

ARTICLE IV.

LIFE AND DEATH OF MICHAEL SERVETUS.¹

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The Early Years of Servetus.

MICHAEL SERVETUS was born the same year with John Calvin (1509) at Villaneuva in Arragon. His father was a notary. Nothing is certainly known of his early education and training. It is said, that he was brought up in a cloister in his native kingdom, and although no proof of the fact is adduced, it is not improbable; for it was the custom of the time, especially in Spain, to devote children who were weak in intellect or feeble in health to the church, and Servetus' physical system was diseased.² In his fourteenth year, according to his account of himself at Vienne, he was taken into the service of Quintana, confessor of Charles V, who, himself a monk, probably took Servetus from the cloister. He was present at the crowning of the Emperor by the Pope at Bologna in Italy, and afterwards went in the suite of Charles V. to Germany. The splendor and parade by which the Roman Pontiff was surrounded, and the adoration which he received, exceedingly disgusted Servetus, and filled him with hatred towards the chief dignity of the church.³

In Servetus' account of himself at the time of his trial at Geneva, he says that his father sent him to the University of Toulouse to study Law. If so, and there are some indications of knowledge of Law in his writings, he must have gone there immediately after his journey to Italy. At that University he probably first learned to read the Bible in the original languages, and acquired more familiarity with the dogmas of the Reformation, for he shows in his first work, published soon after, that he was no stranger to them. The question has been much discussed, wheth-

¹ Based chiefly on Henry's "Leben Johann Calvins des grossen Reformators," Vol. III. pp. 95—276.

² He himself, says Henry, speaks of a "doppelten Brochsaden und dass er mr Ehe untüchtig gewesen." III. 107.

³ The following language is found in his Restitutio in reference to the pope on this occasion: O bestiam bestiarum aceleratissimam, meretriciam impudentissimam, etc., p. 462.

er his first tendencies to heresy took their origin at this time, or were imbibed in Italy or Germany. But it is a question of little importance in respect to our present purpose. He was a free-thinker by nature, and could not have lived anywhere without exhibiting his peculiar characteristics.¹ The similarity of the circumstances of the early life of Servetus and John Calvin, is not more striking than the diversity of their developments. They both began their course with the study of Law, but Servetus at the same time turned his attention to astrology, and rejected with contempt the philosophy of Aristotle. But the desire to promote a reformation in the world, gave him no rest. He read the works of most of the church fathers, especially those who lived before Arius. In Tertullian and Irenaeus he thought he found the true Christian doctrine. He also turned his attention to the Catholic writers of the middle ages, and made himself acquainted with the works of the German reformers, which were extensively circulated in France. As the result of these studies, he renounced popery as a whole, but thought that the reformers had but half accomplished their work. A passage in his treatise on Justification probably gives a correct view of his position at this time: "I hold neither with the Catholics nor Protestants in all things, nor am I opposed to them. Each of them seems to me to have a part of the truth mingled with error. Each looks at the wrong views of the other and sees not his own. God grant, through his compassion, that we may know our errors and be free from stubbornness. It would be easy to distinguish truth from error, if it were allowed to speak freely, so that all might exert themselves to prophesy; if the ancient prophets [i. e. the teachers of the Catholic and Protestant church] would subject themselves to those of modern times [i. e. Servetus], and be silent, whilst these spoke what was revealed to them.—The Lord destroy all the tyrants of the church."

When Servetus went to France, he laid aside the name of Servetus and took that of Reves. The reasons for this change are variously given by his friends and enemies. He, however, did not long find Toulouse a place of safety for one adopting his views, and exercising the freedom of expression which he desired. He therefore went to Basil where Zuingli's dogmas had been embraced, in order to submit his own plans for the reformation of the church to Oecolampadius. But his impudent manner, as well

¹ See Mosheim, *Gesch. des M. Serveto* S. 9, and M'Crie's *Hist. of Reform. in Italy*, p. 178.

as his erroneous views, soon brought him into collision with one of so gentle and amiable a character as Oecolampadius. The principal point of difference between them was in reference to the person of Christ. Servetus denied the union of two natures in him, and contended that he could be eternal, only in the sense that the world is eternal, because the idea of it was from the beginning with God. This controversy was carried on by letters and in private conversation, and not publicly as has been sometimes affirmed.¹ Servetus attempted, a proceeding not unusual with men of his character, to quiet the mind of his opponent by a creed apparently orthodox, but he did not fully succeed. Oecolampadius in a conversation with Zuingli and Bullinger showed plainly that he understood his wily antagonist, and perceived the dangerous nature of his doctrines.²

In personal appearance Servetus was not unpleasing. According to an engraving in the work of Mosheim, said to be from a good portrait, he had rather marked features, a high forehead, a long and pointed beard, and large, bright eyes, which would at once give an attentive observer a premonition of the restless, fanatical spirit within. He was affable in his manners and ready in conversation, and seemed to attract notice wherever he went.

Servetus' first Work upon the Trinity.

Soon after the controversy with Oecolampadius (1530) Servetus went to Hagenau, to make arrangement with the publisher Sarcenius for printing his first work "De Trinitatis Erroribus." The book, however, did not appear until some time in the following year. The starting point in this work is the indivisibility of the nature of God. He is simple and one, and consequently the modifications of his being must be merely in form and not in person. Still He is incomprehensible to man without revelation, and in order to make himself known he has assumed two forms, that of the Son and Spirit. Thus Servetus would retain the distinction of Father, Son and Spirit, but merely as modifications of external appearance. This trinity is not eternal, but ends with the world, as it came into existence with it. Like the world, however, it may be said to have existed forever in the divine pur-

¹ See Mosheim *Gesch. d. M. Serveto*, S. 14.

