

## A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE ESCHATOLOGY OF THE REFORMERS: SECOND COMING, RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD, AND FINAL JUDGMENT

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The term “eschatology” is relatively new in theological parlance, not more than 150 years old,<sup>1</sup> but its object of study began many centuries before through the utterances of the biblical writers themselves. As the “doctrine of the last things,” according to its etymological meaning, it covers an important area of the vast field of theology. In the words of an authoritative dictionary, “the doctrine of the last or final things” includes “death, resurrection, immortality, the end of the age, the second advent of Christ, judgment and the future state.”<sup>2</sup>

Today the noun “eschatology” is used with two main meanings: in the narrower sense, it means the doctrine of the end of history and the beginning of the time of eternal salvation. In the broader sense, it refers to a future in which the circumstances of history will be totally changed, giving way to an entirely different state of things, not necessarily outside the framework of history.<sup>3</sup>

This article focuses on three aspects of the Reformers’ eschatology: the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and the final judgment. A difficult decision has been to leave out the eschatological interpretations of the pre-Reformation writers; but as their thoughts exerted a powerful influence upon the Reformers, this omission is only partial.

It has been stated that eschatology did not represent a main concern in the minds of the Reformers because soteriological and ecclesiological questions were the most pressing issues they had to face in the religious convulsions of the sixteenth century. However, this is not totally right. It is true that the basic question underlying the theology of the Reformation was, “How shall a sinner be justified before God?” or more directly, “What shall I do to be saved?” Nevertheless, this crucial question cannot be fully answered apart from the eschatological hope.

<sup>1</sup>According to the available information the term was coined in 1838, by Heinrich Klee, during a theological discussion, and soon afterward it appeared in his book *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*. Later, it was used again by G. Bushes, *Anastasis* (1844), and by Johann Heinrich Oswald in his monograph *Eschatology* (1868).

<sup>2</sup>*Webster’s New International Dictionary of the English Language* (1948), s.v. “Eschatology.”

<sup>3</sup>E. Jenni, “Eschatology of the OT,” *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George A. Buttrick (New York: Abingdon, 1962), 2:126.

On the other hand, in the field of ecclesiology the Reformation had to face a confrontation by opposed eschatological conceptions. The spiritual condition of the Christian church in that time made it very clear to the Reformers that the church could not be the kingdom of Christ, as was then generally believed. The hierarchical system ruling over Christendom was seen by many as the embodiment of the Antichrist. Further, the nominalistic teaching of corresponding realities, widely accepted in the latter Middle Ages, combined ecclesiology and eschatology in the conception of two entities developing along parallel lines, the kingdom of God in heaven and the kingdom of Christ in the Church. Any dramatic or decisive intervention of God in history was considered very remote. They were faced with an alternative of eschatological dimensions: to accept the present state of things as the final fulfillment of the biblical hope, or to change the situation of the Church drastically in order to bring in the postponed concretion of the establishment of the kingdom of Christ. So, "the occasion of the Reformation was an eschatological question."<sup>1</sup> The Reformers reacted against these views restoring the hope in a more or less imminent Parousia.

Two quotations from James P. Martin's published doctoral dissertation are especially helpful:

The Reformation had to do primarily with the soteriological problem of the understanding of the Gospel which arose out of its resolution . . . Luther's *theologia crucis* became of decisive eschatological importance because of its emphasis, in contradistinction to the *gloria* of Rome, on the hidden nature of the Church, the servant form of Christ's rule, and the power and authority of Satan on earth. When considered together, these brought a renewed sense of tension between the now and the eschatological future.<sup>2</sup>

The theology of the Reformers was eschatologically oriented because it demanded faith in the *hidden* glory of Christ and His Kingdom along with a living hope in its future revelation.<sup>3</sup>

This article reviews the eschatological understandings of the Reformers in the three aspects already specified and, in so doing, considers their confessional formulations. The first part focuses on Martin Luther and his main followers; then the focus is on some of the main theologians of the Reformed tradition in Continental Europe. The final section deals with eschatological statements as expressed in the original documents of the Reformed tradition. A subsequent article will deal with the development of eschatology in Great Britain and elements of the eschatological hope of the Radical Reformation.

### Eschatology in the Lutheran Reformation

The eschatological dimension was always present in the mind of Martin Luther (1483-1546). He constantly lived under the conviction that the end of the world,

<sup>1</sup>J. E. Fison, *The Christian Hope* (London: Longmans, Green, 1954), 75, 76.

<sup>2</sup>James P. Martin, *The Last Judgment: From Orthodoxy to Ritschl* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 11.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 12.

the Last Day, was very near. Thus, while translating the Bible into German, his preoccupation was on working hard and fast enough to have it completed before the coming of the Lord. It is true that he kindly reproached his dear friend Michael Stiefel, who after elaborate calculations had set a date for the end of the world,<sup>1</sup> but he also expressed himself in the sense that the Parousia could happen at any moment.

It is also true that more than once the great Reformer tried to calculate the time span from his own day until the Last Day, though not always showing consistency in his calculations. He wrote variously about 50, 100, 200, 300, or 400 years as the time remaining before the return of Christ.<sup>2</sup> In so doing he was reacting to the different and difficult circumstances which he was facing in his exciting life.

Reformation thought was on the whole rather pessimistic in its outlook on the future. Luther in answer to the Bull of 1520 wrote: "Our Lord Jesus that yet liveth and reigneth, who, I firmly trust, will shortly come, and slay with the spirit of His mouth, and destroy with the brightness of His coming, that Man of Sin." He gave various estimates of the time the human race would endure. Thus at one time he said: "God forbid the world should last fifty years longer. Let Him cut matters short with His last judgment."

The following is also from *Table Talk*: The wickedness of the world is risen to that height that I dare presume to say that the world cannot continue many hundred years longer." Again: "I persuaded myself verily that the day of judgment will not be absent full three hundred years more. God will not, cannot, suffer this wicked world much longer."<sup>3</sup>

The references to the Last Day are many in Luther's writings. He was well aware of the prophetic interpretations of his predecessors. Rome was the last of Daniel's four world empires, and after its breakup the Antichrist would appear. For some time he wavered on the identification of that religious power. In his opinion two powers, the Turkish empire and the Papacy, could be the character described by St. John. Nevertheless, even before 1530 he reached the conclusion that only the Papal hierarchy met the specifications. Here it seems appropriate to observe that, while for the pre-Reformers the Papacy was the very Antichrist because of its conduct and life, for Luther this was so because of its doctrines. In his words,

<sup>1</sup>See Luther's letter of 24 June 1533 to Michael Stiefel. Martin Luther, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, ed. Theodore Tappert, Library of Christian Classics, vol. 18 (London: SCM, 1955), 301-2.

