment by God" (*CG*, 147). Moltmann does not attempt to argue for the historicity of the very words which Mark ascribes to Jesus, but the historicity of what these represent, Jesus' abandonment by God as demonstrated in his pain and grief on the cross. This reflects the theological milieu in which Moltmann originally penned *CG*. If he undertook a similar project today he might not show as much concern for such questions. In the context of *CG*, however, this apology for the historicity of the signs of Jesus' abandonment functions to legitimate Moltmann's claim that such an abandonment is central to understanding the cross and thus to developing a properly conceived doctrine of the Trinity.

Moltmann arrives at this conclusion via two criteria. First, Jesus' abandonment is attested throughout the New Testament. In the synoptic account of Gethsemane, Jesus "began to be distressed and agitated" (Mark 14:33). He told his disciples that he was "deeply grieved, even to death" (Mark 14:34).⁷⁰ A possibly similar tradition is

⁶⁹ E.g., *CG*, x,

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.

Cf. *TKG*, 77-80. Moltmann, "Jürgen Moltmann," 13, writes of first reading the Bible, "When I came to Jesus' dying cry, I knew, 'There is your divine brother and redeemer, who understands you in your godforsakenness.'" Later he writes of *CG*, "The whole book can be understood as an attempt to wrestle theologically with that death cry" (*BP*, 191).

⁷⁰ Matthew agrees with Mark here. Moltmann implies that Luke also agrees, but Luke does not include the Markan *perilypos*, "deeply grieved" (Mark 14:33; Matt 26:38). For Luke it is the disciples who are "sleeping because of grief (*lypē*)" (22:45). The text-critical evidence for the authenticity of 22:43-44, in which Jesus sweats blood in anguish and is comforted by angels, is uncertain. See Claire

attested in Hebrews: “Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death” (Heb 5:7).⁷¹ Although he does not draw upon it to support this claim, Moltmann later also discovers divine abandonment in Pauline theology, suggesting the ubiquity of this theme in the New Testament (CG, 241-243).⁷² Second, the disturbing nature of this abandonment is “gradually weakened” in later texts (CG, 146). The manuscript D^{gr} attests, “[Why] hast thou reproached [or, taunted] me?”⁷³ This can also be seen in Luke and John who attribute other words to Jesus. Luke portrays Jesus’ trust and confidence in the Father with “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46), and John presents a victorious Jesus with “It is finished” (John 19:30). Moltmann concludes that Mark’s “difficult reading... is as close as may be to historical reality” (CG, 147).

Since 1972, the methods of historical Jesus research, as well as understandings of the general significance of this research to the task of theology, have developed considerably. In the contemporary context, the two criteria which Moltmann draws upon, identified above, are known as the criterion of multiple attestation and the criterion of embarrassment, respectively.⁷⁴ With multiple attestation, the case for the authenticity of a particular feature of Jesus’ life is strengthened according to the number of independent sources which attest it. With embarrassment, features that would have embarrassed early Christians, thus working against their cause, are thought to be authentic because sources would have had no reason to otherwise

Clivaz, “The Angel and the Sweat Like ‘Drops of Blood’ (Lk 22:43–44): ρ ⁶⁹ and f ¹³,” *Harvard Theological Review* 91:4 (2005): 419-440 (especially 420-425).

⁷¹ James Swetnam, “The Crux at Hebrews 5,7-8,” *Biblica* 81:3 (2000): 347-361, finds in this verse an allusion to Ps 22:24 and relates it to the cry of dereliction in Mark and Matthew (354-356).

⁷² Moltmann deduces this from Paul’s application of *paradidōmi*, “give up,” to Christ (Compare Rom 1:24, 26, 28; with 8:31-32) and finds further support for this interpretation in 2 Cor 5:21 and Gal 3:13.

⁷³ Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft), 100. The manuscript replaces *ekatelites* with *ōneidesas*. This “may have been substituted for the usual reading by someone who could not understand how God would have forsaken Jesus on the cross” (ibid.).

⁷⁴ I have identified the second criterion as the criterion of embarrassment because Moltmann implies the “embarrassment” of later writers regarding Jesus’ abandonment. However, his very short treatment of this also suggests the principle of textual criticism that where two manuscripts differ, the more difficult reading should be given precedence. Because my focus here is on Moltmann’s appropriation of historical Jesus methodology, which nonetheless overlaps in places with textual criticism, and because Moltmann is not just comparing Markan manuscripts but Mark with other New Testament sources, I will engage with his conclusion to the extent that he relies on something resembling what is now commonly identified as the criterion of embarrassment.

include them. There have been too many books and articles written since *CG* on the historicity of the Gospel accounts of Jesus' death to attempt even a short assessment and comparison here. Rather, I will assess to what extent Moltmann's implicit use of criteria of authenticity is viable on its own terms.

In a critical evaluation of the criteria of authenticity, Dale Allison notes the seeming paradox of employing the criterion of multiple attestation. If a particular datum, though ahistorical, is congenial to the tradition, it is likely to be multiply attested. Conversely, if a particular datum, though historical, is uncongenial to the tradition, it is less likely to be multiply attested.⁷⁵ In the case of Jesus' abandonment, multiple attestation in Mark, Matthew, Paul's letters, and Hebrews does not necessarily attest a historical precedent in the nature of Jesus' passion but primarily the popularity of this reading among early Christians, regardless of potentially different reasons for this popularity. This also means that Jesus' trust and confidence in his Father presented in Luke and John might attest a historical fact that was otherwise uncongenial to the *theologia crucis* that Moltmann sees in other New Testament texts. Obviously that is a speculative conclusion. However, Allison's critique demonstrates the ambiguous utility of this criterion because it cannot demonstrate any necessary connection between historical reality and multiple attestation.

Allison's scrutiny of the criterion of embarrassment yields similar results. He writes, "We must face the surprising fact that all of the supposedly embarrassing facts or words are found in the Jesus tradition itself." Thus, "they were not sufficiently disconcerting to be expurgated."⁷⁶ Moreover, if this is the case, data which modern scholars have deemed embarrassing also could have been *added* to the tradition rather than having originated with the historical Jesus. Indeed, it might be the case that the cry of dereliction was not only not embarrassing enough to be excluded from Mark and Matthew (and Hebrews) but was added to the tradition to develop a particular abandonment-christology, for example. Here the criteria of multiple attestation and embarrassment seem to be in direct contradiction.⁷⁷ Possibly the most embarrassing

⁷⁵ Dale C. Allison, Jr, "How to Marginalize the Traditional Criteria of Authenticity," in *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, ed. Tom Holmén and Stanley E. Porter, 1:3-30, 4 vols. (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2011), 7.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 5-6.

⁷⁷ Mark Goodacre, "Criticizing the Criterion of Multiple Attestation: The Historical Jesus and the Question of Sources," in *Jesus, Criteria, and the Demise of Authenticity*, ed. Chris Keith and Anthony

feature of early Christianity, the cross, was also one of its most distinctive (1 Cor 1:18)!⁷⁸ In relying upon these criteria, Moltmann only considers the theological motives of *some* authors or communities such as Luke and John but he does not apply this critical lens consistently.

In the context of Mark's Gospel, Jesus' abandonment is indeed congenial to Mark's theological concerns.⁷⁹ For example, although theological significance and historical reality are not mutually exclusive, for Mark Jesus' cry may serve to underscore his identification with the godforsaken. Cyril of Alexandria and Thomas Aquinas could both say that Jesus cried not on his own behalf but on behalf of humanity, forsaken by God because of their sin.⁸⁰ Even some modern exegetes have argued that Jesus is not the primary object of his cry. Thomas Schmidt has noted the theme of the judgement of the Jews in Mark's Gospel, suggesting that Jesus cries not only for his own suffering but on behalf of Israel.⁸¹ So, too, Bauckham observes that Jesus cries not for himself but for the godforsaken with whom he identifies. It would be odd if Jesus were asking the question for himself as he "not only knows that it is God's will that he die (8:31; 9:31; 10:34, 38), but also why this must be (Mark 10:45; 14:24)."⁸² Such proposals highlight the possible ways in which Jesus' abandonment might have functioned theologically for Mark.⁸³ Regardless of the historicity of the cry

Le Donne, 152-172 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2012), 166, writes, "It is a strange state of affairs that scholars will simultaneously claim both that a given tradition was 'embarrassing' to the early church and that they repeated it on 'multiple' occasions."

⁷⁸ This is noted by Rafael Rodríguez, "The Embarrassing Truth about Jesus: The Criterion of Embarrassment and the Failure of Historical Authenticity," in Keith and Le Donne, *Demise of Authenticity*, 132-151 (147).

⁷⁹ *Mark* here and throughout this chapter refers to the author responsible for presenting the bulk of material, excluding the two later endings, in what is called today the Gospel according to Mark, regardless of whether or not that person was actually a Mark.

⁸⁰ See 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., 246-298 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009); and Thomas McCall, *The Trinity and the Cross, and Why It Matters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012), 22-25.

⁸¹ Thomas E. Schmidt, "Cry of Dereliction or Cry of Judgment? Mark 15:34 in Context," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 4 (1994): 145-153 (especially, 151-152).

⁸² 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*, 254-268 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 261.

⁸³ In citing these examples I do not imply either my agreement or disagreement with any of them.

of dereliction, then, it is clear that Mark's inclusion of the cry would have been inseparable from its theological implications.

After outlining some of the difficulties with specific criteria, Allison goes on to critique the use of the criteria in general. Two of these critiques apply to Moltmann's argument. First, "That something happened does not entail our ability to show it happened, and that something did not happen does not entail our ability to show that it did not happen."⁸⁴ Moltmann's confidence in his historical method leads to the concerning implication that Mark is of primary historical value and Luke and John of secondary value in witnessing to Jesus' death, to which I will return shortly.⁸⁵ Second, Allison points out that the use of criteria more often confirms the scholar's expectations or presuppositions than it does filter truth from untruth in their attempt to reconstruct a historical Jesus. "The criteria then become justification *ex post facto*."⁸⁶ Moltmann himself claims that christologies "correspond so much to the needs of their age, place of origin and intended purpose that one cannot avoid the suspicion that they are illusory and artificial" (*CG*, 83). This is certainly reductionist, but Moltmann's *theologia crucis* requires that such a statement applies to his own theology as well. In addition to his personal convictions, Moltmann's doctrine of the Trinity bears the marks of post-WII Germany, for example, as can be seen in related proposals of Eberhard Jüngel and Hans Urs von Balthasar.⁸⁷ In this sense, the criteria only obfuscate historical Jesus research by legitimating theological or ideological presuppositions in the form of a supposedly scientific portrait of the historical Jesus. It is suspiciously convenient that Moltmann discovers that the signs of Jesus' abandonment near death, a central theme of *CG*, are a historical reality.

⁸⁴ Allison, "How to Marginalize the Traditional Criteria," 10.

⁸⁵ The historicity of John has often been seen as secondary to the synoptic gospels by historical Jesus scholars. This demotion is perhaps due to the differences between John and the synoptics, noted as early as Clement of Alexandria, who referred to John as "the spiritual gospel." However, not all scholars have followed accordingly. For an outline of some of the major issues and an argument for John's general historicity, see Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel: Issues and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001).

⁸⁶ Allison, "How to Marginalize the Traditional Criteria," 18.

⁸⁷ E.g., Eberhard Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World: On the Foundation of the Theology of the Crucified One in the Dispute between Theism and Atheism*, trans. by Darrell L. Guder (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014); Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, trans. by Aidan Nichols, O.P. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2000). I will discuss a passage from one of Balthasar's later works in chapter six of this thesis.

3.3.3. John 16:32 and the Question of Canon

Moltmann does not explicitly reject the theological value of Luke and John. However, the biblical sources he draws upon for his theology of the crucified God in *CG* are chiefly Markan and Pauline. Because Moltmann advocates an intimate relationship between theology and history, his historical assessment of Jesus' abandonment goes hand in hand with his privileging of particular New Testament sources to develop his doctrine of the Trinity. The cross determines the shape of the doctrine of the Trinity and if Luke and John are of secondary historical value then they are also of secondary theological value. Such a move cannot be made without addressing questions of canon.⁸⁸

Some scholars have appealed to John 16:32, "I am not alone because the Father is with me" to keep in check the exegesis of Mark 15:34 by Moltmann and others.⁸⁹ Mark 15:34 could not then refer to an abandonment of Jesus in the sense of withdrawal of the Father's presence. But from the perspective of historical or narrative criticism, such an appeal makes the same mistake as Moltmann, only in a different direction. It requires that one evangelist's unique christological perspective accord completely with another's:

As redaction criticism and (more recently) narrative criticism have helped us to see, we have to speak of 'the Jesus of Matthew', 'the Jesus of Mark', and so on. Harmonisation..., *at least at the level of what the gospels actually say*, is not possible.⁹⁰

Harmonisation here would be particularly misleading if, as Raymond Brown speculates, John included the verse as "a dissenting comment on the theme that Jesus

⁸⁸ This is noted in the year of *CG*'s publication by Christian Duquoc, *Christologie. Essai dogmatique*, vol. 2 (Paris: Cerf, 1972), 44, cited in Gérard Rossé, *The Cry of Jesus on the Cross: A Biblical and Theological Study*, trans. by Stephen Wentworth Arndt (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1987), 110:

It would also be a mistake to privilege the point of view of one or two evangelists in an absolute way. The theology of the abandonment of Christ on the cross will thus be unable to omit the Lukan perspective in which the hope of Jesus in God, his Father, is placed in relief.

While it is not clear from this citation whether Duquoc is referring to Moltmann, his observation is certainly a potential problem for Moltmann's theology.

⁸⁹ E.g., Marshall, "Dereliction of Christ," 274; McCall, *The Trinity and the Cross*, 28, 88.

⁹⁰ Stephen C. Barton, "Many Gospels, One Jesus?," in *The Cambridge Companion to Jesus*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl, 170-183 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 177, emphasis added.

could feel forsaken by God.”⁹¹ That is, while it is necessary to consult the entire biblical witness in doing trinitarian theology, it also distorts the authorial intentions of Mark and John if either of them are expected to align perfectly with the other on every theological point.

Nonetheless, canonical criticism and redaction or narrative criticism need not be mutually exclusive. Both Mark and John witness to the one gospel which is Christ. Their coherence is in this unity but it is such a unity that consists in the “many things” of Christ so that even “if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written” (John 21:25). An early witness to and the earliest known defence of the fourfold gospel is provided by Irenaeus in his *Adversus Haereses*. He argues not only that the four Gospels have apostolic origins but that they agree in fundamentals: “They have all declared to us that there is one God, Creator of heaven and earth, announced by the law and the prophets; and one Christ, the Son of God.”⁹² If such is the case, then it would be expected that Mark and John agree on the relationship of Jesus to his Father, which is certainly a fundamental! But this cannot be confirmed without first investigating the meaning of Mark 15:34 in context. This will also reveal to what extent Moltmann’s proposal can be justified exegetically.

3.3.4. Mark’s Citation of Ps 22:1: Atomistic or Contextual?

Mark gives Jesus the words of Ps 22:1 in his cry of dereliction. For Moltmann, however, “it is not right to interpret the cry of Jesus in the sense of Ps. 22, but more proper to interpret the words of the psalm here in the sense of the situation of Jesus” (*CG*, 150). Ps 22:1 in this context must be interpreted christologically. Otherwise it is no different from any other cry of lament in the psalms. Jesus enjoys a unique relationship with God as his own Father, which goes beyond the covenant-relationship which God had with Israel. As such, like the psalmist, Jesus pleads with God to vindicate him. But Moltmann is concerned that the interpretation of Ps 22 on Jesus’ lips as a prayer of confidence is

⁹¹ Raymond E. Brown, S.S., *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels*, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 2:1085. Without further support this remains speculation.

⁹² *Adversus Haereses*, 3.1.1-2, cited in Ronald A. Piper, “The One, the Four and the Many,” in *The Written Gospel*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl and Donald A. Hagner, 254-273 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 268.

irrelevant. It obscures the trinitarian nature of the abandonment: “the issue in his death is not the general paradox of confidence in God in abandonment by God, but above all that of the deity of *his* God and *his* Father.” Thus the abandonment must be understood “as something which took place between God and God” (CG, 151).

In a recent monograph on Mark 15:34, Holly Carey differentiates between contextual and atomistic citations of Scripture in the New Testament.⁹³ An author citing Scripture contextually intends for it to be heard in light of its original context, whereas in atomistic citations the context of the citation, in this case the whole of Ps 22, is less relevant. While a number of scholars have contended that Mark cites Ps 22:1 atomistically,⁹⁴ Carey contends that he cites the verse contextually. For example, the centurion’s confession (Mark 15:39), alludes to the nations acknowledging the Lord at the end of Ps 22 (vv.27-28). Moreover, three major features of Mark’s Gospel suggest that he cites Ps 22:1 contextually. First, Mark draws upon the motif of the “righteous sufferer,” a righteous figure who suffers but is ultimately vindicated by God.⁹⁵ Second, Mark prepares his audience for Jesus’ vindication in his resurrection. Throughout Mark, Jesus predicts his death together with his resurrection (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34).⁹⁶ Finally, Mark alludes to Ps 22 not only in his passion narrative but throughout his Gospel, suggesting that the cry of dereliction should be understood in relation to these other allusions and thus the whole psalm.⁹⁷

⁹³ 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), 2-3.

⁹⁴ E.g., Rebecca Cerio, “Jesus’ Last Words: A Cry of Dereliction or Triumph?,” *Expository Times* 125:7 (2014): 323-327 (325), “if Mark wished to portray Jesus’ cry as one of trust in God, he would have quoted one of the more positive verses from Ps. 22... rather than the most desperate and agonizing verse.” The strongest case for an atomistic citation is provided by Vernon K. Robbins, “The Reversed Contextualization of Psalm 22 in the Markan Crucifixion: A Socio-Rhetorical Analysis,” in *The Four Gospels 1992. Festschrift Frans Neirynck*, vol. 2, ed. F. van Segbroeck, et al., 1161-1183 (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 1992). According to Robbins, Mark reverses the context of Ps 22 so that the soldiers divide Jesus’ clothing and cast lots for it (Ps 22:18; Mark 15:24); Jesus is mocked and taunted by passersby, the chief priests and scribes, and those crucified with him (Ps 22:6-8; Mark 15:25-32); and Jesus cries out (Ps 22:2; Mark 15:34); the content of this cry is Ps 22:1.

⁹⁵ This motif is employed by other texts relatively contemporary to Mark, a few of which also take Ps 22 as a source. See Carey, *Jesus’ Cry*, chaps. 5-6.

⁹⁶ The popular reference to these as “passion predictions” is thus a misnomer. See *ibid.*, 46.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, chap. 7. Others make similar points in arguing that Mark cites Ps 22:1 contextually. See Schmidt, “Cry of Dereliction,” 149-150; Rikk E. Watts, “Mark,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, 111-250 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 236-237.

Nonetheless, Mark's contextual use of Ps 22:1 would be misunderstood if it was taken to erase the extent of Jesus' suffering on the cross. It follows that "the vindication that comes at the end of this torment does not negate the suffering that preceded it."⁹⁸ As the theologian Alan Lewis notes, the gospel is a witness to a historical event in narrative form. One part, the resurrection, cannot be taken for the whole. When the story is recounted properly, i.e., as a sequence of events, "Death is given time and space to be itself, to be termination, unabbreviated in its malignancy."⁹⁹ Mark's use of Ps 22:1, while invoking the whole psalm, also concentrates his audience on this particular moment in the psalm to bring attention to this particular moment in the passion narrative.

Carey's conclusion is pertinent here because it illustrates the importance of the whole psalm in providing a background for understanding the nature of Jesus' abandonment. While this does not require that the christological implications of Ps 22:1 on Jesus' lips be put aside (Mark's passion narrative is a witness to Christ's death, not a leisurely exegesis of Ps 22!), it does provide a framework in which Mark intends his audience to understand Jesus' abandonment.

3.3.5. *Mark 15:34 in Its Narrative Context*

The nature of the abandonment expressed by the psalmist therefore illuminates Mark's portrayal of Jesus' abandonment. Following the opening cry, Ps 22 goes on to define God's abandonment in terms of his lack of intervention in the psalmist's suffering. Thus, "I cry by day, but you do not answer" (v.2). God has forsaken the psalmist in that he has not yet heeded his cry. As Bauckham notes, God's abandonment in the Psalms always corresponds to "concrete situations of distress."¹⁰⁰ It would thus be misleading to characterise this abandonment as strictly subjective. Here that concrete situation is God's failure to intervene in both the derision the psalmist suffers at the hands of others (vv.6-8) and the psalmist's nearness to death (vv.11-18). Jesus, too, faces derision (Mark 15:16-20, 29-32) and death. He pleads God to remove his suffering and yet yields to his will (14:36). God does not remove the suffering. In the framework of

⁹⁸ Carey, *Jesus' Cry*, 5.

⁹⁹ Alan E. Lewis, "The Burial of God: Rupture and Resumption as the Story of Salvation," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 40:3 (1987): 335-362.

¹⁰⁰ Bauckham, "God's Self-Identification," 257.

Ps 22, then, Jesus laments “the non-intervention of the Father.”¹⁰¹ Moreover, such an interpretation would preclude the withdrawal of God’s presence in Jesus’ abandonment (so John 16:32). The psalmist looks to a time when he can proclaim that God “did not hide his face from me, but heard when I cried to him” (v.24). Whereas “generally in psalms, and Israel’s faith until almost Maccabean times, death is held to end contact with God (cf. Ps. 6:5, 88:10-12),” here the psalmist at least anticipates some kind of “life after death,” if not the general resurrection.¹⁰² In Mark, Carey notes that the tearing of the curtain in the temple (15:38), the centurion’s confession (15:39), and, ultimately, the resurrection are signs that Mark’s Jesus “has not been abandoned by God in the sense that the presence of God has left him altogether.”¹⁰³

If the investigation were to end here, there would be no reason to endorse the trinitarian implications which Moltmann draws from the text. Like the psalmist, Jesus does not lose his God but laments his lack of involvement, only for it to be shown that God does indeed intervene. Yet there are some indications in Ps 22 and Mark’s narrative context which lend support to Moltmann’s conclusions. Though the psalmist looks forward to a time of deliverance, presently God has indeed forsaken him and thus hidden his face from him (cf. Pss 44:24; 88:14). The tearing of the curtain and the centurion’s confession take place after Jesus dies. They do not evidence God’s presence to Jesus so much as his presence to those who are being welcomed into the kingdom. Thus the Spirit goes out from Jesus (15:37),¹⁰⁴ the temple is open, and the Gentiles proclaim God’s Son. So, too, while the resurrection indicates God’s faithfulness, from the temporal standpoint of Jesus’ abandonment it has not yet occurred.

¹⁰¹ John Yocum, “A Cry of Dereliction? Reconsidering a Recent Theological Commonplace,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 7:1 (2005): 72-80 (79). This was noted by Thomas Aquinas: “God the Father hands Christ over to his passion... by not protecting him from the passion, but instead exposing him to his persecutors. For this reason, Christ, hanging on the cross, said ‘My God, why have you forsaken me?’” See *Summa Theologiae* III, q. 47, a. 3, c, cited in Marshall, “Dereliction of Christ,” 270.