² He even said to Servetus: *Confessionem tuam simplex fortassis approbaret, quia autem mentem tuam declarasti, ut fallacem abominor.* See Henry, Vol. III., 111, 115.

pose; and this ideal existence is the Logos. This book, when it first appeared, was the cause of general commotion with all parties. It was a matter of so much wonder where such daring heresies could have originated, that a journey of Servetus to Africa was presupposed in order to enable him to derive his dogmas from the Koran. This supposition was confirmed, perhaps originated, by the fact that he adduced proof-passages from the Mohammedan's Bible in substantiation of his positions.

The simple errors in doctrine and the reasoning in support of them, were not the only grounds of hostility to this work. The rashness and bitterness which followed him through life appeared here. And besides, for a young man in his twenty-first year, to attempt with full confidence an entire renovation of the religion and philosophy of his age, savored, it was thought, a little of arrogance. He professed to make the Holy Scriptures the source of all his knowledge and his reasonings, and attributed the corruption of true Christianity, to the philosophy of Aristotle and ignorance of the Hebrew language. This hurtful doctrine of the Trinity, he believed, crept into the church at the same time with the primacy of the Pope,¹ and Paul of Samosata first clearly proclaimed the true doctrine, which was but imperfectly comprehended in the time of the Apostles. The torrents of abuse which Servetus poured upon the doctrines received both by the protestants and catholics was still more annoying, and exhibited a want of reverence, to call it by no worse name, which stamped his character forever. The persons of the Godhead, he said, were delusions of the devil, and the triune God, a Cerberus. The protestants were specially troubled at the irregularities of Servetus, because he professed to be one of their number, and their opponents might attribute to them an agreement with him, or at least pretend that his doctrines were the natural result of their secession from the holy catholic church. Melanchthon, Zuingli and others expressed a very decided opposition to his doctrine and his course, and their opinions will be alluded to in a subsequent part of this discussion.

It is probable, that Servetus after he had found a publisher for his book went to Strasburg, and it is even said that he heard the public addresses of Luther and Melanchthon at this time, but it

¹ Puto fuisse divine punitionis judicium ut eodem tempore Papa efficeretur rex, quo est Trinitas orta, et tunc Christum perdidimus.—*De Tris. Error.* Lib. 7, fol. 36.

is uncertain.¹ Where he was when his book appeared, seems also not to be definitely settled. It is however known, that in the middle of the year 1531, he dwelt for a time with his friend Morinus at Basil. Oecolampadius was not pleased at his return to that place, and sent word to the council of his arrival. He was so much opposed to the work which Servetus had issued, that in 1531 he urged Bucer to take ground against it. The author himself whilst the book was in press had explained his system to both Bucer and Capito, and they were decided in their convictions of the injury to be anticipated from him. Bucer even then began publicly to preach against him.

Servetus, notwithstanding the opposition which he met from Oecolampadius and others, and regardless of the inquisition, gave his name as author to the book, but the printer and the publisher, more wary, did not add their names or the place of publication to the title-page. After the book was issued, the inhabitants of Basil requested Bucer to make another answer to Servetus, and his indignation was so much aroused, that he proclaimed from the pulpit that Servetus deserved the most summary and disgraceful punishment.²

The general belief in the dangerous nature of the doctrines of this man long before he came in contact with Calvin should be borne in mind. Before he was allowed to leave Basil, he was compelled to make a retraction of his errors. This was done in the preface of a little work which he published at that time.³ He humbly asks pardon for the offence which he had given, and retracts all that he had said, not however as being erroneous but as childish and imperfect. With characteristic impudence, however, he proceeds in the work to repeat the same sentiments with some little modifications of form. Mosheim says: Servetus did not even change or improve his doctrines in any respect, but merely repeated what he had said before and defended himself against the objections which had been urged against him by Oecolampadius and others.⁴ His idea of justification which he gives in the latter part of this little volume, is about midway between that of the Catholics and Lutherans. Good works, he maintained, will

¹ In a letter to Oecolampadius he says: *Aliter propriis auribus a te declarari andivi, et aliter a Doctore Paulo et aliter a Luthero et aliter a Melanchthone.*—*Mosheim Gesch.* 393.

² His words are: *Dignum esse, qui avulsis visceribus discerperetur.*

³ *Dialogorum de Trinitate libri duo; de justitia Regni Christi Capp. Quatuor.* Per Michaelem Servetum alias Reves ab Arragonia Hispanum.

⁴ *Gesch. des. M. Serveto*, 145, 6.

have their reward irrespective of faith, and both Jews and the heathen will be participants of future blessedness.

Servetus as a public Lecturer and Physician.

