Jurgen Moltmann

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Preacher: Billy Gaines

`[0:00]` Thank you very much for having me. As Dr. Packer said, I'm in my second and indeed my final year at Regent College. I'm doing a Master of Arts in Doctrinal Theology and I am preparing for ordination in the Anglican Church.

I'm from the United States, though almost the entirety of my Anglican experience officially has taken place in Canada. So Canadian Anglicanism, I think, is where I identify and as well, if indeed I wind back in the United States, a relationship that I hope to foster that is already being fostered between the U.S. and Canada, but one that I hope continues and strengthens.
The material which I'm about to share is the result of research that I've been doing. It's a paper I'm currently writing, in fact, for a seminar at Regent. With Dr. Lauren Wilkinson, the title of the course is Kenosis.
Kenosis, the Kenotic Idea, is something I'm going to attempt to define for you a bit, here in a bit. I've titled this paper, specifically, Kenosis as Creation.
We'll see that drawn out of Moltmann's Thought, I think, quite clearly. I hope quite clearly. As Dr. Packer said, German theology is quite dense. I'm going to attempt to navigate that, both for myself.
`[1:26]` Again, I'm teaching this as a part of writing a paper. It's a great benefit to me. I think it'll clarify my thought, but I also hope that it will be helpful and clarifying for you.

Juergen Moltmann is a very important theologian. He is still alive. He was... Oh, before I get into him, I should say, I was going to be presenting here over two weeks.
If you may have seen on the website that I was... If indeed you get your information from there, that I was to be teaching on Juergen Moltmann this week, and next week it was persuasively entitled Juergen Moltmann Part 1 and Part 2.
Those were not my titles, but that's how it came about. However, a slight oversight on my part. My wife's 30th birthday is next Saturday, October 19th, and I thought I should not be preparing a lecture on that very important day, as well as her sister and her husband are going to be here in town.
So I've asked a good friend of mine, also a Regent grad, who's going to be here sharing with you next week. I saw his name on the board, so it is official, Roger Rebel. He will not be sharing on Moltmann at all. So I've taken the two lectures, and I'm going to try and compress it into one, both introducing you to Juergen Moltmann as a person, as a theologian, the archivist thought, and then focusing in on what is my specific interest, which is his kenotic theology.
`[2:54]` I'm going to, just real quick, kenosis, I'm going to get into this later, but even risking redundancy, I'm going to clarify it right from the start. Kenosis, in the Christian mind, should make us think of Philippians chapter 2, specifically verse 7, but it's the hymn about Christ emptying himself.

Kenosis is the Greek word for to empty, and it's the idea that Jesus, being the second person of the Trinity, the Son of God, emptied himself, becoming man, taking on our weakness, taking on our identity, and suffering death on a cross.
It's always been an important idea. It's led to what we understand now is the dual nature of Christ. Again, I'm going to talk about this again in its context, but the dual nature of Christ, that Jesus is both fully God and fully man.
Maltman's going to take this and build a bottom-up theology, and use, allow that idea, the kenotic idea we see in Christ, as well as the dialectic between his death and resurrection, and what he accomplished in that, as defining, in a sense, the character of God, and the nature of God, and the way he's worked throughout history, even indeed the way he relates to himself in the triune relationships.

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There's going to be some other Greek words thrown in there. If indeed it becomes confusing as I'm talking, and I'm not clarifying, please, will you please define that term, and I'll be happy to do it.
[4:20] I think I've covered my basis, but I am still learning as well, so I may indeed have glossed over, either intentionally, because I don't know how to explain it, or accidentally, because I make assumptions.

So, okay, introductory material covered. Jürgen Maltman was born in 1926 in Hamburg, Germany, and from 1967 until 1994 was professor of systematic theology at the University of Tübingen, of which he is professor emeritus still there.
He had what he has described as a thoroughly secular upbringing. He was not raised in the church. At the age of 16, he was very fascinated by the work of Albert Einstein, and was anticipating studying mathematics at university.
He took entrance exams, as one has to do in Germany, before going to university, and everything was all set. However, this was in the early 1940s in Germany. In 1944, he was drafted into military service by the German army, and ordered to the Reichswald, which is a German forest on the front lines.
The Germans were engaging the British there. An interesting fact, and I think an important fact about Jürgen Maltman, is once there, he surrendered in the dark to the very first British soldier he met.
[5:48] He was not interested in what was going on in Germany in that time. In fact, it broke him. He had no Christian faith at this time to speak of. And he, in a sense, was hopeless about the German culture, and about the atrocities of Buchenwald and Auschwitz.

It was during this time that Maltman, after surrendering, he was in English prison camps for the next three years, until 1948, moving from camp to camp in England, as well as in continental camps. And it was during this time that Maltman found the initial source of his theology, and his first experience of the reality of God. He was introduced to British chaplains, various Christian workers who were there, giving him the New Testament to read, and indeed he had a conversion experience.
And it was in this experience that he both found God as the power of hope, and of God's presence in suffering.
And these are the two themes, which form the two complementary sides of his theology, or really are a dialectic. Again, back to this idea of the cross and the resurrection, the cross being the suffering of God, the resurrection being the hope of God, which the cross and the resurrection provide for all of Christian faith.
[7:16] Maltman's works as a theologian can be split into two distinct series. His initial was a trilogy, or turned into a trilogy, and is probably the work he is still best known for.

The theology of hope, which was written in 1964, is probably still his most well-known and influential work. It was followed in 1972 by the crucified God.
As I've talked to people, it tends to be the one more well-known, despite being less influential, I think, than theology of hope. But the crucified God has a provocative title, and perhaps that's why people have heard of it.
And then the third, the church and the power of the spirit. He now regards this trilogy as preparatory work for his second series, which are studies of particular Christian doctrines, which he prefers to call contributions to theological discussion.
Despite the tendency of German theologians, and systematic theologians in general, to try and write a systematic of their theology, essentially the end of their thought, the compromising idea of their thought, Maltman has rejected this.
[8:24] He's a bit postmodern in that sense. He views theology as dialogical, that it's an ongoing dialogue. It's not something that he's able to come to a conclusion on. Of course, most theologians would probably agree with that, but he's put that into practice in the sense of never writing a comprehensive systematic, which is actually something the German guild, and the theological guild in general, has criticized him for.