¹⁰² John H. Reumann, “Psalm 22 at the Cross: Lament and Thanksgiving for Jesus Christ,” *Interpretation* 28:1 (1994): 39-58 (46-47).

¹⁰³ Carey, *Jesus’ Cry*, 163.

¹⁰⁴ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 666, sees no reference to the Spirit in *ekpneō*, “breathed his last,” which is “a natural euphemism for dying, used especially in more poetic or solemn contexts.” However, these two should not be seen as mutually exclusive, especially considering the parallelism between Jesus’ death and baptism in Mark. See Mark 1:8 and Carey, *Jesus’ Cry*, 65-66.

Jesus' abandonment is also especially harsh. Bauckham notes that in Ps 22:1, the Hebrew *'āzab*, "forsaken," and its parallels, are most often used by psalmists to plead that God will not forsake them or to express their assurance "that God has not forsaken or will not forsake them." But, "Much more rarely do they speak of having been abandoned by God."¹⁰⁵ Mark therefore makes use of one of the starkest expressions of abandonment in the Psalms to interpret Jesus' death.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, according to the psalmist, God is the "direct cause" of his suffering.¹⁰⁷ The psalmist's description of his suffering culminates in the charge against God: "*you* lay me in the dust of death" (v.16). As Ellen Davis observes, "God's culpable negligence here deepens into an accusation that names the root cause of the suffering." The psalmist laments God's "active enmity."¹⁰⁸

Mark confirms this theme in the narrative context of his Gospel. God plays an active role in Jesus' death. This is especially evident in 14:27 where Jesus cites Zechariah to interpret his death: "It is written, 'I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.'"¹⁰⁹ God also plays an active role in Jesus' first passion prediction: "Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must (*dei*) undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again" (Mark 8:31). Here Mark's use of *dei* indicates that Jesus' suffering, rejection, death, and resurrection will necessarily take place in accordance with God's will.¹¹⁰ Other examples, such as the Father's declaration at baptism and the

¹⁰⁵ Bauckham, "God's Self-Identification," 257. Bauckham notes that this usage of *'āzab* in Psalms and Lamentations only occurs in Pss 22:1; 71:11; 88:5; Lam 5:20.

¹⁰⁶ That is, excluding Pss 39 and 88, which, unlike Ps 22 and other psalms of lament, do not resolve.

¹⁰⁷ Matthew S. Rindge, "Reconfiguring the Akedah and Recasting God: Lament and Divine Abandonment in Mark," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 130:1 (2011): 755-774 (771).

¹⁰⁸ Ellen F. Davis, "Exploding the Limits: Form and Function in Psalm 22," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 17:53 (1992): 93-105 (98).

¹⁰⁹ Mark's citation differs slightly from the original: "'Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is my associate,' says the Lord of hosts. Strike the shepherd, that the sheep may be scattered" (Zech 13:7). Mark changes *patassō*, "strike," to an indicative. In Zechariah it is an imperative. This is because Mark is citing the verse only in part so that the indicative in this context conveys the same sense as the original imperative without Mark having to cite the whole passage. In both texts, Yahweh is the subject who strikes the shepherd, albeit an indirect subject in Zechariah. See France, *Gospel of Mark*, 575 n.73. In the same place, France notes that although Mark does not explicitly identify the subject as Zechariah does, those in Mark's audience who were familiar with Zechariah would have understood it to be God.

¹¹⁰ Although Mark does not explicitly refer to the fulfilment of Scripture in this context, France, *Gospel of Mark*, 334, proposes that his use of *dei* here should be understood against this background.

Spirit's leading Jesus into the wilderness, are also notable.¹¹¹ It is in Jesus' abandonment that God's role in his death culminates. In chaps. 14-15, Jesus is rejected by the chief priests, scribes, crowd, Sanhedrin, Pilate, soldiers, criminals, and disciples. "God becomes the final, and perhaps the most significant, character to reject Jesus."¹¹²

It is important to follow Mark here in distinguishing God from human beings. This is Carey's reservation over drawing any connection between the abandonment of Jesus at the hands of others and his abandonment by his Father. Those who reject Jesus misunderstand him. Thus follows the problematic implication that either God "doesn't 'get it,'" or the other characters are validated in their rejection of Jesus.¹¹³ Yet these implications do not necessarily follow from this. As shown above, both Ps 22 and Mark emphasise God's agency in Jesus' death. The last words of Mark's Jesus do not express the pain of his rejection at the hands of others but his pain at God's abandonment of him, an abandonment which was decreed by God in Scripture according to his purposes. Moreover, Mark explicitly distinguishes God from sinners: "For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is

God's plan that the Messiah die is attested in Scripture (Mark 9:12; 14:21, 49). Indeed, *dei* occurs six times in Mark's Gospel, each time suggesting God's eschatological fulfilment of Scripture. Thus Elijah must come before the resurrection (9:11; Mal 4:5-6), wars must take place (13:7; Dan 9:26), and the gospel must be preached to all the nations before Jesus' return (13:10; Dan 11:33; and *kērussō*, "proclaim," in Joel 3:9 and Zech 9:9 [LXX]). Peter vows not to deny Jesus, "Even though I must die with you" (14:31). Elsewhere in the Gospel the death of the disciples is connected with eschatological events (e.g., 8:34-38; 10:35-40; 13:9-13; Dan 11:33-35 with 12:3). Mark 13:14 is a possible exception to the other occurrences of *dei* because it is used negatively: "But when you see the desolating sacrilege set up where it *ought not* to be (let the reader understand), then those in Judea must flee to the mountains." Nonetheless, according to Daniel, the predominant background for this prophecy, "Desolations are decreed" (Dan 9:26). See Watts, "Mark," 223-225. Mark's first use of *dei* in 8:31 places Jesus' death in this context. Jesus must die in fulfilment of Scripture.

¹¹¹ As well as the examples discussed above, there are a number of other ways which Mark alludes to God's agency in Jesus' death. For example, the Father's baptismal declaration alludes to the Akedah, a theme which is continued throughout the Gospel. See Rindge, "Reconfiguring the Akedah," *passim*. Sharyn Dowd and Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "The Significance of Jesus' Death in Mark: Narrative Context and Authorial Audience," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 125:2 (2006): 271-297 (274-275), note that the Spirit leading Jesus into the wilderness to face temptation and the wild animals, foreshadowing his passion (1:12), and the passive verb in "The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away (*apairō*) from them" (2:20), also highlight God's agency in Jesus' death. This last point has been found wanting by Benjamin Pascut, "The So-Called *Passivum Divinum* in Mark's Gospel," *Novum Testamentum* 54:4 (2012): 313-333 (especially 316-317), who contends that Markan scholars too often uncritically assume that passive verbs refer to divine action where Mark intends other agents, such as Judas, the chief priests, and Pilate in Jesus' being handed over for crucifixion. However, regardless of the implied subject in Mark's passive verbs, Mark clearly conceives of God as an agent in the crucifixion, as I show in this chapter.

¹¹² Rindge, "Reconfiguring the Akedah," 761 (cf. n.42).

¹¹³ Carey, *Jesus' Cry*, 158.

betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born" (14:21). While not providing a detailed reflection on the relationship between divine and human agency, Mark both locates the climax of Jesus' rejection in divine abandonment and distinguishes the will of God from that of sinners.

Nonetheless, Jesus also embraces his death, which "will not come as the triumph of the opposition but as the fulfilment of the divine purpose, to be welcomed rather than bewailed."¹¹⁴ In contrast to James and John's request to sit either side of him in his coming glory, Jesus proclaims that "the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" (10:45).¹¹⁵ Like Jesus, his disciples are to follow him in actively serving and giving themselves for him, even to death (8:34-35). During the Last Supper, it is Jesus who gives his disciples his body and his blood (14:22-24). In Gethsemane, too, though not without pain, he willingly assents to the Father's will for his death (14:36). After prayer, Jesus arises to meet Judas and the crowd who have come to arrest him, welcoming his imminent trial (14:42).¹¹⁶ Finally, in citing Ps 22:1 in the cry of dereliction Jesus participates in Israel's tradition of lament which situates pain in faith and directs it towards God. Lament expresses "the confidence that God is faithful and will not abandon his servants, but will be moved to perform a new action that will bring deliverance and salvation to them."¹¹⁷ The faith of the righteous extends to confronting God for their suffering. As such, Ps 22:1 is a cry of faith, looking forward to the psalmist's vindication (vv.22b-32). This is also evident in the address to "my God," which expresses faith that God will hear the psalmist's cry.¹¹⁸ For Mark, Jesus

¹¹⁴ France, *Gospel of Mark*, 333.

¹¹⁵ This differs from the Pauline *paradidōmi*, "deliver up," which Moltmann cites (e.g. Gal 2:20), and which Paul uses interchangeably with *didōmi*, "give." In Mark, Judas (3:19), the chief priests, elders, scribes, and counsel (15:11), Pilate (15:15), and possibly God (9:31; 14:41) are subjects of *paradidōmi*, but Jesus is only the subject of *didōmi*. See Cilliers Breytenbach, "Narrating the Death of Jesus in Mark: Utterances of the Main Character, Jesus," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 105:2 (2014): 153-168 (161-162).

¹¹⁶ So France, *Gospel of Mark*, 590, clarifies that in keeping with Jesus' active acceptance of his death, "This is a call to advance rather than retreat."

¹¹⁷ Henry L. Novello, "Jesus' Cry of Lament: Towards a True Apophaticism," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 78:1 (2012): 38-60 (42).

¹¹⁸ Bauckham, "God's Self-Identification," 258. Bauckham denies that Jesus' lapse from his habitual address to God as Father in prayer (the only lapse in the New Testament) represents any kind of distance between him and God. It is perhaps significant that in the words of Ps 31:5 which Luke (23:46) gives to Jesus on the cross he adjusts the citation to accord with this trend. However, this does not require that Mark wanted to portray something else by leaving the citation unaltered. When not addressing him in prayer, Jesus refers to his Father as God elsewhere in Mark. Especially notable are

cries out in simultaneous protest to the one who wills his death and faith to the one who has been with him from his baptism, throughout his ministry, and will deliver him from death.

3.3.6. *Assessment: Moltmann and Mark on Jesus' Abandonment*

There are some interesting convergences and subtle tensions with the cry of dereliction in Mark's narrative context and Moltmann's theological interpretation thereof. Like Mark, Moltmann emphasises the simultaneous will of Jesus to go to the cross and his pain in being abandoned by his Father. Moltmann, too, stresses the inseparability of crucifixion and resurrection throughout *CG*. However, the trinitarian conclusions Moltmann draws from Mark 15:34 (and Paul, etc.) are not met with either support or opposition from Mark. As Thomas McCall writes,

Is there anything here that says—or even implies—that the eternal communion between the Father and the Son was ruptured? Does the text actually say that the Trinity was broken? The answers to these questions are surprisingly clear: Neither the Matthean nor the Markan account says any of these things.¹¹⁹

There is a sense in which Mark reads Ps 22:1 christologically. For Mark, Jesus' abandonment certainly has its own significance, which cannot be reduced to the context of Ps 22. Whereas the psalmist looks to his vindication, he has to die one day. Jesus, too, will die, but his deliverance is from death itself into resurrection. Neither does the psalmist give his life as a ransom for many, as Jesus does. Finally, as Moltmann observes, Mark presents Jesus' unique relationship to the Father. He is God's beloved Son and he addresses God as Father. He receives God's Spirit, forgives sin, casts out demons, and heals infirmities. But unlike Moltmann, Mark writes before Nicaea and Chalcedon. He does witness to Jesus' abandonment by the Father and underscores the extent of this abandonment, providing the harsh statements of Ps 22 as a background, emphasising the Father's active role in the crucifixion, and presenting Jesus' divine abandonment as the climax of his abandonment by others. It may even be suggested, with care, that there is something like enmity between Father and Son here.¹²⁰

his citations of Scripture (e.g., 10:6; 12:26), which suggests that Mark only saw the need to substitute *theos* for *patēr* when Jesus was not citing Scripture.

¹¹⁹ McCall, *The Trinity and the Cross*, 30.

¹²⁰ See subsection 4.5. of this thesis for a critical discussion of this aspect of Moltmann's theology.

However, whereas in the tradition this is interpreted through Chalcedon and Constantinople III, so that the harshness of Jesus' abandonment does not extend to the intra-trinitarian relationships but to the Son's mode of existence as a human being, Moltmann bypasses some of these to interpret Mark according to his own christological and trinitarian categories. I will continue the discussion of Moltmann's theological proposals in the following chapters. Here it is enough to state that neither traditional christology and trinitarian theology nor Moltmann's innovations can be reached on the basis of the Gospel of Mark alone.

Nonetheless, Mark's disinterest in the line which Moltmann takes suggests at least one difficulty with Moltmann's approach: speculation. Indeed, many have charged Moltmann with this. When Moltmann attributes suffering in the crucifixion not only to Christ but the Father, which is never explicitly stated in Scripture,¹²¹ Bauckham suggests that this "lay[s] Moltmann open to the charge of speaking mythologically about the divine experience." Moreover, "If we could speak as literally about the Father's experience as we can about the human experience of the incarnate Son, incarnation would not be necessary."¹²² John Webster also notes this problem and situates it in Moltmann's panentheism: "Because God is defined by reference to historical events of the utmost finitude, [Moltmann] tends to assume that language about God is in the end relatively easy to devise."¹²³

Moltmann does not address this issue in *CG* or *TKG*. However, in his *ExpTh*, he attends to those who "counsel me to more silence before the unfathomable, nameless Mystery, and to more negative theology." He responds,

I am enough of a mystic to understand what they mean. But just because the disclosed mystery of God's name is unfathomable, one can't get enough of

¹²¹ Though see the allusion to Amos 8:9-10 in Mark 15:33 that Moltmann notes in *TKG*, 80.

¹²² Bauckham, *Theology of Moltmann*, 66. Cf. Klass Runia, *The Present-Day Christological Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1984), 44:

Paul, who summarizes his whole message in the expression, 'the word of the cross' (1 Cor. 1:18; cf. 2:2), never speaks of God as the One who suffered with Jesus on the cross, but again and again as the God who raised Jesus from the dead.

Castelo, "Moltmann's Dismissal," 403, writes that Moltmann's proposal here "sound[s] like the kind of trinitarian reflection Moltmann decries (i.e. one that delves into the mysteries of the godhead rather than maintaining itself within the economy of divine revelation)."

¹²³ John Webster, "Jürgen Moltmann: Trinity and Suffering," *Evangel* 3:2 (1985): 4-6 (6).

wanting to know more about it. The Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God... (*ExpTh*, xxi, ellipsis original).

This is a bold claim. Moltmann perhaps misses the role of other safeguards, such as ecumenical councils, which limit what can be said about God. Conversely, he is reading Scripture in light of the horrors of the twentieth century, where Jesus' cry of dereliction resonates with him and others in their sufferings. That is, as other theological proposals have functioned in their respective ages to restore hope, faith, and love to human beings, perhaps Moltmann's proposals can function in the same way in his own time.¹²⁴ I will address the potential theodical import of these proposals in the next chapter. Nonetheless, aside from that caveat, without any extended discussion of the role of theological language in his project, Moltmann certainly runs the risk of descending into mythology.

3.3.7. *Canon Revisited*: Theologia Crucis

Before moving on, Mark 15:34 in its canonical context again requires attention. Whereas the other evangelists emphasise Jesus' lament in his passion,¹²⁵ John situates this earlier in Lazarus' death (11:17-44).¹²⁶ Nonetheless, John's account of Jesus' last words may be closer to Mark's than is evident on the surface. Rebekah Eklund points out that John's "I am thirsty" (19:28), an allusion to Ps 69:21, is a theme in the psalms which can indicate God's absence as Mark does, "though admittedly in a much more subtle way."¹²⁷ Further support for this is found in John's citation of Ps 22:18 in 19:24. And though only a flimsy case for this can be made, his "It is finished (*tetelestai*)" (John 19:30) possibly alludes to the superscription of LXX Ps 21:1, "For the end (*telos*), concerning the support of the morning," or the Hebrew of v.31, "he has done it."¹²⁸ John,

¹²⁴ Cf. Moltmann's reflections on *TH* and *CG* in *HTG*, 173-174,

I did not attempt to write these books as theological textbooks, informative on all sides, balanced in judgment and reassuring in wisdom. In them I wanted to say something specific in a particular cultural, theological and political situation, and took sides. They were written from the time for the time, and are thus to be understood as contextual theology, set within the conflict of contemporary life.

¹²⁵ Although cf. Matt 23:37 and Luke 13:34.

¹²⁶ Rebekah Eklund, *Jesus Wept: The Significance of Jesus' Laments in the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2015), 38-39.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 48. Cf. Pss 22:15; 42:1-3; 63:1; 69:3.

¹²⁸ Eklund, *Jesus Wept*, 49.

then, may still conceive of the absence of God in the sense of his non-intervention, despite not underscoring this as emphatically as Mark.¹²⁹

But Moltmann takes Mark 15:34 further than John, in such a way that surely contradicts John 16:32. He attempts to do so with historical Jesus methodology, something that I have argued he undertakes unsuccessfully. If historical Jesus methodology provides the only justification for this then he has failed.

However, in the context of both *CG* and the nature of Scripture, such a contradiction might find support. Moltmann's *theologia crucis* confronts not only human theologies but its critique extends to God himself. It is thus irrelevant whether a commitment to canon conflicts with *a priori* christological or trinitarian commitments because it is the cross which conflicts with all of these. In centring the divine abandonment which he sees in Mark and Paul's letters, Moltmann seeks to decentre all traditional and modern theologies of glory which do not take this abandonment with the full seriousness that the cross requires.¹³⁰ Indeed, he focusses on Mark because Mark's account of Jesus' abandonment has often been read in the context of wider trinitarian concerns, in part consolidated by the rest of the New Testament, which impede a proper understanding of what Mark intended to convey. While this proper understanding is probably not as far from Luke and John as he seems to imply, Moltmann still manages to bring something of Mark's unique perspective to

¹²⁹ A similar, though less technical, case can be made for Luke's account of Jesus' last words. Anne Hunt, "The Trinity through Pascal Eyes," in *Rethinking Trinitarian Theology: Disputed Questions and Contemporary Issues in Trinitarian Theology*, ed. Giulio Maspero and Robert J. Woźniak, 472-490 (London: T. & T. Clark, 2012), writes,

Unlike the other Synoptic accounts, Luke's account of the passion and death makes *two* references to the Father in the passion narrative (Lk. 23.34, 23.46)... Jesus cries out, 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit' (Lk. 23.46). Having said this, Jesus then breathed His last. In Luke's account, death is precisely the moment par excellence for saying 'Father'... Jesus' death discloses that Jesus' Sonship moves towards and culminates in a pure invocation of the Father, the symbol of which is death to absolutely any and every other reality (emphasis original).

Cf. Eklund, *Jesus Wept*, 45-47.

¹³⁰ However, see Marshall, "Dereliction of Christ," 246, who argues that the cry of dereliction has indeed had a central place in the tradition:

Along with its companions from Luke and John, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' belongs among the traditional seven last words of Jesus, and as such has been the subject of countless Lenten meditations. Hymns both Catholic and Protestant allude to this cry, and it has elicited reflection from theologians, spiritual writers, and exegetes since the early church.

the forefront.¹³¹ A *theologia crucis* approach to the canon, then, means reading Scripture dialectically so that each aspect has its expression in its due place, acknowledging where the whole can sometimes mute the part. Moreover, although Moltmann interprets the historical Jesus data in accordance with *a priori* theological commitments, his own theology is *avowedly* fragmented or one-sided. Moltmann acknowledges the cultural location of all theology but, rather than assuming that his theology has the ability to transcend this, he proceeds to offer his critical theology on the basis of the cross, knowing that it can serve its purpose in his time.¹³² It is quite possible that in their contributions to the conversation future critical theologies could centre Luke or John, seeking to decentre Markan or Pauline theologies of the cross (and Moltmannian readings thereof) which function in some sense as covert theologies of glory in ways not yet seen. The unity of the canon would then be eschatological, the crucified Christ being present in different configurations of the canon throughout history, where parts of the biblical witness are always inevitably excluded or harmonised, until God brings his kingdom to completion and each piece in the canon is seen for its individual and unique witness to Christ in its own time and place. Admittedly, this reasoning is missing from *CG*. Nonetheless, I present it here to show that in the wider context of Moltmann's theology his apparently opportunistic exclusion of John 16:32 can accord with a deep commitment to the crucified Christ.

¹³¹ Contrast Moltmann's reading of the passion narratives with that of David Bentley Hart, "No Shadow of Turning: On Divine Impassibility," *Pro Ecclesia* 11:2 (2002): 184-206 (205), who prioritises Mark's canonical context:

[T]he 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.'

Support for this claim might even be provided by Mark's Gospel itself, in the inseparability of the crucifixion from the resurrection, as shown above. But what Moltmann is attempting to do is to maintain this broader context of resurrection, love, and victory, while at the same time directing his readers to the horror of the cross. It is in Mark's Gospel especially that he finds this brought to the centre.

¹³² This is not to say that other serious theologians make the mistake of confusing their context with theological truth. It is to say, however, that God uses their proposals in specific times and places but new times and places call for new proposals and, where necessary, recognition of how previous proposals might function in ways contrary to the gospel in these new times and places.

3.4. Conclusion

I began this chapter looking at Moltmann's methodology in *CG*. In *CG* Moltmann understands theology to be both christocentric and crucicentric. On this basis he attempts to undertake his project critically, dialectically, and to soteriological ends. The criticism that he attempts to derive theology singularly from the cross overlooks the role the resurrection has to play in Moltmann's methodology in *CG*. Moreover, two other methodological commitments not derived directly from the cross, the eschatological openness of theology to the future and trinitarian shape of all theology, also guide Moltmann's theology in *CG*.

In *TKG*, Moltmann incorporates human experience into his theological method. He also contends that theology should be undertaken dialogically. As such, it should not seek to be complete in its conclusions and it should strive to include voices that are otherwise excluded from the conversation. In his own theology Moltmann does not attempt to construct a system but offers proposals intended to stimulate further theological dialogue.

I also looked at the role Mark 15:34 played in *CG* as a case study for Moltmann's use of Scripture. Whereas in his later theology he tends to downplay the authority of Scripture, this is not so much the case in *CG* and *TKG*. However, his adoption of historical Jesus methodology clouds this commitment to biblical authority. Specifically, in arguing for the historicity of Jesus' abandonment as attested in Mark, Moltmann marginalises the passion accounts of Luke and John. He omits to note that the cry of dereliction plays not only a historical but a theological role in Mark's Gospel, and his employment of historical Jesus methodology allows him to arrive at a suspiciously convenient conclusion. I then compared Mark 15:34 in Moltmann's theology with some contemporary Markan scholarship. The context of Ps 22, Mark's passion narrative, and the rest of Mark's Gospel all point to the harshness of Jesus' abandonment by his Father. However, Mark's pre-conciliar setting means that he does not explicitly draw out the implications of this for the Father-Son relationship. Moltmann, then, runs into a language problem, offering a speculative proposal which has a flimsy basis in Mark. Nonetheless, his marginalisation of Luke and John is in keeping with his *theologia crucis* method. All theologies will inevitably marginalise aspects of the canon. And Moltmann's concentration on particular aspects of the canon offer a contribution to theology unique to the concerns of his generation.

