

20th Century Theologians

Hans Urs Von Balthasar

Context

In the selection we read Von Balthasar is responding to critics of an earlier work. They claim Von Balthasar is a universalist and does not believe anyone is in hell. Von Balthasar responds with this writing to clear up his argument.

Punitive vs Love

In the short discourse on hell Von Balthasar cleared up the charge of him being a universalist. His critics accused Von Balthasar of foregoing past teachings and of heresy. They claimed Von Balthasar was teaching universalism and said hell was empty of all people. Von Balthasar did not claim this, but put his trust in the hope of God's mercy. On page 164 he states, "I think the most serious thing that exists is not God's punitive justice, but rather his love." This way of thinking is a shift from the past and our past readings. Think of the past literature and how it is a shift. We see vividly from the dead sea scrolls, the apocalypse of Peter, 4 Ezra, and testament of Abraham where people are punished because they are bad and/or wicked. It is an emphasis on the punitive God, but Von Balthasar moves from the focus on their actions to God's love and mercy.

Who is in hell?

According to the readings Von Balthasar is not certain as to who is currently in hell. He has hope in the mercy of God that no one is in hell. He believes it is possible for a person to be wicked on earth and to be reconciled with God at the last minute and be with him. While he doesn't know if anyone is in hell, he does claim there could be people in there. Those are the people who choose to not be with God. They choose not to reconcile themselves with their creator. If we accept love, we can have a valid reason we can be saved. If we refuse love, there is a possibility for us to be in hell.

Others in hell

Von Balthasar warns of the damning of others. He says once we start saying a certain person is in hell for a certain reason we start to focus on others and forget about our own actions. We start to forget to analyze our own actions. He also doesn't want to condemn others out of fear of condemning himself. Think, "I am responsible for myself, it is not my role to decide where someone goes."

Criteria salvation

Von Balthasar says the criteria for salvation is reconciling with God and accepting love. If we do those things, we have hope we can be saved. This is different than the past literature. For example, Augustine and Hildegard require people to be baptized to be saved. Von Balthasar and other twentieth century theologians start to move from a check box type of criteria of salvation.

Benedictus Deus

Body/Soul Dualism

This document emphasizes the importance of the soul over the body. The resurrection of the body has minimal impact.

What happens after death

For those who need no purification there is no process for them to see God, or have a beatific vision. They will be in union with God until a pause at the Last Judgment. After the last judgement they will go back to being with God. They are able to be with God before their bodies are resurrected.

For those who die in mortal sin they go straight to hell and receive judgement at the last judgment and then return to hell.

There is no intermediate state according to this document. It is not explicitly stated, but if a person who is in mortal sin goes immediately to hell there is not in between state.

Feminist Theologies

The feminist theologies challenged how a person looks at the study of eschatology. They challenge a person to look at the depictions of gender and the dynamics at play. The feminist theologians point out the differences between the portrayals of the men and women in the apocalyptic literature. In the literature we have read most of the women portrayed have been in a negative light. It has been the standard of what not to be, an example is the harlot of Babylon.

One of their concerns is the portrayal of dominance from the male figures. All of the figures who dominate over others or the world are male. Where does a woman fit into this structure? Does a woman always belong as the submissive one? Or is the female equal in the eschatological end? We should think of creation as a unified family.

Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendell and Jurgen Moltmann

During this dialogue they discuss about the resurrection of the body.

Resurrection of the body

Jurgen rejects body/soul dualism and says the soul and the body are important. The body is important because it is made in the image of God, our bodies are an image of who we are as a person, and it is how we experience the world around us. Jurgen argues the body that is resurrected is the experienced body. The experienced body is the body that is a true reflection

of the person, it is more than the physical organs and tissues which make up a person. This is the body which will be resurrected at the time of death.

Time of Resurrection

Jurgen asserts the resurrection of the body and the judgment happens right after the person dies. (pg 5) There is not an intermediate state for the person after they die. They do not have to wait for the Parousia, but it happens automatically. Once a person enters eternity they are in it forever. There is not a pause or stop during the last judgment, they enter and stay there. This is different from *Benedictus Deus* where there is a slight pause for the people during the second judgment.