One of the most important achievements of Maltman's theology, according to Richard Bauckham, the English theologian, has been to rehabilitate future eschatology, which, as Bauckham puts it, is of determinative significance for biblical faith.

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eschatology, well, other important applications of his work are to theodicy. So eschatology is what we said was probably the most important in Bauckham's mind.
other applications to his work are to theodicy. Theodicy is the problem of evil. How we understand if God is all-powerful, why is there still suffering in the world? Why is there still evil in the world?
A very pressing question, I think, in our culture, as well as to what many have called today's ecological crises.
[9:43] He's written quite a bit about creation, ecology, and those types of things. The archivist thought, again, so this is where I'm going to try and introduce the archivist thought, and then how it then goes back and is defined by his canonic theology, in fact, defines his canonic theology.

So eschatology, for those of you who don't know, is traditionally understood as the doctrine of last things, the end times theology. For Moltmann, though, eschatology means the doctrine of Christian hope, which embraces both the object hoped for and also the hope inspired by it.
For Moltmann, Christianity is eschatology, in its entirety, is hope. From first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is forward-looking and forward-moving, and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present.
To put it another way, the eschatological is not one element of Christianity, and I quote Moltmann here, but it is the medium of Christian faith as such, the key in which everything in it is set, the glow that suffuses everything here in the dawn of an expected new day.
For Moltmann, the hope of the Christian faith lives in the rising of the crucified Christ, and strains after the promises of the universal future of Christ. Eschatology is the passionate suffering and passionate longing kindled by the Messiah.
[11:20] It was in the resurrection of Christ that Moltmann found hope for himself, for his fledgling nation, oppressed by the atrocities again of Auschwitz and Buchenwald, and for the world.

The other side of his theology, the other side of that coin, is what I'm going to call here God's kenosis. God's suffering and God's kenosis are very much interlinked.
Maybe we can talk about why that is in the time after, but we're just going to assume it here in Moltmann's thought. Kenosis is the Greek term meaning to empty, as I told you. It has traditionally been understood in Christian theology to explain the dual nature of Christ, i.e. that he is fully God and fully man.
Based upon Philippians 2.7, again, where it is said that Jesus emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. Moltmann sees the incarnation as the pivotal expression of the kenotic idea.
However, he hardly thinks to be exhaustive of God's kenotic experience. He sees the incarnation and thus the crucifixion and resurrection as the Christian experience of God, which springs from the perception of the presence of God in Jesus Christ and his history.
[12:37] Again, this is that bottom-up theology where what we've seen and what we've experienced of God most essentially is Jesus Christ, his becoming man, his suffering and dying for us.

This tells us something essential about the character and the nature of God. It defines God for Moltmann. There are several ways, several ways, to come at the scope of Jürgen Moltmann's kenotic theology.
One could follow the string of thought as it develops, because it certainly does develop in his writings and his thought. one could attempt a web, placing the cross as the crux and attempt to trace it out into the various fields, connecting it back to the death and the resurrection of Christ.
For simplicity's sake, though, because it is quite dense, we're going to attempt to trace it in a historic chronology. So outside of Moltmann's thought, we're going to start at the beginning, creation, and try and move all the way forward through it.
We actually have to start before the beginning, though, because as I've said, this is bound up in the nature of who God is, and certainly we understand that God existed before he created, right? God has always been.
[13:57] He is without beginning, without need. As Trinity, he dwells in perfect harmony and relationship. Why is it, then, that he creates? Christianity has often said that it was an overflow of his nature.

Of his love. This is rooted, especially in Moltmann, in the perichoretic, another Greek term, nature of the Trinity. Perichoresis is simply the technical term for social Trinity, or what Moltmann would like

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to call dynamic relationality.
relationality. Essentially, the way God relates to himself. In Moltmann's thought, God is open to himself. God is not a divine hierarchy, Father, Son, and Spirit, but a Trinitarian community of persons who relate to each other in a relationship of mutual indwelling, or perichoresis.
It is out of this open and limitless divine love that God creates. So do you understand me that the Trinity functions in relation to itself? That there was, personhood is often defined as relationship, and relationship by personhood.
Therefore, if God didn't need us in order to relate to us, in order to define his personhood, he had to dwell in perfect relationship before he created. Moltmann takes this a step further and maybe looks at it from paradigmatically the opposite way, in that it is out of this openness to himself, in the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, that God is, that's the instance, the way that God creates out of openness.
[15:32] So he creates something that's open. That will hopefully clarify here as we move on. How though is the act of creation a canonic act?

In at least three ways in Moltmann. It is an act of self-definition. Out of his infinite possibilities, God realizes this particular one, this particular created order, and renounces all others.
God is infinite, he had infinite possibilities before him, but he chose this one. In that sense, God self-defines. And God's determination to be a creator is linked with the consideration for his creation that allows it space and time and its own movement, its own otherness, as he lovingly does with himself in that open, triune relationship.
So that it is not crushed by the divine reality or totally absorbed by it. We're created by an omniscient God, an omnipresent God, and yet he gives us a distinct otherness, and this happens in a particular way.
And that being said, it's also an act of self-contraction. Before God went out of himself in order to create a non-divine world, he withdrew himself into himself in order to make room for the world and to concede its space.
[16:52] In this way, creation comes into being in the space of God's kenosis. So you understand, if God's omnipresent, there's essentially no room for him to create something that's not him, which is what we're defining creation as, something different than God and otherness.

So God essentially had to go pull within himself, create a space. He had to empty a space within his omnipresent self in order to create. And that's God's kenosis, his initial act of kenosis.
And in that sense, it is also an act of divine humiliation. Humility. Whereas before he created, God needed nothing, longed for nothing, worried for nothing.
In creating, he links himself to his creation. If in his freedom, God resolves to create a being who is not divine, who can coexist with his own divine being, then this resolve does not affect the created being only.
It touches God's own being too. In creating, God chooses, in a sense, a way of weakness. He chooses to have it matter what happens to his creation.
[18:03] And it's also an open-ended project because it requires, because of the otherness, what's required in Moltmann's thinking, and I think more generally in Christian thinking, is an active response of the created.