4. A Pathetic God? Moltmann and Divine Suffering

Moltmann was not the first modern theologian to advocate a suffering God. Yet he contributed hugely to the popularity of divine passibility following the release of *CG*. Many followed him in likewise affirming not only the possibility of divine suffering but its necessity for a properly Christian understanding of God. Such was the case that in 1986 Ronald Goetz famously named divine passibility the “new orthodoxy.”¹³³ However, while this new trend has been received enthusiastically by some, others have pushed back on it, questioning whether the passibilists’ proposals make good biblical, theological, and even historical sense.

4.1. Defining Impassibility and Passibility

Moltmann rejects the traditional doctrine of divine impassibility, taking up a form of divine passibility. The exact meaning in modern theology of this doctrine which Moltmann rejects, a literal translation into Latin (*impassibilitas*) from the Greek *apatheia*,¹³⁴ is not completely clear. Many, Moltmann included, have employed the term without first clarifying what they mean by it, which has brought about some confusion.

Marcel Sarot notes that impassibility was originally employed to mean “incapable of being acted upon by an outside force,” a definition which was later easily extended to include inside forces as well. In this original sense it can be used interchangeably with immutability.¹³⁵ To distinguish impassibility from immutability,

¹³³ Ronald Goetz, “The Suffering God: The Rise of a New Orthodoxy,” *Christian Century* 103:13 (1986): 385-389.

¹³⁴ Marcel Sarot, “Patipassianism, Theopaschitism and the Suffering of God. Some Historical and Systematic Considerations,” *Religious Studies* 26:3 (1990): 363-375 (365).

¹³⁵ Sarot, “Patipassianism,” 365. Richard E. Creel, *Divine Impassibility: An Essay in Philosophical Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3-9, identifies eight definitions of divine impassibility in the literature he surveys. These are as follows:

- I₁ ‘lacking all emotions’ (bliss not an emotion)
- I₂ ‘in a state of mind that is imperturbable’
- I₃ ‘insusceptible to distraction from resolve’
- I₄ ‘having a will determined entirely by oneself’
- I₅ ‘cannot be affected by an outside force’
- I₆ ‘cannot be prevented from achieving one’s purpose’
- I₇ ‘has not susceptibility to negative emotions’
- I₈ ‘cannot be affected by an outside force or changed by oneself’ (9).

then, Sarot defines it as “immutability with regard to one's feelings, or the quality of one's inner life,” which includes “emotions, suffering, (un)happiness, affections and the like.”¹³⁶ This is similar to the definition provided by Kevin Vanhoozer: “That which is not subject to change is immutable; that which is not subject to suffering is impassible.”¹³⁷ Impassibility remains a substratum of immutability, the latter which also concerns God's nature, will, and knowledge.

Moltmann's proposal for divine suffering certainly goes beyond divine feelings. He proclaims a radical alternative to traditional accounts of immutability in that God's feelings are not merely perturbed but the trinitarian persons are constituted in the death of Christ. Father and Son become Sonless and Fatherless. Conversely, this constitution in nothingness is a historical feature of God's being, overcome eschatologically. Father and Son negate their negation in the resurrection, completing this negation of the negation when creation is brought into full trinitarian fellowship in the coming kingdom. That is, although Moltmann strives to express the extent of God's suffering such that God undergoes a change in his nature, like other Christian passibilists he is reluctant to posit anything that would compete with God's being. God undergoes suffering and change but it never can overcome him. The negation is limited by a stronger counter-negation which Moltmann sees in the resurrection. Moltmann's commitment to the immutability of divine nature on this fundamental level is further evident in his claim that God actively allows himself to be changed and actively suffers with his creation, rather than what he understands to be the false dichotomy of undergoing change or suffering either unwillingly or not at all. He thus holds to a form

He settles with the definition he sees most consistently represented: “that which is impassible is that which cannot be affected by an outside force. Hence, impassibility is imperviousness to causal influence” (11). This differs from immutability, which concerns both outside and inside forces. Creel then suggests sixteen possible variations on impassibility, depending on the combination in which a theologian ascribes impassibility to God's nature, will, knowledge, and feeling. For example, someone might claim that God is impassible in nature and will but not in knowledge and feeling, or vice versa. Creel explores these various areas throughout the rest of his book. However, this definition runs into difficulties. First, it does not adequately distinguish between kinds of outside forces. Creel conflates any external force that might influence its object with causal forces, the influence of which cannot be countered (Sarot, “Patripassianism,” 366, makes this point). Second, although impassibility might be applied to God's nature, will, knowledge, or feelings, these are not symmetrical aspects of God. There are certainly fewer than sixteen combinations. Creel himself devotes only two pages to the impassibility of God's nature, which it seems no Christian passibilist has any desire to dispute (Creel, *Divine Impassibility*, 13-14). It would be difficult, for example, for anyone to coherently claim that God is passible in nature, will, and knowledge, and yet not in feelings.

¹³⁶ Sarot, “Patripassianism,” 368.

¹³⁷ Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology*, 397.

of divine impassibility, though a divine impassibility with much broader parameters than the tradition.

Divine passibility in general is not to be confused with specific forms of divine passibility, such as patripassianism or theopaschitism.¹³⁸ Patripassianism refers to a version of modalism in which the Father suffers on the cross because he is indistinct from the Son. Although Moltmann affirms the suffering of the Father, he does not modalistically equate the Father with the Son. The Son experiences dying whereas the Father experiences death, i.e., the death of his Son (CG, 243). In light of this, Paul Molnar's attribution of modalism to Moltmann is untenable.¹³⁹ Theopaschitism is an orthodox belief that God the Son suffered in the flesh. It was affirmed at the fifth ecumenical council. *Theos* here, as in the term *theotokos*, refers to the person of the Son rather than God *in genere*. But Moltmann takes the term to mean the latter and thus disavows it, perhaps for its association with passibilists prior to him and the erroneous way in which they employed the term.¹⁴⁰ Nonetheless, because Moltmann rejects the distinction between Christ's divine and human natures that orthodox theopaschitism presupposes, *theopaschite* is an inexact descriptor of his theology.

¹³⁸ For these definitions and distinctions see Sarot, "Patripassianism," 363-375.

¹³⁹ Paul D. Molnar, *Divine Freedom and the Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity: In Dialogue with Karl Barth and Contemporary Theology* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2002), 222, takes one of Moltmann's comments to be modalistic: "What Christ, the incarnate God, did in time, God, the heavenly Father, does and must do in eternity" (TKG, 31). He goes on to equate any attribution of suffering to the Father with modalism. Molnar also makes the seemingly contradictory claim that Moltmann's theology is tritheistic, a claim which I will not be assessing here but one which is more frequently made in the literature and seems to have some basis in his theology (ibid., 227-233). Indeed, Moltmann outrightly embraces tritheism because he does not find it problematic (e.g., TKG, 243 n.43). Kärkkäinen, "Jürgen Moltmann," 121, follows Molnar in attributing modalism to Moltmann. There are two problems with this. First, in the passage Molnar cites from TKG, Moltmann is expounding not his own position but that of C. E. Rolt. In Moltmann's own theology, he presents a much stronger distinction between the trinitarian persons, so strong that Molnar and others charge him with tritheism. Second, though there may be other objections to raise regarding Moltmann's attribution of suffering to the Father, modalism is not one of them. This accusation only serves a polemical function and it does little to illuminate the limitations of Moltmann's claims. Moltmann is clear that the pain of the cross touches the Father on account of his Son's death but the Father does not undergo death as the Son. The latter is the claim which patripassianism makes. Elsewhere, to differentiate his theology more decisively from patripassianism, Moltmann coins the term "patricompassianism." See Jürgen Moltmann, "Gesichtspunkte der Kreuzestheologie heute," *Evangelische Theologie* XXXIII (1973), 359, cited in Sarot, "Patripassianism," 372 n.47.

¹⁴⁰ "Nor can the death of Jesus be understood in theopaschite terms as the 'death of God'. To understand what happened between Jesus and his God and Father on the cross, it is necessary to talk in trinitarian terms" (CG, 243).

4.2. Is Divine Impassibility a Pagan or a Christian Doctrine?

Towards the end of *CG*, Moltmann provides a positive assessment of the origins of divine impassibility in Plato, Aristotle, and Stoic philosophy. The fathers found that the doctrine could be suitably integrated into and even provide support for the central Christian concept of *agape*. In contrast to the rest of the book, Moltmann's only reservation here is with "the framework of the presupposed negation of the negative," i.e., that divine impassibility is just an anthropological negation of human suffering projected onto God (*CG*, 270). Yet in contrast to this positive assessment, throughout *CG* and *TKG* Moltmann juxtaposes what he understands to be an essentially Greek or pagan philosophical concept of God with the trinitarian God he sees at work in the cross. As Daniel Castelo observes, he neglects "to engage the fathers in their own setting and to analyse their usage and the negotiations which they made with their philosophical and cultural context at large."¹⁴¹ Moltmann has maintained this rhetoric throughout his career.¹⁴²

Moltmann is not alone in attributing the prominence of divine impassibility in the tradition to the undue influence of Greek philosophy.¹⁴³ Indeed, this attribution has been so popular that Paul Gavriluk gives it its own name: "The Theory of Theology's

¹⁴¹ Castelo, "Moltmann's Dismissal," 400.

¹⁴² In 2014, Moltmann writes,

The Aristotelian-Thomist metaphysics of substance has its origins in the religious enlightenment of ancient Greece. It does not affect the God of Israel. Why did Aristotle call God '*apathes*'? To exclude the moods and affairs of the Homeric gods. The God of Israel is not subject to such moods, but he is full of compassion for his people. This is why Abraham Heschel interpreted God's love and ability to suffer by way of his pathos. The history of Israel with God, according to Hosea, is a love story. From Jesus' history with God, the early Christians deduced the unconditional love of God. God not merely loves—'God is love' (1 John 4:16). The story of Christ is the story of the Passion of God in the double sense of passion and suffering.

See Jürgen Moltmann, "The Passibility or Impassibility of God: Answers to J. K. Mozley's 'Six Necessary Questions'," in *Within the Love of God: Essays on the Doctrine of God in Honour of Paul S. Fiddes*, ed. Anthony Clarke and Anthony Moore, 108-119 (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 116.

¹⁴³ E.g., T. E. Pollard, "The Impassibility of God," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 8:4 (1955): 353-364: "Nowhere is this bad influence of Greek philosophical presuppositions on Christian thinking about God more clearly to be seen than in what are commonly known as the traditional attributes of God, and in particular in the attribute of *impassibility*" (354, emphasis original). Richard Bauckham, "'Only the Suffering God Can Help': Divine Passibility in Modern Theology," *Themelios* 9:3 (1984): 6-12: "The idea of divine impassibility (*apatheia*) was a Greek philosophical inheritance in early Christian theology" (7). For some further examples, see Thomas Weinandy, O.F.M. Cap., *Does God Suffer?* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000), 18-25.

Fall into Hellenistic Philosophy” (henceforth, TTFHT).¹⁴⁴ The TTFHT has its beginnings in nineteenth century Germany. It was later popularised by Adolf von Harnack.¹⁴⁵ Yet, despite its popularity, it often rests on an oversimplified narrative. In response to this it must be said: “Impassibility was not baptized without conversion.”¹⁴⁶ “Perhaps the greatest irony in the [modern] divine (im)passibility debates is that [historically] both orthodox and heretic alike assumed impassibility to be viable within theological discourse.”¹⁴⁷

4.2.1. *In Defence of the Patristic Adoption of the Doctrine of Divine Impassibility*

Gavrilyuk identifies some major problems with the TTFHT, some of which apply to Moltmann.¹⁴⁸ First, the Greek philosophical milieu of the fathers did not provide a single form of divine impassibility but was home to diverse approaches, both between and within various schools of Epicurean, Stoic, and Middle Platonist philosophy. Indeed, divine suffering was actually a feature of some Hellenistic mystery cults. As Gavrilyuk concludes, “Hellenistic religions too had their passion narratives.”¹⁴⁹

Second, the TTFHT often misconstrues the role Hebrew sources played in patristic notions of divine impassibility. Indeed, the fathers received a complex picture of the God of Israel:

God in the Bible is said to repent... and to be incapable of repenting...; he is said to change his mind and to be unchangeable...; he is said to walk in the garden of Eden... and to dwell in ‘thick darkness’... and in ‘unapproachable light’... It is important to note that the tensions created by these conflicting descriptions of

¹⁴⁴ Paul L. Gavrilyuk, *The Suffering of the Impassible God: The Dialectics of Patristic Thought* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1.

¹⁴⁵ Gerald Bray, “Has the Christian Doctrine of God Been Corrupted by Greek Philosophy?,” in *God under Fire*, ed. Douglas S. Huffman and Eric L. Johnson, 105-118 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 108. Specifically, Bray locates its beginnings in Ferdinand Christian Baur, August Neander, and Albrecht Ritschl. Cf. the literature Moltmann cites in support of this (*CG*, 289 n.148).

¹⁴⁶ Gavrilyuk, *Impassible God*, 15. For an earlier critical assessment of the TTFHT, see Wolfhart Pannenberg, “The Appropriation of the Philosophical Concept of God as a Dogmatic Problem of Early Christian Theology,” in *Basic Questions in Theology*, vol. 2, trans. by George H. Kehm, 119-183 (London: SCM, 1971).

¹⁴⁷ Castelo, “Moltmann's Dismissal,” 398.

¹⁴⁸ Gavrilyuk, *Impassible God*, 178, observes, “Moltmann's position is not easily classifiable, since he rightly recognizes that *apatheia* for the Greek authors denoted God's freedom and self-sufficiency, rather than apathy and indifference.”

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 36.

God arise within the biblical narrative itself. They are not tensions between the Greek and the Hebrew ways of thought.¹⁵⁰

Moreover, the Bible predominantly consulted by the fathers, the Septuagint, often (though not always) downplayed or even omitted anthropomorphisms and anthropopathisms¹⁵¹ when translating from the original Hebrew. For example, the Hebrew text of Exod 32:14 in English reads, “Yahweh repented of the evil that he planned to bring on his people.” The same text translated from the Septuagint reads, “the Lord was moved with compassion.”¹⁵² Nor was this development restricted to translating the Hebrew Bible. Following Martin Hengel, James Keating and Thomas White note that, because of the Hellenistic concepts Judaism had inherited, “These notions not only permeated pre-Christian Jewish literature such as the Septuagint translation, *Ben Sirach*, or the book of *Wisdom*, but, most significantly, colored the Jewish thought-world of Jesus and the evangelists.”¹⁵³ Too sharp a distinction between the concepts which the biblical authors employed to understand the God of Israel and those developed by Plato and Aristotle is simply unhistorical.

Finally, the TTFHT often overlooks the positive role that the doctrine of divine impassibility played in patristic theology. It distinguished God from the pagan deities who were subject to human passions, like hate and lust. The Christian God was impassible and thus above these. Although some of the fathers spoke of God’s emotional life, they consistently underscored the difference between divine and human emotion. For the fathers, “divine impassibility entails freedom from and control over those emotional states that humans cannot manage easily.” Thus, “God is impassible in the sense of being immune to the negative consequences typically associated with human emotions.”¹⁵⁴ Thomas Weinandy makes a similar point, situating divine impassibility in its wider theological context. Most of the fathers subscribed to an absolute distinction between God and creation, a distinction they

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 38.

¹⁵¹ That is, attributions of human emotion to God.

¹⁵² Ibid., 39.

¹⁵³ James F. Keating and Thomas Joseph White, O.P., “Introduction: Divine Passibility in Contemporary Theology,” in idem, *Divine Impassibility*, 5.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 59.

drew from the Bible. In the context of Gnostic, Platonic, and Aristotelian thought this was especially unique:

[God] did not just relatively transcend all else in that he was the pinnacle of a contiguous chain of being, but rather he transcended creation in that he constituted a distinct ontological order all his own, and so was not one of the things made.¹⁵⁵

It was this biblically derived presupposition that provided a basis for the development of negative divine attributes in patristic theology, such as impassibility. The attributes of created things are simply *not* the attributes of God. Moreover, the development of such negative attributes “equally gave more noetic content to the positive attributes.”¹⁵⁶ Because God is free of the same oppressive or sinful passions experienced by human beings that would otherwise threaten his love, this love is all the more constant.

4.2.2. Assessment: Moltmann on the Pagan Origin of Divine Impassibility

It is difficult to offer an assessment of Moltmann here. He certainly affirms the positive role of the doctrine of divine impassibility in patristic theology and the later Christian tradition (*CG*, 267-270; *TKG*, 23). In this passage from *CG*, too, he avoids oversimplifying Greek philosophy, noting that Christian theology was influenced by particular aspects and adapted these according to the biblical witness to God. Moltmann’s only potential fault here would be the generalisation implied in his use of the shorthand “Greek.”¹⁵⁷ He does not explicitly address biblical support for divine impassibility in *CG* or *TKG*. Following Abraham Heschel, Moltmann presupposes that Scripture attests a divine *pathos*, unlike the capricious and irrational *pathē* of human beings and pagan gods, and yet unlike the Hellenistic concept of God that Jewish philosophy of religion (and, implicitly, Christian tradition) had inherited (*CG*, 270-274; *TKG*, 25-30). He also follows Heschel in affirming the varying portraits of God in the Hebrew Bible, immanent and transcendent, consummated in the person of Christ,

¹⁵⁵ Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?*, 109.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ E.g., *TKG*, 21,

If, in the manner of Greek philosophy, we ask what characteristics are ‘appropriate’ to the deity, then we have to exclude difference, diversity, movement and suffering from the divine nature. The divine substance is incapable of suffering; otherwise it would not be divine.

crucified and risen. In contrast to human suffering, God suffers freely. Creation can only affect God because he allows it to do so. Moltmann, then, is certainly conscious of the tensions which Gavriyuk highlights and in this he avoids going the way of non-Christian accounts of divine passibility such as process theology (*CG*, 255-256).¹⁵⁸

However, elsewhere Moltmann can assert that “Aristotle’s God,” which the Christian tradition has inherited, “cannot love; he can only be loved by all non-divine beings by virtue of his perfection and beauty.” This God is a “Narcissus in a metaphysical degree: *Deus incurvatus in se*” (*CG*, 222). In *TKG*, Moltmann refers polemically to Christ’s passion as a merely “human tragedy” when read through a Chalcedonian lens. As such, “God is inevitably bound to become the cold, silent and unloved heavenly power” (*TKG*, 22). Despite affirming that the tradition understood that God’s impassibility and love were inseparable (*CG*, 269-270), Moltmann’s contention here seems to be that the doctrine could never deliver on this, a point to which I will return below.¹⁵⁹ Thus, while Moltmann provides a sympathetic assessment in one place, elsewhere he reverts to polemical language, denouncing a significant aspect of the tradition as essentially un-Christian. His characterisation of traditional theology as “theism” (and, in *TKG*, his rejection of “monotheism”), implying the substitution of a theology which is consistently christocentric and crucicentric for a non-trinitarian, theocentric, and thus ultimately pagan, philosophy, is especially problematic in this respect because it overlooks the theological considerations the tradition made in coming to its conclusions. As Gavriyuk and Weinandy note, such a characterisation ignores both the biblical support for traditional aspects of the doctrine of God and the constructive role these aspects play in that theology. Nonetheless, on this basis Moltmann could only be faulted for bad reading. Only after the presuppositions underlying his theology of divine passibility are compared with some of those underlying traditional divine impassibility can a fuller assessment of his

¹⁵⁸ For more on the differences between Moltmann’s trinitarian panentheism and process theology see Oksu Shin, “The Panentheistic Vision in the Theology of Jürgen Moltmann” (Ph.D. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2002), 8-13. Shin outlines how Moltmann distances his own theology from process theology. She also highlights some of the distinctives of Moltmann’s theology that differentiate his panentheism from process theology, which she treats in greater detail over the course of her dissertation.

¹⁵⁹ See subsection 4.4.2.

claims be offered. Before doing this, it is necessary to clarify Moltmann's rejection of Chalcedonian christology.

4.3. Impassibility and Chalcedonian Christology

The fourth ecumenical council, the Council of Chalcedon, is accepted by the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church, and by many Protestant churches as an authoritative reading of Scripture. It produced the Chalcedonian Definition, which provides a norm for christology, emphasising the one person of Christ while distinguishing between his divine and human natures. However, Moltmann rejects this distinction because he claims that it derived from theism rather than the cross, and was included in the Definition to guard God's being from Jesus' passion. For him, "In contrast to the traditional doctrine of the two natures in the person of Christ, [contemporary christology] must begin from the totality of the person of Christ" (CG, 205-206). This is achieved when God as Trinity is the focus.¹⁶⁰ Moltmann affirms Luther's statement regarding the *communicatio idiomatum* that "This human being [*iste homo*] created the world and this God [*Deus iste*] suffered, died, and was buried,"¹⁶¹ but seeks a more radical statement, claiming that Luther "divides the person of Christ with this phrase '*iste Deus*' and '*iste homo*'" (CG, 233).

4.3.1. The Role of the Doctrine of Divine Impassibility in the Formation of Chalcedonian Orthodoxy

The fifth century christological controversies between the Alexandrians and the Antiochenes provide some background to the Council. While "textbook" interpretations of the controversies often cite the humanity of Jesus as the major issue of debate, John O'Keefe argues that it was instead the impassibility of God which was at stake.¹⁶² Indeed, impassibility had always played a major role in patristic theology.

¹⁶⁰ In the context of the Trinity, "the person of Jesus comes to the fore in its totality as the Son, and the relationship of the Godhead and the manhood in his person fall into the background" (CG, 207). Cf. Moltmann's references throughout CG to the "human God" (e.g., CG, 195-196, 227, 231, 252). Moltmann does not employ "God-man" in the context of his own theology but uses it to refer to other christologies (e.g., CG, 93, 212).

¹⁶¹ "*Iste homo creavit mundum et Deus iste est passus, mortuus, sepultus, etc.*" Weimar Ausgabe 39, II, 93ff, cited in CG, 233.

¹⁶² John J. O'Keefe, "Impassible Suffering? Divine Passion and Fifth-Century Christology," *Theological Studies* 58:1 (1997): 39-60 (57). Cf. Gavrilyuk, *Impassible God*, chap. 6. Gavrilyuk argues,

In the fourth century, for example, the anti-Nicenes had rejected the term *homoousion* because of its potential to import Christ's human sufferings into the Godhead.¹⁶³ However, once the Nicene Creed had been formulated and accepted, a new question emerged: "If Jesus Christ is God, as Nicaea declared, and if Jesus Christ suffered, as Scripture asserted, does this not imply that God suffered in some way?"¹⁶⁴

This question took on especial importance in the exchanges between Nestorius and Cyril of Alexandria. Nestorius, whose views were later condemned as heresy, claimed that it was necessary to make a strong distinction between two persons in Christ, the divine and the human. He was concerned that attributing human attributes and actions to the Son, who was *homoousion* with the Father, compromised divine impassibility. By positing the divine and human in Christ as two different persons he could safeguard divine impassibility. Conversely, Cyril of Alexandria, "first and foremost an exegete," rejected this strong distinction on biblical grounds: "if the biblical narrative suggested that God the Word had suffered, then Cyril was willing to affirm it, even if doing so made the concept of an impassible godhead strain and buckle."¹⁶⁵ Scripture attested one, not two persons of Christ. O'Keefe goes so far as to say that for Cyril the distinction between the Word suffering according to his person or according to his divine or human natures, "fade[s] to insignificance after the Incarnation."¹⁶⁶ In Cyril's own words, it is necessary to make the distinction but "only at a theoretical level." That is, "we accept the distinction only in our mental intuitions."¹⁶⁷ Nonetheless, like Nestorius, Cyril upheld the doctrine of divine impassibility. The theoretical distinction between the two natures meant the one person of Christ suffered but he suffered according to his human nature, not his divine nature. Cyril writes, "we do not deny that he can be said to suffer... but this does not

Theodore and Nestorius were dominantly theists who, above all else, sought to protect absolute divine impassibility from being compromised by any involvement in the turbulent affairs of human life. It is in the light of this central concern that they developed their two-subjects account of the incarnation. For Cyril, in contrast, the starting point was the voluntary self-emptying of a single divine subject who accepted the limitations of human life (141).