After this first unsuccessful effort, Servetus seems to have concluded that it was not so easy to effect a reformation as he had supposed. Without the least particle of a martyr's heroism, notwithstanding all his vauntings, he left Germany,¹ where so much hostility was shown to his doctrines, and determined to live in France. And in order to escape the inquisition he no longer retained either of the names, Servetus and Reves, by which he had been previously known, but called himself Michael Villaneuva, from his native city. He says that in the year 1534 he studied mathematics and medicine in Paris at the Collège de Calvi and afterwards in the Collège de Lombards. It was in this year that the meeting was appointed for a discussion between him and the then youthful reformer, Calvin.² After leaving Paris, he went to Orleans. Joh. Wier relates that when the notorious imposition of the Franciscan monks in calling up the ghosts of the departed was practised at Orleans, he had several friends of some reputation there, among others Michael Villanovanus. It should seem from the preface to Servetus' edition of Ptolemy's Geography that he went, about this time, to Italy, but it is possible that his first journey with Quintana is referred to. It is at least certain that his works were widely circulated in Italy, for one of his apologists Postellus says, that he had disciples there, and Melanchthon thought his influence sufficient to require a confutation of his errors, which was addressed to the council at Venice: "He," Melanchthon writes, "proclaims the condemned dogmas of Paul of Samosata, and subverts the doctrine of two persons in Christ. It is granted that the reason cannot comprehend the personality of the word, but we must rely with faith upon the teachings of the early church and the apostles, which are in direct opposition to those of Servetus." Some time after leaving Paris Servetus went to Lyons, where he prepared and published his Edition of Ptolemy's Geography with notes and was for some time corrector of the press for the firm of Trechsel, distinguished in that age for their beautiful typogra-

¹ In the sentence pronounced against him at Geneva it is said: *Le dit servet rendu fugitif des dites Allemagnes à cause du dit Livre.*

² See *Bib. Sac.* Vol. II. p. 353.

phy. In 1537 he went again to Paris, took his degree of Doctor of Medicine, and lectured upon mathematics and astronomy. No one will affirm that Servetus was a man of inferior capacity. Although possessed of much theological learning, when he went to Paris, he applied himself with characteristic zeal to natural science, and was soon able to lecture upon it. He was also reckoned one of the most distinguished physicians in France. He even seems to have been the first to describe the circulation of the blood.¹ In the mean time he did not lay aside his theological pursuits, but was preparing for the press an edition of the Bible. At this time he must have felt himself more prosperous than at any other period during his life. His lectures were attended by multitudes, and it is exceedingly to be regretted that he did not devote the remainder of his life to literary and scientific pursuits. He was of the Greek school of physicians in opposition to that of the Arabians, and in 1537 published a treatise on the Gallenists and Averrhoists. He also published an *Essay upon the use of syrups* which was highly approved. These works as well as his notes upon Ptolemy were written in very respectable Latin, compared with his theological treatises, which were barbarous. But his pride and arrogance did not suffer him long to occupy his honorable position. The University and Faculty of Paris opposed him, partly perhaps from envy, but more on account of his attacks upon many of the scholars of the capital, especially the professors in Natural History, who returned the assault in their public discourses. He then published a defence, in which he called his antagonists pests to the world, and other hard names. The result was that he was prohibited from lecturing on astronomy. With his usual impudence, he voluntarily appeared before the tribunal of the inquisition, trusting to the anonymous publication of his book, although every page of it, if proved upon him, would have subjected him to capital punishment, and he was acquitted.

From Paris Servetus went to Avignon, and thence back again to Lyons and in 1538 established himself in Charlieu near Lyons, as a physician. But even there he could not long remain quiet. He was thirty years old, and after the example of Christ, it was necessary, he thought, to be rebaptized. He placed great stress upon this duty. Faith, he held, justifies but baptism alone sancti-

¹ See *Christianismi Restitutio*, De Finit. Lib. V.; or an Extract from it in Henry, III. Beil. No. 3. a.

fies; faith is imperfect without baptism. It has indeed been supposed, that he was baptized again in secret by some anabaptist in Switzerland or elsewhere, but Calvin believed that he never troubled himself about it, although he maintained that it was a necessary pledge of eternal felicity. He also seems, from a passage in his *Restitutio*, to have belonged to a secret sect which partook of the sacrament in a different manner from either Catholics or Protestants. The same qualities which did not allow him to live in peace in Paris soon drove him from Charlien.¹

In 1540 we find Servetus in Vienne in Dauphiny. The Archbishop of that city, Peter Palmier, a distinguished patron of literature who had heard the Spaniard's lectures in Paris, received him into his palace. Here he lived in quiet, and hypocritically conformed to all the usages of the Catholic church. How different is the conduct of this man from Calvin. The latter went straight forward in the path dictated by his conscience, without deviating for kings or princes, or for any selfish interest. How noble is his conduct in contrast with the wavering, changeable and even contradictory course of one who could revile with the most opprobrious language at one time, that which he approved and sanctioned by his conduct at another. Soon after his arrival in Vienna Servetus published a new edition of Ptolemy's Geography, dedicated to his patron, in which he suppressed a passage upon the barrenness of the promised land, which he feared might be offensive to the Archbishop.

In 1542 Servetus published, with a few changes, the translation of the Bible made by the learned monk Xantes Pagninus, to which he added his own ideas upon the interpretation of the Bible. His main object was, to show that the prophecies of the Old Testament were all fulfilled before the time of Christ, and only had respect to him in a spiritual sense. The ii. and xxii. Psalms, he supposed, referred directly to David, and the xlv. to Solomon, and designated Christ only as David and Solomon were types of him. The 'virgin' in Isa. vii. was Abia who was to be the mother of king Hezekiah. His remarks in the preface to this Bible, upon the Hebrew language and the impossibility of expressing the beauty of the original in a translation, make us regret that such fine talents as he exhibits, could not have been regulated by sound principle, and dedicated to the cause of truth, which so much needed them at that time. This Bible of course

¹ Ob ea quae illic stolide ac insolenter designaverat.—*Bolsec.*

was not approved by the Catholics; at Lyons it was placed upon the catalogue of prohibited books. Servetus remained in this quiet retreat twelve years, and was the regular physician of the city. But he could no longer continue in such pursuits. He must again launch his frail bark as a reformer.

