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*Review Essay:*  
*Did God Abandon Jesus at the Cross?*

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*Jesus' Cry from the Cross: Towards a First-Century Understanding of the Intertextual Relationship between Psalm 22 and the Narrative of Mark's Gospel.* By Holly J. Carey. Library of New Testament Studies. New York: T&T Clark, 2009. 240 pages. Hardcover, \$130.00.

**The Book**

Holly J. Carey has written an important monograph that will impact both biblical and theological camps. The issue is not new, but for some reason, as she observes, it has been seriously neglected. What is the theological importance of the meaning of Jesus' cry from the cross? I am going to leave the answer to this question for later, but Carey's thesis should be visited carefully.

According to our author, there is a tendency among Bible interpreters to read the passage of Mark 15:34 in an atomistic manner, and thus arrive at a conclusion that may not be what Mark intended. However, if we read the narrative of this Gospel contextually, Carey contends, we will find that the meaning of the famous cry is not necessarily one of abandonment. In fact, Mark's implied readers would have interpreted the passage in light of the whole content of Psalm 22. The reason for this is to be found not only in the abundant material of the Psalm that saturates the whole passion narrative of Mark's writing, but also it has to do with Mark's whole narrative. Thus, Mark has provided a consistent pattern wherein when Jesus' death is announced His resurrection and vindication is always present.

The first and second chapters are devoted to providing some kind of hermeneutical background for the study. The first chapter provides solid interaction with major contemporary interpreters. The second is an introduction to the discussion of how Mark is to be read as a narrative as well as his use of Old Testament quotations, allusions, and echoes. Chapter two is also critical for understanding the complexity involved in recognizing when the Gospel writer is actually making use of Old Testament material, since this issue is not as simple as some interpreters have believed. For example, some theologians have argued that since Mark only quotes Psalm 22:2, there

is no basis whatsoever to believe he intended the entire Psalm. This section convincingly demonstrates this idea to be bluntly simplistic.

Chapter three presents an analysis of Mark's narrative. It is this narrative that allows us to see that the writer has created an expectation on the implied readers. They are supposed to wait not only for Jesus' passion, but also for His vindication via the resurrection. Central, but not exclusive to the evidence provided, are the predictions of Jesus' death throughout this Gospel. Carey renames those predictions as to include the resurrection. They are not simply predictions of Jesus' death, but of His resurrection as well, and as such they create an anticipation of Jesus' vindication after His death and passion.

So, Carey concludes: "The implied readers' expectations of Jesus' vindication after suffering, fostered by various passages that foreshadow these events in the Markan narrative, makes it likely that the same plot of Ps. 22 (the suffering and vindication of the speaker) would have been recalled when Mark includes the allusions and citation of the Psalm in the context of Jesus' death. In other words . . . an allusion to Ps. 22 in Mark 15:34 would probably have not gone unrecognized by his implied readers because they would have been prepared previously by the narrative to anticipate and recognize the shared reference (implicit in the citation, explicit in the narrative) to his vindication within the plot of the Psalm" (171–72).

Chapter 4 provides further support for the author's case. In this section evidence is given that the most common way in which Mark deals with Old Testament passages is contextual and not atomistic. Mark's intertextual use of Scripture reveals that this pattern is present in all scriptural genres (poetry, history, prophecy, etc.) and in all types of quotations and allusions. In Carey's words, the fact that Mark uses Scriptures like this "lends considerable weight to the likelihood that he is again doing so in Mark 15:34." (172).

Chapter 5 explores whether there is enough historical evidence to support the thesis that the implied readers of the Gospel of Mark would have interpreted Mark 15:34 in the light of the larger context of Psalm 22. First, there is a traceable and cohesive tradition of the Righteous Sufferer in Scripture and extracanonical texts. People in that socio-cultural environment would have easily recognized texts belonging to this tradition and its suffering-vindication pattern. Second, the liturgical use of the Psalms during the first century among Qumran and synagogue worshipers strongly suggests that Mark's readers would have enough knowledge of Psalm 22 to "fill in the blanks" left by the incipit of this Psalm in Mark 15:34. Finally, there seems to be several extracanonical texts portraying Psalm 22 as a suffering individual who ultimately is vindicated by God. The fact that chapter six confirms the image of the Righteous Sufferer is profusely used by Mark to present Jesus only buttresses the whole line of argument: Jesus' cry at the cross is being portrayed within this story line.