¹⁶³ O'Keefe, "Impassible Suffering?," 40. Cf. Gavriluk, *Impassible God*, chap. 5.

¹⁶⁴ O'Keefe, "Impassible Suffering?," 40-41.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 45-46.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁶⁷ Cyril of Alexandria, "Second Letter to Succensus," *Cyril of Alexandria: Select Letters*, ed. Lionel R. Wickham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 92.14-16, cited in O'Keefe, "Impassible Suffering?," 50.

mean that we say that the things pertaining to the flesh transpired in his divine and transcendent nature.”¹⁶⁸ Such a distinction, which would be clarified later at Chalcedon, resists straightforward definition. Yet, however difficult it was to maintain, Cyril saw its importance in preserving the notion of divine impassibility because it avoided predicating suffering of the divine nature.

The Council of Chalcedon was convened in 451, not long after both Cyril and Nestorius had passed away. Initially, assent to the Chalcedonian Definition in contemporary theology appears not to require any commitment to divine impassibility. For example, Sarah Coakley suggests that the word *Definition* here should be treated with care. While it is often called *Definition* in English, in Greek it is called *horos*, i.e., horizon or boundary. *Definition* connotes “semantic clarity, linguistic precision, or careful circumspection,” whereas “Chalcedon apparently fails to deliver all of these.”¹⁶⁹ Key words such as person (*hypostasis*) and nature (*physis*) are left “relatively *undefined*.” Indeed, “these terms had a pre-history, but it was an ambiguous one and the ‘Definition’ does not clear up the ambiguity.”¹⁷⁰ Rather, as a boundary, the Definition functions apophatically, identifying what is not orthodox christology as opposed to prescribing positive content for christology. It is “dogmatic minimalism.”¹⁷¹ Specifically, Coakley asserts that the Definition rules out Apollinarian, Eutychian, and Nestorian christologies; provides the terms *physis* and *hypostasis* to distinguish between duality and unity in Christ; and offers negative qualifiers (Christ’s natures are

¹⁶⁸ Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*, trans. by J. A. McGuckin (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary, 1995), SC 97.776A, cited in O’Keefe, “Impassible Suffering?,” 51.

¹⁶⁹ Sarah Coakley, “What Does Chalcedon Solve and What Does It Not? Some Reflections on the Status and Meaning of the Chalcedonian ‘Definition’,” in *The Incarnation: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, David Kendall S.J., and Gerald O’Collins, S.J., 143-163 (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), 160.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 148, emphasis original. Coakley writes that Chalcedon “does not tell us that the *hypostasis* is identical with the pre-existent Logos” and “it does not tell us whether the meaning of *hypostasis* in this christological context is different, or the same, from the meaning in the trinitarian context” (162-163). Similarly, Michael Slusser, “The Issues in the ‘Definition’ of the Council of Chalcedon,” *Toronto Journal of Theology* 6 (1990): 63-69, notes, “*hypostasis*... is a supplementary word, non-technical in character, and does not necessarily represent the same nuance of meaning as ‘person’ [*prosōpon*]” (68).

¹⁷¹ Oliver D. Crisp, “Desiderata for Models of the Hypostatic Union,” in *Christology: Ancient and Modern: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics*, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders, 19-41 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 27.

united “without confusion, without change, without division, without separation”).¹⁷² These qualifiers motion to an even greater mystery, the hypostatic union, which escapes definition.

However, in the context of the Council, the inseparability of the Definition’s two natures framework from divine impassibility becomes clear. As an apophatic text, Coakley argues that there are a number of christological issues that Chalcedon does not clarify. Yet, while “Chalcedon does not tell us in what the divine and human ‘natures’ consist,”¹⁷³ the text preceding the Definition suggests that divine passibility is the very problem that results if the two natures are not properly distinguished. According to the text, some heretics confuse or mix the natures, “mindlessly imagining that there is a single nature of the flesh and the divinity, and fantastically supposing that in the confusion the divine nature of the Only-begotten is passible.”¹⁷⁴ The Council thus “expels from the assembly of the priests those who dare to say that the divinity of the Only-begotten is passible.”¹⁷⁵ The theology of Chalcedon may be predominantly apophatic, but this is an apophaticism that also precludes any claim that the divine nature is passible either before or, especially, after the hypostatic union.

This short account of Cyril and Chalcedon confirms Moltmann’s contention that the “two natures framework” was developed out of a need to guard the divine nature from suffering. Other factors were certainly at play, such as the need to affirm Scripture’s witness to the full divinity and humanity of the one person of Christ, but divine impassibility played a central role in arriving at the Chalcedonian Definition. As long as this framework is upheld, theologians cannot speak of divine suffering in the same sense as Moltmann does. Any theology advancing within the bounds of this framework that Jesus suffers in his divine nature makes the framework redundant. It is for this reason that Moltmann sees the need to dismiss it altogether.

¹⁷² This is the translation Coakley provides at the beginning of her chapter (“What Does Chalcedon Solve?,” 143).

¹⁷³ Ibid., 162.

¹⁷⁴ “The Fourth Ecumenical Council: The Council of Chalcedon, 451,” in *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Valerie Hotchkiss, vol. 1, *Early, Eastern, and Medieval*, 172-181 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 177.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 179.

4.3.2. Assessment: The Theological Implications of Moltmann's Rejection of Chalcedon

It is useful here to note Wolfhart Pannenberg's rejection of Chalcedonian christology in his *Jesus—God and Man*.¹⁷⁶ Moltmann had certainly read this popular work, written four years before *CG*. The alternative to Chalcedon which Pannenberg presents is similar in some ways to Moltmann's christology in *CG*, though, as I will suggest, Moltmann's christology is less clear in this respect. For Pannenberg, despite the limits of Chalcedon, "*Vere deus, vere homo* is an indispensable statement of Christian theology."¹⁷⁷ It is this pre-Chalcedonian motif that Pannenberg observes is clearly present in the New Testament. Specifically, Pannenberg suggests that it is the resurrection by which the writers of the New Testament confessed Christ as *vere deus, vere homo*. Modern christology must redirect its sights from Chalcedon, which developed its construal of the hypostatic union on the basis of the incarnation rather than the resurrection. For Pannenberg, then, "Jesus' unity with God—and thus the truth of the incarnation—is also decided only retroactively from the perspective of Jesus' resurrection for the whole of Jesus' human existence... and thus also for God's eternity."¹⁷⁸

Moltmann's affinity with Pannenberg can be seen earlier in *CG* where he explicitly addresses the questions "Is Jesus true God?" and "Is Jesus true man?" (*CG*, 87-98). However, Moltmann does not provide a direct reply to these questions. He only suggests that past efforts to answer them have failed by effectively excluding Jesus' crucifixion, which is irreducible to either of these questions.¹⁷⁹ That is, the cross cannot be contained in the mutually exclusive concepts of divinity or humanity because it

¹⁷⁶ Pannenberg gives a number of reasons for rejecting Chalcedon: it inadvertently centres the contradiction between divine and human natures in christology, diminishing the centrality of the one person of Christ; in the term *physis* it implies a symmetry between divine and human natures; and it cannot satisfactorily mediate between Nestorian and monophysite alternatives. See Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man*, trans. by Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster John Knox, 1968), 283-323.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 285.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 321.

¹⁷⁹ Thus, in response to the first question Moltmann replies, "The more [patristic christology] emphasized the divinity of Christ..., the more difficult it became to demonstrate that the Son of God who was of one substance with God was Jesus of Nazareth, crucified under Pontius Pilate" (*CG*, 89). In response to the second he writes, "Christ... in his own way is outside history, outside society and outside the question of the humanity of living men. The transcendence of the crucified Christ is not metaphysical but the transcendence of concrete rejection" (*CG*, 98).

stands beyond both of them. It is not until the fulfilment of Christ's future that this irreducibility is overcome (CG, 103-107). This eschatological identity, "the centre of his existence" (CG, 106), is given proleptically in the resurrection. Like Pannenberg, Moltmann refers the unity of the one person of Christ to eschatology. He also diverts attention from the incarnation to the resurrection.¹⁸⁰ Nonetheless, in contrast to Pannenberg, Moltmann does not seem too concerned with developing a positive alternative to Chalcedonian christology: "On the one hand, Moltmann certainly agrees with Chalcedon that Jesus is *vere Deus* and *vere homo*. On the other hand, the doctrine of the two natures does not really play a part in his book [CG]."¹⁸¹ Rather, Moltmann attempts to evade Chalcedon altogether, bringing his readers' attention to the cross where the categories of divinity and humanity are confronted and contradicted. But as Richard Bauckham suggests, in an otherwise positive review of Moltmann's later *WJC*, this evasion is unconvincing:

Eschewing two-natures Christology in favour of Jesus' being-in-relation and being-in-history, Moltmann seems to see Jesus as a human being whose relationship to the Father in the Spirit makes him the unique Son of God... At this point Moltmann's focus on pneumatological Christology evidently enables him to sidestep a classic Christological issue; it is less clear that his own trinitarian theology ought to allow him to evade it.¹⁸²

Moltmann's christology is certainly not Nestorian, i.e., tending towards the disunity of the Logos and the man from Nazareth, as his continual insistence on oneness of Christ's person shows. Nor is it monophysite in the sense that the human Jesus is swallowed up in the divine Christ. Moltmann asserts Jesus' full humanity in the tradition of Gregory Nazianzen's dictum, "What is not assumed is not healed."¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ E.g., "His [Christ's] office is upheld not by the incarnation of the eternal Son of God nor by the archetype of true humanity, but by the future of the kingdom which is inaugurated in and around him" (CG, 98). "[T]he resurrection of the crucified Jesus into the coming glory of God contains within itself the process of the incarnation of the coming God and his glory in the crucified Jesus" (CG, 169).

¹⁸¹ Runia, *Christological Debate*, 45.

¹⁸² Bauckham, *Theology of Moltmann*, 208; cf. Macleod, "Christology of Moltmann," 35, "In *The Way of Jesus Christ* Moltmann achieves the extraordinary feat of writing over 300 pages on Christology without once mentioning Chalcedon." Not that it makes much difference, but, *pace* Macleod, Moltmann mentions Chalcedon once (*WJC*, 47).

¹⁸³ CG, 276,

When God becomes man in Jesus of Nazareth, he not only enters into the finitude of man, but in his death on the cross also enters into the situation of man's godforsakenness. In Jesus he

Conversely, he also asserts that it is certainly God who undergoes crucifixion.¹⁸⁴ He brings the two together in the unity of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. Without the historical crucifixion, Christ becomes an irrelevant myth. Without the resurrection, the death he undergoes does not differ greatly from those who underwent comparable deaths. Moltmann's rejection of Chalcedon, then, does not seem to be due to the duality in unity that it commends, despite his comment that even Luther "divides the person of Christ" (*CG*, 233, cited above). Ironically, it is difficult to see how Moltmann's dual emphasis on Christ as God and human avoids a similar "division."¹⁸⁵ Rather, Moltmann is particularly averse to Chalcedon for the impassibility of the divine nature which it presupposes. Similarly, while Moltmann radicalises Luther's doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum* to say that it is not only God *qua* a human being that Christ suffers but God *qua* God, the Chalcedonian exclusion of the confusion or mixing of natures necessitates a traditional doctrine of the *communicatio* that Moltmann rejects.

What is yet unclear is just how Moltmann intends to uphold the full humanity and divinity of Christ, as Chalcedon does, without positing a *tertium quid*, which is neither divine nor human. Nonetheless, although this ambiguity remains, Moltmann manages to maintain that which is important in this dual affirmation, while making some adjustments. God assumes the whole human condition, including human godforsakenness, and overcomes its limits in Christ, bringing human beings into fellowship with him. But it is in Moltmann's central claim in *CG* that he diverges from tradition. The crucifixion is not only an external work *pro nobis*; it is at the same time an internal work of God *pro se*. Indeed, in Moltmann's panentheistic framework it is one work in which both God and creation are included and transformed because to be

does not die the natural death of a finite being, but the violent death of the criminal on the cross, the death of complete abandonment by God.

Moreover, Moltmann asserts that Jesus' humanity is not just mediatory, a fault he attributes to Calvin's christology, but it has a central place in the consummated kingdom (*CG*, 256-266).

¹⁸⁴ *CG*, 192, "God (himself) suffered in Jesus, God himself died in Jesus for us... God became the crucified God so that we might become free sons of God."

¹⁸⁵ Conversely, it might be difficult to see how Moltmann avoids a conflation of the two. Despite variously asserting both the divinity and humanity of Christ, Marc Steen, "Jürgen Moltmann's Critical Reception of K. Barth's Theopaschitism," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 67:4 (1991): 278-311 (297), claims that Moltmann "ends up in a dubious christology, which neglects the difference between the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ." I would soften this critique, however, and suggest that this is an ambiguity in Moltmann's theology rather than an ignorance of the respective significances of Christ's divinity and humanity. As the foregoing citations demonstrate, Moltmann recognises that Christ's divinity and humanity have different functions in christology.

pro se is to be *pro nobis*, and vice versa. Any problems inherent in this move are avoided by the Chalcedonian alternative. Yet Moltmann does not arrive at this on the basis of rejecting Chalcedon but he rejects Chalcedon on this basis, i.e., the suffering of God that he sees in the cross. There remain some ambiguities in Moltmann's christology that might be clarified with reference to Chalcedon, and his rejection of the council is potentially unhelpful for an ecumenical Christianity.¹⁸⁶ However, besides these reasons, I do not deem this rejection to be of central importance in assessing the validity of Moltmann's doctrine of the Trinity.

4.4. Is Passibility a Possibility? A Critical Assessment of Moltmann's Arguments for Divine Suffering

Moltmann advocates for divine passibility on the basis of the centrality of the cross to the doctrine of the Trinity, the nature of divine love, and theodicy.¹⁸⁷

4.4.1. The Centrality of the Cross

Earlier I examined the centrality of the cross in Moltmann's methodology and proposed that even in *CG* Moltmann does not reduce everything to the cross.¹⁸⁸ Especially in light of his whole corpus, it is clear that other aspects of the biblical narrative such as eschatology and divine love, which are certainly also informed by the cross, guide his theological project. Moreover, Moltmann's *theologia crucis* methodology requires commitment to a critical theology. Insofar as the doctrine of divine impassibility functions in a way contrary to the gospel, as a *theologia gloriae*, it must be rejected. It therefore cannot be separated from his argument from theodicy, because for Moltmann it is theism that distances God from suffering on the basis of the limitations of finite being.

¹⁸⁶ See Mark S. G. Nestlehuett, "Chalcedonian Christology: Modern Criticism and Contemporary Ecumenism," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 35:2 (1998): 175-196. Elsewhere Moltmann demonstrates ecumenical spirit, such as in his willingness to provide a mediating perspective on the *filioque* for East and West (*TKG*, 178-187). Nonetheless, a rejection of Chalcedon may entail an entirely different ecumenism, a solidarity with those who have been historically marginalised by Christendom and the imperial church (*WJC*, 53-55).

¹⁸⁷ See subsection 1.5.2. above. This is, at least, what Bauckham, *Theology of Moltmann*, 47-53 claims, and I agree with him. There are other factors which have influenced theology's turn to the suffering God (Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology*, 392-394, provides a short but comprehensive account), though it is these three that are most prominent in Moltmann's theology.

¹⁸⁸ See section 3.1. above.

However, the necessity of developing a theology of divine suffering from the cross is disputed by Vanhoozer. Theology after Karl Barth has seen a welcome return to the basis for the doctrine of God in special revelation, i.e., in the person of Christ. Nonetheless, “While a christological concentration is entirely appropriate... a christological *reduction* is not.”¹⁸⁹ In making the cross a central feature not only of revelation but of the divine nature also, Moltmann risks this kind of christological reduction. According to Vanhoozer, there are two major problems with this. First, it misunderstands the cross: “What is ‘new’ about the new covenant is its intensity and scope: it is more wonderful, and glorious, than Israel had imagined because it includes the Gentiles and because it is fulfilled unilaterally (graciously) by God himself.”¹⁹⁰ There is no newness on the divine side, from whom all new things come. Second, Vanhoozer claims that a consistent commitment to this starting point requires that every feature of the cross be transferred in some way to the divine nature. But this makes for questionable results: “Does the incarnate life of Jesus reveal that God is a sleeper (because Jesus sleeps)?”¹⁹¹ This second point is distracting though because it overlooks the centrality of Jesus’ passion in Scripture. That he also slept and did other things was more or less assumed by the writers of the New Testament! Moltmann proceeds from the basis that if the cross is central to divine revelation, and on the cross we see the suffering Christ, then surely this suffering must reveal something more of God than the tradition allows.

But the major fault of the christological reduction of which Moltmann is potentially guilty is that it misses the canonical or biblical-theological context in which we encounter the crucified Christ. It stakes everything on this one event, omitting to speak of Scripture’s variegated witness to the God of Israel. That is, “Jesus is the center of the Scriptures, but we only appreciate the center as a center in light of the broader context.”¹⁹² Although Moltmann’s main focus in *CG* is on New Testament texts relating to the cross, he certainly situates his proposals within this broader context. His eschatological reversal of time, for example, draws upon his early doctrine of God in *TH*, which relies heavily on the eschatology of the Hebrew Bible (*TH*, sections I and II).

¹⁸⁹ Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology*, 418, emphasis original.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 418-419.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 419.

¹⁹² Ibid.

What Vanhoozer's critique of christological reduction helpfully points out here, however, is that Scripture does not *require* that the cross be placed at the centre of the doctrine of God in such a way that would make the doctrine of divine impassibility irrelevant and even heretical. Indeed, as I will show in chapter six, Hans Urs von Balthasar provides a possible solution to this problem, situating the cross in the centre of the Trinity, as Moltmann does, without compromising the distinction between God and creation.

4.4.2. *The Nature of Divine Love*

Moltmann's second contention, that if God is love then he must suffer because it is in love's nature to suffer, also requires attention.¹⁹³ Paul Molnar accuses Moltmann of substituting the doctrine of the immanent Trinity for a "panentheistic principle of suffering love discovered in a relational metaphysics."¹⁹⁴ Yet if this is the case then the question might also be asked what philosophical principles traditional Christianity draws on to elucidate its doctrine of the immanent Trinity. This counterclaim is highlighted well by Bauckham:

[W]hereas the tradition of metaphysical theism held that purely active benevolence was the only kind of human love which has an analogy in God, the cross requires us to say that it is human suffering love to which God's love is analogous.¹⁹⁵

That is, the basis for this particular concept of divine love to which Moltmann subscribes is in the cross, rather than what he identifies as theism, and certainly not an anthropologically derived principle of love apart from the cross.

¹⁹³ This argument is often made by divine passibilists. See, for example, Paul Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 1988), 16-26:

[I]f God is not less than personal, and if the claim that 'God is love' is to have any recognizable continuity with our normal experience of love, the conclusion seems inescapable that a loving God must be a sympathetic and therefore suffering God (17).

See also Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Suffering Love," in *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*, ed. Thomas V. Morris, 196-237 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988):

The fact that the biblical writers speak of God as rejoicing and suffering over the state of the creation is not a superficial eliminable feature of their speech... God's love for the world is a rejoicing and suffering love. The picture of God as a Stoic sage, ever blissful and nonsuffering, is in deep conflict with the biblical picture (227).

¹⁹⁴ Molnar, *Divine Freedom*, 215.

¹⁹⁵ Bauckham, *Theology of Moltmann*, 65.

But it is exactly this which is the problem, as Bauckham goes on to write. I cited a number of Moltmann's readers earlier in this thesis who had identified language as an issue in his theology. Specifically, John Webster suggested that this results from Moltmann's panentheistic confusion of finite and infinite being.¹⁹⁶ Although it is on the basis of the cross that Moltmann claims divine love is analogous to human love here, it is difficult to see how he intends to distinguish these two loves. A strong distinction is provided by the tradition, to which Vanhoozer subscribes. As he writes of divine compassion, the feature of love to which he draws our attention, "It is not a commiserating but a commanding, effectual compassion that does not share but transforms the sufferer's situation."¹⁹⁷ Compassion is thus "less a passion than a power."¹⁹⁸ God really loves human beings on the basis of the love which he is in eternity. But this is such a love that can never be perturbed by the sufferings of creatures. Rather, it seeks their good by offering them the only possible redemption from this suffering in a God who cannot suffer.¹⁹⁹ As noted above, Moltmann to an extent acknowledges the validity of this position (*CG*, 269-270). Nonetheless, this only provides an alternative way of conceptualising divine love. Moltmann's claims that the centrality of the cross and the nature of divine love require a theology of divine passibility must be seen together with his argument from theodicy.

4.4.3. *Theodicy*

Moltmann's third argument is from theodicy. Theism holds to the doctrine of divine impassibility to secure redemption from the limitations of finite being. Yet in so doing it offers a vision of redemption which effectively denies the reality of human suffering. The trinitarian God of the cross, however, constitutes himself in this suffering and protests with human beings against it. Redemption is not simply from suffering but it is a redemption that participates in suffering and nonetheless goes beyond it.

¹⁹⁶ Webster, "Jürgen Moltmann," 6. See subsection 3.3.6. above.

¹⁹⁷ Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology*, 446.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?*, 160, also makes the point that while human love often passes through suffering, "suffering itself is not a constitutive element of love." That is, we can imagine a love which consists in self-giving but occurs in such a context that self-giving does not lead to suffering. This is an important point to which I will return in my treatment of Hans Urs von Balthasar in chapter six.

Engaging with Moltmann's argument requires making some preliminary comments concerning the relationship between immanent and economic Trinity, which I will treat in greater depth in the following chapter.