Correspondence with Calvin and the Preacher Pepin.

The first direct communication between Calvin and Servetus, after the proposed discussion at Paris previously mentioned, was not until about 1540. They, however, had not been unmindful of each other in the mean time. Servetus felt that Calvin was the leading spirit of the reformation, and the great hindrance to the success of his own projects. He accordingly wrote to him and desired him to answer three questions: "1. Is the man Jesus, who was crucified, Son of God, and how is he so? 2. Is the kingdom of God in men, when they enter this kingdom, when they are regenerated? 3. Must Christian baptism be received in faith like the Lord's Supper, and why are baptism and the Lord's Supper instituted in the new Covenant?" Calvin answered each of these questions specifically and kindly. But Servetus was not satisfied with his answer, and wrote him again a refutation of his solution of the questions proposed, and urged another reply. Calvin wrote to him a second time in a friendly manner, although with warmth, and with decided reproofs for his unreasonable demands upon him, and for his erroneous views. "I neither hate," he says, "nor despise you, nor would I knowingly inveigh against you with too much severity. But I should be harder than iron if I were not moved, when I see you with such shameless impudence assailing the truth."

There is much in Calvin's answer to the third question of Servetus upon baptism and the Lord's Supper, which shows that the severity which has sometimes been ascribed to his system of doctrines, is not altogether merited. "I do not doubt," he says, "that when God removes infants from the world, they are regenerated by the secret influences of the Holy Spirit."

In reference to several other interrogatories of Servetus, Calvin replied: "I would answer them if I could do it in few words; but my other engagements do not allow me time to write whole volumes to you alone. Besides you ask nothing which you may

¹ Quos parvulos Dominus ex hac vita recolligit, non dubito regenerari arcana Spiritus operatione.

not find in my Institutes, if you will take the trouble to look there. Still I would not spare my own labor, if I knew the exact point at which you aim. But if I should undertake to discuss the subjects which you propose, what a forest I should find myself in." The proud Spaniard was so enraged at this answer, that, according to Calvin's account, he sent back to him his Institutes with the most bitter and taunting remarks upon the margin, and addressed to him several letters one after another, filled with reproaches, abuse and insults. Calvin however bore them with patience. It is true, that it has been questioned, but, as it seems to us, without reason, whether he was not too severe upon Servetus in his account of the matter. Calvin throughout his whole life showed himself scrupulously conscientious, and not subject to the failure of his memory in the statement of facts, and it is hardly to be supposed that here alone he would be found in fault. This argument in favor of Calvin receives double force from the perfect correspondence of this course of Servetus with the spirit which he manifested, and with his conduct on other occasions. As far as is known, Calvin never wrote to Servetus but two letters. The manner of his antagonist was disagreeable to him from the first, and he could not be prevailed upon to continue the controversy. He seems to have consented to answer him at all, in consequence of the request of a mutual friend, John Frellon, a book-merchant in Lyons. In a letter to him enclosing one to Servetus, Calvin says: "Sir John! I am very ready to gratify your wishes, although I have little hope of availing anything with a man of such a disposition as he seems to possess; but yet I will try whether there is any means of bringing him to reason, which may be accomplished if God shall work an entire change in him. Since he wrote me in so haughty a tone I have wished to humble his pride, by speaking to him with a little more severity than is my custom; I could not do otherwise, for I assure you, that no lesson is more necessary for him to learn than that of humility, which will come to him only through the influence of the Spirit of God. But still we must use our exertions for it. If God shall be so gracious to him and to us as to make this reply profitable to him, I shall have occasion for joy. But if he shall continue in his present course, you will lose your time if you solicit me to exert myself for him; for I have other duties which are more imperative, and I shall scruple to occupy myself longer with him, not doubting that he is a Satan, to turn me off from other more

profitable studies. I therefore pray you to rest satisfied with what I have already done," etc.¹

At the time of writing the above letter, Calvin hoped that Servetus might be turned to a better life by the influences of the Holy Spirit; yet he seems from a letter to Farel bearing date the same day, to have been quite exasperated by the numerous heretical documents sent him to read, and by the wish of Servetus to come to Geneva, if Calvin would afford him protection. "Servetus," he says, "wrote me recently, and sent with his letter a large volume of his reveries, full of the most pompous arrogance. He said; I should find stupendous things never before heard of therein! If I was willing, he would come here; but I am unwilling to give him my protection. For if he shall come, if my authority avails anything, I will not suffer him to go away alive."—This last unfortunate expression has given occasion for numerous needless calumnies and reproaches from the opponents of Calvin. The simple and unprejudiced state of the case seems to be this: Calvin had received and answered the request of Servetus and was giving an account of it to Farel. And this was a mere expression of impatience which he felt at Servetus' conduct, and the fear that he might give occasion for condign punishment. That he had deliberately designed to compass his death is confuted by the letter above quoted to Frelon, written the same day, in which he expresses the hope that Servetus may yet be turned from his errors to the truth. Besides, if he had desired the Spaniard's death, he would not have prevented him from coming to Geneva. It is to be regretted that Calvin gave way to his impatience, that "wild animal which he had not yet quite tamed," but we are not able to persuade ourselves that there was in this expression, a particle of deliberate malice. It was certainly much milder than the assertions of others who had not a tithe of the occasion for severity that Calvin had.²

The correspondence between Calvin and Servetus entirely ceased before 1548. For it appears from a letter from Calvin to Viret, that since Servetus could obtain no further answers from him, he had attacked Viret. "I believe," Calvin says, "you once read what I answered that man. I wished not to contend any longer with one so desperately headstrong and heretical; and it was certainly well to obey the injunction of the apostle Paul. Now he has made an assault upon you. How far it will be ad-

¹ Feb. 13, 1546.