Moltmann would take this certainly beyond human beings, but even just for simplicity's sake, in human beings, God, in a sense, takes a risk by creating us free and able to choose. Again, this is, I should clarify, that this is somewhat revolutionary in Christian thinking.
It's certainly not in line with a Calvinistic understanding of the way God has created in which God, in his omniscience, knows the end.
This is in a sense that, though God is omniscient, he chooses a way of weakness. He pulls within himself and chooses not to know the future. He's still all-knowing in the sense that he understands everything that's going on, but he does not know that which is unknowable, that which has not happened yet, including whether or not you and I will choose him, but also what will be related to the created order.
That being said, I hope you're sticking with me, creation is therefore an open system. God is open to himself. Creation, implicitly and explicitly, is an open system.
[19:22] As God is a God of open love, and it points in hope towards the consummation. Another point of clarifying, in moments thinking, that then means that creation was not perfect in the beginning.

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There's not this sense that there was a perfect created order that was then corrupted by Adam's fall, and then redeemed by Jesus Christ and moving towards the consummation, which is perfection again.
This is a cyclical way of understanding the history of God and his creation. Moltmann thinks of it more linearly, that God created, he created something that was good, but not perfect, and instead was working towards perfection.
So, the world is created now. This is the example of God's first kenosis, his first kenotic act, thus defining himself as a kenotic God.
Again, chronologically. So now, kenosis in pre-incarnate history, so before Christ came, we understand as the epitome of God's kenosis, but how was God working kenotically in the world before Christ?
[20:36] Excuse me. Oh, thank you very much. In the idea of the Shekinah, the Shekinah glory of God, God's indwelling, we find the Old Testament presupposition for the Christian idea of Christ's kenosis and its Jewish equivalent.

You understand the Shekinah glory of God? It's the sense in which when Israel built the temple, when they carried the Ark of the Covenant, that God came to dwell in the midst of his people.
The eternal, infinite God, who even the heavens cannot contain, we understand God in this way, comes down, this is Exodus 3, 8, so as to dwell among his powerless little people.
Not only so, but what happened to the Shekinah when in 587 B.C., the Babylonians destroyed the city and the temple. Okay, so God is dwelling, we understand that in a real way, this is foundational to the Jewish understanding of God's dwelling with his people Israel.
But in 587, the Babylonians came, they destroyed the temple, the Ark of the Covenant was taken away, and all the Jewish people went into exile. Did God withdraw his earthly indwelling to his eternal presence in heaven?
[21:57] Isaiah 63, 9 says, in all their afflictions he was afflicted. That in a sense, God became a fellow sufferer with his people Israel, and in some senses even went into the Espora with them, became wandering in the earth.

I think you find this not only in Maltman, I think Maltman's picking up on this in Jewish thought. There's not this sense that God stayed with his people and suffered with them and kept empowering and wooing them back because obviously it was related to their own sin, but also God's redemptive act in history.
This idea, because it's not a perfect state that we're attempting to get back to, it's something that's progressive and ongoing. It's eschatological in that sense as we defined it earlier. God had come to overcome sin and death and to make for himself a people.
Would he now break covenant with them as they had done with him and leave them to their fate? Or would he continue with them, breaking them free of the bondage of others as in the Exodus and in their sin, indeed, turning them back to himself?
You see, these acts in history are themselves little acts of creation. A classic definition for sin is the Latin phrase incurvatus in se.
[23:17] It means turning in on oneself. Luther picked up on this a lot. Sin, essentially, is turning in on ourselves, turning away from God, turning away from others, focusing on ourselves. A type of narcissism, I suppose.

By dwelling with his people, God consistently broke them open. Remember, God is open trinity. God has created something that is open. And now, God is consistently breaking people open, Israel open, towards a future hope, eschatology.
Particularly, that of the Messiah. Okay, this is, again, foundational in Jewish understanding, and the Christian faith is a Judeo-Christian faith. We understand Jesus as the Messiah of the Old Testament as well as that of the New.
Of course, the same Messiah. Hopefully. So, kenosis in Christ, we arrive at the crux, right, the epitome of God's canonic act in the world.
We've mentioned already the way in which God limited himself by taking on flesh in Philippians 2.7. The dialectic of cross and resurrection interpreted in an eschatological perspective in Trinitarian context frames this Christology.
[24:32] Okay, so again, we're moving between cross and resurrection, suffering, and hope. We see that in a sense in creation, we didn't talk as much about it, but there's a sense in which suffering is built into creation because remember, it's good, but it's not perfect.

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It's not this sense that there's no death, there's no pain. It's not how Moltmann and several other Christian theologians throughout history have not understood creation in that way.
Irenaeus, the early church father, second century, talked about Adam and Eve as though they were infants. We all know, I know, I have four children, the children are born good and innocent but not perfect.
There is much growth and eschatological hope required in parenting. In his cross, Jesus enters and suffers vicariously the end-time sufferings that threaten the whole of creation.
again, it's a risk God took in creating. He identifies with dying nature as well as with abandoned humans. He undergoes the birth pangs of the new creation.
[25:49] This is the eschatological hope of certainly of the revelation but also, I think, of all of Jewish and Christian thought that the new creation, that God would create a new and perfect in a consummating way. And his resurrection is the eschatological springtime of all nature.

So it affects nature as well, all of the created order. Christ's death is the consummation of the creation process and the ultimate expression of God's openness to the world.
And with the raising of Christ, who had been surrendered to death fully, the creation of the end-time begins. I'm trying to decide if now would be a good time.
This is one of those contraction problems. If now would be a good time to talk about the history of the problem of Christ, the theological problem of Jesus Christ.
Or to finish, I think I'm going to finish and we're going to go back to that so keep that in mind. Christ in creating created a problem for Christian theology. Okay, so what we've covered so far is that God is open.
[26:57] Before anything created, God is open to himself. Perfectly so. In creation, he created an open creation which was meant to be open to him and he was open to it, this mutual indwelling.