<sup>2</sup>"I hope the last day will not tarry over 100 years, because God's word will be taken away again and a great darkness will come for the scarcity of ministers of the Word." *Dr. Martin Luther's Sämmlische Schriften*, ed. Johann Georg Walch (St. Louis: Concordia, 1881-1910), 22: col. 16, quoted in LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1948), 2:278. "This world will not last any more, if God wills it, than another hundred years." *Schriften*, 22:col. 1334, quoted in Froom, 2:278.

<sup>3</sup>T. Francis Glasson, *His Appearing and His Kingdom* (London: Epworth, 1953), 146.

I do not think Mohammed is the antichrist. He does things too obviously; that black devil is so easily recognized that neither faith nor reason can be deceived. He is like a pagan who persecutes the church from outside it, as the Romans and other pagans have done. But the pope of our time is the true antichrist. He has a very crafty, beautiful, and glorious devil who sits inside the church.<sup>1</sup>

In the interpretation of Dan 2, Luther followed the exegesis common among the Reformers. No other world empire would emerge after the fall of the Roman Empire and before the end of the world.<sup>2</sup> Since the Roman empire was almost totally destroyed in his time, the end could not be too far away.<sup>3</sup> Again, in Luther's words,

The first kingdom is the Assyrian or Babylonian kingdom; the second, the Medo-Persian; the third, the great kingdom of Alexander and the Greeks; and the fourth, the Roman Empire. In this the whole world agrees, and history supports it fully in detail.

But the prophet has the most to say about the Roman Empire, . . . the legs, the feet, and the toes. The Roman Empire will be divided. Spain, France, England, and others emerged from it, some of them weak, others strong, and although it will be divided there will still be some strength, as symbolized by the iron in it . . . This empire shall last until the end; no one will destroy it but Jesus Himself, when His kingdom comes.<sup>4</sup>

What events would be connected with the Last Day? The world's condition would worsen more and more until the sudden intervention of God, who would dramatically change even the physical structure of the earth.

Now that the end of the world is approaching, the people rage and rave most horribly against God, and blaspheme and damn God's Word, though they well know that it is God's Word and the truth.<sup>5</sup>

Another proof of the nearness of the end for Luther was the false spiritual life of his time, anticipated by the apostle Paul in 2 Tim 3:1-5,<sup>6</sup> and manifested in the corruption of the clergy and the multiplication of criminals, the "saints" of the devil.<sup>7</sup>

Thus when the Last Day breaks all of a sudden, in one moment there will be nothing but fire. Everything in heaven and on earth will be reduced to powder

<sup>1</sup>Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke* (Weimar: Hermann B. Nachfolge, 1920), 53:394, quoted in Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schulz (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 421.

<sup>2</sup>Martin Luther, "Preface to the Prophet Daniel, 1530," *Works of Martin Luther (WML)* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1932), 6:421.

<sup>3</sup>Martin Luther, "On War Against the Turk, 1529," *WML*, 6:118.

<sup>4</sup>*Schriften*, 6:898-99.

<sup>5</sup>Martin Luther, "Preface to the Prophet Jeremiah, 1532," *WML*, 6:410.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 6:472.

<sup>7</sup>Martin Luther, "On Psalm 101," trans. Martin H. Bertram et. al., *Luther's Works (LW)*, (St. Louis: Concordia, 1958-1967), 13:188.

and ashes. Everything must be changed by fire, just as the waters changed everything at the time of the Flood.<sup>1</sup>

The apparent delay of Jesus' return should not be a reason for discouragement: the Lord would come "when men least think it,"<sup>2</sup> because He has a different perception of time than men.

Now since before God there is no reckoning of time, before Him a thousand years must be as one day. Therefore Adam, the first man, is just as close to Him as the man who will be born last before the Last Day. For God does not see time longitudinally; He sees it transversely, as if you were looking transversely at a tall tree laying before you. Then you can see both ends at the same time. This you cannot do if you look at it longitudinally.<sup>3</sup>

Luther also wrote at length about the resurrection of the dead. Troubled as he was in his youth regarding the popular teaching about Purgatory and Hell, he anxiously searched the Bible trying to understand what it teaches about these subjects. He arrived at the conclusion that there is no scriptural foundation for belief in the unconditional immortality of the soul. In the words of William Maxwell Blackburne: "Luther espoused the doctrine of the sleep of the soul, upon a Scripture foundation, and *then* he made use of it as a confutation of purgatory and saint worship, and continued in that belief to the last moment of his life."<sup>4</sup>

Luther, with a greater emphasis on the resurrection, preferred to concentrate on the scriptural metaphor of sleep. "For just as one who falls asleep and reaches morning unexpectedly when he awakes, without knowing what has happened to him, so we shall suddenly rise on the last day without knowing how we have come into death and through death." "We shall sleep until He comes and knocks on the little grave and says, Doctor Martin, get up! Then I shall rise in a moment and be happy with Him forever."<sup>5</sup>

These were Luther's explanations concerning the resurrection of the dead. First, death can be compared with sleep, undetected in its beginning, and the resurrection with the awakening in the morning after a good night of sleep. "We depart, and we return on the Last Day, before we are aware of it. Nor do we know how long we have been away."<sup>6</sup> Second, our physical nature will be different in the resurrection because we "will have a flesh that is pure, without any passions or evil desires."<sup>7</sup> Third, the resurrected life will be a spiritual one, and the body will not perform any "natural or physical functions." It "will live without food and

<sup>1</sup>Martin Luther, "Sermons on Second Peter," trans. Martin H. Bertram, *LW*, 30:195.

<sup>2</sup>Luther, *WML*, 6:432.

<sup>3</sup>Luther, *LW*, 30:196.