Exegesis of Mark 15:34 is tackled only after the whole narrative of Mark has been searched for the presence of Psalm 22 (139–50). Thus, abundant and strong evidence is offered, showing that Mark uses the Psalm not only

in his passion-resurrection narrative, but also in other sections. Space is also provided for evaluating other interpretative suggestions as to the meaning of Mark 15:34. Most of them, however, fail in that they exclude evidence that does not fit their previously adopted schemes (160).

Reading Mark 15:34 in context should include being sensitive to the intricate layers of the narrative, and resistance to extracting the text from his surrounding context. To help with this, Carey provides four guiding questions to illuminate the meaning of the passage within its own context. First, she studies the meaning of “abandonment” and concludes that in the whole Bible, with only one possible exception, God does not “abandon” in the sense of removing His presence. In fact, the meaning of “abandon” in this passage is not as obvious as is often assumed.

Second, is there any suggestion in the passage that God did not abandon Jesus? Carey’s reading of the crucifixion and final sections of Mark produces plenty of evidence that shows in fact God did not abandon Jesus in the sense of removing His presence. For example, God may be answering Jesus’ prayer in the tearing of the temple veil. Moreover, the centurion’s confession reveals that Jesus’ relationship with God did not stop at the crucifixion. These and other “narrative indicators” demonstrate that “the Markan Jesus has not been abandoned by God in the sense that the presence of God has left him altogether. Instead these phenomena suggest that the ‘abandonment’ of Jesus refers to his helpless situation at the hands of his enemies” (163).

The third question she formulates is about how to reconcile a supposed abandonment by God of Jesus at the cross with the relationship they both enjoyed throughout the narrative. If God really abandoned Jesus at the cross, how do we explain his close and intimate relationship with Jesus through all of Mark’s narrative? The way Jesus interacts with the Father according to Mark’s narrative is one of the strongest reasons to hold that God did not abandon Him at the cross. Even at the cross it is more natural to see them both as “being together in this” too (163).

Finally, Carey answers the questions of those who may consider it a problem to have a Jesus who is suffering while God is still present. To say that God did not abandon Jesus at the cross does not mean that Jesus’ suffering was not real or severe. In other words, affirming that Jesus’ suffering is not due to God’s personal absence does not take away its seriousness and importance for the whole argument of the Gospel. Jesus’ suffering is as severe as that in Psalm 22. However, Mark does not want his readers to get the idea that “Jesus was completely and utterly abandoned by God without receiving his intervention as the psalmist had. If that was the case, why did he include such a triumphant ending of vindication in his narrative?” (166).

After summarizing the argument, the book finishes by providing a reading of Matthew and Luke as the “earliest readers” of Mark. This arrangement helps Carey not only maintain the autonomy of her study of Mark, but also leads the reader to see how the two other Gospel narratives integrated a similar reading of this Psalm.

### Theological Implications

Carey's book is of monumental importance for Christian theology. For one thing, Christian theology will always be a *theologia crucis*. This means that if you want to affirm something about God and His relationships with His universe, you have to go through Jesus and ask whether that statement coheres with His revelation. It also means that Christology has its center at the cross. In other words, whatever we want to say about God has to be tested against the cross of Jesus.

That being the case, we should not overlook the fact that the cross of Jesus is a revelation mediated by the biblical text. This of course means hermeneutics. We cannot isolate this cross from its literary and historical context. The meaning of the cross of Jesus should not come solely or mainly from our common knowledge of other crosses in the past or the present. To do so would reduce God's revelation to natural theology.

What is then the meaning of the cross of Jesus? It is obvious that here we cannot provide a full answer to the question. At the same time, the way we understand Jesus' words on the cross will fully impact that answer. Therefore, it is appropriate for us to explore whether Jesus' cry of Psalm 22:2 has been correctly understood.<sup>1</sup>

Carey says that in order to answer this question, we need to explore the contextual narrative where this verse appears. On the one hand, we should avoid bringing to the text dogmatic presuppositions, which do not find direct support in the text itself. On the other hand, reading the text at "face value" is not a strategy that produces better and more reliable results. Neither of these two options should be followed. A right understanding of the text demands that we see it first in terms of the writer's own discourse, and second in terms of the way the initial audience may have understood it.