² See the declaration of Bucer quoted above p. 55. note.

visible for you to withstand his frenzy, you can judge. He will extort nothing further from me."¹

Servetus sent to Calvin the manuscript of his *Restitutio*, by means of the bookseller Frellon, in order to obtain his opinion upon it. He afterwards desired Calvin to return it, so that he might make alterations. But it was in the hands of Viret, in Lausanne, and was accordingly not sent. After all communication between him and Calvin was suspended, Servetus wrote to the preacher Pepin at Geneva, in order to obtain it through him; but as it did not come, Servetus made changes in another copy which he had, and gave it to the press. His third letter to Pepin has been preserved, and is well worthy of perusal, as indicative of the spirit of the man. It is as follows: "Although my letter (the twelfth) to Calvin shows very clearly that the law is no longer in force, yet I will refer to still another passage, in order that you may better comprehend the new order of things which has been introduced by Christ's coming. If you read Jer. xxxi. you will distinctly perceive that the obligatory force of the decalogue is superseded. The prophet there teaches, that the covenant with the fathers when they came out of Egypt, is abolished; so also Ezekiel, in Chapter xvi, and Paul in Hebrews viii. God does not now receive us as his, on account of this covenant, but through faith alone in Jesus Christ, his beloved Son. See now what sort of a gospel you have, entirely confused as it is by the law. Your gospel is without the One God, without true faith, without good works. In the place of one God you have a three-headed Cerberus, in place of true faith you have a hurtful fancy. Good works you consider as nothing more than vain shadows. Faith in Christ is to you a mere show without substance. Man is nothing more than a block of wood, and God a monster without free-will. The divine regeneration by water you do not understand, and it is only a fable to you. You close the kingdom of heaven to men, by excluding it from us as a mere imaginary thing. Wo, wo, wo to you. By this last letter I wish you to be warned, so that you may be turned to a better belief. This is the last of my admonitions. There is perhaps a feeling of vexation in you, that I join in this struggle of Michael, and wish you also to be a fellow combatant with him. Read attentively this passage (in the Revelation),² and you will see that men are there spoken

¹ A me nihil posthac extorquebit.—*Miss. Gen. Sept. 1548.*

² Chapter xii.

of who, placing their lives in jeopardy, shall conquer in the contest by the blood and as witnesses of the Lord. That they shall be called angels is customarily said in the Bible. Do you not see that the church of Christ, already so long wandering in the desert, is here spoken of? Is not a future state of the church here intended, as John himself affirms? Who is that accuser who formerly complained of us for trampling upon the law and the commands? Before the struggle, John says, will the accusation take place and the corruption of the world. Then shall the conflict ensue—and the time is near. Who are those who shall obtain the victory over the beast? and who shall not have his mark? I am well assured that I shall suffer death for this cause, but I am not troubled in spirit on that account, so that I, a disciple, may be like my master.—I am sorry that I cannot through you obtain my manuscript which is in Calvin's hands; so as to improve some passages in it. Farewell and expect no more letters from me. I will stand upon my watch-tower and watch, to see what he will say; for he will come, he will surely come and will not delay."

The Restitution of Christianity.

Servetus' Work on the Restitution of Christianity¹ appeared in January, 1553. He attempted first to obtain a publisher for it at Basil, but did not succeed. The archbishop Palmier, his patron, had established some printers in Vienne, and to these he next turned. The overseer of the press, W. Guerout, who had been banished from Geneva and was an enemy of Calvin, was easily induced to favor the work. The publisher, B. Arnoullet, hesitated to issue a book without the sanction of the clergy, but was finally prevailed upon by pecuniary inducements and by assurances of the harmless character of the book. Two presses

¹ This work was an octavo, 734 pages, and the whole title is as follows: *Christianismi Restitutio, totius Ecclesiae Apostolicae ad sua limina vocatio, in integram restituta cognitione Dei, fidei Christi, justificationis nostrae, regenerationis baptismi, et coenae Domini manducationis. Restituto denique nobis regno coelesti, Babylonis impiae captivitate soluta, et Antichristo cum suis penitus destructo.*

וַיִּהְיֶה לְבַרְכָּתוֹ יוֹמָהּ מִיְהוּדָה
 και ἐγένετο πόλεμος ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ.

M. S. V.

1553.

were put into operation in secret, and Servetus himself corrected the sheets. After about three months the work appeared without the name of the author or the place of publication. Five bales of them were sent to Lyons, the same number to Chatillon, and several copies to Frankfort and Geneva.