<sup>4</sup>Francis Blackburne, *A Short Historical View of the Controversy Concerning an Intermediate State and the Separate Existence of the Soul between Death and the General Resurrection, Deduced from the Beginning of the Protestant Reformation to the Present Times* (London: F. Field, 1765) 14, quoted in LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Conditionalist Faith of Our Fathers* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1965), 2:74.

<sup>5</sup>T. A. Kantonen, *The Christian Hope* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1954), 37.

<sup>6</sup>Luther, "Lectures on Genesis," *LW*, 8:318.

<sup>7</sup>Luther, "Lectures on Galatians, 1535," *LW*, 27:11, 97.

drink, will not beget children, digest, throw off waste matter, and the like.”<sup>1</sup> Fourth, the brightness of the new body will be greater than even the sun’s, not only in the outward appearance but “everything will be made perfect, so that the whole of human nature, body and soul, will live in a pure and everlasting obedience toward God.”<sup>2</sup>

Two things, among others, impress the researcher very much in Luther’s eschatology: first, his total assurance about the imminent triumph of the Church of God with the coming of Christ and the destruction of the Antichrist; and second, his strong belief in the resurrection of the dead as the real and final reward, or punishment, for human beings. But in this, he was not an innovator: he continued in the same line of eschatological thought that many had started and built before him against the popular interpretations of his time.

Well, on hand, Luther was deeply influenced by the popular apocalyptic literature so abundant at the end of the Middle Ages, literature proceeding from Wycliff, from England, from the Taborites, the Bohemians, and especially the numerous successors of Joachim of Fiore and the brethren; on the other hand, in his formation Luther was much molded by the philosophy and theology of the Scholastics, conceiving eternity as a *totum simul* [alike in all], or all in only one block, so that in writing his commentary on Peter and Jude, it was extremely difficult for him to think of any *duration* or *time* in the kingdom of God. In consequence, apocalyptic for Luther didn’t place the accent on the establishment of the kingdom of God in history, but rather in the abrupt end of history.<sup>3</sup>

Melanchthon, Luther’s disciple and colleague, shared his views regarding eschatology, but in his interpretation he introduced a new element: the old teaching of a 6,000 year period allotted for the whole of human history. In his words,

The words of the prophet Elias should be marked by everyone . . . 6.000 years shall this world stand and after that be destroyed; 2.000 years without the law; 2.000 years under the law of Moses; 2.000 years under the Messiah; and if any of these years are not fulfilled, they will be shortened (a shortening intimated by Christ also) on account of our sins.<sup>4</sup>

The same interest in the prophecies was evidenced by other Lutheran theologians, as the following summary shows: Andreas Osiander or Hosemann (d. 1552) calculated the end of the world to come some time around the end of the seventeenth century; Nicolaus von Amsdorf (d. 1565) wrote extensively about the signs of the approaching end, interpreting them from Luke 21 and Matt 24; Johann Funck (d. 1566), Matthias Flacius (d. 1575), Michael Stiefel (d. 1567), Andreas Musculus (d. 1581), Nicolaus Selnecker (d. 1592), Georg Nigrinus (d. 1602), and David Chytraeus, the last of the “Fathers of the Lutheran church” (d. 1600), all wrote with conviction concerning the power they considered corrupting

<sup>1</sup>Luther, “Sermons on the First Epistle of Peter,” *LW*, 30:11-2.

<sup>2</sup>Luther, “Selected Psalms. On Psalm 110,” *LW*, 13:291.

<sup>3</sup>T. F. Torrance, *Les Réformateurs et la Fin d s Temps*, trans. Roger Brandt (Neuchatel: Delachaux et Nietlé, 1955), 15. English translation provided.

<sup>4</sup>See Glasson, 146.

Christendom, and how it would be destroyed by the second coming of Christ at the end of the world.<sup>1</sup>

In the same century several confessional documents were issued by the Lutheran theologians. Among them, two contain clear eschatological references: the *Augsburg Confession* and the *Smaller Catechism of Luther*, the more prestigious and relevant for the Lutheran church. The first one, the work of Melancthon, was read before Emperor Charles V and a select group of princes, counselors, and representatives of the cities, in the small episcopal palace chapel in Augsburg during the Diet summoned for the purpose of reuniting Catholics and Protestants against the common foe, the Turks (June 25, 1530).

Two of the articles (3,17) of the influential *Augsburg Confession* deal with the eschatological hope. Their statements express the belief in the soon return of Christ, the work of judgment, the resurrection of the dead, and the eternal reward or punishment connected with that event.<sup>2</sup> Art. 17 includes a strong condemnation of two doctrines: the final destruction of the wicked and the devil, and the establishment of the earthly kingdom of the saints.<sup>3</sup>

The second document, the *Smaller Catechism*, was written by Martin Luther in 1529, with the purpose of providing an instrument to correct the state of ignorance and corruption that he found in his inspection of the churches of Saxony. There was another very important reason behind the preparation of the *Enchiridion*, as Luther called it—the religious instruction of children. In Part II: The Creed, art. 3, the following statement is found: “. . . and will raise up me and all the dead at the last day, and will grant everlasting life to me and to all who believe in Christ. This is most certainly true.”<sup>4</sup>

After this brief review of the eschatological formulation of the formative period of the Lutheran Reformation, some conclusions are useful.

1. The Lutherans had a clear and definite personal and apocalyptic eschatology, characterized by the hope of a just judgment, the resurrection of the dead, and the final and eternal reward. Joyful expectation would be an appropriate description of their attitude toward the future.

2. They had a prophetic or historical eschatology in harmony with the understanding of the majority of the pre-Reformers, which identified many signs anticipating the nearness of the end of history.

3. Their cosmic eschatology was not too well defined, including the purification of the whole earth by fire and the rejection of the belief in any earthly millennial kingdom of Christ.

<sup>1</sup>See Froom, *Prophetic Faith*, 2:295-306, 308-318, 320-322.

<sup>2</sup>Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1877), 3:9, 10, 17, 18. “Art. 3: Of the Son of God . . . The same Christ shall openly come again, to judge the quick and the dead, according as the Apostles’ Creed declareth these and other things.” *Ibid.*, 3:9, 10. “Art. 17: Of Christ’s Return to Judgment. Also they teach that, in the consummation of the world [at the last day], Christ shall appear to judge, and shall raise up all the dead, and shall give unto the godly and elect eternal life and everlasting joys; but ungodly men and the devils shall he condemn unto endless torments. *Ibid.*, 3:17.