Interestingly, when you review the theological literature on the meaning of Jesus' cry, there seems to be general agreement, even between those representing the two options. According to both, God the Father abandoned Jesus. Conservative theologians will tell us that the meaning is clear and we should not tamper with it. Since Jesus at the cross was representing sinful humanity, the least you can expect is that God the Father may turn His back on Him. On the other hand, liberals and liberationists will complain against those who try to dulcify the meaning of that abandonment. Those trying to do so not only go against "the most historical interpretation" of this text, but also are unable to provide a serious theodicy within this "God-forsaken world."<sup>2</sup>

And so, you find yourself entangled between these two poles. In either case you are in trouble for you either have not taken the cross of Jesus seriously, or you want to dulcify its historical interpretation. What Carey's work has clarified for us is that taking the cross historically and seriously does not necessarily mean to see it as abandonment. It has also helped us see that the pure affirmation of taking the cross historically and seriously does

<sup>1</sup>Leon Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 43.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Jon Sobrino, *Jesucristo Liberador* (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1991), 395–422.

not mean we are in fact doing that. Some of those proposals that claim to be historical and serious about the cross have actually read the cross without its context. Oftentimes the interpretation of the cry of Jesus has come either from a systematic point of view or from a theodicy previously accepted. In order to correct this, the meaning of the cry of Jesus has to come first from the literary context where it is placed in Scripture. We need to be grateful for Holly Carey for doing exactly this.

### **Systematic Repercussions**

Taking Carey's monograph as a basis, I want now to provide some feedback on the problems we find whenever we want to affirm that God abandoned Jesus at the cross. But first, we need to be clear as to the meaning of this "abandonment." If by "abandonment" you mean that God did not do anything to stop the crucifixion, then I do not see how you can deny it. If by "abandonment" is meant that God the Father (the triune God indeed!) wanted this to happen, then there is no way to oppose it from a biblical standpoint. Nonetheless, the problem is that some theologians want to say more than that. They want to say that God turned His back on His Son, that He frowned at Him because of His being loaded with human sinfulness. God the Father was supposed to be disgusted with Jesus for this, and He hid His face from Him. God the Father rejected Jesus the Son and abandoned him to suffer crucifixion and His absence. Jesus was abandoned to suffer in complete loneliness, this being the reason for His cry.

It is this second meaning that is problematic, because it has scant support from Scripture, if any. Instead, the God of Jesus Christ is the one who planned the passion to take place. He punished human sin on Jesus His Son, but He did not reject Him. The prophet Isaiah asserts that it was "us" who rejected Him, not God (53:3–5). As Scripture continually attests, the Father received this sacrifice and accepted it (53:10–12). While everyone else deserted Jesus, the Father was with Him (John 8:29; 16:32). The Father loved Jesus *because* of the cross (John 10:17). Jesus was the very same representation of the Father, even in the context of Jesus' departure (John 14:10); the Father and the Son shared in the same works (John 14:8–11), including the cross (John 10:18). Attempting to dissolve this unity, even in the context of Jesus representing sinners, is called by Karl Barth "the supreme blasphemy," for "God gives Himself, but He does not give Himself away. . . . He does not come into conflict with Himself. He does not sin when in unity with the man Jesus He mingles with sinners and takes their place."<sup>3</sup> It is this meaning of "abandonment" that we need to evaluate and consider. Here are some theological observations.

I have noted above that for some conservative theologians the answer about the meaning of Jesus' cry is found in a predetermined understanding of the atonement. If sinfulness means separation from God, and Jesus is taking the place of sinners, then there is need for real separation. This logic, however,

<sup>3</sup>Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV.1, ed. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956), 185.

does not take the biblical data in the correct order. When doing theology, at least from an evangelical point of view, you want to check first if you have direct answers concerning your question. In this case, our question is exactly this: Do we have in Scripture direct and clear statements telling us that God abandoned Jesus at the cross? It will be very easy to jump to the conclusion that Mark 15:34 (and Matthew's parallel) tell us so. However, after reading Carey's work such an answer is not possible any more. We will have to look for evidence somewhere else.

After reviewing all possible evidence, however, we have to agree that there is no other passage in Scripture that directly expresses that God abandoned Jesus. Even Jürgen Moltmann, someone who has constructed a whole theological metaphysics based on the abandonment of God, has to take refuge in a very weak textual variant.<sup>4</sup> It is questionable therefore that with this scarce evidence Moltmann may be willing to express his case with such powerful words as these: "On the cross the Father and the Son are so widely separated that the direct relationship between them breaks off."<sup>5</sup> Once again, there is no direct biblical evidence for this type of statement.