This was the idea, though maybe not perfectly realized. It was the eschatological hope of creation. In God's Shekinah glory, he comes in constantly to break his people open.
Open to him, open to his law, open to each other, and indeed open to the world, right? Israel was meant to be a light to all nations, a city upon a hill. To use the New Testament anachronistic talk.
This has always been the idea and the movement and even the character of God. Kenosis in Christ is the same thing. God takes on humanity's suffering.
Remember, God's suffering a bit in the sense that he created. He had to limit, empty a space in himself. He's limiting himself in the Shekinah by taking the eternal, infinite God and placing it inside something that's containable that a group of Levite priests can carry around.
[28:05] That is one room of one tent to talk with people very personally. That's a sense of self-limitation. As well as God, remember, we talked about those three categories of the way it does that.

It self-defines and it self-humiliates God. It's now important to God what happens with his creation, what happens with Israel, indeed what happens with the disciples of Christ and all of humanity.
He's made it, God's chosen it to be so. After Christ, we see another act of kenosis, though at a new paradigm, a new step in God's spiritual indwelling of his believers.
So much in the way that the Shekinah glory of God came and resided in one particular place, God's spirit after Christ, excuse me, I'm blinding you with my watch, comes and dwells in his individual believers.
This is not yet the fullness of the experience of God. Right? It's not the hope of the Christian faith. We are made a new creation in him by his death and resurrection and then he carries us still by enduring with us in our pain, sorrow, and sin.
[29:24] We're not yet perfect. We're able not to sin but in the end, in the full consummation, we'll no longer be able to sin. There's a sense in which we'll be perfected in that, in perfect relationship.

But now we still sin and in moments thinking, God endures that sin with us. His Holy Spirit, when we're in an act of sin, does not withdraw from us but indeed enters into it, carries us, limits himself in that way, both by dwelling physically within us but also by enduring our pain and loss and rejection of him.
but in the end, there will be no more death or tears because the God who shed a human tear, Jesus at the tomb, maybe Jesus even on the cross, came and died for us.
This is the Lamb of God slain before the foundation of the world. Quote again from Revelation. That is actually the end of my official lecture.

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Now what I'm going to try and do is explain to you the history of why kenosis creates a theological problem and then I really want to open it up for discussion, for clarifying thought. This is important, though a problematic way of understanding the world but I think even if we find at the end we disagree with Jürgen Moltmann, we have to deal with him.
[30:51] we have to deal with him in order to be honest in the Christian world and I think to engage the world. So, real quick, the problem created by Christ, the Greek understanding which comprised the first 1800 years of the church essentially is that God was apathetic in the sense that God is immutable, he does not change, and God is certainly impassable, he does not suffer, this is this is how Christians have almost always understood God.

Of course that's a problem because Jesus is fully God, right? And he suffered, he died, he went through an incredible amount of change and yet was fully God.
This is in history in the 5th century why they came up with the Chalcedonian definition of Christ where we define Christ as fully God and fully man and it's an attempt to reconcile all of these things. Moltmann has essentially, and most modern theologians, most modern theologians, I'd be interested to know your opinion on this Dr. Facker, have set that aside and said, no, God is in fact very passable.
It's more in step with the Jewish thinking of God that he did in fact, I quoted that Isaiah passage for you, though certainly not all Jewish thought is this way, that God suffers with his people, that God is a suffering God, and that, that in a sense defines Moltmann's theology and many other modern theologians.
[32:35] So who has a question? Yes? Is it a distortion, thank you very much for your, is it a distortion of Moltmann and or the tradition that he represents, does God's suffering, if indeed God suffers, I don't have doubts about that, it's a big issue.

It's a huge issue. Does God suffer, we think of suffering and it could destroy us, but is it a distortion to say God's suffering is triumphant in love for our salvation?
Or does that evacuate the word suffering of what Moltmann wants it to be? No, I don't think it does because in Moltmann's thinking and in the school of thinking, God isn't able to suffer everything in the way that we do.
We're able to suffer death, God certainly did that in Jesus, but ultimately God can't suffer defeat as he is now. God's suffering is always victorious, it's always eschatological, right?
This is the two sides of his coin, the dialectic between cross and resurrection. It was in God's power that he was resurrected and that to explain the purpose of his suffering.
[33:47] This is why I titled this paper Kenosis as Creation. It's a play on words because a lot of people in the ecological crisis are attempting to understand creation as kenosis, that idea we were talking about the way in which God canonically withdrew himself, created this otherness in creation.

But Moltmann seems to be, and I think in a lot of ways rightly so, defining God's kenosis, emptying, God's suffering as an act of creation.
It's always creating something. It's not purposeless and it's not impotent. It always achieves its goal in that sense. Yeah.
That makes me think of another thought. Did that answer your question? It's always with purpose. It's eschatological. That is the other side of the coin entirely. That's the post-grab. I know. Maybe that makes suffering as defined compatible with impassibility, I would think.
Yeah. And a lot of people are trying to walk this road of saying, well, we can't, we have to define our terms. We have to say nothing is without category or without nuance.
[34:58] And so God can both be impassable and passable. And people are writing good stuff on this. Moltmann doesn't think so.

He thinks it's related directly to the character of God to suffer. He continually bears, bears, because again, it's implicit to the triune relationship. There's already an openness and a sense of self-limiting within the Trinity.
This hasn't happened in order to create yet, but there's always space for the other person in the perichoresis of God. There's always room for the other, which requires self-limiting.
But it's within the triune category, so there's not in the sense in which there's an otherness outside of the divinity yet. Yes? Sorry, right back here.
Oh, thank you. I'm wondering, you know, in Isaiah it says that he's a suffering servant. And then in the New Testament of all the Hebrews it says he understands humanity, you know, people's, you

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know, feelings, infirmities, which it says, as human beings.
[36:06] So maybe, does it mean that he used suffering, you know, on the cross? He suffered in the garden, and then, you know, but now he's not suffering in that way because he's victorious up there.