<sup>3</sup>“They condemn the Anabaptists who think that to condemned men and the devils shall be an end of torments. They condemn others also, who now scatter Jewish opinions, that, before the resurrection of the dead, the godly shall occupy the kingdom of the world, the wicked being every where suppressed [the saints alone, the pious, shall have a worldly kingdom, and shall exterminate all the godless].” *Ibid.*, 3:17,18.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 3:80.

However, even during that important century, the strong hope that characterized Luther and his immediate followers was slowly pushed to a secondary place by other more pressing doctrinal issues. Thus eschatology is strangely absent in the *Formula of Concord* (1577), and in the following century it was almost forgotten among Lutherans. In the words of Paul Althaus,

Christians at the time of the Reformation were aware of their position and knew where they stood in the midst of the history of the world and eagerly desired the coming of the day of Christ.

In the seventeenth century, however, this emphasis recedes into the background. To a large extent piety becomes a private matter. Christians are concerned with their personal and individual salvation.<sup>1</sup>

### Eschatology in the Reformed Tradition in Continental Europe

#### Major Reformers

The origin of the Reformed Churches was the work of several outstanding leaders, including Zwingli, Oecolampadius, Bucer, Bullinger, Calvin, Beza, Knox, and others. Each one made his own contribution to the definition of doctrines and to the territorial expansion of the movement. Nevertheless, Zwingli and especially Calvin deserve a place of particular importance because of their decisive contributions to the theology and ecclesiastical discipline of their respective traditions.

#### Ulrich Zwingli

Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) "represents the first stage of the Reformed Church in Switzerland. He began what Calvin and others completed."<sup>2</sup> After a short but very intensive career, he lost his life while fighting for the freedom of his city, Zurich, on the battlefield of Cappel. A few months before his tragic end, he wrote *The Exposition of the Christian Faith to King Francis I*, "the swan song of Zwingli," in the words of his close friend Bullinger. In it "he gives an able exposition of the two natures in the one person of Christ, his death, resurrection, ascension, and return to judgment."<sup>3</sup> One of the statements of that work reflects clearly his eschatological views: The disembodied souls of the departed will be with Christ until His return in glory, he taught; then they will receive bodies again, and immediately after the resurrection, the final judgment will take place.<sup>4</sup> He states:

This same Christ of ours has ascended unto heaven and taken seat at the right hand of the Father, as I believe unhesitatingly. He promises that we also who

<sup>1</sup>Althaus, *Theology*, 422-23.

<sup>2</sup>Schaff, 1:360.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 1:369.

<sup>4</sup>Zwingli did not mention what happens with the souls of the ungodly dead until the recovering of their bodies.

hasten thither as soon as we die, shall one day enjoy everlasting bliss there also in the body. And as He sitteth there until He shall come for the general judgment of the whole world, so our souls and those of the blessed are with Him without bodies until the aforesaid judgment, at the beginning of which we shall all put on again the garment of the body, that we have laid aside, and with it depart either to the everlasting marriage of our bridegroom or to the everlasting torments of the enemy, the devil.<sup>1</sup>

There are at least two other statements from the pen of Zurich's Reformer which express his hopes regarding the Parousia and final judgment, both in his treatise *On the Lord's Supper* (1526). The references they contain regarding these events are only indirect: the Bible declares that Christ is at the right hand of God the Father, and He will not leave that place until the last day, when He will return in judgment. For this reason, it is a theological contradiction to claim His presence in the Lord's Supper. It seems that Zwingli was the only one among the Reformers to use such an argument in relation to discussions about the claimed presence of Christ in the Eucharist.<sup>2</sup>

It is quite evident that eschatology did not play an important role in Zwingli's written works. This can be attributed to at least two reasons: first, his short ministry was almost entirely absorbed by the task of the organization of his church and the pressing issue of defining the meaning of baptism and the Lord's Supper; and second, his life was truncated at the age of forty-seven, before he could produce a mature and complete doctrinal expression of his thought. However, the whole work of Zwingli reveals that a distinct eschatological understanding led him to the conviction that the establishment of Christ's kingdom was still in the future, closely connected with the Parousia, the resurrection of the dead, and the final judgment.

## John Calvin

After the death of Zwingli, the progress of the cause of the Reformation was momentarily checked in German Switzerland, but almost at the same time a new door was opened in French Switzerland, thanks to the precursory works of Farel, Viret, and Froment. The more difficult task of organization was left to John Calvin (1509-64). During his long ministry in the city of Geneva, this "Aristotle of Protestantism," as he was sometimes called,<sup>3</sup> had the opportunity to write extensively. His influence was multiplied and extended through the work of missionaries whom he sent to different countries and through the many confessions

<sup>1</sup>William John Hinke, ed., *The Latin Works of Huldreich Zwingli* (Philadelphia: Heidelberg, 1922), 2:246.

<sup>2</sup>"Second, we point out that until the last day Christ cannot be anywhere but at the right hand of God the Father. . . . And that is the basis of the third article in the Creed: 'From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.' This article requires that he shall not come from thence until he come to judge." G. W. Bromiley, ed., *Zwingli and Bullinger*, Library of Christian Classics, vol. 24 (London: SCM, 1953), 216.

<sup>3</sup>"But if he is present in the bread, or if the bread is the body of Christ, then the last day has already come, he is already present, he is already seated on the judgment throne. But if the last day has not yet come, he is not present in the flesh: for when he does come in the flesh, he will sit in judgment." *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>Schaff, 1:446.

that bear the stamp of his theological formulations. In the opinion of Philip Schaff, John Calvin can be considered as "the greatest theologian and disciplinarian of the giant race of the Reformers, and for commanding intellect, lofty character, and far-reaching influence one of the foremost leaders in the history of Christianity."<sup>1</sup> All this fully justifies the several statements quoted in the following paragraphs.

What was the eschatological hope of this outstanding exegete of the sixteenth century? Three of his numerous works, more than any other, clearly express his thoughts regarding the future: *Psychopannychia* (1534), *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (first edition in 1536, and last edition by Calvin in 1559), and the *Catechism of the Church of Geneva* (final form in 1545), a kind of summary for popular use of the *Institutes*.