Of course, after surveying all the direct evidence (or lack of it), it may be that the only biblical evidence that exists is indirect. That is not a problem per se; however, if that is the case you have to be extremely careful, because you may be reading your pre-commitments into the text. You have to ask first if there is not another way of integrating your observation or presupposition. For example, biblical scholars would agree that sin results in separation from God and that Jesus came to bridge this separation. To jump from this to Jesus' cry on the cross is too long a jump. We have to consider first what this separation is and if there is any other way in which this separation was assumed and bridged by Jesus. Karl Barth's extended discussion of this matter should suffice here as a more biblical example of how God dealt with this separation by means of the "way of the son of God into the far country."<sup>6</sup>

Another example of bringing theological conclusions to the cross would be related to a passage such as 2 Corinthians 5:21. This passage can be used to argue that since Jesus became "sin," God the Father had to separate from Him, and once again this is what we have in Jesus' cry at the cross. However, this interpretation overlooks several critical things. First, it does not take into account that the word "sin" in this context can be better translated as an "offering for sin," as supported by most modern translations. This, of course, will relate the Father not as the one abandoning the Son, but as the very same person who is giving this offering, and therefore present at the cross. Second, even if you take the word to mean directly "sin," we should ask ourselves if we are willing to say that Jesus actually became "sin," or if the word is used in a more representational or metaphorical way. If the former, we should ponder the serious theological problems we are getting into. For example, if Jesus actually "became" sin, how is it that God accepted His sacrifice, if in order to

<sup>4</sup>Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 166.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 174.

<sup>6</sup>Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV.1. 157–357.

be accepted His person and work were supposed to be blameless? If the latter option is the true one, then the ultimate reason for God taking away His presence from Jesus disappears. Third, the context of this passage, as no other, presents God as intimately involved with Jesus at the cross, reconciling the world to Himself. If you were to ask this passage, where is God the Father at the crucifixion? The passage has one single answer: "God was in Christ" (19). Even if the Father is seen as the one executing the punishment for sin on His Son, this does not require Him being absent. On the contrary, the very same action requires His presence.

Connected to the previous discussion is the role of the wrath of God. This theme should be explored in more detail, but here I am only interested in showing that even this *image* does not necessitate God's absence at the cross. If by the wrath of God we mean God's justice in action and not an anthropopathic explosion of emotions (similar to the parent's reaction to their disobedient child who is punished and secluded in his room), then we have to understand that applying that justice presupposes the very same presence of the one executing it. That the justice of God is in action at the cross of Jesus is clear from a biblical standpoint. The wrath of God means *the cross* for Jesus. The terrible thing that takes place at the cross is that God himself is on it, suffering and judging. However, that this punishment requires God the Father to remove His presence from Jesus is something the biblical data does not support.

On another issue, we should ask ourselves whether Jesus was ignorant about the reasons of God's actions at the cross? From a liberal point of view, for example, there is no problem if you present Jesus as questioning the presence of the Father at the cross. Bultmann said that historically we do not know if Jesus relinquished His faith in God at the cross. Conservatives, however, would have a problem if they actually take the question of Jesus in a literal sense. This is often overlooked. To take the question literally would mean, first of all, the realization that Jesus is asking for reasons about God's absence. But if this is the case, are we willing to affirm that Jesus did not know why God abandoned Him? According to the Gospels, Jesus is completely aware that He is going to the cross with the purpose of giving Himself up in the place of the sinner. This means that, if Jesus expected a separation from God because of this, His question does not make sense.<sup>7</sup> In other words, if the Father had in fact separated from Jesus due to his vicarious condition, He had to know why that was the case. But, then, why the question? Should we take this question other than literally? Carey's book once again is useful here.