The general character of this work may be inferred from the Introduction. "We design," says the author, "to disclose the divine revelation of the first centuries—the great mystery of faith which is beyond all controversy. The God who before was not seen, we shall now see; since the veil is removed from his face, we shall behold him shining upon us."—Then follows a prayer, the sincerity of which may be judged by his subsequent conduct. "O Christ Jesus, Son of God, reveal thyself to thy servant, in order that so great a revelation may be truly clear to us. Grant me now thy good Spirit and thy efficacious word; guide my pen and my thoughts that I may describe the glory of thy divinity, and set forth the true faith in thee. This is thy cause, which I, by an internal divine impulse, have been induced to defend, since I was zealous for thy truth. I indeed long since undertook this cause, and am now again urged to it, since the time is certainly now fulfilled. Thou hast taught us that the light must not be concealed, and wo is to me if I preach not the gospel." Servetus seems to have considered himself as especially designated by God, to make known truths which had long been lost, or rather had never been clearly revealed. The apostles had but dimly understood what he was about distinctly to make known. He was indeed in the succession of the apostles, but he towered far above all the rest in the series. That which was but obscurely understood and hinted at in the words: "In the beginning was the Word," now was to have its complete disclosure. How different this arrogant, profane, boasting spirit from the reverent, teachable, humble feeling with which Calvin always approached God and his word. After years of attentive study, he did not venture to attempt an explanation of the Apocalypse, but the wandering Spaniard, who was skilled in astrological science, considered himself altogether equal to the task. Listen to his explanations of the twelfth chapter: "The dragon that will destroy the woman and her child is the pope; the woman is the church; her son whom God rescues, the faith of Christians. 1260 prophetic days or years the church must remain under the dominion of antichrist; then the controversy against the dragon was to commence; Michael and his angels conquer after the dragon has slain many;

the good and the bad contend together upon the earth. This conflict is now going on, the hosts of Michael are the true witnesses of the church. At the time of Constantine the great, the dragon began to drive the church unto the desert. Christ ceased to reign when the true doctrine in reference to his person was mistaken at the council of Nice, and the divine Being separated into three persons." It does not appear that Servetus ever gave himself out as the angel Michael himself, but it is evident that he considered himself one of his most important and valiant combatants with the dragon. A biographer of Calvin says, rather pertinently, that if Servetus means by *with*, for the Dragon, his claim is a just one.¹

It is not necessary, would the limits of one Article allow it, to attempt an enumeration of the contents of this work, oftentimes inconsistent with and contradictory to itself. Some of the dogmas of the author have already been noticed, and they will appear further in the account of his trial at Geneva. It is, however, but justice to Calvin to say, that it was not, as has been often maintained, his favorite doctrines, such as predestination and perseverance, that Servetus especially impugned. The Trinity occupied the first place in the book, and the author also showed himself an Antinomian, Pantheist and Materialist, and what is more than all in the opinion of his judges, an open and violent blasphemer.

Trial and Condemnation of Servetus in Vienne.

It is well known that the Restitution of Christianity was specially obnoxious to the Catholics, and led to the arrest and trial of Servetus in Vienne. It has been often alleged that Calvin was the occasion of this trial, but it is clear that if he was so, it was without design on his part. The accusation of direct communication with Tournon and the other officers of the Inquisition, is too improbable to deserve even a passing notice. The following seems to be the true state of the case. There lived in Geneva, when Servetus' book was sent there, a refugee from Lyons, William Trie, who had a friend at the latter place by the name of Arney, who was a zealous Catholic and attempted to persuade

¹ Certes on trouvera que ce n'est pas sans raison que cet impie s'appliquait ces paroles, pourvu que par ces mots avec le dragon on n'entende pas contre le dragon, mais pour le dragon.—*Vie de Calvin*, Geneva 1830, p. 86.

Trie to return to the Catholic church. In answer to some of his arguments, Trie wrote to him on the 26th of February: "I cannot but wonder that you bring as an objection against us, that we have no church order and discipline. I see, praise be to God, that the blasphemer is better punished among us than in all your spiritual tribunals; and as respects doctrine, although there is more freedom here, yet it would never be endured that the name of God should be blasphemed, and impious doctrines disseminated without opposing them. I can mention an instance which in truth is a great reproach to you. A heretic is upheld among you, who richly deserves to be given to the flames, wherever he is found. I speak of a man, whom the papists as well as we condemn as a heretic; for although we differ in many points, yet we have this in common that we believe in three persons in one God, etc.—If now a man asserts that the Trinity in which we believe is a Cerberus, a monster from hell, and pours out upon it all imaginable filth,—in what consideration shall he be held among you?—What a disgrace that those who confess, that we must worship one only God, etc., [enumerating the articles of belief among the Protestants,] are condemned to death, whilst one who looks upon Jesus Christ as an idol, destroys the very foundation of faith and collects together all the dreams of the ancient heretics; who even condemns the baptism of infants, calling it an invention of the devil, is an honor among you, and is treated as if he had never erred.—The individual of whom I speak is a Spaniard or Portuguese, by the name of Michael Servetus. This is his right name; but he is now called Villaneuve, is a physician, and has caused a work to be published at Vienne by Arnoullet." After some other representations of the inconsistency of their course in the treatment of the books of the reformers, Trie adds to his letter the title page, contents and first four pages of the *Restitutio*.