In a critical article responding to contemporary divine passibilists, David Bentley Hart suggests what is at stake in such a position. Following Heidegger, Hart contends that divine passibility threatens the distinction between finite and infinite being:

[O]ne is identifying being with a being among beings, one's God is an ontic God, who becomes what he is not, possessed of potential, receiving his being from elsewhere—from being. And, as a being, he is in some sense finite, divided between being and being *this*, and so cannot be the being of creatures, even though he is their cause.²⁰⁰

For Hart, divine passibility confuses this distinction in that the finite acts upon the infinite, even if such action is allowed by the infinite. The infinite is both grounded in itself and it is the ground of finite being. If the finite acts upon it then it too is just another configuration of finite being, regardless of how much “larger” it may be. This results in a number of problems. First, as finite being God cannot be the ground of creaturely existence. There would have to be something greater than him which is both his ground and the ground of creaturely existence. Moltmann may then be referring to something but that something cannot be the God of Scripture, beyond whom there is nothing greater. And such a God cannot offer redemption: “if the nature of God's love can be in any sense positively shaped by sin, suffering, and death, then sin, suffering, and death will always be in some sense features of who he is.” Divine love is contingent on creaturely being to realise itself and is thus “inherently deficient, and in itself a fundamentally reactive reality.”²⁰¹ As Karl Rahner once said in an interview, “To put it crudely, it does not help me to escape from my mess and mix-up and despair if God is in the same predicament.”²⁰²

²⁰⁰ Hart, “No Shadow,” 190.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 191.

²⁰² Karl Rahner, *Karl Rahner in Dialogue 1965-1982*, ed. Paul Imhof and Hubert Biallowons, trans. by Harvey D. Egan (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 126-127, cited in *HTG*, 122. Castelo, “Moltmann's Dismissal,” 403, goes one step further, attributing the lack of soteriological value in Moltmann's proposal to his speculative methodology. Divine passibility (specifically, the suffering of the Father) “adds paltry little to notions of redemption and reconciliation which Moltmann all too often de-emphasises and puts to the side in his doctrine of God.” However, this critique overlooks the

This again raises the question of to what extent post-biblical philosophical frameworks can be presupposed in theology. As Paul Fiddes writes, in Barthian parlance, “if we object that an infinite God cannot encompass the finite then we are simply showing our ‘pagan’ and idolatrous outlook in denying God’s freedom to be what he wills to be.”²⁰³ Yet if Moltmann and Fiddes adopt alternative presuppositions to better follow what they read in Scripture, the counter-question of to what extent these presuppositions are coherent must also be asked.

One distinctive of the tradition which Moltmann maintains is God’s active suffering. God never suffers unwillingly but only insofar as he allows it (CG, 229-230). However, whereas the tradition ascribes God’s active suffering to God in Christ so that he suffers as a human being but not in such a way that would compromise his sovereignty, i.e., in involuntary suffering, Moltmann maintains that God suffers actively and yet that he does so not just as a human being but as God. He upholds God’s omnipotence, unlike process theology.²⁰⁴ But on the middle ground which Moltmann seeks to control here it is difficult to see how the strengths of either position can be upheld together. As soon as passibilism ranges into the territory of active suffering it begins to compromise itself. As Anastasia Scrutton suggests, “it seems to be an integral aspect of suffering that we do not have control over our suffering, and that we do not choose to suffer.”²⁰⁵ Similarly, Marc Steen ponders, “If God’s ‘suffering’ is as specific

inseparability of soteriology and the doctrine of the Trinity for Moltmann. See subsection 1.5.5. of this thesis for comment on the soteriological value of his proposal.

²⁰³ Fiddes, *Creative Suffering*, 64.

²⁰⁴ E.g., David Ray Griffin, “Process Theology,” in *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Charles Taliaferro, Paul Draper, and Philip L. Quinn, 159-166, 2nd ed. (West Sussex: Blackwell, 2010), 161, summarises Alfred Whitehead’s philosophy:

Evil can occur in the world because God, while influencing all events, fully determines no events. Each event is necessarily influenced by its past world as well as by God, and each actual entity is partly self-determining, even vis-à-vis divine agency... [C]reaturely freedom is rooted not in a voluntary self-limitation by God but in the very nature of things... This naturalistic theism entails that God cannot occasionally violate the normal causal relationships.

²⁰⁵ Anastasia Scrutton, “Living Like the Common People: Emotion, Will, and Divine Passibility,” *Religious Studies* 45:4 (2009): 373-393 (388). Scrutton goes on to dispute this connection, giving examples of those who suffer voluntarily but who, nonetheless, suffer! For her, voluntary suffering has value when it is undertaken with the right motivations. However, this claim misses the fundamental distinction between voluntary and involuntary suffering. Although the voluntary sufferer indeed suffers and does so for the good of others, they can never experience suffering in the same way as those who suffer involuntarily. That is, although their suffering may indeed even be greater, e.g., in terms of physical pain, they cannot *choose* to experience *involuntary* suffering. This is significant

and 'active' as Moltmann says, is the term 'suffering' still relevant?"²⁰⁶ If God were really to take on human suffering in this sense and reign victorious over it in Christ then he would have had to have been always subject to suffering. It is impossible to freely take on that which is essentially involuntary. Process theology can certainly affirm this kind of divine suffering because, unlike Moltmann's theology, its subject is not the God of Jesus Christ. So, too, traditional notions of God's suffering in the flesh avoid this because, as with Vanhoozer cited above, the purpose of divine compassion is not to experience human suffering but to overcome it.²⁰⁷ Moltmann could go the way of process theology, but then there would be no certain hope for deliverance from suffering because such a suffering would threaten the possibility of God's ultimate victory over it. Otherwise Moltmann could go the way of the tradition, but this would require that his proposals be radically adjusted. Thus, despite maintaining the reality of redemption while rejecting the theistic distinction between infinite and finite being, such a commitment is compromised by a logical problem in Moltmann's alternative doctrine of the Trinity.

The second claim Hart makes is that if suffering is attributed to the ground of all existence then it becomes difficult to maintain its contingent character. Rather, all sufferings "will turn out to be moments in the identity of God, resonances within the event of his being, aspects of the occurrence of his essence: all evil will become meaningful." But, this would be a "monstrous irony... if, in our eagerness to find a way of believing in God's love in the age of Auschwitz, we should in fact succeed only in describing a God who is the metaphysical ground of Auschwitz."²⁰⁸ While this is certainly a danger for any passibilism, at least in *CG* Moltmann avoids making suffering (and the evil from which many sufferings proceed) necessary simply because he does not claim that it is necessary. In his eschatological orientation he avoids making any

because there is some level of unbridgeability between the being of the sufferer and that of the active sufferer.

²⁰⁶ Steen, "Moltmann's Critical Reception," 306.

²⁰⁷ Heb 4:15 should not be a problem here. In the same place the author explicitly differentiates Jesus from other human beings in that he was without sin. If Jesus can be without sin and nonetheless face real temptation, then he can also be distinct from other human beings in actively suffering because the voluntariness of his suffering is not essential to his overcoming of it. Cf. Kevin DeYoung, "Divine Impassibility and the Passion of Christ in the Book of Hebrews," *Westminster Theological Journal* 68:1 (2006): 41-50 (47-50).

²⁰⁸ Hart, "No Shadow," 192.

claims about the source of suffering and instead focusses on its abolition in the future of God's kingdom. Suffering afflicts human beings in the present but on the cross the coming God and the resurrected Son, for whom there is no suffering and in whom is humanity's only hope to one day overcome all suffering, have come into this present and nonetheless subjected themselves to suffering. Moltmann addresses the fact of suffering and looks to a time when that fact will be no longer. In *CG* he does not attempt to give this fact meaning or purpose, let alone necessity.

It is to Moltmann's claims in *TKG*, however, that Hart's critique must be applied. Before the creation of the world, the love of the Father for the Son must²⁰⁹ go beyond itself to love not just its like but its Other. Yet suffering arises out of the freedom given to its Other, a suffering in which God willingly partakes so that creation may have redemption in his redemption (*TKG*, 57-60). The chief problem with this claim is that by making creation necessary to divine love and suffering necessary to the freedom given to creation it cannot avoid the conclusion that sufferings, such as Auschwitz, serve some eschatological purpose in the panentheistic God-world relation. That is, creation must take place so that God's love can be complete, and it will suffer if it is free because it is not God and therefore it will misuse its freedom. The eschatological kingdom in which creation participates in the trinitarian fellowship cannot be consummated apart from these sufferings because finite freedom must run its course as finite freedom for it to be finite freedom before God redirects it to its source in him and it becomes transformed freedom. If Moltmann had understood the act of creation as contingent on God's free choice rather than necessary, the force of this problem would be mitigated.²¹⁰ Regarding the problem of suffering, the starting point in *CG* is preferable because here Moltmann assumes that the question of the source (and

²⁰⁹ This, however, is a qualified *must*. See subsection 5.2.3. below.

²¹⁰ Moltmann does draw attention to a mysticism of the cross that would eternalise suffering:

To submerge oneself mystically in the dying torments of the crucified Jesus would mean giving these torments eternal validity if the submergence were not bound up with a hidden, inner, joyful exaltation of the risen and transfigured Christ. A theology of the cross without the resurrection is hell itself (*TKG*, 41-42).

However, here we are concerned with the necessary source of suffering in Moltmann's theology of creation.

therefore possible purpose) of suffering is irrelevant to the sufferer. Their concern is not with explanation but liberation.²¹¹

The risk in this, however, is that of evil taking on “a certain independent authenticity, a reality with which God must come to grips.”²¹² This is a problem because again God’s absolute transcendence and sovereignty would be compromised. But Moltmann affirms the possibility of redemption in an alternative conception of divine transcendence. The strength of his position is that he also sees in the cross God’s participation in the questioning of or protest against suffering. The extent of the victim’s suffering is not brushed aside as something inconsequential to God. God himself feels the force of the meaninglessness of suffering. Nonetheless, as suggested above, it is difficult to see how Moltmann can maintain this if he also wants to maintain that God suffers actively.

4.5. Enmity between Father and Son?

A distinctive of Moltmann’s theology in *CG* is his attribution of “enmity” to the relationship between Father and Son in the crucifixion:

The abandonment on the cross which separates the Son from the Father is something which takes place within God himself; it is *stasis* within God—‘God against God’—particularly if we are to maintain that Jesus bore witness to and lived out the truth of God. We must not allow ourselves to overlook this ‘enmity’ between God and God by failing to take seriously either the rejection of Jesus by God, the gospel of God which he lived out, or his last cry to God upon the cross (*CG*, 151-152).

Moltmann’s intention here is clearly poetic and polemical. As Helen Bergin suggests, such “bald statements attributed to God’s rejection are meant to disturb, in order that the horror of Jesus’ death may be realised and that Jesus’ God may be seen to be directly involved.”²¹³ However, such striking language implies that God not only takes on creaturely suffering in the crucifixion but evil as well! If this is not the case, at least the

²¹¹ In the last thirty years, theology has seen an increased interest in “antitheodicy” positions, those which reject any attempt at a theodicy on moral grounds. This is what I see at work in *CG*. For a short critical overview of some recent antitheodicy literature see Robert Mark Simpson, “Moral Antitheodicy: Prospects and Problems,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 65:3 (2009): 153-169.

²¹² Hart, “No Shadow,” 191.

²¹³ Helen Bergin, O.P., “The Death of Jesus and Its Impact on God – Jürgen Moltmann and Edward Schillebeeckx,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 52:3 (1986): 193-211 (196).”

apparent love in unity between Father and Son in the crucifixion, which Moltmann elsewhere adamantly defends, seems to be at stake in such a claim. In the later *WJC*, Moltmann explicitly addresses this: "In the New Testament the Father of Jesus Christ is always on Jesus' side, never on the side of the people who crucified him; for he is Israel's God, not Jupiter, the god of the Romans" (*WJC*, 176). While some theologians in history have suggested that with regard to the cross, "God *wishes* Jesus to die in this way" so that "Betrayers, judges and executioners are doing to Jesus what God charges them to do, so that he may die," Moltmann responds, "This is not an answer at all. It is blasphemy, for a monster like this is not God" (*WJC*, 177). It is ironic then that Moltmann's suggestion of intra-trinitarian enmity in *CG* seems to flirt with such a blasphemy.

Moltmann probably included this in *CG* for soteriological reasons. Divine love does not overcome human sin and injustice by force. Rather, in the midst of sin and injustice it overcomes them in submission to them. This is the enmity to which Christ submits on the cross and overcomes through the love of the Father for the Son, expressed in the resurrection. Divine love "cannot prohibit slavery and enmity, but must suffer this contradiction, and can only take upon itself grief at this contradiction and the grief of protest against it, and manifest this grief in protest" (*CG*, 248). The enmity between Father and Son is not then a divine enmity to match the enmities of this world. Instead, it is Christ suffering the human enmity of the crucifixion against which he cries out to the one who has allowed him to undergo such an evil (though he himself has also willingly taken up this suffering). Nonetheless, this concept of intra-divine enmity can be confusing and misleading, especially where it implies either God's taking on of evil or an opposition between Father and Son. Moltmann would have done well to address these issues before characterising the crucifixion as such.

4.6. Conclusion

I began this chapter by defining what Moltmann means by divine suffering. Whereas many divine passibilists advocate a divine passibility in which God's feelings are affected by the world, Moltmann goes further to say that God undergoes a change in nature in relation to the world. Two other terms, patripassianism and theopaschitism, are inaccurate descriptors of Moltmann's theology. The first denotes a form of

modalism and the second presupposes the Chalcedonian christology which Moltmann rejects.

I then looked at Moltmann's adherence to a form of what Gavriilyuk names the "Theory of Theology's Fall into Hellenistic Philosophy." Gavriilyuk rejects the theory because it misunderstands patristic motivations for the development of the doctrine of divine impassibility. But, like Gavriilyuk, Moltmann does not oversimplify Hellenistic philosophy or the biblical narrative. He also recognises the positive role divine impassibility played in the tradition, and attempts to remain faithful to the biblical witness to God's transcendence. However, elsewhere Moltmann makes more generalised statements that do not help his case, and neither are his dismissive references to *theism* and *monotheism* particularly helpful.

Moltmann rejects the Chalcedonian christology of two natures in one person because it arose out of an *a priori* commitment to divine impassibility. His contention holds true in looking at the debate between Cyril and Nestorius, and the context of the Chalcedonian Definition. But regardless of the context in which the conclusions of Chalcedon were formed, it seems odd that Moltmann would want to rid his theology of a framework that brings clarity to christology. He certainly wants to uphold the full humanity and divinity of Christ, and he takes pains to do so. Nonetheless, while it remains ambiguous just how Moltmann envisages this, apart from the obstacles his rejection might provide for an ecumenical theology this is not a major problem for his doctrine of the Trinity.

Next, I assessed the basis on which Moltmann argues for divine passibility. For his first two claims I provided impassibilist alternatives to show that it was not necessary to follow him here. First, impassibilists affirm the central importance of the cross for the doctrine of the Trinity without conceding divine suffering. For them it is one aspect of whole biblical witness to God. Second, impassibilists maintain divine love in such a way that upholds divine impassibility. God's compassion manifests not in suffering with creation (though he does suffer with creation as a human being in Christ) but in delivering creation out of its sufferings. But Moltmann's claims must be seen together. His third argument is from theodicy. Those who suffer can only find hope in the trinitarian God of the cross who suffers in love for humanity. However, while there may be room for alternative conceptions of divine transcendence, such as that to which Moltmann holds in commending divine passibility, it is difficult to see

how he can maintain both that God actively suffers with his creation, lest suffering is greater than him, and that God really identifies with the problem of suffering, which is involuntary for human beings. A second possible problem, that Moltmann's theology eternalises suffering and makes it necessary, is generally avoided in *CG* but not so much in *TKG* in Moltmann's nascent doctrine of creation.

Finally, I examined Moltmann's attribution of enmity to the relationship between Father and Son in the crucifixion. While it is unlikely that he intends a real enmity here (it is just the Father's and the Son's experience of the world's enmity), the poetic and polemical context of this assertion and Moltmann's lack of explanation might mislead his readers to think that God takes on evil or that the love between Father and Son is displaced by enmity.

5. Maze Rahner: Navigating the Labyrinth of Rahner's Rule in Moltmann's Doctrine of the Trinity

Following Karl Rahner, Moltmann affirms, "The economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity, and the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity" (CG, 240). Yet others who have followed Rahner have reached different conclusions for the doctrine of the Trinity. Moltmann is, in Fred Sanders's terms, a "radicalizer" of Rahner's rule, developing its "implications in the direction of the closest possible identity between economic and immanent Trinity."²¹⁴ Conversely, "restricters" often acknowledge the legitimacy of Rahner's rule in emphasising the connection between economic and immanent Trinity, but "maintain a sharper conceptual distinction" between them when interpreting the rule.²¹⁵ This distinction, to which Moltmann does not hold, can be stated as such: "The economic Trinity is the ground of cognition for the ontological [i.e., immanent] Trinity, and the ontological Trinity is the ground of being for the economic Trinity."²¹⁶ In this case the identity between economic and immanent Trinity, as well as their traditional asymmetry, is upheld. Before addressing Moltmann's radical reading of Rahner, it is necessary to clarify a distinctive feature of his construal of the relationship between immanent and economic Trinity.

5.1. Moltmann's Eschatological-Historical Ambiguity

5.1.1. The Problem

In a widely cited article, Roger Olson contends that Moltmann's doctrine of the Trinity inadequately assumes a particular relationship between eschatology and history. He interprets Moltmann's statement, "When everything is 'in God' and 'God is all in all',

²¹⁴ Fred Sanders, *The Image of the Immanent Trinity: Rahner's Rule and the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 6. In the former category, Sanders includes Piet Schoonenberg, Hans Küng, Jürgen Moltmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Robert Jenson, and Catherine Mowry LaCugna. In the latter he includes Yves Congar, Walter Kasper, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Thomas Torrance and Paul Molnar. For a short historical overview, see *ibid.*, 15-46 and Chung-Hyun Baik, *The Holy Trinity – God for God and God for Us: Seven Positions on the Immanent-Economic Trinity Relation in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 21-61.

²¹⁵ Sanders, *Image of the Immanent Trinity*, 6.

²¹⁶ Seung Goo Lee, "The Relationship between the Ontological Trinity and the Immanent Trinity," *Journal of Reformed Theology* 3:1 (2009): 90-107 (92). Puzzlingly, Lee does not associate this position with Barth, but groups Barth instead with Rahner, Moltmann, and Jüngel (97).

then the economic Trinity is raised into and transcended in the immanent Trinity” (*TKG*, 161), to mean, “the immanent Trinity properly belongs to the future.”²¹⁷ As such, “this future kingdom of Glory is the ‘locus’ of the Trinity in immanence and thus both the outcome of the economic, historical trinitarian process and the power which gives it its ultimate validity.”²¹⁸ Olson understands that Moltmann situates the immanent Trinity in the future and the economic Trinity in history. But this innovation is problematic: “if the immanent Trinity is conceived as future, and thus not a completed reality at any point in the historical process of the divine life... how does it ‘primarily determine’ that process and life?”²¹⁹ Sanders extends Olson’s critique, noting,

This could be something of a shell game, which begins by asserting some kind of priority for the immanent Trinity but ends by putting the immanent Trinity on the receiving end of the action in a twofold sense, thus eliminating reciprocity.²²⁰

In place of this ambiguity, Olson suggests that Moltmann’s doctrine of the Trinity could be improved with recourse to something like Wolfhart Pannenberg’s concept of the “ontological priority of the future,” i.e., “the concept of the future’s determination of every present without destruction of the real contingency and historicity of the present.”²²¹

5.1.2. The Immanent-Economic Distinction and the Trinity in Protology, History, and Eschatology

While Moltmann’s presentation of the relationship between immanent and economic Trinity in *TKG* is sufficiently ambiguous to lend itself to such readings, his thinking is also more complicated than Olson and Sanders suggest. In a 1977 collection of essays, Moltmann differentiates between what he terms “protological” and “eschatological” approaches to the Trinity (*FC*, 86). The protological approach, which characterises traditional Western theology, infers from the economic sendings of the Son and the Spirit their origin in the immanent Trinity. In contrast, the eschatological approach

²¹⁷ Roger Olson, “Trinity and Eschatology: The Historical Being of God in Jürgen Moltmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 36:2 (1983): 213-227 (219).

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 221.

²²⁰ Sanders, *Image of the Immanent Trinity*, 95.

²²¹ Olson, “Trinity and Eschatology,” 222-223.

infers from the future identity of the trinitarian persons their identity in relation to us in the present. Moltmann has here gone further than he did in *CG*, now affirming the validity of not only the eschatological but the traditional approach as well, which investigates the eternal origins of the economic Trinity. Nonetheless, it must be emphasised that Moltmann's understanding of the protological life of the Trinity differs significantly from the traditional approach in that "in the sending of the Son and the Spirit the Trinity issues from itself... [I]t not only reveals what is within it but also opens itself for history and experience" (*FC*, 86). God's constitution in history begins with the creation of the world.

This distinction between protology and eschatology is implied throughout *TKG*. Moltmann notes that for Paul, "The temporally marked beginning of Jesus' ministry as 'the Son of God in power' and the statements about the pre-existence of the Son... stand side by side, without any attempt to reconcile them" (*TKG*, 87). Indeed, as Douglas Farrow observes, for Moltmann "a 'primordial' Trinity (God open to the world) is perfected *via* the economy (God suffering with the world) into an eternal or doxological Trinity (God glorified in the world)."²²² Here protological and eschatological are not merely different approaches to understanding the Trinity. These, along with the middle term, the divine economy, constitute a threefold structure of distinct stages in the life of the Trinity. This is complicated, though, by the non-linearity of these stages. For example, "Jesus is risen into the coming kingdom of God. Jesus is risen into the innermost being of God himself. He has been exalted into the divine origin of the Holy Spirit" (*TKG*, 88). Moltmann maintains that the economic mission of the Spirit is grounded in the Spirit's intra-trinitarian procession from the Father of the Son,²²³ but here claims that the procession itself is inseparable from the Son's resurrection. That Moltmann sees the procession as eternal (and contingent on the Son's eternal sonship) is clear in his discussion of the *filioque*: "The Father is in all eternity solely the Father of the Son... The procession of the Spirit from the Father therefore has as its premise the generation of the Son through the Father in eternity" (*TKG*, 183). The Spirit

²²² Farrow, "Systematic Contributions," 436. Cf. Moltmann, *FC*, 92, "Between the Trinity in its origins before time and the eschatological Trinity at the end of time lies the whole history of God's dealings with man and creation."

²²³ For Moltmann, in his contribution to the *filioque* problem, the Spirit proceeds neither from the Father alone nor from the Father and the Son but from the Father of the Son (*TKG*, 185).

proceeds both protologically, from the eternal Father of the Son, and eschatologically, from the Father of the risen Son.

Before attempting to see how Moltmann can say this, it is important to clarify what he intends to convey. Because Moltmann refers not only to the protological but the eschatological stage as *immanent* Trinity, a terrain which traditionally belongs to the doctrine of the *economic* Trinity, it is unclear exactly where in this threefold schema he intends to situate immanent and economic Trinity. Certainly his insistence on the identity of immanent with economic Trinity requires that this dual immanent Trinity, protological and eschatological, must not be read as Moltmann simply introducing a third factor, the eschatological, into the traditional dualism of protological immanent and historical economic Trinity so that there are now two immanent Trinities, one either side of economic. Moltmann rejects the traditional concept of the immanent Trinity insofar as it is “a closed circle of perfect being in heaven” (CG, 255). Thus, protologically, God is immanent Trinity because creation has not “yet” taken place. Nonetheless, creation will take place and there is no God before the foundation of the world who will not create. Historically, God is immanent Trinity because Father, Son, and Spirit have their own life which transcends the history that takes place in this life. However, as this life is recognised through doxology, the Spirit who gives this recognition also further constitutes Father and Son through the praises of believers. Eschatologically, God is immanent Trinity as the culmination of his acts in history when “the economic Trinity is raised into and transcended in the immanent Trinity” (TKG, 161). The difference between history and eschatology here, then, is not that the latter grounds the former. God is already transcendent in a particular way in history. He does not primarily determine history from the future. The future has not yet taken place. But he determines history in his own historical trinitarian relations who are nonetheless transcendent to the historical process of the world. Moltmann variously links God’s transcendence in history to God’s protological or eschatological life, but he sometimes simply presupposes it without reference to protology or eschatology, and he certainly never situates it exclusively in God’s eschatological life.