We should add to the previous observation some other comments related to those who want to take the question of Jesus in a literalistic sense. First of all, we need to observe that even if Jesus' words were to be taken in this way, we should not overlook that His words are presented in a question

<sup>7</sup>Boff, from a liberationist point of view, solves the problem by having Jesus not being completely sure about God's will concerning the cross. Leonardo Boff, *Jesucristo el Liberador* (Bogotá, Colombia: Libros SRL, 1977), 127–30.



format and not as an affirmation. It is not useful simply to argue that Mark 15:34 *affirms* that God abandoned Jesus. It does not. It is a question. If you want to take the abandonment part of this verse literally, you should also take the “question part” the same way. This is also connected with the way some theologians try to buttress their argument for separation. They want to affirm that before the cross Jesus calls God His Father, but now at the cross He calls Him “God,” the reason being His separation from Him. Berkouwer, for example, argues for a change in the way Jesus addressed God before and after that question. Berkouwer seems to be unaware, however, that Jesus uses “Father” and “God” as He keeps praying *on the cross*.<sup>8</sup> When exactly was Jesus separated from God if He keeps praying even until the very moment of death? Even more, Berkouwer’s way of arguing completely ignores the importance of a direct Old Testament quotation. There has not been any change in the relation of the Father and Jesus, at least not one that you can prove or trace back to the use of “God” in Mark 15:34. Moreover, as Bauckham mentions, Jesus calls God His God at the cross reflecting that His trust in Him is still intact, even amidst enormous suffering.<sup>9</sup>

### **The Doctrine of the Trinity**

There are some other problems coming from a systematic theology perspective for those who believe that the Father removed his presence from Jesus. Most of these issues are related one way or the other to the doctrine of the Trinity. Once again, for liberal and liberationist theologians, who tend to see the doctrine as a late and secondary development of Christian theology, this is not a real concern. For conservatives who consider the Trinity as being central for all Christian doctrines, however, its importance is paramount. When affirming that Jesus was separated from the Father, what are the implications for the Trinity? Are we saying that it is possible for the Trinity to be separated? To take refuge in the humanity of Jesus is not convenient for two major reasons. First of all, to insist that something happened to Jesus and not to God the Son comes too dangerously close to Gnosticism. The one being crucified and affected by the cross is none other than God the Son. Second, the salvific importance of the cross relies on the fact that the one affected by it is not only the human Jesus, but the Son of God. It is because of the divine person at the cross that this is efficacious. There is no alternative, the one at the cross had to fully experience the cross.

But then, can we really conceive theologically any separation between Father and Son? There is no escaping this question either. Some scholars, who want to affirm the separation at the cross between the persons of the Trinity, end up saying that the separation was actually not as radical as sometimes is thought.<sup>10</sup> But, what is the meaning of this? Was there separation or not?

<sup>8</sup>Cf. G.C. Berkouwer, *The Person of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 221.

<sup>9</sup>At points Bauckham uses “abandonment” as meaning actual departure, though. Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 258.

<sup>10</sup>Taylor, after arguing for real separation, ends up saying that Jesus, “*seemed* to be forsaken by Him” (italics mine). Vincent Taylor, *Jesus and His Sacrifice* (New York: Macmillan, 1959), 162.

Others will take refuge in the category of “mystery” or of “paradox,” but will keep emphasizing the reality of the separation.<sup>11</sup> While warning about not trying to dissolve the mystery or the paradox, these scholars end up doing exactly that when clearly maintaining the reality of the separation between the two persons.

Another interesting factor often neglected in this discussion is the place of the Holy Spirit at the cross. This is an important issue derived from the doctrine of the Trinity. Even for those who will not completely accept Augustine’s idea of the Spirit as being the eternal and loving link between the Father and the Son, believing that there might be a separation between these two may include serious repercussions in our understanding of the triune God and His work of salvation. Where is the Holy Spirit when such separation takes place? It is relatively easy to polarize the relationship between God the Father and the Son in order to give support to the idea of separation. The Father is the holy one and Jesus is the one representing sinful humanity, then the relationship breaks off. But, what about the Holy Spirit, who is both as holy and as involved in salvation as the Father? Graham Cole rightly concludes that there is little direct evidence as to the role of the Spirit during the cross. However, we do have the whole New Testament supporting the fact that salvation is Trinitarian. There is also serious indication that Hebrews 9:14 is referring to the Holy Spirit as being the power by means of which Jesus offered His sacrifice.<sup>12</sup> While agreeing with Cole on this, I find it extremely difficult and problematic to assent to his conclusion that the Holy Spirit is the one who “kept the triune Godhead from imploding—as it were—when the barrier of sin went up between the Father and the Son.”<sup>13</sup>

This is not acceptable for various reasons. First, it makes the core of salvation dependent only on the Father and the Son, since the Spirit only keeps things from breaking off completely. (Notice again that there is not actual separation here). For me this sounds like a mediatory anthropological and political metaphor has found its way into our image of God and salvation. The Holy Spirit seems to be the one who mediates in between two extreme irreconcilable poles, He Himself not being identified with any of them intrinsically. It is the Father who is offended by sin. It is only the Son who is burdened and suffering because of sin. This is not the biblical image of the Spirit who is holy and who both suffers and is offended by human sinfulness.