So, but he understands because he was a human being. Yes, of course. he understands a person's trials, like Joe's trials.
Exactly. We have a, we have a Savior who in every way can identify with our weakness, even with our death. That's certainly, I think, a side, a way of interpreting those passages and a Christology that both sides would agree upon.
Moltmann just wants to take it a step further and put it back into the Trinitarian relationship, that indeed this means God the Father in some ways suffers, and even God the Spirit in some ways suffers, in a way that most Christians in history would reject.
That it was only God the Son who suffered on the cross, because indeed Christ is impassable, or excuse me, God the Father, God the Trinity is impassable. And that's the reason for our understanding of the dual nature of Christ, that he can be both fully God and fully man, in a negative way of understanding that.
[37:22] Certainly Moltmann still thinks God, of Jesus, as fully God and fully man, as far as I know, but he takes it more positively than that. So, no, but that's, that's it, yeah, that's great.

Yes? You used the word risk. Yeah. I as a, a non-theologian found easy to understand. It's an important... It opens up a whole realm of interesting thought with respect to the relationship between creation and redemption.
Yes. And I guess a God who takes risks is a very slippery, a very slippery concept, but it has great attraction for an ecologically minded person.
It does. In the sense that it is so consistent with what one understands about creation and the whole evolutionary context and so on. Does he express himself in these terms as a God who takes risks? Yes, very much so. Certainly the traditional category, when we talk about the risk... So much of Christian theology has been anthropocentric in the sense that it's focused upon what you and I as men and women, what human beings, how we respond to God.
[38:36] And the conversation about whether or not God has taken a risk has generally fallen into that category. This is when I was referring to Calvinism, right? The idea that God knows perfectly what's going to happen to man, or the idea that God may have taken a risk in saying, allowing us to reject him.

Is there a risk involved? This has been broadened, again, by the ecological crises, I think, and certainly in the thought of Maltman, to relate to the created order as a whole. Maltman places us as a part of the created order, certainly with a specific role and prominence in it, but definitely as a part of it.
And that there's a risk overall in God creating, in God creating a world that's able to fail in some senses, that atrocities are able to happen by it.
And we're seeing that in a lot of... This is essentially a new theological category because for the first time in history, really the second half of the 20th century, we began to become aware of the way in which human beings interact with the world.
And we're beginning to overwhelm it, both because of advancements in technology and medicine. There's just more of us. And of course, it's an exponential factor involved as well.
[39:50] So yeah, God's risk in creating is imperative for Maltman. And this relates both to salvation, to soteriology, and also to natural theology and the creation of the world.

He's very ecologically minded. One of his biggest tomes is called God in Creation. And it's basically emphasizing God's risk in creation.
And therefore, and also the hope, but that the otherness of human beings and what our responsibility is in relating to creation and fulfilling our destiny and pressing on towards the eschatological hope of the cross in creation.
That's a very important distinguishing factor of Maltman. Sorry, right here. When theologians attempt to define the thinking of God, my first question is about the relevance of the word of the Lord coming to Isaiah saying my thoughts are of your thoughts.
Yes. As far as the heavens are above the earth and so forth. Now, the second question though is, are they looking at such a passage and saying, well, that was true in Old Testament times that God

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was, it was impossible to know the mind of God.
[41:09] But that is totally different now that since Christ has come, we now can understand the thinking of God. Is that their position? No, I don't think so.

I think Maltman's very willing to live in the mystery of God's thoughts, of God's nature, and of God's character. There's several categories of theology.
I mentioned natural theology. This is essentially the existential experience of theology. We look around, some people call it general revelation.
we understand certain things about the character of God based upon our experiences. Maltman is a very big player in natural theology. So we can understand there's certain a priori knowledge about the way of the world, right?
That certain things are good, certain things are bad. There is in fact good, right? This is a Christian argument against some of the postmodern arguments. Like, you can't say there is no ultimate truth. For one, it's a self-refuting argument because to claim that there is no such thing as ultimate truth is itself an ultimate truth claim problematic.
[42:18] That's natural theology. There's also revealed theology, special revelation, which we have in the Word of God. So we know, ultimately, that God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts because He tells us so.

Also, in the life of Jesus, and again, Maltman especially emphasizes this, because Jesus is God, this, in a sense, is God telling us about Himself.
God defining Himself in many ways for us. Not in its entirety because it's still outside of our concept of understanding, but there is a sense in which we can know the thoughts of God because He's told us.
Only because He's told us. It's not armchair theology where we just kind of sit back and come up with these categorical ways of thinking about God and then place Him in it. People do that, of course.
We probably all do that in our day-to-day lives. But, I think Maltman does want to take seriously natural theology, revealed theology, so that he can look at an agnostic who says, how can we really know anything?
[43:20] And he would say, well, because God has told us some of His thoughts at least. But yeah, certainly, I think he tries to live in the tension and the mystery of His thoughts are higher than our thoughts and His ways higher than our ways.

Yes? I think that human beings have their risks. I mean, the longer you live on this earth, you recognize every day is a risk. I mean, being born is a risk.
Living in a fallen world is a risk. Making certain choices can be risky. You know, reaching out to people and they reject you and it's ongoing throughout one's life.
So, I mean, I never used to think that way, but now, oh, when we first began engaging that topic, I kind of, it kind of was an affront to me at first.
Like, what does God really risk? Like, every time we step out on the street, I get risk, I risk being hit by one of the Vancouver buses, you know, that are flying around. Like, there's a risk to that.
[44:21] God doesn't risk in that way. But then, as I was arguing with Lauren about this, in the middle of my thought, I realized that in a sense, me having children doesn't create, I mean, in some ways it does.