Moltmann’s association of God’s eschatological life with the immanent Trinity can be understood in two ways. First, it underscores his thoroughgoing emphasis on the unity of immanent and economic Trinity. Because from eternity God opens himself to be conditioned by creation, creation’s eschatological inclusion in the Trinity can be

called inclusion in the *immanent* Trinity. God as immanent Trinity is never without this openness so that when this openness is answered with his redemption of creation he does not retreat into being a God apart from creation. The inclusion of creation in him is in keeping with the nature of his being, one that has always been open to inclusion. Second, as in traditional accounts of the immanent Trinity, God in his protological life is the ground of creation's possibility and its redemption. Moltmann also situates this in God's eschatological life. In the earlier *FC*, he addresses the relationship between the present and the future, a relationship he seems to presuppose in *TKG*. In answer to the question, "Does the present determine the future, or does the future determine the present?" (*FC*, 20-31), Moltmann concludes that both configurations are evident in the New Testament. Thus the New Testament speaks of God's power in the present stretching into and determining the future. Paul can "argue soteriologically... in order to deduce the power of Christ's resurrection from the power of his passion in justification and the reconciliation of man" (*FC*, 30). The New Testament also speaks of God's eschatological power coming into the present to inaugurate the coming kingdom ahead of its consummation. Nonetheless, Moltmann sees priority given by the New Testament to this latter relationship, by which any present determination on the future is "comprehended and enclosed." As such, "It is only out of the historical descent from the future to the present that the converse soteriological descent from the present to the future acquires its quickening power" (*FC*, 31).²²⁴ Moltmann employs similar reasoning in *CG*:

In terms of history and its sense of time, Jesus first died and was then raised. In eschatological terms the last becomes the first: he died as the risen Christ and was made flesh as the one who was to come (*CG*, 184).

On the one hand, Christ's eschatological sonship has priority in that it reveals who he is in the crucifixion. On the other hand, God in history has priority as the trinitarian persons constitute themselves in the crucifixion, a constitution that continues in various ways until the consummation of the kingdom.

In *TKG*, Moltmann can thus refer to God's eschatological life as immanent Trinity: "Anyone who sees the risen Christ is looking in advance into the coming glory

²²⁴ Moltmann returns to the relationship between historical and eschatological determination in his mature *CoG*, 22-29.

of God" (*TKG*, 85) and the "presence of the Spirit is the presence of future glory" (*TKG*, 125). But he also wants to affirm the priority of God's acts in history to his being: "The economic Trinity not only reveals the immanent Trinity; it also has a retroactive effect on it" (*TKG*, 160). "The pain of the cross determines the inner life of God from eternity to eternity" (*TKG*, 161). To complicate things further, elsewhere the protological life of the Trinity appears to be the ground of the cross event, as it is in traditional doctrines of the Trinity. Creation "springs from the Father's love for the Son and is redeemed by the answering love of the Son for the Father" (*TKG*, 59). "The Father loves the Son with engendering, fatherly love. The Son loves the Father with responsive, self-giving love." Therefore, "the Son's sacrifice of boundless love on Golgotha is from eternity *already included* in the exchange of the essential, the consubstantial love which constitutes the divine life of the Trinity" (*TKG*, 168, emphasis added). Here the love of God on the cross is first the love between Father and Son in eternity. In this sense, the cross does not so much retroactively affect the Trinity as it does reveal the love which is already there from eternity.

In presenting conflicting accounts of protological, historical, and eschatological priority in God, Moltmann may well be following a pattern he finds in Paul, who, according to Moltmann, also employs conflicting approaches to identifying God "without any attempt to reconcile them," as cited above. This would be fine if Moltmann's statements regarding the constitution of the trinitarian persons in the crucifixion and resurrection were merely epistemological. Certainly Moltmann understands the resurrection to play an epistemological role. As Richard Bauckham writes, "The recognition of God's eschatological action in raising Jesus requires us to understand God as active in the cross of Jesus."²²⁵ But Moltmann also explicitly assigns ontological import to this eschatological reversal, which the above exposition of *FC* demonstrates. Indeed, J. Matthew Bonzo reads Moltmann's comments on "the reversal of the noetic and ontic orders" in the resurrection (*CG*, 184) to mean "Noetically, the experience of the cross has chronological priority... Ontically, the experience of the resurrection has a logical priority."²²⁶ For Moltmann, God determines his being in the non-linear protological, historical, and eschatological stages of his life. It is in the

²²⁵ Bauckham, "Moltmann's Eschatology," 304.

²²⁶ J. Matthew Bonzo, *Indwelling the Forsaken Other: The Trinitarian Ethics of Jürgen Moltmann* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009), 56.

middle term, the historical, where the dialectic of protological and eschatological is worked out. From the point of the cross, Moltmann's use of "retroactive" (*TKG*, 160) invokes the protological Trinity. In emphasising the priority of the cross, Moltmann underscores the extent of God's love in constituting himself in history. God's love is such that he identifies with the godless by becoming godless himself. Conversely, in emphasising the priority of the eternal love, Moltmann underscores the meaning of the cross event as the overflowing of God's intra-trinitarian love.

5.1.3. Assessment: *The Missing Dialectic*

Olson's critique falls down where it misunderstands the distinction between immanent and economic Trinity in *TKG*. For Moltmann, "The thesis about the fundamental *identity* of the immanent and the economic Trinity of course remains open to misunderstanding as long as we cling to the distinction at all" (*TKG*, 160). This means that for Moltmann not only can God allow himself to be determined by his creation, as Olson acknowledges, but he remains transcendent at every stage in the historical process because he is the one who allows himself to be determined.

It remains, however, that Olson has highlighted a significant ambiguity in *CG* and *TKG*, which Moltmann does not sufficiently clarify. At different points in *CG* and *TKG*, either stage in God's protological, historical, or eschatological life variously exercises some kind of determination over other stages. So, too, the immanent primarily determines the economic Trinity, but the economic also determines the immanent Trinity. For Moltmann these are different ways of talking about the same God, ways which the cross necessitates must be spoken about together. I have argued that Moltmann identifies both immanent and economic Trinity in different ways in each of the three stages. It is clear that for Moltmann the interaction between these three stages and between the two ways of identifying the one Trinity must be understood dialectically. There is no absolute priority in any stage or in either economic or immanent Trinity, in contrast to the traditional priority identified with the protological immanent Trinity, because God is transcendent in each and through this constitutes the others in various ways. Yet what Moltmann omits from this characterisation of the Trinity is an explicit situating of these relationships in a dialectic, as I have identified here, or other organising structure. He seems to assume the validity of these complex relationships without making it clear on what basis he

intends to do so. Moreover, careful reading is required to understand exactly how Moltmann conceives of these relationships and, as the work of Olson and others show, it is not only an explicit framework which is missing but clarification of what Moltmann intends by the terms “immanent” and “economic” Trinity in the context of protology, history, and eschatology.

5.2. Issues in Moltmann’s Adoption of Rahner’s Rule

Moltmann’s construal of the relationship between immanent and economic Trinity diverges significantly from the tradition. The doctrine of the Trinity which Karl Barth developed in the first half of the twentieth century is a robust alternative to Moltmann’s and illustrates some of the difficulties involved with following him.

5.2.1. Karl Barth on the Relationship between Immanent and Economic Trinity

Barth provides his own rule to determine the relationship between immanent and economic Trinity:

[W]e have consistently followed the rule, which we regard as basic, that statements about the divine modes of being antecedently in themselves cannot be different in content from those that are to be made about their reality in revelation. All our statements concerning what is called the immanent Trinity have been reached simply as confirmations or underlinings or, materially, as the indispensable premises of the economic Trinity.²²⁷

For Barth, human beings cannot know God apart from his revelation of himself in Christ. Thus any attempt to find God apart from his revelation is not theology but in actual fact anthropology. This is what the first part of Barth’s rule concerns. Knowledge of who God is in himself, the immanent Trinity, can only be attained through who God reveals himself to be in relation to us, the economic Trinity. Similarly, because the

²²⁷ Barth, *CD* I/1, 479. I will not be addressing the recent debates on the relationship between election and Trinity in Barth’s theology. Some of the relevant literature, with an introduction to the issues, is collected in Michael T. Dempsey, ed., *Trinity and Election in Contemporary Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 2011. Han-luen Kantzer Koline, “Friendship and Being: Election and Trinitarian Freedom in Moltmann and Barth,” *Modern Theology* 29:1 (2013): 1-17, situates Moltmann in this context. Regarding *TKG*, “For Moltmann, then, God’s ‘being-for’ is logically prior to God’s triune identity” (13). However, although Moltmann situates God’s ‘being-for’ in eternity, any claim of logical priority to triunity imposes an unnecessary order on Moltmann’s doctrine of the Trinity, one which he himself does not claim. If Moltmann’s theology is to be brought into dialogue with this framework at all, it would be better to say that the two occur simultaneously for him so that the Trinity is always already for us.

immanent Trinity by definition excludes creaturely being, statements about the immanent Trinity, while factual if derived from revelation, can only be made in an indirect way, acknowledging their epistemological origin and soteriological end in the sphere of the economic Trinity:

All we can know of God according to the witness of Scripture are His acts. All we can say of God, all the attributes we can assign to God, relate to these acts of His; not, then, to His essence *as such*.²²⁸

Conversely, God gives himself completely to human beings in revelation: "We have to take revelation with such utter seriousness that in it as God's act we must directly see God's being too."²²⁹ Revelation is not a mere image or appearance of God. The God who reveals himself is the same God who is eternally Father, Son, and Spirit. Moreover, without the eternal, triune God there can be no revelation of him. This is what the second part of Barth's rule concerns. Statements concerning the immanent Trinity are the "indispensable premises of the economic Trinity."²³⁰ "He is God our Father *because* He is so antecedently in Himself as the Father of the Son."²³¹ Who God is in relation to us is grounded in the intra-trinitarian relations of the immanent Trinity. For Barth, then, God as immanent Trinity is logically prior to and determinative of who he is as economic Trinity:

Jesus Christ is the Son because He is (not because He makes this impression on us, not because He does what we think is to be expected of a God, but because He is). With this presupposition all thinking about Jesus, which means at once all thinking about God, must begin and end.²³²

²²⁸ Ibid., 371, emphasis mine. Cf. Ben Leslie, "Does God Have a Life?: Barth and LaCugna on the Immanent Trinity," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 24:4 (1997): 377-398,

[T]he works of God in revelation and the eternal being of God are essentially one and allow of no inherent division. Theology, however, must make this essentially heuristic division (i.e., an epistemological as opposed to an ontological division) in order to maintain the freedom in which God's acts of grace are executed (381).

²²⁹ Barth, *CD* I/1, 428. God nonetheless remains free in determining the subjective reception of this revelation by his Spirit.

²³⁰ Ibid., 479, cited above.

²³¹ Ibid., 384, emphasis mine. Cf. p.399, "He is the Son of God who has come to us or the Word of God that has been spoken to us, because He is so antecedently in Himself as the Son or Word of God the Father," and p.448, "He is the Holy Spirit, by receiving whom we become the children of God, because, as the Spirit of the love of God the Father and the Son, He is so antecedently in Himself."

²³² Ibid., 415.

5.2.2. A Barthian Critique of Moltmann's Doctrine of the Trinity

Following Barth, Paul Molnar seeks to radically restate the importance of the doctrine of the immanent Trinity against what he perceives as its contemporary misuse.²³³ For him, "the purpose of a doctrine of the immanent Trinity is to recognize, uphold and respect God's freedom." That is,

since we know the triune God by grace and through faith, we cannot, as it were, read back our concepts and experiences into God. And a properly conceived doctrine of the immanent Trinity, while not designed to prevent this, will indeed do so to the extent that God's freedom is recognized and upheld through such a doctrine.²³⁴

Molnar contends that it is necessary to maintain the traditional distinction between immanent and economic Trinity, epitomised by Barth, to acknowledge God's freedom *in se* as the basis for his free acts *ad extra*. Again, following Barth, this doctrine arises in the context of human experience, because "we obviously have no alternative but to understand God in the categories available to us in our human experience," but "it is not anything within our experience or inherent in those categories that prescribes who God is *in se* and *ad extra*."²³⁵ Rather, knowledge of God is a response to his acts towards humanity, a knowledge made possible only by faith given in the Holy Spirit. Moreover, this knowledge of God in the form of the doctrine of the immanent Trinity is for the purpose of salvation: "If God cannot in fact be distinguished from our experiences and thoughts about ourselves and the world we live in... then trinitarian theology, for all its attempts to reinvigorate the Christian life, actually makes Christianity more irrelevant than ever."²³⁶ Salvation can only save if it arises from the one who is not determined by creaturely being in any way. Otherwise it, too, is subject to sin and death. Second, "By recognizing that God did not and does not need to act mercifully toward us *ad extra*, even as he in fact did so and does so in his Word and Spirit, we recognize the freedom

²³³ Interestingly, though he draws heavily on him, Molnar finds that even Barth applies the doctrine inconsistently. See Paul D. Molnar, "The Function of the Immanent Trinity in the Theology of Karl Barth: Implications for Today," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 42:3 (1989): 367-399 (371 n.24).

²³⁴ Molnar, *Divine Freedom*, ix.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid., 315. A proper doctrine of the immanent Trinity will "eschew irrelevant speculation about God's inner nature, abstracted from God's own self-revelation" (x).

of grace.”²³⁷ Only a salvation which is not inherent in creation but is given freely is one of grace. There can be no hint of the slightest vice versa without compromising the freedom of God and thus the reality of salvation.

Barth passed away before he got to read Moltmann’s radical contributions to the doctrine of the Trinity in *CG*. However, he did get to read *TH*, in which Moltmann wrote, “The eschatological is not one element of Christianity, but it is the medium of Christian faith as such, the key in which everything in it is set” (*TH*, 16). Barth was suspicious of such a method. He wrote to Moltmann,

To put it pointedly, does your theology of hope really differ at all from the baptized *principle* of hope of Mr. Bloch? What disturbs me is that for you theology becomes so much a matter of principle (an eschatological principle)... Would it not be wise to accept the doctrine of the immanent Trinity of God?²³⁸

Molnar cites this comment from Barth to call attention to what he understands as the problematic aspect of Moltmann’s doctrine of the Trinity, i.e., attempting to interpret revelation via particular principles rather than acknowledging its origin in the immanent Trinity and its sufficiency apart from human principles in the economic Trinity.

This is evident in Moltmann’s tendency to reject dualities such as necessity and freedom, replacing them with a “*process* common to both,” which results in a “reconciliation of opposites.”²³⁹ But if Moltmann wants to employ this method and at the same time maintain a distinction between God and the world, “given the fact that it is impossible to conceive of a God who is not creative and who cannot find bliss in his eternal self-love,” for example, “the question arises as to whether, in this reasoning, there can be an inner-trinitarian process distinct from that trinitarian thinking which defines God’s love as selflessness and which insists that God cannot have existed

²³⁷ Ibid., 198.

²³⁸ Karl Barth, *Letters 1961-1968*, ed. Jürgen Fangemeier and Hinrich Stoevesandt, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 175, emphasis original. Barth refers to the Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch, whose *Principle of Hope* was a major influence for Moltmann’s *TH*. Moltmann responds to Barth, writing,

I thought I could so expound the economic Trinity that in the foreground, and then again in the background, it would be open to an immanent Trinity. That is, for me the Holy Spirit is first the Spirit of the raising of the dead and then as such the third person of the Trinity (in *ibid.*, 348).

²³⁹ Molnar, *Divine Freedom*, 207, emphasis original.

without being the creator.”²⁴⁰ According to Molnar, Moltmann cannot logically uphold any distinction. By insisting that creation is essential to divine love and that divine freedom must be understood as determined by this love, Moltmann has identified the immanent Trinity with creation. Moreover, while Moltmann insists that this love does not compromise but rather constitutes and upholds divine freedom, Molnar contends, “if God is not his own prisoner he is certainly the prisoner of love which by its nature *must* freely create another in order to be true to its own nature.”²⁴¹

This compromise is evident in Moltmann’s assertion that the divine processions are necessary.²⁴² The Father begets the Son in love necessarily and this love must seek not only its like, the Son, but its other, creation. Yet, Molnar asks, “where is the distinction between God’s free love and the necessary creation of a reality distinct from him to be drawn?”²⁴³ In Moltmann’s doctrine of the Trinity, divine freedom disappears and, with it, the immanent Trinity apart from the world. Moltmann has made “the love of God subject to a higher law encompassing his actual free love. That higher law of course would be accessible as a philosophical principle to which God himself was subject.”²⁴⁴ His theology thus no longer engages with revelation on its own terms, but skews it according to human principles. This differs from the knowledge of God which comes from faith and derives “its meaning from God *in se* acting *ad extra* and not from the realm of history accessible to the philosopher.”²⁴⁵

Molnar identifies the key principle which Moltmann draws on in *TKG* as experience, human and divine, and especially the experience of suffering: “Moltmann consistently defines God *by* the experiences creatures have of suffering, nothingness

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 209-210.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 213, emphasis original.

²⁴² E.g., *TKG*, 167,

The generation and birth of the Son come from the Father’s *nature*, not from his will. That is why we talk about the *eternal* generation and birth of the Son. The Father begets and bears the Son out of the *necessity* of his being.

Molnar contrasts Moltmann’s theology with the traditional doctrine of the processions, citing Athanasius and the Eleventh Council of Toledo (675): “God the Father begot [the Son] not through his will and not of necessity, for there is no necessity in God nor does the will precede wisdom.” See John F. Clarkson, SJ, et. al. (trans. and ed.), *The Church Teaches: Documents of the Church in English Translation* (London: Herder, 1955), cited in *Divine Freedom*, 214.

²⁴³ Molnar, *Divine Freedom*, 214.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 215.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 216.

and death.”²⁴⁶ Thus, “If a person once feels the infinite passion of God’s love which finds expression here [on the cross], then he understands the mystery of the triune God” (TKG, 4). But because “Moltmann does not distinguish clearly between human experience of the created realm and God’s being and action in his Word and Spirit,” his theology results in an ambiguous “synthesis of human and divine experience.”²⁴⁷ This leads to a basic epistemological problem: “since these are our experiences, how shall we identify the God we are experiencing?”²⁴⁸ Revelation interpreted in this way no longer reveals God.

In the end, Moltmann’s concept of divine freedom

leaves him in a logical and theological dilemma. Either he may argue that God really is subject to no internal or external necessities. Then he would have to reject his own panentheist interpretation of the Trinity and of creation because the Christian God who loves is intrinsically free both in nature and will. Or he may argue that God is subject both to internal and external necessities. Then he would have to reject the biblical and traditional view of creation and of the Trinity. But he cannot logically hold both positions at once.²⁴⁹

Moltmann’s panentheism, therefore, not only affords a number of soteriological problems otherwise avoided with an asymmetrical distinction between immanent and economic Trinity, but at its most basic level it is contradictory.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 200, emphasis original. Moltmann develops this principle further in *GC*, which Molnar characterises as “a panentheistic principle of suffering love discovered in relational metaphysics and then applied to revelation” (215).

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 216-217.

²⁴⁸ Farrow, “Systematic Contributions,” 436.

²⁴⁹ Molnar, *Divine Freedom*, 226.

²⁵⁰ Throughout his book, Molnar also insists that human freedom is only possible on the basis of a divine freedom which presupposes a strong distinction between the immanent and the economic Trinity. However, he does not explain this connection. Such an explanation is given by Colin Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997), 128, who conceives of divine freedom in trinitarian terms: “Father, Son and Spirit constitute each other as free persons by virtue of the shape their inter-relationship takes in the trinitarian perichoresis.” The trinitarian persons are free in that they are distinct from one another not in “freedom *from* others” but “the *personal space* that is received and conferred” (emphasis original). This trinitarian freedom determines the shape of the freedom of human beings who “require space as well as relation: to be both related to and other than those and that on which we depend” (ibid., 107). Moreover, pantheism and panentheism create problems for human freedom because they do not adequately distinguish between God and the world: “There is... no basis in any such unitary conception of God for freedom because there is in it no space between God and the world.” That is, there is no space between God and creatures in which creatures can enact their freedom. Complete determinism follows. Conversely, “the doctrine of the Trinity allows for such space because it enables us to conceive the world as other than, while yet in relation to God” (ibid., 129). This freedom can only come from a God who already has his own personal space, undetermined by any retroactivity of the economic upon the immanent Trinity,

5.2.3. Assessment: Moltmann on Panentheism and Divine Freedom

If Barth's concerns regarding his contemporaries' dismissal of the immanent Trinity applied to Moltmann then he might be accused of substituting grace with necessity, faith with human knowledge, and revelation with worldly events.²⁵¹ According to Molnar, at least, in Moltmann's theology God is subjected to a philosophical principle, relating him necessarily to the world, confusing him with human experience, and thus contradicting Moltmann's claim that God is distinct from the world.

While Moltmann's panentheism clearly differs from classical theism, which posits an absolute distinction between infinite and finite being, it is important also to distinguish his position from pantheism in which all distinctions are abolished between God and creation. Moltmann's distance from classical theism is probably much more explicit because it is more prevalent among Moltmann's intended audience. Nonetheless, where Moltmann mentions pantheism he distinguishes it from traditional theology or his own position.²⁵² Although panentheism is a disputed term, a helpful distinction from pantheism, which accords with Moltmann's theology, is provided by William Rowe:

Pantheism is the view that God is wholly within the universe and the universe is wholly within God, so that God and the universe are coextensive, but not identical. A related, but distinct view known as *Panentheism*, agrees with pantheism that the universe is within God, but denies that God is limited to the universe. For according to panentheism, the universe is finite and within God, but God is truly infinite and so cannot be totally within or otherwise limited to the finite universe.²⁵³

"Infinite" and "finite" take on particular meanings in classical theism which cannot be straightforwardly transferred to Moltmann's panentheism. There is, however, in Moltmann's panentheism a distinction between the infinite God who actively takes

and thus a God who can allow for creaturely space. Unfortunately, because of space limitations in this thesis I have decided not to engage with this critique. Neither does Molnar devote any extended discussion to this critique. Nonetheless, see *TKG*, 191-222 for Moltmann's claim that it is theism (and monotheism) which in actual fact inhibits and has historically inhibited truly human freedom. Moltmann goes on to present an alternative theology of human freedom on the basis of the doctrine of the Trinity which he presents in *TKG*.

²⁵¹ See Barth, *CD* I/1, 420-422.