The eschatology of Calvin was strongly influenced by his conception of the nature of man. Very soon after his conversion, he wrote about the soul, and until his death maintained the same anthropological conception:

The spirit or soul of man is a substance distinct from the body. . . . The soul, after the death of the body, still survives, endued with sense and intellect. And it is a mistake to suppose that I am here affirming anything else than the immortality of the soul.<sup>2</sup>

This statement is taken from a work he wrote in 1534, his first theological work, against the Anabaptist belief in soul sleep. The complete title of that work is revealing in itself: "Psychopannychia: Or a refutation of the error entertained by some unskilled persons, who ignorantly imagine that in the interval between death and the judgment the soul sleeps, together with an explanation of the condition and life of the soul after this present life." Some quotations from this treatise will prove helpful for understanding the position that determined the composition of not less than thirty confessions of faith.

We are more miserable than all men if there is no Resurrection, because, although we are happy before the Resurrection, we are not happy without the Resurrection.<sup>3</sup>

Christ is our Head, whose kingdom and glory have not yet appeared. . . . We shall follow our Prince when he shall come in the glory of his Father, and sit in the seat of his majesty. . . . Why are they [the Christians who died], nevertheless, happy? Because they both perceive God to be propitious to them, and see their future reward from a distance, and rest in the same hope of the blessed Resurrection.<sup>4</sup>

Accordingly, in the same book [Revelation] John has described a twofold Resurrection, as well as a twofold death; namely, one of the soul before judgment, and another when the body will be raised up, and when the soul also will be raised up to glory.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1:423.

<sup>2</sup>John Calvin, *Tracts and Treatises* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 3:427.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 3:472.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 3:466.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 3:446.

He reigns, I say, even now, when we pray that his kingdom may come. . . . But his kingdom will properly come when it will be complete. And it will be complete when he will plainly manifest the glory of his majesty to his elect for salvation, and to the reprobate for confusion.<sup>1</sup>

Two years later, Calvin published the first edition of his extraordinary theological work, the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Scattered through its four books are many references to the resurrection, the events connected with the Last Day, and the final judgment. The following mosaic of quotations will show with greater clarity the eschatological understanding of the great theologian of Geneva. Concerning the second coming of Christ, He wrote:

Christ gives to his own people clear testimonies of his very present power. Yet his Kingdom lies hidden in the earth, so to speak, under the lowness of the flesh. It is right, therefore, that faith be called to ponder that visible presence of Christ which he will manifest on the Last Day.<sup>2</sup>

It is for us to hunger for, seek, look to, learn, and study Christ alone, until that great day dawns when the Lord will fully manifest the glory of his Kingdom and will show himself for us to see him as he is. And for this reason this age of ours is designated in the Scriptures as the “last hour,” the “last days,” “the last times,” that no one should delude himself with a vain expectation of some new doctrine or revelation.<sup>3</sup>

For he will come down from heaven in the same visible form in which he was seen to ascend. And he will appear to all with the ineffable majesty of his Kingdom, with the glow of immortality, with the boundless power of divinity, with a guard of angels. From thence we are commanded to await him as our Redeemer on that day when he will separate the lambs from the goats, the elect from the reprobate. No one—living or dead—shall escape his judgment. The sound of the trumpet will be heard from the ends of the earth, and by it all will be summoned before his judgment seat, both those still alive at that day and those whom death had previously taken from the company of the living.<sup>4</sup>

For though we very truly hear that the Kingdom of God will be filled with splendor, joy, happiness, and glory, yet when these things are spoken of, they remain utterly remote from our perception, and, as it were, wrapped in obscurities, until that day comes when he will reveal to us his glory, that we may behold it face to face.<sup>5</sup>

Calvin admits that not all things can be fully understood at the present, but this fact must not preclude the hope of the Christians.

Now it is neither lawful nor expedient to inquire too curiously concerning our souls' intermediate state. . . . Concerning the place, it is not less foolish and futile

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 3:465.

<sup>2</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), II, 16, 17.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., IV, 18, 20.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., II, 16, 17.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., III, 25, 10.

to inquire, since we know that the soul does not have the same dimension as the body. . . . Meanwhile, since Scripture everywhere bids us wait in expectation for Christ's coming, and defers until then the crown of glory, let us be content with the limits divinely set for us: namely, that the souls of the pious, having ended the toil of their warfare, enter into blessed rest, where in glad expectation they await the enjoyment of promised glory, and so all things are held in suspense until Christ the Redeemer appear. The lot of the reprobate is doubtless the same as that which Jude assigns to the devils: to be held in chains until they are dragged to the punishment appointed to them.<sup>1</sup>

In several other statements in the same book, Calvin recognizes that the "how" of the resurrection and of the transformation of the living ones are both mysteries lying far beyond the reach of human understanding.<sup>2</sup> However, he considers it a monstrous error to imagine that the souls will have different bodies than those they had when they were on earth.<sup>3</sup> One thing was clear to him: the souls of the departed believers are resting in the presence of the Lord, and at the appointed time will receive bodies again. For this reason he strongly opposed two different tenets: that the souls sleep until the Parousia, and that they receive different bodies in heaven.<sup>4</sup> Calvin stated further that the final decision regarding one's eternal destiny will be in direct relationship to what each person did while still in the body.<sup>5</sup> In all his expectations the Christian has a powerful consolation: the final judgment will be conducted by One who died for him, who is now in charge of his protection and who intercedes for him.<sup>6</sup> "To conclude in a word: if believers' eyes are turned to the power of the resurrection, in their hearts the cross of Christ will at last triumph over devil, flesh, sin and wicked man."<sup>7</sup>

Some years after the publication of the second edition of the *Institutes*, Calvin again expressed his convictions regarding the future, now in the *Catechism of the Church of Geneva*, which consists of a review and summary of the doctrines presented in the former work, in the form of a dialogue between a master who asks and a student who answers. There are no new eschatological formulations in this *Catechism*, but just the expression of the former in a simpler language.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., III, 25, 6.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., III, 25, 8.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., III, 25, 7.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., III, 25, 26.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., I, 15, 2.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., II, 16, 18.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., III, 10, 6.