This letter led to the arrest of Servetus; and because Trie happened to be at Geneva, and on friendly terms with Calvin, it has been maintained that he was the direct cause of this arrest, and furnished the leaves of Servetus' Book for this purpose; just as if they might not have been obtained except from Calvin, and were not the common topics of remark in Geneva. Calvin's own express declaration in his *Refutatio*, that if he had caused this accusation he would readily confess it, not counting it any disgrace to have done it, is sufficient to exculpate him, where all evidence is wanting, if indeed there was not direct testimony in his favor. The most difficult point to understand is, how Trie knew the au-

thor and publisher of the work, of whom he speaks. He might perhaps have heard Calvin mention the author, for he of course recognized the work at once; but how should Calvin know better than any one else where and by whom the book was printed? It seems most probable, that Servetus, who had taken such precaution to ensure privacy, had some false friend at Vienne, who had made known these facts at Geneva.

When Servetus, in consequence of the information given by Arney, was summoned before the Inquisition at Vienne, he presented himself cheerfully, and having had time in two hours to put aside the papers which would witness against him, declared that he was ready to open his house to be searched; since he had always wished to remain free from all suspicion of heresy. Whether a flat denial of the authorship of the work in question, and this declaration of attachment to the church, was quite in accordance with the pretended conviction announced in the preface, especially in the words of invocation to the Son of God, we leave for every one to decide for himself. The house was searched according to Servetus' wish, and as a matter of course nothing was found which would criminate him. Gueroult was also subjected to an examination, but from him nothing was elicited. The printers were all asked if they recognized the leaves which were sent to Arney. All denied that they knew anything of them. When the catalogue of their works, printed within two years, was demanded, not an octavo was found among them. The servants and their families in the employment of Arnoulet were next examined, but to no purpose. On the following day Arnoulet returned from a journey, and was instantly summoned before the judges, but sufficient evidence was not found against the Spanish physician to warrant his arrest. It was, however, thought best to go to the root of the matter, and the inquisitor Ory, who had himself come to Vienne to manage this affair, wrote to Trie, asking him for the whole work of which he had sent the first leaves; affirming that "if there were credible grounds for it, they should see in Geneva that they in France loved the honor of God and of the faith, and were not so lax in their discipline as it had been imagined."

Trie in his answer, directed to Arney, said: "When I wrote you the letter which you have given to those of whose remissness I complained, I had no expectation that the matter would go so far. My intention was only to remind you what a beautiful zeal those have, who call themselves the pillars of the church, whilst

they suffer such disorder among themselves, and persecute so cruelly the poor Christians who desire to serve God in all simplicity.—Since my private correspondence has been made public, I pray God, that this at least may serve to free the world from such defilement; yea from such a deadly pestilence. The book itself I cannot send, but I place in your hands a better proof for the conviction of this man, namely, two dozen of written leaves in which some of his heresies appear. If his printed work were shown him, he might not acknowledge it as his, but he cannot deny his manuscript. I will, however, confess to you alone that I have had great difficulty in obtaining from Mr. Calvin what I send you. Not that he does not wish to have such damnable heresies suppressed, but because it appears to him to be his duty, who bears not the sword of justice, to oppose heretics by argument, rather than by such means. But I have been so importunate with him, showing him that the reproach of being an unjust accuser would rest upon me if he did not give me his aid, that he has finally yielded, and furnished me with that which I send to you."

These leaves spoken of in this letter, as will readily be imagined, were those which were sent back to Calvin with remarks, when he directed Servetus to his Institutes for an answer to some of his questions. The contents of this letter are interesting in several respects. They show that the communication which caused the arrest of Servetus was not intended for that purpose, and that Calvin had nothing to do with it. They furthermore show his hesitation, since he was not clothed with civil authority, to employ any other means than argument for the correction of errors in belief.

The proof sent by Trie was not, however, sufficient for the detention of Servetus, since he was called Villeneuve in Vienne, and the hand-writing could be set aside by a denial on oath. Arney accordingly again wrote to Trie, to give him better proof of the facts which he had alleged. The messenger arrived late at night on the last day of March, and Trie answered the request of Arney that night, saying that the manuscript copy of the work of Servetus was in Lausanne and could not be sent, but that in the last of the letters sent, Servetus was identified by defending himself for assuming the strange name. It was finally decided, that although positive proof was not adduced that Villeneuve was the author of the work in question, and Arnoullet the publisher, yet that they should be put in prison to await their trial. After

dinner on the same day of the arrest, the tribunal was assembled in the apartment where capital sentences were pronounced in the palace of Justice. The accused person was introduced and according to the custom of the time made to take oath upon the Gospel, that he would speak only the truth. But instead of acting in accordance with his solemn promise, he spoke anything but the truth. How pitiable and base was such conduct! How unworthy the name of man and especially of Christian! How art thou fallen, thou who didst claim to be one of Michael's host!

The tribunal asked for some explanations of the remarks upon the leaves of the Institutes, and Servetus was incautious enough to give them, thus implying that he was the author. When he found that he was entrapped, and that his life was in jeopardy, he expressed doubts whether he was the author of the remarks, and renounced his views so often expressed upon baptism, professed himself a believer in the Orthodox doctrine, and subjected himself in all things to the church as to his Holy Mother.

At the second examination the next day, when Servetus perceived that his letters to Calvin were before the judges, he lost all courage and in order to free himself from the dilemma, invented a falsehood, which was as foolish as it was dastardly. With many tears he said: "My Lords I will confess the truth. Five and twenty years ago when I was in Germany, there was printed at Hagenau a book of a certain Servetus, a Spaniard. I know not from whence he came. Since I corresponded with Calvin at that time, he wrote to me as Servetus, because there was a similarity in our persons, and I sustained his character. But for ten years I have not written him, and I protest before God and these Lords, that I have never published anything against the church or proclaimed doctrines counter to the Christian religion." Several letters were then shown in which his heretical dogmas were plainly expressed. He did not disown the letters, but supposed he had expressed the thoughts which came into his mind at the time, but which were no part of his settled belief. When the examination was resumed in the afternoon of the same day, other letters were read, to which he gave substantially the same answers as before: He did not assert what was found to be heretical in them, but only what his judges and the church would approve.