Second, from this image you can get the idea that the Father’s holiness is the only one affected by sinfulness. The other two members of the Trinity are somewhat excluded from this absolute attribute. We should never forget,

<sup>11</sup>A good summary of several interpretations is given by John Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1986), 80–82. The problem, once again, with Stott’s own option is twofold: 1) the myth of the “face value” thesis; and 2) based on this a type of psychologization of Jesus by means of which, the interpreter knows exactly how Jesus (and the Father!) must have felt at the cross, without more evidence from the text.

<sup>12</sup>Graham Cole, *He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 164–67.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 167.

however, that the problem of sin is not an issue only between one of the persons of the Trinity and humankind. The whole Trinity is involved and affected by it. But if sinfulness is pictured as affecting only the holiness of the Father (thus causing separation between him and the Son), are we not implying that the Spirit and the Son are less holy than the Father? Some would even say that the reason God did not want to see His Son at the moment of the cross was because of His holiness. But if that is the case, what do you do with the Son's own holiness, and with the holiness of the Holy Spirit, who again according to Hebrews nine was energizing Jesus to offer His sacrifice *at* the cross? Are we not risking an implication that the Son's and the Spirit's deity can deal with sinfulness closer than what the Father's can? Is not this a practical way of implementing some sort of ontological subordinationism?

Having said all this, we should not forget to say that this is not denying the clear teaching of Scripture that at the cross, God punishes sin in the person of the Son (Isa 53). But because it is the Son, the Father is directly involved, not separated from Him.<sup>14</sup> The whole God is there experiencing and dealing with what sin is, albeit from different perspectives. As the Father, He experiences sin as the reason for His Son's suffering and death. As the Son, He suffers human sin in faithfulness. As the Spirit, He gives himself to God in the person of the Son. The triune God uses the same historical event of the crucifixion to punish sin. It is not as if there is another thing the Father and the Son are doing to expiate sin. The punishment of God *is* the historical and human crucifixion of the Son. Punishment of sin in the Son takes place in that God does not intervene to stop the crucifixion. But this does not mean He has abandoned the Son in the sense of taking His presence away from him. The picture of God as turning His back to the Son is not biblical. God is with His Son, but He is not intervening to stop the crucifixion.<sup>15</sup> The triune God is present at the crucifixion. The cross is not an experience for Jesus alone. The cross is possible because the triune God is there. The cry of Jesus at the cross is the cry of the person of Psalm 22, the messianic righteous sufferer, who in the midst of extreme mistreatment claims His innocence and asks God to vindicate Him. God will answer His prayer evidently even before the resurrection. All the events surrounding the cross after the cry can be seen as God responding to the Messiah. The gentiles, represented by the

<sup>14</sup>Some medieval paintings have an extraordinary portrayal of the Father holding Jesus' arms as he hangs on the cross. See, François Boespflug, "The Compassion of God the Father in Western Art," *Cross Currents* (Winter 1992–93): 487–503.

<sup>15</sup>Peter Lombard seemed to be reflecting the Scriptures in this: "And so, if that abandonment is understood as a dissolution of the union, a severance of God and man took place before Christ had died. But who would say this? So let us profess that God abandoned that man at death in some way, because for a time he exposed him to the power of his persecutors; God did not defend him by displaying his power so that he would not die. The Godhead severed itself because it took away its protection, but did not dissolve the union; it separated itself outwardly so that it was not there to defend him, but was not absent inwardly in regard to the union. If at that time the Godhead had not held back its power, but had displayed it, Christ would not have died." Peter Lombard, *The Sentences*, Book III: *The Incarnation of the Word*, trans. Giulio Silano (Ontario: PIMS, 2010), 89.

centurion, can now confess that the one on the cross is so intimately related to God as to be called His own Son! This is a much better picture of God, perfectly in accordance with the picture Jesus presented of His Father during His life and ministry.