It creates great physical risk for me. Maybe I gotta jump in front of one of those buses to push them out of the way. I'm responsible for them, right? But that's not ultimately the way I risk. The way I risk in having children, in creating life, the way I risk in being married, in creating a marriage, a love, this is a creative act of human beings, or the way I risk in having a friendship, the way I risk in opening myself up, is essentially the way of loss, the way of rejection.
My children can reject me and my wife. My children can reject the faith in which we are instilling in them. And this is a great personal risk because it would hurt and it should hurt.
And Moltmann's thinking this is why God takes a risk. He's, in a sense, attached himself to his creation. The moment he created, before he was impassable, I think Moltmann would even say.
But at the moment he creates, he self-humiliates in the sense that he opens himself to risk. By his own, it's only the all-powerful God who can take away power from God.
[45:41] But he has forfeited a bit of his power in this sense. And I think of it in the way that I could have chosen never to take the risk of having children. Many people do that, right?

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They talk about that all the time, like, I can't bring children into this world because it's just such a bad place and they just can't do it. I'm trying to make up for those people.
But there is a sense in which there's something good, right? We can never love because there's the chance of loss. Our loved one can die. Our loved one could essentially reject us.
But, you know, Shakespeare had it right. It's better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all. And I think this is in the mind of God as well. I thought I heard you say that Moulton's belief was that God, I'm not sure whether it would be God had limited himself to actually not knowing what was going to happen to us in the end.
Yes. So would that be, would his belief be that God had actually put that limit upon himself? Yes. Because of, I am. God, God, I would say in the same way that God was omnipresent.
[46:55] So we talked about before creation. In a sense, you could apply the categories of impassibility, omnipresence, omniscience, omniscience is all-knowing, which you're specifically talking about, to God.

Though I think Moulton would want to nuance it within the perichoretic relationship, right? That there's a sense in which there's room for the otherness within the person of God. It's a great mystery that God is both three and one, and yet we must maintain it.
It's not that there's one mind of God. There's three persons. So there's a whole debate to be had there. But to set that aside, but closely aside, there is a sense in which before creating, God knew everything.
There was a perfect openness between the others. But in creating, in order to make us truly other, and some people disagree about whether or not this is in some ways a difference between the sacramental understanding of the world, whether or not we certainly live and move and have our being in Him, but whether or not we're truly other, whether there's room for the otherness in creation, in us.
And in a sense, in Moulton's thinking, just to put it specifically to what he would say, I think, is that God limited His ability to know. It was His self-limiting, again, only omnipotence can make potent.
[48:11] No, you have to, only all power can limit power. But, God is still all-knowing, but only of that which can be known. And because you and I actually have freedom to choose, to choose Him, to choose, if I'm standing on a line, I have a choice whether to step left or to step right.

It's a real choice. And in that sense, God doesn't know what I'm going to choose. He's all-knowing about everything that I'm thinking. He knows that I'm thinking about whether I should step left or step right, whether I should sin, whether I should not sin, whether I should choose Him or reject Him.
He understands all that I'm thinking, my processing. He knows our thoughts. But we don't even know necessarily everything that we're going to do. And in that sense, God is limited whether or not He can know those things as well.
Because He's made room for the other. It's that otherness that's really important. Well, that's taking one other step further than just having a feeling of choice.
That's saying that our omnipotent, all-powerful God is also choosing not to know what our choice would be. I mean, we can believe that God couldn't know what our choice would be.
[49:24] You know, that an all-powerful creator would have the ability to know what that choice would be, right? I mean, we tend to believe that we may have free will, but God ultimately knows what our free will choice would be.

But He's taking it as time for a look. Yeah, He's saying, yeah, yeah. God has limited Himself. God has chosen not to know, in a sense, by creating room for the other. And in that sense, He would still talk about an omniscient God, but the category would be defined.
God knows all that is knowable. what a free will other human being will do, or even what the end of creation might be, whether the creation will fail, as some of the preponderance of the Armageddon of ecology would say.
But certainly, whether or not we will choose Him, there's a sense in which that cannot be known. So, on an omniscient God can't know that which will not be known. He can only know all that will be known, or that can be known, and that can't be known.
So yeah, it is a next step. Whether or not we choose Him would not be known. Again, this is very, this is not in line, certainly with the way evangelicals have often thought, though I'm not sure it's out of line with how we think and live in general.

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[50:41] I think we often, even in a sinful way, take upon this idea that we are our own person, in a way that is even more radical, I think, than what Moulton is proposing. It's not a theological category, it's just, it's in privatu sensei.

It's us saying, I'm my own person, I do what I want. And I think he taps into that, and this again goes to the risk of God. God allows us to not, to not know, to sin, to not choose Him.
So that's, yeah, Moulton takes it that next step. God doesn't know everything, because He doesn't know that which cannot be known. Future choice. Very interesting. Yeah, thank you. With Moulton, like you said, there's a difference between Moulton and Calvin, that with Moulton's leanings, does he lean towards John Calvin or Martin Luther at all, or just to a point?
Well, it's a huge question. He's certainly, he's a Lutheran evangelical theologian. Oh. He very much finds himself in the Barthian tradition, which Barth was also Luther in that sense, but both Luther and Calvin, I think, would have talked about the impassable God, that they would not have, please correct me if I'm wrong, but they were still firmly within that tradition of the classical understanding of God, and that God was immutable, God was impassable.
This is really about the 19th century when these ideas are foundational for Moulton's thinking came into being, but in many ways, he's reliant and standing on the shoulders of Calvin and Luther, but he's also cutting their legs off from under them in other ways, so.
[52:25] Could I just say a word about the impassibility of God? Please. As you like me say, it's been very much a matter of discussion for the last hundred years, really, in theology.

What made it a foremost topic for discussion was the utterly unanticipated and overwhelming suffering and pain that broke on the world in the First World War.
At the end of the First World War, people felt this is a different world from the world that we thought we were living in, say, ten years ago, because this reality of suffering, which seems to be endless, has become part of the life we're living.
Whereas, for at least half a century before that, Western culture had assumed that we are evolving from the imperfect towards the perfect, we are eliminating the various forms of evil from our world, and every day, in every way, things are getting better and better.
well, nobody could think that after the First World War, and so the question rose up and pressed on the minds of theologians, does God in any sense share in this overwhelming reality of suffering, which we have had to go through and are still having to go through, I mean, we went through it in the war, and we're still having to go through it in the troubled world after the war.
[54:33] This, let me say, was felt very much more in Europe than it was in the States, in case you're wondering. But, no, it seems to me that the first thing to say is that the idea of God as impassible was taken over without too much analysis, without too much serious thinking.