<sup>8</sup>The section under consideration reads as follows:

"M. In what order will this resurrection take place?

S. Those who were formerly dead will recover their bodies, the same bodies as before, but endued with a new quality, that is, no longer liable to death or corruption. (1 Cor 15:53.) Those who survive God will miraculously raise up by a sudden change.

M. But will this be common to the righteous and the wicked?

S. There will be one resurrection of all, but the condition will be different: some will rise to salvation and blessedness, others to death and extreme misery." Calvin, *Tracts and Treatises*, 2:52, 53.

"S. 'From thence he will come to judge the quick and the dead.' The meaning of these words is, that he will come openly from heaven to judge the world, just as he was seen to ascend. (Acts 1:11.)

M. As the day of judgment is not to be before the end of the world, how do you say that

As it has been already mentioned, the influence of Calvin is seen in all of the most important confessions of the Reformed Churches. He was a “consummate logician and dialectician,”<sup>1</sup> endowed with a special gift for precise and clear expression of thought. “Luther and Zwingli cut the stones from the quarry; Calvin gave them shape and polish, and erected a magnificent cathedral of ideas with the skill of a master architect.”<sup>2</sup> In the words of Schaff,

The Huguenots of France, the Protestants of Holland and Belgium, the Puritans and Independents of England and New England, the Presbyterians of Scotland and throughout the world, . . . the whole Anglo-Saxon race . . . bear the impress of his genius, and show the power and tenacity of his doctrines and principles of government.<sup>3</sup>

### Other Swiss Writers

With very few variations, similar eschatological beliefs were shared by other Swiss writers of his time. Leo Juda (d. 1542), Zwingli’s friend, held that the papal Antichrist would reach his end at the coming of Christ and the final judgment. Johann Oecolampadius (d. 1531), the leading Reformer in Basel, was totally convinced that the reign of the Antichrist was approaching its end. Theodor Bibliander (d. 1564), the “Father of Biblical Exegesis in Switzerland,” the successor of Zwingli as a teacher in Zurich, held the view that the 6000-year period for the history of the earth, was about to be fulfilled. Heinrich Bullinger (d. 1575), the successor of Zwingli in the pastorate of the Great Minister in Zurich, wrote extensively about the book of Revelation, following the same criterion as the Reformers on the identification of the Antichrist, and expressing time and again his hope in the soon return of Christ and the resurrection of the dead. Lambert Daneau (d. 1595), juriconsult, theologian, and pastor at Geneva, strongly opposed every attempt to identify Mohammed as the Antichrist. He wrote that the seat of this power was Rome, and that the Antichrist’s reign would come to an end around the year 1666, when the Parousia had to happen. In the many illustrations drawn by Tobias Stimmer (d. 1584), the same ideas found graphic expression. But not

some men will then be alive, since it is appointed unto all men once to die? (Heb 9:27.)

S. Paul answers this question when he says, that those who then survive will undergo a sudden change, so that the corruption of the flesh being abolished, they will put on incorruption. (1 Cor 15:51; 1 Thess 4:17.)

M. You understand then that this change will be like death, that there will be an abolition of the first nature, and the beginning of a new nature?

S. That is my meaning.

M. Does it give any delight to our consciences that Christ will one day be the judge of the world?

S. Indeed singular delight. For we know assuredly that he will come only for our salvation.

M. We should not then tremble at this judgment, so as to let it fill us with dismay?

S. No, indeed; since we should only stand at the tribunal of a judge who is also our advocate, and who has taken us under his faith and protection.” *Ibid.*, 2:49, 50.

<sup>1</sup>Schaff, 1:436.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 1:444-45.

one of these authors and interpreters had the importance and influence of John Calvin, and second to him, of Ulrich Zwingli.<sup>1</sup>

### Martin Bucer

Special mention should be made of Martin Bucer (d. 1551), the Reformer of Strassburg. Very early, in 1518, while still a Dominican monk at Heidelberg, he felt the influence of Martin Luther, and from then on the shadow of the German Reformer always accompanied him. Bucer also influenced Calvin, and was influenced by him. Nevertheless, he can be considered an independent thinker, well gifted to write and preach with powerful and convincing argumentation. How should this Reformer be classified? He was neither completely Lutheran nor totally Reformed, but a kind of link between these two traditions of the Reformation. He also influenced the process of the Reformation in England. It is true that Bucer seemed more inclined toward the Reformed Church, probably because of his friendship with Calvin, but a moderating position is more consistent with the leaning of his whole work. Reference is made here to only one of his works, *The Kingdom of Christ* (1550), dedicated to the young English monarch Edward VI, whom he strongly advised how to establish a Christian commonwealth, a *republica Christiana*.<sup>2</sup> Here and there through his lengthy arguments, there are some statements of eschatological content regarding the imminent destruction of the Antichrist,<sup>3</sup> the coming of the Lord, and the fulfillment of the hope in the resurrection from the dead. However, concerned as he was with an earthly Christian kingdom, the Parousia became a remote possibility in time, deprived of its significance.<sup>4</sup>

The following two quotations illustrate Bucer's belief in the resurrection of the dead. Like Luther he believed in the spiritual nature of the resurrected bodies, in contrast to Calvin's insistence that the resurrected bodies would be identical in nature to those of the present existence.<sup>5</sup>

That is, he made us, through faith in himself and his Son, participants in a blessed, heavenly life, and certain of our hoped-for resurrection and translation into heaven, when we may fully enjoy this life of God.<sup>6</sup>

He [Paul, in 1 Cor 15:50] means that while we are yet burdened with the flesh and blood, we cannot perceive our accomplished salvation and our restoration, by

<sup>1</sup>Froom, *Conditionalist Faith*, 2:333-49.

<sup>2</sup>"I shall indicate how your Majesty can and should establish, foster, and encourage the full restoration of the kingdom of Christ among his subjects." Wilhelm Pauck, ed., *Melanchthon and Bucer*, Library of Christian Classics, vol. 19 (London: SCM, 1969), 176.

<sup>3</sup>He used the expression "Antichrists," in plural, meaning "the pseudobishops and clergy, following their head, the supreme Roman Antichrist." *Ibid.*, 174, 209.