²⁵² E.g., *CG*, 209, 235, 265, 277; *TKG*, 107, 110, 165, 199-200.

²⁵³ William Rowe, "Does Panentheism Reduce to Pantheism? A Response to Craig," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 61:2 (2007): 65-67 (65, emphasis original).

upon himself finite qualities such as death and suffering in his interaction with the world and the finite creation whose limits in death and suffering are transcended in the future life of the infinite trinitarian God. God's love towards human beings is "love of man in revolt," which can be contradicted and crucified, "but in crucifixion it finds its fulfilment and becomes love of the enemy. Thus its suffering proves to be stronger than hate." Such a love, from which arises the Spirit who "gives life even to its enemies and opens up the future to change," cannot be realised by creation (CG, 248-249). Only where God and humanity come together in Christ can creation be taken beyond its bondage into freedom.

In *TKG*, too, identifying the immanent with the economic Trinity does not mean the abolition of distinctions between God and creation:

[God's] world puts its impress on God too, through its reactions, its aberrations and its own initiatives. It certainly does not do so in the same way; but that it does so in its *own* way there can be no doubt at all (*TKG*, 99).

There is an "interaction between the substance and the revelation, the 'inwardness' and the 'outwardness' of the triune God" (*TKG*, 160), but "the divine relationship to the world is *primarily* defined by that inner relationship" (*TKG*, 161, emphasis added). Moltmann sees in the cross, as well as creation and the coming kingdom, the historical constitution of the trinitarian persons. But this constitution is God's willing self-descent into the sphere of creaturely being and not something that creatures thrust upon him beyond his will. He may well be confused with creaturely being, and, ironically, this is the accusation that Moltmann chiefly levels against classical theism. Its vision of the impassible God is based on an anthropological assessment of the limits of finite being. But it is Christ in his coming to humanity on the cross who confronts all confusions of God with creaturely being, theistic, pantheistic, *and* panentheistic, to the extent that they oppose, however inadvertently, the freedom of creation in the kingdom of God. Thus the confusion between God and creation in Moltmann's theology is one that he could attribute to all theologies, and one that is only remedied through the cross's ongoing confrontation of these theologies.

To assess Molnar's claim that Moltmann subjects God to a philosophical principle of necessity, it is worth clarifying how Moltmann conceives divine freedom. For him, the God of love cannot be understood as "one who is free, who could just as well *not* love," that is, choose not to create. This introduces an "arbitrary element" into

this love (*TKG*, 55). Rather, divine freedom must be understood in terms of love, and not vice versa, as Barth presents it. This is perhaps unfair of Moltmann, however, as his rejection of Barth and others who maintain this priority of divine freedom appears to rest on a caricature. As David Bentley Hart notes, “while one has to avoid the pathetic anthropomorphism of imagining God’s decision to create as an arbitrary choice made after a deliberation among options, one still has to affirm that it’s free.”²⁵⁴ Moltmann overlooks this apophatic aspect of the doctrine of divine freedom: God is bound neither internally nor externally to create and yet neither is his free act of creation arbitrary. However, Moltmann’s oversight also reveals Molnar’s misunderstanding of the function of necessity in Moltmann’s doctrine of the Trinity. If the lordship of God requires theology to think in terms of a God in whom freedom and non-arbitrariness can coincide, then the alternative route proposed by Moltmann, “in God necessity and freedom coincide” (*TKG*, 107), can be no less plausible an interpretation of the love of God. Other legitimate objections may be raised, but Moltmann’s dual denial of God’s freedom of choice and being “compelled to love by any outward or inward necessity” (*TKG*, 151) is not objectionable unless the dual denial of necessity and arbitrariness in the doctrine of divine freedom is also objectionable. In this sense, Moltmann’s concept of divine love must be understood apophatically as well. God’s freedom does not consist in either choice or anthropomorphic necessity but divine love, which transcends all analogies.

Nonetheless, the core of Moltmann’s understanding of divine freedom is not in apophatic denials of choice and necessity but in the positive affirmation of God’s love: “in loving the world [God] is entirely free because he is entirely himself” (*TKG*, 55). He freely assents to his loving creation of the world. Stated positively, the necessary creation of the world expresses rather than contradicts the divine freedom: “God’s ‘need’ for the world is not due to imperfection, but issues from the abundance of His divine love, which is itself the most authentic divine freedom.”²⁵⁵ Moltmann’s position

²⁵⁴ David Bentley Hart, “God, Creation, and Evil,” paper presented at the “Creation out of Nothing: Origins and Contemporary Significance” conference at University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN, 8 July 2015 <<https://soundcloud.com/iclnotredame/god-creation-and-evil>> (27 July 2015). Cf. John Webster, “Trinity and Creation,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 12:1 (2010): 4-19, “the notion of the divine will has to be stripped of connotations of arbitrariness, so that we do not think of creation as a mere spasmodic exercise of God’s power not anchored in the divine ethos” (15).

²⁵⁵ Steen, “Moltmann’s Critical Reception,” 305.

is here similar to Augustine's who writes of the "blessed necessity" of God's will.²⁵⁶ There are some things that God cannot do, such as sin, but such constraints are in keeping with the being of God and thus with his freedom. However, this does not mean that everything God cannot do is akin to sin or evil. From an Augustinian perspective, God necessarily creates neither out of moral obligation nor an incompleteness in the trinitarian relations: "God does not create out of poverty but abundance... It is fitting and natural for the God of love to create, and God can do so voluntarily even if necessarily because creation is a willing expression of divine goodness."²⁵⁷ Both Augustine and Moltmann seek to limit God's freedom of choice in some way by situating this in the context of his being, which Moltmann characterises as love, and both see this as an expression rather than as a contradiction of God's freedom.

Molnar traces Moltmann's notion of divine freedom to his claim that the trinitarian processions are necessary. In itself, this claim should be uncontroversial, albeit perhaps stated irresponsibly on Moltmann's part. As Barth writes,

He cannot not be Father and cannot be without the Son. His freedom or aseity in respect of Himself consists in His freedom, not determined by anything but Himself, to be God, and that means to be the Father of the Son. A freedom to be able not to be this would be an abrogation of His freedom.²⁵⁸

Even Barth, then, would affirm a kind of "blessed necessity" with regard to the trinitarian processions, *necessity* because there is no God who is not Father, Son, and Spirit, and *blessed* because this is a necessity which pertains to the divine being so that, negatively, it is unlike any conceivable philosophical necessity and, positively, God's freedom consists in this necessity in which he is himself.²⁵⁹ Moltmann attempts to

²⁵⁶ "If, then, you say that the will cannot be attributed to necessity, even this is not universally true. For ... there is even a certain blessed necessity, because it is necessary that God always lives both immutably and most happily." See Augustine, *Unfinished Work in Answer to Julian*, in *The Works of Saint Augustine*, vol. 1/25, *Answer to the Pelagians III*, ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Roland J. Teske (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1999), v.53, cited in Jesse Couenhoven, "The Necessities of Perfect Freedom," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 14:4 (2012): 396-419 (398). Couenhoven claims that Moltmann's position is similar to Augustine's, despite being "confused in some ways" (401 n.20).

²⁵⁷ Couenhoven, "Necessities of Perfect Freedom," 412.

²⁵⁸ Barth, *CD I/1*, 434.

²⁵⁹ Webster, "Trinity and Creation," 11, also makes this claim: "God's immanent activities are 'necessary', not by external compulsion but by absolute or natural necessity: these activities are what it is for God to be God."

communicate this same point in claiming that the necessary intra-trinitarian love is at the same time a free love.

Molnar also sees a problematic connection in *TKG* between this intra-trinitarian necessity and the necessary creation of the world. However, Moltmann maintains a distinction between the processions and the act of creation. In begetting the Son, the Father's love "goes out of itself" so that "it is no longer merely engendering and bringing forth, it is creative love too" (*TKG*, 58-59). Creation is not another Son nor equated with the Son. The Son is God from God. The creation of the world is given in this procession in the sense that it naturally and, indeed, necessarily arises from it but it is not identical to the Son because it is instead an expression of the Father's love for the Son. As such, Moltmann maintains a distinction between God and creation in the protological Trinity.²⁶⁰ Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that whereas the Augustinian position outlined above allows for the creation of the world to be understood as necessary, it only goes so far to conceive of this in terms of an overflowing of God's love. "[C]reation is supererogatory."²⁶¹ Moltmann attempts to concede this, but, because he rethinks divine love in terms of the cross in which God makes himself vulnerable to suffering, he goes one step further in claiming that "God 'needs' the world and man. If God is love, then he neither will nor can be without the one who is his beloved," that one being creation (*TKG*, 58). That is, for Moltmann creation is necessarily related to the divine processions not only in that it overflows out of the Father's love for the Son but also in that God needs the world to express this love.

The relationship between creation and the immanent Trinity, then, is indeed necessary in Moltmann's doctrine of the Trinity, but this does not mean that every necessity in the immanent Trinity needs to be dismissed *a priori*. Insofar as Moltmann presents God's necessary creation of the world as an apophatic denial of freedom of choice and a positive affirmation of his overflowing love, his doctrine of the Trinity should not raise any issues.

However, although Molnar's analysis of the relationship between the necessary processions and the creation of the world is inexact, faulting Moltmann for more than

²⁶⁰ Wood, "Barth's Trinitarian Christology," makes the odd claim that "If any theologian has ever consistently maintained God's divine otherness from the created order, it is Moltmann" (59-60). Although I cannot share this estimation with Wood, I do see Moltmann's efforts to maintain the distinction between God and creatures.

²⁶¹ Couenhoven, "Necessities of Perfect Freedom," 412.

he is perhaps due, he does draw attention to Moltmann's problematic conception of God's need for the world, which is based in his intra-trinitarian love. So, too, George Hunsinger writes, "The fatal move here, of course, is the idea that God's love requires something external."²⁶² It is not that God is conditioned by something external to him. The external does not exist before God creates it. But God is conditioned internally in such a way that he needs an external world in which to fulfil his love. This is only fulfilled eschatologically when the suffering of creation and therefore God, who experiences the suffering of his creation, is overcome. "While Moltmann says God does not act out of deficiency of being, it is precisely here that God's being is indeed deficient by virtue of his need for redemption, glory and freedom."²⁶³ If God needs the world in this way then Moltmann risks making God's intra-trinitarian love insufficient for himself. And if God's love is not fulfilled already in himself apart from the history of the world then when this history is delivered into his eschatological life it is delivered into an incomplete life. Creation would not complete this life either because it could only do so in a finite and thus incomplete manner. While Moltmann's attempt to conceive of divine love in light of the cross provides a helpful beginning for understanding God's creation of the world as necessary in some sense, he goes too far in conceiving this in terms of need.²⁶⁴

5.3. Conclusion

In this chapter I looked at the relationship between immanent and economic Trinity in Moltmann's theology. Roger Olson argues that in making God's eschatological life the ground of his transcendence while at the same time claiming that his actions in history constitute this eschatological life Moltmann's doctrine of the Trinity rests on an illogical relationship between eschatology and history. But Moltmann conceives of a dialectical relationship between God's protological, historical, and eschatological life. In each of these aspects God is transcendent. The difficulty with Moltmann's doctrine of the Trinity here, however, is that he neglects to provide an explicit framework within

²⁶² Hunsinger, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 135.

²⁶³ Molnar, *Divine Freedom*, 208.

²⁶⁴ The other problem, of course, is that Moltmann risks making suffering necessary. On this see subsection 4.4.3. above.

which to understand the relationships between these different aspects, and it is unclear what he intends to denote with the terms “immanent” and “economic.”

Following Barth, Paul Molnar maintains the traditional asymmetry between immanent and economic Trinity. According to Molnar, Moltmann replaces the doctrine of the Trinity with human principles. Specifically, he cannot maintain a defensible theology of divine freedom. Yet a closer look at Moltmann’s doctrine of the Trinity reveals that his panentheism allows for a distinction between divine and creaturely being. Moreover, if his claim that God creates in the intersection between necessity and freedom is to be rejected, then so also is the alternative claim that God creates freely and yet not arbitrarily. However, Moltmann attributes “need” to the Trinity, suggesting that God is incomplete prior to creation. This creates a soteriological problem as an incomplete God would have difficulty redeeming creation.

6. Hans Urs von Balthasar: Having Your Orthodoxy and Eating It Too?

One contemporary of Moltmann who sought to take seriously the significance of the cross for the doctrine of the Trinity without compromising the traditional distinction between immanent and economic Trinity is Hans Urs von Balthasar. It is important to note that Balthasar's corpus is expansive. Aidan Nichols writes, "Any one area of his publications would constitute a decent life's work for a lesser man."²⁶⁵ My intention here is only to employ a short but theologically dense section in Balthasar's work to offer a mediating position between Moltmann's theology and some of the dissenting voices I have cited in chapters four and five.²⁶⁶

6.1. Balthasar on the Intra-Trinitarian Basis for Divine Abandonment

Balthasar, like Karl Barth and Paul Molnar, maintains that the immanent Trinity is distinct from and grounds the economic Trinity: "Otherwise the immanent, eternal Trinity would threaten to dissolve into the economic."²⁶⁷ He also rejects that "the full doctrine of the Trinity can be unfolded only on the basis of a theology of the Cross."²⁶⁸ Nonetheless, maintaining that a doctrine of the immanent Trinity must remain theologically faithful to God as he reveals himself in the divine economy, Balthasar writes, "we must see the doctrine of the Trinity as the ever-present, inner-presupposition of the doctrine of the Cross."²⁶⁹ Indeed, this is how the cross is presented in Scripture. It derives from the Father's love in giving his Son for the world, the love which the Son shares in giving himself for the world.

²⁶⁵ Aidan Nichols, "Introduction," in Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 1-10 (3).

²⁶⁶ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama*, 5 vols., trans. by Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988-1998), 319-328 (henceforth *TD*). Balthasar provides an earlier, substantial statement on the relationship between the cross and the Trinity in *Mysterium Paschale*. For a recent critical overview of this development in Balthasar's thought from *Mysterium Paschale* to the later *Theo-Drama*, see Joshua R. Brotherton, "Damnation and the Trinity in Ratzinger and Balthasar," *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 18:3 (2015): 123-150.

²⁶⁷ Balthasar, *TD* III, 508.

²⁶⁸ Balthasar, *TD* IV, 319.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

First, the cross presupposes the Father in his intra-trinitarian love. Following Sergei Bulgakov, Balthasar situates this in an eternal kenosis: “For the Father strips himself, without remainder, of his Godhead and hands it over to the Son; he ‘imparts’ to the Son all that is his.”²⁷⁰ Because this kenosis belongs to the Father in his eternal generation of the Son, he is never without this kenosis. That is, “he *is* this movement of self-giving that holds nothing back.”²⁷¹ In bringing forth the Son, the Father posits “an absolute, ‘infinite’ distance that can contain and embrace all the other distances that are possible within the world of finitude.”²⁷² Second, the Son’s surrendering of himself on the cross is made possible by the eternal ground of this self-surrender in the immanent Trinity. The Son eternally reciprocates the Father’s love in thanksgiving, “a thanksgiving as selfless and unreserved as the Father’s original self-surrender.”²⁷³ Third, the cross reveals the Spirit who is the unity of Father and Son. This unity encompasses the Father’s abandonment of the Son so “the uniting Spirit, their ‘We’, actually appears in the form of mere distance.”²⁷⁴ The cross thus also presupposes the Spirit who as the unity of Father and Son both affirms their distance and “bridges it.”²⁷⁵

The doctrine of the immanent Trinity which Balthasar provides here differs from Moltmann’s in that Balthasar rules out any mutual reciprocity between God and the world. Moltmann, and others who make moves similar to him, have “succumbed to the illusion that man’s ability to say No to God actually limits the divine omnipotence.”²⁷⁶ Rather, God consists completely in his intra-trinitarian relations, which absolutely transcend and thus encompass the possibility of all finite sufferings. In contrast to Moltmann, Balthasar does not go so far as to situate any kind of “enmity” in the Trinity. On the one hand, the intra-trinitarian distance between Father and Son is a distance of love. In begetting the Son, the Father gives himself completely but “does not lose himself.”²⁷⁷ On the other hand, this is not the first part of a dialectical process

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 323.

²⁷¹ Ibid., emphasis original.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Ibid., 324.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 320.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 324.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 326.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 325.

in which God must realise himself in his negation. God's love is complete without this negation so that the negation is already eternally present in God in the sense that his love is greater than and encompasses it.²⁷⁸ The power of God's love is sufficient in its trinitarian self, independent of any negation it might otherwise need to undergo in order to deliver creation from suffering. According to Balthasar, the being of God encompasses godlessness but it is a "(divine) God-lessness (of love, of course)."²⁷⁹ As Fred Sanders writes of Balthasar's theology, "Creation and the history that takes place in it may be rich, complex, diverse, and multi-faceted, but the God who is responsible for it possesses all of these attributes and more in an ever-greater way."²⁸⁰ That is not to say that the historical event of the cross only reveals that the redemption of creation has already taken place in eternity. This redemption needs to take place in history not for God's sake but for creation's sake because the nature of creation is historical. It is to say, then, against Moltmann, that the cross does not introduce anything new into the being of God which he needs to experience for the redemption of the world to take place, let alone his own redemption. Redemption is for creation, taking place in history, contingent on the eternal, kenotic love of the Trinity.

The infinite distance between Father and Son not only contains the possibility of the cross but of suffering in general. Thus, "there is something in God that can develop into suffering." Whereas the Son completely reciprocates the Father's love in giving himself completely to the Father, sinful human beings do not reciprocate this love, instead responding with a "calculating, cautious self-preservation."²⁸¹ As such, a suffering which cannot take place between Father and Son who give themselves completely to each other, instead takes place for human beings in their non-reciprocation of God's love.

²⁷⁸ As Anne Hunt, "Hans Urs von Balthasar: Love Alone is Credible," in *The Trinity and the Paschal Mystery* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), 60, writes, "Every possible drama between God and the world is thus already contained in, allowed for, and indeed infinitely surpassed and transcended in that eternal, supra-temporal 'event' of intra-trinitarian love."

²⁷⁹ TD IV, 324.

²⁸⁰ Sanders, *Image of the Immanent Trinity*, 135.

²⁸¹ TD IV, 328.

6.2. Assessment: The Analogy of Distance

A critical reading of Balthasar's proposal reveals some of the difficulties with situating the ground for such an abandonment in the immanent Trinity. It is important to engage with these difficulties because they are indicative of some of the reservations others may have with following suit. First, Balthasar construes "Christ's passion and death as most fundamentally a drama of abandonment of Christ by the Father."²⁸² Balthasar's inference, based on Christ's cry of dereliction, is disputed by some because the cry may indicate Jesus' faith rather than abandonment, as Jesus cites the first line of Psalm 22. As I demonstrated in subsections 3.3.4.-3.3.6. of this thesis, however, Mark certainly underscores the harshness of Jesus' abandonment, which is reflected in the cry of dereliction. Yet Mark's pre-conciliar context prevents us from deciding on the basis of exegesis alone whether this refers to the Word of God's human experience of abandonment or a divine abandonment with trinitarian implications. Like Moltmann, this lands Balthasar with the accusation of speculation, a point I will address presently.

Second, assuming the centrality of the cross in divine revelation, Balthasar infers that the conditions of the cross's possibility must have some central role to play in the immanent life of God. However, the absolute distance which Balthasar proposes "cannot be put forward as a self-evident starting point for further argument or reflection, but is at most the rather precarious conclusion to a train of reflection."²⁸³ Karen Kilby is concerned that Balthasar puts too much confidence in speculation. He seems to speak of the immanent Trinity with an "insider's view."²⁸⁴ Moreover, by interpreting the cross as an abandonment exceeded and made possible by an absolute distance in the immanent Trinity which grounds this abandonment, "Balthasar seems in clear danger of fundamentally blurring the distinction between love and loss, joy and suffering, in themselves."²⁸⁵ This may even mean, as Paul Gavrilyuk points out in

²⁸² Karen Kilby, "Hans Urs von Balthasar on the Trinity," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Trinity*, ed. Peter Phan, 208-222 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 215. Moltmann makes a similar move and I have addressed some of the difficulties of this reading in subsections 3.3.4.-3.3.6. above.

²⁸³ Ibid., 216.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 217. Paul Gavrilyuk, "The Kenotic Theology of Sergius Bulgakov," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 58:3 (2005): 251-269, levels a similar critique against Bulgakov, whose theology influenced Balthasar's. Bulgakov "at times appears to know more about the relations between the persons of the Trinity than these persons know about themselves" (268).

²⁸⁵ Kilby, "Hans Urs von Balthasar," 220. This is not limited to *TD IV*. Kilby writes,

Vladimir Lossky's critique of Bulgakov, that Balthasar risks first making "voluntary redemptive suffering into a process inherent in the very nature of God" and second replacing the historical event of the cross with a "metaphysical Golgotha."²⁸⁶

However, Kilby's critique can only go so far. She has already conceded that if the cross is interpreted as divine abandonment the traditional construal of the relationship between immanent and economic Trinity implies "something eternally present in the life of the Trinity which anticipates [divine abandonment]."²⁸⁷ This also seems to be Balthasar's motivation for making such an apparently speculative inference. Thus his position is commendable in that, unlike Moltmann, he can both affirm the economic reality of divine abandonment on the cross and the immanent reality of the divine life which transcends and grounds this abandonment. In other words, the cross is not a *novum* for God. Balthasar's position maintains both the seriousness with which Moltmann takes *theologia crucis* and the seriousness with which Barth and Molnar take the asymmetrical distinction between immanent and economic Trinity.²⁸⁸ This is not to say that Barth or Molnar do not take the cross seriously! Even Moltmann acknowledges that "Barth has consistently drawn the harshness of the cross into his concept of God" (*CG*, 203).²⁸⁹ However, Balthasar succeeds in establishing a positive connection between what Moltmann identifies as "the two special features of Christianity, faith in the crucified Jesus and in the triune God" (*CG*, 236), without collapsing these features into one another. Thus Balthasar not only demonstrates the significance of the cross for the doctrine of the Trinity but, conversely, as Moltmann does, interprets the cross in a thoroughly trinitarian way. His is an innovative contribution both to the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of the

A proclivity in general to cast suffering in a positive light, and to link faith, love, and obedience with self-loss, self-abasement, even something like annihilation of the self, in fact frequently makes itself felt in Balthasar's writings (219).

²⁸⁶ Gavriluk, "Kenotic Theology," 267.

²⁸⁷ Kilby, "Hans Urs von Balthasar," 217.

²⁸⁸ Molnar's *Divine Freedom* contains three references to Balthasar, two of which are critical and none of which directly relate to the relationship between immanent and economic Trinity (202, 265).

²⁸⁹ Moltmann's problem with Barth's *theologia crucis* is not a lack of the cross's centrality but the form which Barth accords to that centrality: "Remarkably, I see the critical limitation of Barth in the fact that he still thinks too *theologically*, and that his approach is not sufficiently trinitarian" (*CG*, 203).

cross, underscoring the mutual inseparability of two central aspects of divine revelation.