It was taken over from Greek philosophy in the second and third and fourth centuries, and became one of the reference points by which Christian faith in God was defined against the various forms of idolatry which were being canvassed in the cults of the ancient world during those centuries.
It was impossible, that is, for those who believed in idols to maintain that they were impassible. Okay, said Christians, this is one of the big differences which sets our God above the idols. That was as far as the discussion went.
Well, what we need, I think, if I may jump from the early centuries to the 20th, what was needed in the 20th, what is still needed in the 21st, is the distinction between suffering that is wished on you by others, suffering in which you are a victim.
[56:21] And it is part of, it is basic Christian belief, I think, to say that that sort of suffering is no part of the reality of the life of God.

But that leaves open the alternative understanding that, yes, God made us capable of suffering, suffering pain, suffering grief, suffering loss, suffering frustration, and so on, because that, in fact, is part of the reality of divine life also.
But, now here's the important distinction, it is willed on himself by God, and that's how it is when it happens to God.
In other words, the suffering of Christ, the supreme example, this was divinely willed. The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit planned it, went through it, I would say together, because you may have heard me on this, I think it's very important to stress the togetherness of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit in the crucifixion.

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And I notice that evangelicals are very reluctant to say, well, the Father was there and involved, and the Spirit was there and involved.
[58:03] Moltmann, of course, would insist on the togetherness of the Trinity at the cross, and I think he was right. But no, the point I'm trying to make is that this is willed suffering on God's part.

At least, that's what my understanding of Bible teaching, and my thinking, fueled, as a lot of it is, by elements of the Reformed heritage, leads me to.
Well, whether or not Moltmann and I are totally together there, at least this, I don't think he would dispute, would he, that this suffering, the suffering of Calvary, was willed suffering on God's part.
And it's not suffering in which, what can I say, ontologically, metaphysically, in the ultimate sense, God, the Son of God, was the victim.
In a superficial sense, of course, he was, because it was an act of supreme injustice that the Romans sent him to the cross. But, at deep level, no, this is the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, together, doing what they have willed to do, or what the Father, as the planner, as willed to do, and doing it out of the fundamental motivational reality which constitutes, ethically, the definition of God.
[59:53] God is love. Love makes the world go round. Love determines what God will do.

God, for reasons which, I can't go into them here, I'd like to know what Maltman has to say about this, but perhaps you can tell me when finally I shut up.
God will, in the appropriate sense of the word, will, the fall, sin, and my understanding of things, judgment, and hell, all of that is, in one sense at least, part of the plan.
But now, the other part of the plan is that God willed, that love would act in redemption.
But that meant that love must act in suffering. Okay, God wills the suffering for redemptive purposes. Now, I don't think Maltman would have any problem with any of that.
[61:07] No, I think the way he would nuance it, again, it goes back to the way in which God created. And it's not this closed system, remember, where God created perfectly and willed suffering out of that, and then is working to redeem it back to that perfect state which already was in the beginning.

Rather, the purpose of the creation was, suffering was built into it. And, of course, this Maltman is, he's an evolutionist, in the traditional sense of the word.
He very much attempts to write a theology that is in line with modern scientific cosmology and biology, and attempts to reconcile these two. He thinks it's important that theology can nuance evolutionary biology and thought, because he said, on its own, it can't come to God.
But he also said, it can't be, this is the way he operates in all, remember I said at the beginning he was really interested in Einstein, he was really interested, he wanted to study science. It was the atrocities of the Second World War that he witnessed, and again, this further loss of the sense of the modern idea that we can somehow achieve perfection in this world.
Even World War I was called the war to end all wars, right? Our midst of this day was this idea like we're never going to have this again, thank God. World War II came about, and took what was so evil and wicked and destructive in World War I, and added to it a sense of evil, and that concentration came from the extermination of people.
[62:39] There's two more questions here we really want to get to. I have more I can say. I just, I thought that you're putting out there, there are good evangelical theologians, Bill D'Embrell, an Old Testament scholar formerly at Regent, he said when our creator said to Adam and Eve, on the day you sin, you will die, it wasn't a mystery to them what death was, it was his position, because they saw death all around them in the creation.

The creation was created that way. It was read in truth and plot to start with. That wasn't news to the ancient world. They would have thought, at least some theologians would have thought that way. Yeah, very much so.
And this very much built into the idea of the openness of creation. Maybe I should have spent more time talking about that. This idea, again, it was not a perfect state where there was no death, there was no suffering. It was very much the experience of the world.
It was, in a sense, the evolutionary idea of struggle, right, to survive. I can't draw a blank on the terms, but yeah, death was very much a part of the experience in creation, and has always been so. Because it's always, even creation is eschatological in focus. Even in creation we're hoping for the end of death. It's not, again, it's not the closed system, it's an open system which is driving towards that thought.

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[63:51] You had a question, it's a long time now. Yes, has positive evil sort of gone away in what man's thinking? Does he deal with the question of, is there a positive evil that's actually causing the suffering and death, or the suffering and death that's non-redemptive?

So positive evil in the sense that God allows this in order for us to turn back to him?
Is that how you mean? No, but positive evil, like Satan, there's a thief that comes to steal, kill, and yeah, of course. Moldman is a universalist, and he believes very much in hell, very much in Satan, in these things, but he also believes that in the end, not only all people will be redeemed, but even Satan himself will be redeemed.
This is when you get to more controversial thought, and it's not categorical in his thought, but it certainly is implicit, and it heads there. But again, he's dialogical, he's not trying to say this is the end of it, he's saying this is where it seems to go, what do you think about that?
He's asking for pushback, which a lot of people get. Sorry, I don't know the second part of your question. So, if death is sort of inherent integration, why do we have the sense of injustice within it, it's not our development?
[65:11] Because it's eschatologically driven. So it's not only that it's implicit, but it's supposed to point us towards something. This is in the sense, our question earlier, is suffering, the suffering of God with purpose, does it head somewhere?