<sup>4</sup>Due to the scarcity of available material written by Bucer, the evaluation of the thought of this Reformer is partial.

<sup>5</sup>There is no opposition between these Reformers, but as Luther emphasized the spiritual nature of the resurrected bodies, to the point of denying every physical function in them, the contention of Calvin was centered in the total identity of the resurrected ones with their former bodies.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 179.

which God is all things to us; and for this reason we must first be renewed by corporal death and a blessed resurrection and become completely spiritual.<sup>1</sup>

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the following points summarize our findings thus far:

1. In their historical eschatology, the Swiss Reformers had no doubts concerning the identity of the Antichrist and of his destruction at the second coming of Christ. At the same time, the sense of urgency and imminence related to the Parousia, so definite in the writings of the Germans, is almost absent in their works.

2. In common with the Germans, the Swiss looked forward to the final judgment with anticipated joy, and saw it as a source of consolation, comfort, and encouragement for the Christians.

3. One point in which Luther and Calvin differed in emphasis is that, while the Lutheran eschatology is mainly one of judgment, going back to the first Latin Fathers such as Cyprian, the eschatology of the Reformed tradition centers essentially in the resurrection with its roots in the formulations of the first Greek Fathers.<sup>2</sup>

4. While the eschatology of Calvin was mostly personal, that of Luther emphasized the historical and apocalyptic aspects.

5. Medieval Roman Catholic thought saw in transubstantiation a symbol of the final transformation of the whole world. On the other hand, Zwingli based in eschatology his denial of the doctrine of the real presence of Christ in the bread. Christ will come, but only at the end of the world, and only then will the final transformation take place.

6. In spite of these apparent differences, both the Germans and the Swiss believed in the simultaneity of three events—the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and the final judgment.

## Confessions and Catechisms

The doctrinal documents of the Reformed tradition are much more numerous than those of the Lutherans because the influence of the Reformed Church extended to more countries. Because their geographical and national peculiarities impressed their stamp upon some aspects of the faith, different formulations were necessary. The Reformed confessions are not less than thirty, though not all have the same degree of authority and recognition, and none holds the commanding position of the *Augsburg Confession* in the Lutheran Church. The most influential are the *Heidelberg* or *Palatinate Catechism*, the *Thirty-nine Articles*, and the *Westminster Confession*. Equally significant, though less adapted for popular use, are the *Second Helvetic Confession* and the *Canons of Dort*. The dates of these documents indicate that the formative period of the Reformed Church lasted up to the middle of the seventeenth century, with some of its most important confessions written decades earlier than when the Lutheran Church reached its credal climax in the *Formula of Concord* (1577).

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 224.

<sup>2</sup>Torrance, 10, 11.

These documents “are the work of an intensely theological and polemical age, when religious controversy absorbed the attention of all classes of society.”<sup>1</sup> Several of them reflect the conflict with the Roman Catholic Church; others, internal differences on some doctrinal definitions. But what were the common eschatological expectations in that time of political convulsions and theological disputations? The answer is sought in what follows, though it can be anticipated that it will not be too different from what was considered in the previous section, due to the influence of the same Swiss Reformers on these confessional and catechetical formulations.

### First Helvetic Confession

In the *First Helvetic Confession* (1536), a work of the Zwinglian Reformation, the certainty of the final judgment found emphatic expression:

We look for His coming at the end of all ages as the true and righteous Judge, and for His passing sentence upon all flesh, which shall first have been raised up for that judgment, and that He will carry the pious above the sky, and will condemn the impious, body and soul, to everlasting destruction.<sup>2</sup>

### Belgic Confession

Twenty-five years later, Guido de Bres (d. 1567), with the cooperation of other theologians, wrote an important document (1561) which was adopted by several local synods until its general approval at the great Synod of Dort (1619). This document is known as the *Belgic* or *Belgian Confession*. It contains one of the most elaborate and detailed eschatological statements found in all the confessional documents of the Reformation. The main points expressed in its long and last Article 37, “Of the Last Judgment,” are the following:

1. At the appointed time, unknown to men, the Lord will return to the earth, corporally and visibly, as the Judge of all human beings.
2. The dead will be raised, and their souls will be united with the same bodies which they formerly inhabited. The living ones will be instantly transformed.
3. The consciences, “the books,” will be opened to searching and evaluation by the judgment. The consequent reward or punishment will be eternal.
4. The earth will be purified by fire.
5. That day is joyfully expected by the Christians, but feared by the ungodly.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Schaff, 1:209.

<sup>2</sup>John T. Darragh, *The Resurrection of the Flesh* (London: SPCK, 1921), 215.

<sup>3</sup>Finally, we believe, according to the Word of God, when the time appointed by the Lord (which is unknown to all creatures) is come, and the number of the elect complete, that our Lord Jesus Christ will come from heaven, corporally and visibly, as he ascended with great glory and majesty, to declare himself Judge of the quick and the dead, burning this old world with fire and flame to cleanse it. And then all men will personally appear before this great Judge, both men and women and children, that have been from the beginning of the world to the end, thereof, being summoned by the voice of the archangel, and by the sound of the trumpet of God. For all the dead shall be raised out of the earth, and their souls joined and united with their proper bodies in which they formerly lived. As for those who shall then be living, they shall not

One aspect of this document, not mentioned in any other confessional statement of the Reformation, is especially worthy of notice—the identification of the “books” to be examined at the judgment with the consciences of men.

### Catechism of Heidelberg

As already noted, the most important confessional document of the Reformed tradition is the *Catechism of Heidelberg* (1563), which represents the work of scholars of Heidelberg University, both German and Swiss Reformers of the second generation, Zacharias Ursinus (d. 1583) and Kaspar Olevianus (d. 1585). This is why in this *catechism* there is more of nurturing and ripening, than of plowing and planting. They harvested the inheritance of the Swiss Reformers, producing this “acknowledged masterpiece, with few to equal and none to surpass it.”<sup>1</sup> Together with the *Smaller Catechism of Luther* and the *Shorter Catechism of Westminster*, it is one of the “most popular and useful catechisms that Protestantism has produced.”<sup>2</sup>

Six of its articles contain eschatological references in relation to the resurrection of the dead and the judgment. These may be summarized:

1. The resurrection of Christ is the guarantee of the resurrection of the believers.
2. When His work of intercession in behalf of man is completed, He will return as a Judge.
3. The joy, assurance, and comfort of His coming is repeatedly stressed.<sup>3</sup>

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die as the others, but be changed in the twinkling of an eye, and from corruptible become incorruptible.