Understood in this way, Balthasar's proposal appears less speculative and more necessary. Sanders writes of Balthasar that he "is one of the few thinkers to outline what investing in the priority of the immanent Trinity *might require*."²⁹⁰ Similarly, Kilby herself observes,

[I]f the cross is conceived as God abandoning God, and if we are not, like Moltmann, to think of it as introducing something new, something previously unexperienced, into the life of the Trinity, then we are bound to suppose that there is something eternally present in the life of the Trinity which anticipates it.²⁹¹

The critique must not be *that* Balthasar maintains a ground for divine abandonment in the immanent Trinity but *what* he maintains this ground to be. Yet here, again, Balthasar's proposal is commendable. This is because his *what* does not really go beyond what is minimally required for a *that*. Rather than opportunistically deriving from the *that* an unbridled speculation on the immanent Trinity, Balthasar explicates the content of his proposal within the bounds of a traditional trinitarian grammar. He proceeds from the cross to the doctrine of the immanent Trinity apophatically, giving the impression of someone walking around in the dark:

[W]e must feel our way back into the mystery of the absolute, employing a negative theology that excludes from God all intramundane experience and suffering, while at the same time presupposing that the possibility of such experience and suffering... is grounded in God.²⁹²

Here "distance" is a particular way of identifying that ground. The strength of conceiving this ground as such is that under one term it can denote both a central axiom of the doctrine of the immanent Trinity, the distinct persons of Father and Son, and an expression of this axiom in the economic Trinity, the Father's abandonment of

²⁹⁰ Sanders, *Image of the Immanent Trinity*, 137, emphasis added.

²⁹¹ Kilby, "Hans Urs von Balthasar," 217. Cf. Keating and Joseph, "Introduction," 18,

If God is in fact willing to suffer in and through his human physical, emotional, and psychological states, then what correspondence does this suggest between his human expression of suffering in love and his transcendent divine character as one whose goodness is 'fully active' or 'inalienable'? Surely there must be some real analogy between the two?

²⁹² Balthasar, *TD IV*, 324.

the Son. For Balthasar, “suffering and death *ad extra* are not to be attributed univocally to God *ad intra*; rather the grounds for the possibility of what takes place *ad extra* are to be found in God *ad intra*.”²⁹³ In one word, “distance” affirms both that the divine abandonment in the economy does not go beyond who God is *in se* and that the mystery of the immanent Trinity is not exhausted in revelation. At the same time, it avoids equating the distance between Father and Son in the economy with the distance that infinitely exceeds (and grounds) it in the immanent Trinity. A similar move is made by Gary Culpepper who builds an etymological and philosophical case for expanding the semantic range of “suffering.” The Latin *subferre*, for example, can denote “allowing or permitting the action of the other in a stance of voluntary receptivity.”²⁹⁴ “Attribution of suffering to the divine eternity, then, is rooted in the affirmation *that God is moved by another* in the reciprocal relations of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”²⁹⁵ Balthasar’s “distance” and Culpepper’s “suffering,” in contrast to Moltmann’s “enmity,” suggest realities of the economic Trinity which exist in a different way in the immanent Trinity without compromising God’s love or transcendence *in se*.

Finally, while Balthasar may still be subject to Kilby’s critique that he fails to adequately distinguish suffering from bliss across his corpus, something I cannot explore here, this need not be the case with the proposal he puts forward in this particular section. As shown above, Balthasar maintains the connection between suffering and sin, specifically, that it is a result of the misuse of human freedom. It follows that sin and suffering are not something other to the immanent Trinity in the sense that in his relationship to creation God encounters something new, but they are other to the immanent Trinity in the sense that they are distortions or negations of the fullness of God’s trinitarian being. God is thus the ground of suffering insofar as suffering and the world it presupposes is only possible on account of the triune God but this does not require that he grounds suffering in the sense that it necessarily arises from his being. Although both the immanent Father-Son relationship and the divine abandonment on the cross can be spoken of as “distance,” sin and suffering retain their

²⁹³ Hunt, “Hans Urs von Balthasar,” 80.

²⁹⁴ Gary Culpepper, “‘One Suffering, in Two Natures’: An Analogical Inquiry into Divine and Human Suffering,” in Keating and White, *Divine Impassibility*, 81. Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?*, 168-170, also suggests a qualified divine passibility in this direction. However, he warns that in the current theological climate such a move might be confusing.

²⁹⁵ Culpepper, “One Suffering,” 90, emphasis original.

contingent character, here arising from the misuse of human freedom. So, too, the cross retains its gracious character in that God occasions it in response to sin and suffering. Nor does the cross merely reveal that human beings are already reconciled to God. Although God does not undergo any change in himself, the cross certainly effects the historical reconciliation of creation to him because creation undergoes change on account of the cross.

6.3. Conclusion

Balthasar's proposal both allows for the traditional asymmetry between immanent and economic Trinity to be upheld and underscores the reality of divine abandonment on the cross. In the abandonment on the cross, Father and Son willingly take up a distance that is a distortion of their eternal and loving intra-trinitarian distance, overcoming it in this greater distance. Although in the context of Balthasar's wider thought such a proposal may be found wanting in that it understates the reality of suffering, it at least opens the way for others who would pursue this connection but find Moltmann's approach problematic because he identifies immanent with economic Trinity or uses metaphors like "enmity."

Conclusion

It would defeat the purpose of this thesis to end with Balthasar and say nothing more of Moltmann. I would therefore like to revisit my analysis in chapters three to five where I discussed his methodology, divine passibility, and the relationship between immanent and economic Trinity. Like Moltmann, I do not intend for this work to end the conversation. I offer it as a contribution for better understanding his concerns and for critically assessing their value for the church and theology. Therefore, I will not only restate my critical conclusions from these chapters but also offer some further reflection. After subjecting Moltmann's theology to various questions across the course of this thesis, now, in the spirit of the dialectic, I offer a more appreciative commentary on aspects of his project that I have so far only touched on. Without writing another whole thesis, I submit these not only by way of looking back but also by way of looking forward. I will therefore also suggest some potential avenues for further research.

In chapter three I began by identifying some distinctive aspects of the methodology Moltmann employs to develop his proposals regarding the significance of the cross for the doctrine of the Trinity. On *CG*, I contended that although the cross plays a central role in Moltmann's methodology (on the prior basis of christology), other foci such as eschatology heavily influence his methodology, and his commitment to the doctrine of the Trinity means not only that the cross determines its content but that the Trinity determines the form which *theologia crucis* must take. I then attended to Moltmann's methodology in *TKG*, demonstrating that a commitment to dialogue guides his methodology. While not dismissing the necessity of critical engagement with his theology (indeed, Moltmann expects such engagement), Moltmann's dialogical methodology means that his proposals should be seen as contributions to an ongoing conversation rather than conclusions in themselves. The bulk of chapter three was dedicated to Moltmann's use of Scripture, specifically his interpretation of Mark 15:34 and the function it has in the context of his theology. I claimed that although Moltmann is committed to the authority of Scripture in *CG* and *TKG*, his appropriation of historical Jesus methodology tacitly undermines this commitment by elevating some parts of the canon above others. My proposed solution to this was a *theologia crucis* approach to canon. This approach entails bringing to the fore the unique theological insights of

various biblical voices to engage with them in their particularity, as well as identifying how the dominance of other biblical voices in contemporary and traditional theology inadvertently marginalises these various voices.

Although Moltmann does not make this connection between *theologia crucis* and the biblical canon, I think that such a connection is representative of the critical spirit of his *theologia crucis*. Specifically, his suggestion that the cross calls into question both Christ and his Father (CG, 125 and 151, respectively),²⁹⁶ greatly extends the scope of critical theology. It situates the protests of Job, the psalmists, and Qohelet, among others, in the New Testament witness to the crucifixion. This not only gives theological space for those who doubt, allowing them to direct their questions to God without leaving the sphere of the church, but it undermines any refuge a dominant theology may seek, against dissenting theologies, in divine fiat. Of course, such a critical orientation can be misused. At the fundamental level, no theology can be absolutely critical because absolute criticality is contradictory. It would have to also be critical of its own critical orientation. More pertinently, *theologia crucis* is misused where it opposes the basic confession that God speaks. It then becomes a critical principle abstracted from the cross and its end is no longer service in the kingdom of God. Nonetheless, while Moltmann's proposals are variously problematic, the critical theology which is *theologia crucis*, when understood rightly, i.e., christologically, can fulfil its function in calling other theologies to account before the cross. A christological *theologia crucis* remembers the whole Christ, crucified, resurrected, and coming again, Son of the Father, and bearer of the Spirit. In its orientation to the coming kingdom its critiques are aimed at that which is contrary to the kingdom. It is not only deconstructive but also constructive, suggesting how theology may better represent the coming Christ. As christological it is also trinitarian. It seeks to represent in its dialogue with others the love between Father and Son given to believers in the Spirit.

I would be interested in further researching two areas of Moltmann's methodology. First, I have not come across any sustained treatments of the development of Moltmann's exegesis, hermeneutics, or doctrine of Scripture in

²⁹⁶ See subsection 1.3.1. above.

English.²⁹⁷ As I noted at the beginning of section 3.3., Moltmann's attitudes toward Scripture have changed over the course of his career. Further research could offer a critical examination of the roles that particular verses, passages, and biblical writers, etc., play across the development of Moltmann's theology, what hermeneutics Moltmann employs to interpret Scripture, and the place Scripture holds in Moltmann's methodology, for example. Second, I think it would be worth assessing Moltmann's *theologia crucis* in light of other modern critical theologies, such as feminist or liberationist theologies, and attending especially to the potential that these theologies have for engaging with the different voices of the biblical canon.

In chapter four I assessed the theology of trinitarian passibility that Moltmann derives from the cross. I first clarified what he meant by divine suffering and then considered to what extent he subscribes to the harmful "Theory of Theology's Fall into Hellenistic Philosophy" (Gavrilyuk), harmful because it misunderstands the motivations of the fathers for developing the doctrine of divine impassibility. Although Moltmann largely avoids this, his sometimes polemical characterisations of patristic and medieval theology, such as his dismissive use of the term *theism*, work against understanding history's theologians in their own context. I also defended Moltmann's claim that Chalcedonian christology arose out of an *a priori* commitment to divine impassibility, though I questioned whether this required throwing out Chalcedon altogether, as Moltmann does. Chalcedon brings welcome clarity to christology. Next I examined Moltmann's arguments for divine suffering. I found his claims that divine passibility is required by the centrality of the cross to Christian theology and the nature of divine love to be wanting. Impassibilists present alternative interpretations of the cross and divine love that do not require attributing suffering to God. But these two claims must be seen in accordance with Moltmann's argument from theodicy. Divine passibility gives hope to those who might otherwise reject the God whom they come to know via the dominant tradition. Nonetheless, Moltmann runs into a logical difficulty in claiming that divine suffering is both active and in solidarity with human suffering. Either suffering becomes something with which God must come to terms or the central function of divine suffering is not ongoing suffering with creation but triumph over it.

²⁹⁷ Moltmann has published a lot since Steven Phillips's work, "The Use of Scripture in Liberation Theologies: An Examination of Juan Luis Segundo, James H. Cone, and Jürgen Moltmann" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1978).

Moreover, especially in *TKG*, Moltmann risks overriding the contingent nature of suffering by making it integral to the historical constitution of God's being. Finally, I found Moltmann's attribution of enmity to the relationship between Father and Son in the crucifixion to be not adequately clarified and therefore potentially misleading.

Despite some of the problems that I and Moltmann's readers have identified with his theology of divine passibility, the soteriological vision behind it cannot be denied. The suffering God is not a "cold, silent and unloved heavenly power" (*TKG*, 22) but for Moltmann, and many others following Alfred Whitehead, "the great companion—the fellow sufferer, who understands."²⁹⁸ It would be wrong to dismiss traditional notions of divine impassibility on just this basis. Moltmann acknowledges that the best divine impassibilists in fact have robust understandings of divine love (*CG*, 269-270). Nonetheless, as Rebekah Eklund, herself an impassibilist, asserts, "it is difficult to ignore the fact that the preponderance of theologians from minority or Two-Thirds-World contexts have chosen the path of a suffering God rather than an impassible one."²⁹⁹ Unfortunately, impassibilists have "paid comparatively less attention in their arguments about *apatheia* to concrete contexts of contemporary oppression and injustice."³⁰⁰ In a later preface to *CG*, reflecting on its legacy, Moltmann cites a letter he received following the murders of six Jesuits and their housekeeper with her daughter by the Salvadoran Army in 1989:

When the killers were dragging some of the bodies back into the building, as they took one of the bodies into Jon's room, they hit a bookcase and knocked a book on to the floor, which became drenched with the martyr's blood. In the morning, when they picked up the book, they found that it was your *The Crucified God* (cited in *CG*, xii).³⁰¹

For Moltmann it is in such a context, among the martyrs, the poor, and the otherwise persecuted or marginalised, that the affirmation of divine passibility finds its home. This is in part why Miroslav Volf can say "I know of no theologian from the second half

²⁹⁸ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960), 532, cited in *CG*, 255.

²⁹⁹ Eklund, *Jesus Wept*, 122. Eklund discusses the theologians to which she refers in *ibid.*, 115-122.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 123.

³⁰¹ The Jon to which the letter refers is the theologian Jon Sobrino who was away at the time of the attack. Moltmann's theology has influenced his work.

of the twentieth century who has had as powerful a global resonance as Moltmann has.”³⁰² Specifically, “His critical engagement with liberation theologians of all kinds has made him a major influence in revolutionary and political theologies of the latter half of the century around the world.”³⁰³

Clearly the merit of particular theological positions cannot be judged on the basis of their popularity among particular groups of people. But Moltmann avoids developing his theology of divine passibility merely on the basis of soteriological or theodical considerations. It is first because the cross takes centre stage in his doctrine of the Trinity and second, on the basis of this, because soteriology is inseparable from theology proper, that for Moltmann thinking about God’s presence in human suffering is at the same time thinking about the crucified Christ. It is because in the crucifixion the Father undergoes Sonlessness and the Son undergoes Fatherlessness that God suffers today in human sufferings. The strength of Moltmann’s theology here is that rather than abandon Christ, as the increasing secularism in the twentieth century led others to do, he drew upon the resources of the Christian tradition to rediscover in a new way and communicate to his generation just how God remains present among those who suffer.

This sociological insight obviously should not invalidate any critiques made against theologies of divine passibility. Yet the traditional doctrine of divine impassibility, which began among the fathers and reached its height in medieval theology, particularly in that of Thomas Aquinas (and which was nonetheless influenced by the pre-Christian philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, among others), has had two-thousand or more years to think through this doctrine, assess its value for interpreting the whole biblical witness, and respond to any dissenters. Conversely, many contemporary passibilists, arguing like Moltmann on the basis of the cross and divine love, or pointing to the divine emotion attested in Scripture,³⁰⁴ can provide good

³⁰² Miroslav Volf, foreword to Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: 40th Anniversary Edition*, trans. by R. A. Wilson and John Bowden, vii-x (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2015), vii.

³⁰³ Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, “The Transcendence of the Future: The Theology of Hope,” in *20th Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age*, 170-199 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 173.

³⁰⁴ This latter basis overlaps in some respects with divine love. However, I am referring specifically to the biblical witness to God, especially in the Hebrew Bible, that ascribes emotion to God. Although this does not occupy a central place in Moltmann’s theology (but see *TKG*, 25-30), other contemporary passibilists have made much of this. See Bauckham, “Only the Suffering God,” 9-10.

biblical and theological reasons for attributing suffering to God. While there are certainly logical problems with this position, maybe even more with Moltmann's because of his poetic and polemical style, its modern manifestation only began to enjoy widespread and international acceptance in the twentieth century. That is, it may still be too early to judge the validity of divine passibility because this theology has not had as long to think through its faithfulness to revelation. Nonetheless, the company that this theology keeps, among those who suffer themselves, and the biblical appeals it makes, should at least occasion pause on the part of divine impassibilists.³⁰⁵

There is an increasingly large body of books and articles addressing aspects of the contemporary impassibility debate, many of which engage with Moltmann's theology and some of which I have cited in this thesis. As such, it would be difficult to offer anything in the way of a new contribution to this conversation without first being better acquainted with the conversation. Yet while my assessment of his theology of divine passibility in this thesis has been largely critical, I think there is still room for a more sympathetic reading of Moltmann's claims. Laying aside for now its inherent weaknesses, Moltmann's proposal has two strengths that require a more in-depth treatment. First, he avoids the negative mirror that he attributes to theism by which God is defined in opposition to the limitations of finite being. In doing so, he presents a soteriological vision in which new creation is not only *new* creation but new *creation*. The negation of finite limitations in classical theism "also negate[s] the relative goodness of creation and the transitory and mortal happiness of this life" (CG, 230). But because the identities of Father and Son contain their own negation in the suffering of the crucifixion and yet also transcend this negation by the Spirit in the resurrection, the world of suffering human beings can likewise be renewed by the Spirit, maintaining its identity as God's good creation and transcending the negation of this identity wrought by suffering and evil. This avoids positing a new creation which is absolutely other and thus "terrifying and boring" (CG, 230), but it also avoids the implication that creaturely life and this world must be discarded for the world beyond, an otherworldly soteriology abstracted from the concrete sufferings of creation.

³⁰⁵ Many of divine passibility's critics show a willingness to understand the concerns behind it and address how these might be met in the context of a commitment to divine impassibility. The best example of this that I have come across is Vanhoozer's discussion in his *Remythologizing Theology*, 387-468.

Second, Moltmann affirms the reality of human suffering without abandoning people to despair. Suffering becomes real for God too. Consequently, this suffering allows “the profound fellowship between God and man in suffering – in compassionate suffering with one another, and passionate love for one another” (*TKG*, 60). Yet even in God undergoing the greatest of sufferings, the negation of being, the final note sounds with eschatological joy, a joy in which human beings can also hope for through the resurrection. The value in this is that it mitigates the offensiveness of someone who is external to the sufferer intervening and promising a certain hope for redemption. The hope remains certain though not yet answered because the problem of suffering is still an ongoing problem throughout history: “the experiences of Auschwitz and Hiroshima raise questions for which no answers are enduring, because the questions are fundamentally protests” (*GC*, 91). But it is the hope of one who has experienced suffering, indeed the greatest of sufferings, not one who might otherwise appear aloof to human suffering, a major difficulty for atheists throughout history (*CG*, 219-223).³⁰⁶ This short sketch cannot account for all that needs to be considered in engaging with Moltmann’s proposal, but these strengths and weaknesses could be treated at greater length in future.

In chapter five I attended to Moltmann’s construal of the relationship between immanent and economic Trinity. I responded to Roger Olson’s critique of the relationship between eschatology and history in Moltmann’s doctrine of the Trinity by suggesting that Moltmann conceives of this relationship dialectically so that God is transcendent in protology, history, and eschatology and nonetheless acts upon himself in each of these stages. However, this remains an ambiguity in Moltmann’s theology as he does not make these relationships clear. In the next part of the chapter I engaged with Paul Molnar’s Barthian critique of Moltmann’s doctrine of the Trinity. I contended that Moltmann’s panentheism does indeed allow for a distinction between God and creation. I also claimed that his positing of a middle term between necessity and

³⁰⁶ However, while bringing God to participate in human suffering can be seen as a strength, the implied converse, attributing human suffering to God, i.e., not only to Christ in his flesh but to the whole Godhead as God, might inadvertently undo what the first attribution apparently achieves. The concrete experiences of human beings are projected onto the divine in such a way that they lose their concrete character. That various theologians and communities have found this to be otherwise, finding hope and healing in upholding divine passibility, suggests that this may not be a major problem. Nonetheless, it is a potential difficulty into which Moltmann’s theology may run.

freedom in the act of creation should be understood apophatically, i.e., as neither necessary nor free in the sense of an arbitrary decision.

The way Moltmann conceives of the relationship between immanent and economic Trinity raises again the issue of his use of theological language. John Webster's perceptive comment merits being cited a second time: "Because God is defined by reference to historical events of the utmost finitude, [Moltmann] tends to assume that language about God is in the end relatively easy to devise."³⁰⁷ This has been a persistent difficulty with Moltmann's theology that I encountered over the course of writing this thesis. Whether it be his poetic attribution to God of enmity between Father and Son or of need to be loved by creation, his identification of immanent with economic Trinity elicits blame. Nonetheless, perhaps Webster is too critical here. Negatively, this problem could be traced to a general carelessness with language across Moltmann's career, as his lack of explanation with regard to the relationship between history and eschatology suggests. Positively, and I think this more likely, Moltmann's free approach to language is a methodological quirk characteristic of his poetic style. And perhaps he is in the right company as "it is not poetry that is impossible after Auschwitz, but rather *prose*. Realistic prose fails, where the poetic evocation of the unbearable atmosphere of a camp succeeds."³⁰⁸ This does not absolve Moltmann of critique in this respect but it opens the way for better understanding of what he is trying to achieve.

After a sympathetic defence of Moltmann in response to Molnar's critiques, I ended chapter five with a critical comment on his attribution of "need" to God (*TKG*, 58). I argued that if God as infinite needs the finite world then he is incomplete in some way, being limited by the finite and as such ultimately being unable to offer it anything beyond finitude, which is subject to sin and death. But I wonder here if Moltmann's argument against classical theism, namely that it relies on an anthropological negation of finite being that consequently negates the desirability of any soteriology as well as its own received goodness, would benefit from a lengthier treatment, also giving attention to the trinitarian panentheism he suggests as a replacement. In such a treatment I would like to offer a more sympathetic assessment of the relationship

³⁰⁷ Webster, "Jürgen Moltmann," 6.

³⁰⁸ Slavoj Žižek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (London: Profile Books, 2008), 4, emphasis original. Žižek inverts Theodor W. Adorno's famous claim that poetry is not possible after Auschwitz.

between God and creation, immanent and economic Trinity, infinite and finite being in Moltmann's theology. I think it is too easy to dismiss Moltmann's panentheism as compromising God's absolute transcendence and thus the possibility of any real salvation, while at the same time overlooking his critique of classical theism. It must be asked again whether understanding God to be in need of creation, in the middle term between freedom and necessity that Moltmann commends, really makes God incomplete and hence soteriologically impotent, or whether God can allow for some kind of space within his transcendence that can be dedicated to needing creation without compromising the whole of that transcendence. If sin and death is inessential to creaturely being then surely there must be a way to conceive of God "necessarily" creating without his power over sin and death being compromised.

While I have come across various chapters and articles comparing Barth and Moltmann on particular topics, I have not come across any sustained treatment of Barth in Moltmann's thought. Moltmann often engages with him critically, though it is clear that Barth has exercised considerable influence on his theology, for example in his commitment to christology as the centre of theology.³⁰⁹

Whether one generally agrees with Moltmann or not, his proposals regarding the significance of the cross for the doctrine of the Trinity will only be ignored by future theologians at great loss. Through his theology, God has brought hope and challenge to various individuals and communities, believers have come to know the Trinity in new, confronting, and exciting ways, theologians have been sharpened in their dialogues, and those outside of the church have been welcomed into the ongoing conversation. May the conversation continue.

³⁰⁹ William P. Loewe, "Two Theologians of the Cross: Karl Barth and Jürgen Moltmann," *The Thomist* 41:4 (1977): 510-539 (536), comments, "although Moltmann engages in criticism of Barth, his own position on each of the points he raises [in *CG*] can be read as a continuous development rather than an abrupt break with Barth's theology."

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