And of course it does. It's this open system that we are supposed to hope for the end of death, and the promise of the life of God.
And that's why it's implicit in creation. It's supposed to drive us towards the consummation when we will be with God. Again, what's foundational in this understanding is that there was not perfection before.
it's not a closed system, it's an open system, and he attempts to prove that by showing kenosis and creation in the Shekinah, in the life of Jesus, and there on.
Does that make sense? Am I clarifying his thought at all, or do you want to push back on why you think he's wrong? I'm just wondering what he's wrong. Okay, did that help? Did that clarify it? Yes.
[66:13] You've explained really the relinquishment of power by God. Is he therefore able to reassume that power at some point, and will he do that?

Is that part of the end of this scenario, that God will at some point reestablish himself as all-powerful and take it back?
In one sense, yes, another, no. In the consummation, the fulfillment of all things, again, the power to overcome death will become, and sin, and all of these things which are opposed to God will cease. But there is not a sense in which God will somehow close this system at the end of all things. It will remain an open system in which we grow, change, and do other things other than what is.
It's not like, it's in his understanding of the eschaton, of heaven, essentially. It's still an open system in which things will change. In that sense, God is still, I think, in some ways limited.
[67:22] So there will be this limitation in the new heaven and the new earth? but in a radically different way, because it will be a relationship of perfect harmony.

Nobody will anymore at that time choose against God. It will be a very positive limitation in a well-functioning marriage. The risk of you leaving me is gone, but now there's still this positive openness in which you refine me and I refine you, though it's not the same as a marriage, obviously, because it's creator and created, and that distinction remains.
But there is a sense in which God is still open to the mutual indwelling. It's not only God in us that will be done, but it's us in Him, and it's still open and things still kind of grow out of that. So if the thrust of His understanding from creation onto the eschaton is open, it remains open.
God does in some ways reclaim His power, but there's still the other. He still has to deal with the other. Yeah. Are you telling us, really, that God's understanding and action in the world that He's made has an evolutionary dimension, which older theologists, of course, prior to the appearance of evolution as a philosophical category, older theologists knew nothing about.
and when you're talking about reality not being a closed system for Moltmann, which echoes things that he says himself, are you really calling our attention to that fact, that the evolutionary dimension, which is pervasive in his thinking about really everything that happens in the world, everything that God does, that is absent from the theological tradition we've inherited.
[69:39] and that when I say we, I'm thinking of us as evangelicals, as well as us as the historic church in a larger sense.

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Okay, then, are you encouraging us to say, well, at every turn of the road, if we're going to come to terms with Moltmann, we have to remember that this evolutionary dimension is structurally, structurally, how can I say, structurally basic to his thinking about all process as God manages process.
And that does put us in a different world. Yeah. Ontologically, from the world that we've been thinking ourselves to be in, well, actually, we and our spiritual ancestors don't exist.
Yes. It seems to me that that is actually a central focus in the parting of the ways, if one can talk about, talk in those terms.
Yeah. Yeah, very much so is. Yeah. Excellent point. Well, then, am I right in thinking, as I confess I do, this is a personal Packer statement, am I right in thinking, then, that if one, a person like me, is going to talk about Malkman and try to explain him to people who have been drilled in the old pre-evolutionary ontology, which you've got, you see, in the early Christian centuries, in the Middle Ages, and in Lutheran Calvin, this is the, this is the, this is an illuminating point of divergence.
[71:35] My mind always asks, well, now, what is, when there's a difference here, what is the key point of difference? And listening to you, I've been, uh, impressed with the thought that it looks as if the evolutionary perspective is the key point of difference between the way Malkman thinks and the way that we thought before we came into this class.

That's right. There, there's, out, out, there's no other, Yes, you are exactly right. The idea of an open system, I don't think, of creation can exist outside of an evolutionary thought.
Uh, it's, it's implicit to it. Otherwise, the only, if we only use biblical categories, we always think of a perfect creation, uh, which, which is fallen from perfection, and that we're always trying to get back to.
It's only the evolutionary mindset, which I think is very implicit within this idea of an open system, that there's something evolving, um, it's very theologically nuanced in the sense that it's the eschaton, you know, and, and Malkman thinks, yeah, that is the distinguishing characteristic, yeah, to answer your question directly.
And, uh, yes, of course, there are, there are people who try to push Irenaeus into this perspective. Yes. And I, I mentioned him, the early church father who, uh, that's one of them, is he?
[73:01] You know, I haven't come across that specifically in his writings. but, he's not, sorry, we shouldn't be doing this, should we? This is senior common room stuff. No. What I should be doing at this point, instead of bladdering on about my own opinions, is thanking, Billy, very warmly, and sincerely, for a very illuminating talk.

Thank you, Billy. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I'm happy to stay around, and if anybody had any other questions that they weren't able to get out, we have to leave this room.
No, no rush to leave the room. Okay. And, if you missed that in the beginning, your son or daughter is being baptized tonight? My son, my daughter, my daughter, and my son, they're all being baptized tonight.
We're only, I was raised Catholic. I had a conversion experience, as Dr. Packer said, through a Young Life ministry, and became very involved in evangelical Bible churches for about, before the last few years, about the first decade before that, so 13 years ago, kind of became in that world, of course, where paedo-baptism is not a part of the expression.
Now I'm an Anglican and an express paedo-baptist, and so all of my children will be baptized tonight, so I'm looking forward to it. What's a paedo-baptist? Infant-baptist, as opposed to a believer-baptist.
[74:20] Because your vocabulary is very, very good. Oh, I appreciate that. What's that? The movement, well, what age did he live to? He was born in Germany.

Yes. What age did he live to? He's still born. He's born in 1926. He's the same age as Dr. Packer. I think so. Close to it.

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