

## *Christian Hope*

Eschatology

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- Eschatology is the doctrine of the last things
  - Thus, it concerns the hope for God's purpose for creation being fulfilled
- Not primarily about hope for personal survival beyond death, but hope in the transformation of all creation

## *"Crisis of Hope in a Nuclear Age" ( 232-237)*

- The biblical images of hope in God's future emphasize God's promise to a people and to all creation
- Mainstream orthodox Christianity, especially since Constantine, tends to focus on life after death for the individual

## *Challenges to Biblical View of Hope*

- Since the Enlightenment, confidence in reason has led to liberal theory of progress
  - This view of progress was shaken to core by two world wars, Holocaust, threat of nuclear annihilation, and environmental crisis
- Marxist view of hope as revolutionary triumph of proletariat over bourgeoisie was shaken by failure of communism

### *Challenges (cont.)*

- Fundamentalistic apocalypticism, such as Hal Lindsey and “Left Behind” books have a certain popularity
  - Crass manipulation of biblical texts
  - Appeal to fear for personal well-being rather than to gracious love of God
  - Diverts attention from central biblical witness of cross and resurrection to “rapture” (escapism)

### *Challenges (cont.)*

- Even mainstream theologians vary on nature of eschatology
  - Futuristic vs. realized
  - Existential vs. corporate
  - Historical vs. cosmic
  - Emphasizing God’s activity vs. emphasizing human activity
- Implied: we need an eschatology that doesn’t fall into these false dualisms

### *Principles for Eschatology (238-242)*

- “The language of Christian hope is language stretched to the limits ... rich in symbol and image”
- Christian hope is centered in triune God, revealed in cross and resurrection, that promises new life for all creation
- Eschatological symbols must avoid dualisms we mentioned
- Eschatological symbols relativize all historical and cultural achievements – always more
- Eschatological symbols evoke creative human activity

### *Classical Eschatological Symbols* 242-247

- Parousia of Christ – arrival or coming of Christ
  - Hope in someone, not in many things
  - Christ is proleptically present (already, but not yet)
- Resurrection of the dead
  - Holistic image—body and soul (based on Jesus’ resurrection)
- Last judgment— “loving judgment and judging love”
- Eternal life (death)—heaven (hell) or everlasting fellowship with triune God (beatific vision)

### *Eschatology and Ethics (247-251)*

- Christian hope empowers us to live in solidarity with all oppressed creation
- In face of persistent evil, death, and destruction, Christian hope teaches us that the end is God's doing, not ours

### *Migliore's Final Point*

- "This is the spirit of Christian hope: to struggle and to take risks for justice, freedom, and peace for all people; to be zealous for the completion of God's redemptive activity for the world; to live in the confidence that nothing can ever separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:38-39); and to discover ever new reasons to give thanks and glory to God." (251)