“The books (that is to say, the consciences) shall be opened, and the dead judged according to what they shall have done in this world, whether it be good or evil. Nay, all men shall give an account of every idle word they have spoken, which the world only counts amusement and jest; and then the secrets and hypocrisy of men shall be disclosed and laid open before all.

“And, therefore, the consideration of this judgement is justly terrible and dreadful to the wicked and ungodly, but most desirable and comfortable to the righteous and the elect; because then their full deliverance shall be perfected, and there they shall received the fruits of their labor and trouble which they have borne. Their innocence shall be known to all, and they shall see the terrible vengeance which God shall execute on the wicked, who most cruelly persecuted, oppressed, and tormented them in this world; and who shall be convicted by the testimony of their own consciences, and, being immortal, shall be tormented then in the everlasting fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels. But on the contrary, the faithful and elect shall be crowned with glory and honor; and the Son of God will confess their names before God his Father, and his elect angels; all tears shall be wiped from their eyes; and their cause, which is now condemned by many judges and magistrates as heretical and impious, will then be known to be the cause of the Son of God. And, for a gracious reward, the Lord will cause them to possess such a glory as never entered into the heart of man to conceive.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1:540.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1:543.

<sup>3</sup>“Question 23: What are these Articles? . . . ‘from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.’”

“Question 45: What benefit do we receive from the *resurrection* of Christ? . . . Thirdly, the resurrection of Christ is to us a sure pledge of our blessed resurrection.”

“Question 46: How dost thou understand the words, *He ascended into Heaven?* That

## Second Helvetic Confession

With the experience gathered from writing the *First Helvetic Confession*, Henry Bullinger produced a second document, the remarkable *Second Helvetic Confession* (1566), surpassed only by the *Heidelberg Catechism* in the Reformed tradition of Continental Europe. It is one of the very few confessions in which a specific reference is made to the Antichrist and his work. It also contains a double condemnation: one against those who deny the resurrection, and one against those who hold chiliastic expectations. A whole chapter is devoted to the burial of the faithful, some superstitions regarding their state, and the hope of the resurrection.<sup>1</sup>

### Canons of Dort

The last important document to be discussed in this section is known as the *Canons of Dort* (1619). Surprisingly enough, it does not contain a specific section on eschatology. Two reasons could explain this omission: first, this document

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Christ, in sight of his disciples, was taken up from the earth into heaven, and in our behalf there continues, until he shall come again to judge the living and the dead.”

“Question 52: What comfort is it to thee that Christ *shall come again to judge the quick and the dead*? That in all my sorrows and persecutions, with uplifted head, I look for the self-same One who has offered himself for me to the judgment of God, and removed from me all curse, to come again as Judge from heaven; who shall cast all his and my enemies into everlasting condemnation, but shall take me, with all his chosen ones, to himself, into heavenly joy and glory.”

“Question 57: What comfort does the *resurrection of the body* afford thee? That not only my soul, after this life, shall be immediately taken up to Christ its Head, but also that this my body, raised by the power of Christ, shall again be united with my soul, and make like unto the glorious body of Christ.”

“Question 123: What is the second petition? *Thy kingdom come*. That is: So govern us by the Word and the Spirit that we may submit ourselves unto thee always more and more; . . . until the full coming of thy kingdom, wherein thou shalt be all in all.” Schaff, 3:321-22, 324-26, 352-53.

“Chapter XI: Of Jesus Christ, being true God and man, the only Saviour of the world.” “And out of heaven the same Christ will return unto judgment, even then when wickedness shall chiefly reign in the world, and when Antichrist, having corrupted true religion, shall fill all things with superstition and impiety, and shall most cruelly waste the Church with fire and bloodshed. Now Christ shall return to redeem his, and to abolish Antichrist by his coming, and to judge the quick and the dead (Acts 17:31). For dead shall arise, and those that shall be found alive in that day (which is unknown to all creatures) ‘shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye’ (1 Cor. 15:51,52). And all the faithful shall be taken up to meet Christ in the air (1 Thess. 4:17); that thenceforth they may enter with him into heaven, there to live forever (2 Tim. 2:11); but the unbelievers, or ungodly, shall descend with the devils into hell, there to burn forever, and never to be delivered out of torments. (Matt. 25:41.)

“We therefore condemn all those who deny the true resurrection of the flesh, and those who think amiss of the glorified bodies . . . Moreover, we condemn the Jewish dreams, that before the day of judgment there shall be a golden age in the earth, and that the godly shall possess the kingdoms of the world, their wicked enemies being trodden under foot . . .”

“Chapter XXVI: Of the burial of the faithful, and of the care which is to be had for such as are dead; of purgatory, and the appearing of the saints.

“The Scripture directs that the bodies of the faithful, as being temples of the Holy Spirit, which we truly believe shall rise again at the last day, should be honorably, without any superstition, committed to the earth.” Ibid., 3:850, 852, 853, 902.

represents the last attempt of the rigid Calvinistic orthodoxy to answer the objections raised against the doctrine of predestination, so that is its main subject; second, the same assembly officially accepted the *Belgic Confession*, with its clear and lengthy Article 37 already discussed. However, the hope in the resurrection is stated in chapter 3, "Of the Corruption of Man, his Conversion to God, and the Manner thereof" (arts. 11, 12).<sup>1</sup>

### Summary

In a brief summary, the Reformed Confessions in Continental Europe, among which these five are the best exponents, reflect without exception the thoughts of the two great inspirers of the Swiss Reformation, Zwingli and (mainly) Calvin. Personal eschatology is the aspect of the Christian hope most often repeated; however, prophetic or historical eschatology is not totally absent, and the cosmic purification of the earth by fire is also mentioned.

The Reformation in England followed more closely the Swiss than the German pattern. The eschatology of the English Reformation will be explored in a subsequent article.

<sup>1</sup>See William A. Curtis, *A History of Creeds and Confessions of Faith* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1911), 242-48.