So much has been said by the enemies of Calvin, in reference to his betraying trust, by giving up Servetus' letters, that we cannot forbear to enumerate two or three of the circumstances which

have a bearing upon the matter, leaving our readers to draw their own conclusions in regard to his criminality. In the first place, the letters were forced upon Calvin, after he had desired to have no more communication with Servetus, and of course were not confidential letters. In the next place, a friend of Calvin, in defending his fellow Christians whose heroic martyr-cries were wafted to Geneva on every northern breeze, had brought upon himself the unjust suspicion of preferring false charges against one, who richly deserved them; and if his charge was not sustained, reproach would fall upon the truth, and the persecutor would be armed with new courage and new instruments of torture. Ought not then his earnest solicitations that Calvin would furnish the necessary documents for substantiating his assertions, to have been heeded? Would not Calvin have been recreant to his faith, if he had left Trie unaided? Besides, the contents of the letters, as far as they would be used at Vienne, were of public interest, and according to Calvin's convictions, of vital consequence to the church at large, and especially to the civil and religious community in Geneva. If then, by giving up the manuscripts which had been so ungraciously urged upon him, he could prevent the farther spread of impious and heretical dogmas, could he in conscience withhold them?¹

Considerable liberty had been granted to Servetus during his trial, and valuable presents, left for him by visitors who were permitted to see him in prison, show that he was not without friends in Vienne. Early the next morning after his last examination, he arose, dressed himself, and putting his dressing-gown over his other clothes, and a velvet cap upon his head, asked the jailor for the key to the garden in which he had been allowed to walk. It was readily given him, and the jailor went with the workmen

¹ As a good illustration of the wholesale slanders and falsehood which are but too common in speaking of Calvin, I quote a passage from the Speech of Lord Brougham on the Maynooth Grant, as given in the Boston Semi-Weekly Advertiser of Sat. June 28, 1845: "By acts of the most atrocious perfidy, by opening letters, he [Calvin] entrapped Servetus to Geneva, and there, because he suspected him of Socinian doctrines, after a mockery of a trial had him buried [burned?] alive." We suppose that "opening letters" must have reference to the giving up of the letters, mentioned above, for we have yet to learn that there is any special atrocity or perfidy, in opening letters addressed to one's self for personal perusal. That Calvin not only did not 'entrap Servetus to Geneva,' but even refused to grant him his protection if he came there, has already been seen. Furthermore, that there was something more than a "mockery of a trial," and that Servetus was far enough from being *buried* alive, we think, will appear in the sequel.

to the vineyard. Servetus had previously noticed, that it was easy to pass from this garden upon the roof of an out-building, and from that, upon a wall from which he could let himself down into the court of the royal palace, and escape thence through the gate and over the bridge of the Rhone. He accordingly made good use of his time and had been gone some hours before his absence was noticed. When it was found that he had gone, a frightful tumult was made about the prison and in the city. Doors were broken open and houses searched; but the captive was free. Nothing was heard of him until three days after, when a country-woman reported that she had seen him pass.

The trial proceeded after Servetus' escape, as if he had been present. The judges were at last persuaded that the *Restitutio* was printed in secret in Vienne. They then proceeded to make a synopsis of the errors contained in it, and on the 17th of June condemned its author to be burned at the stake. Until they could get possession of him, they decided that he should be burned in effigy. Arnoullet made it appear that he was assured by Gueroult that the *Restitutio* was an entirely harmless book, and was set at liberty. Gueroult probably saved himself by flight. On the same day in which the sentence was passed, the executioner carried the effigy of Servetus with five bales of books upon a cart, from the palace to the market place, and thence to the Place de Charneve, and there suspended it upon a gallows and caused it, with the books, to be slowly consumed by fire. The wealth which Servetus had acquired was found to be so considerable, that a nobleman applied to the king for it for his son, and his request was granted.

The Arrest and Trial of Servetus at Geneva.

Servetus, after his escape from Vienne, designed to go to Naples and establish himself as physician there. He did not venture to pass through Piedmont lest he should be discovered by his popish persecutors, and after wandering for a month in France, he took the route through Switzerland. About the middle of July at evening, a man was seen silently entering the gate of the ancient city of Geneva on foot, having left his horse at a small village near, where he had passed the preceding night. He stopped at a little Inn called *Auberge de la Rose*, upon the banks of the lake. There was something in the bearing of the stranger, in the enthusiasm which shone through his dark, glowing, south-

ern eye, in the ease and familiarity of his conversation, which attracted the notice of the people of the Inn and led them to attempt to learn something about him by questions. In answer to the inquiry whether he was married he replied: *On trouve bien assez de femmes sans se marier.* This man was soon seen going to the church where Mr. Calvin preached. To any one acquainted with the life of the stranger, the circumstances of his escape from Vienne, the admonition which he received in respect to coming to Geneva, especially if they had heard him say as he was accustomed to do, that it was by means of accusations made by Calvin that he was first arrested, his conduct should seem so unaccountable as to suggest the suspicion that he was

Insensate left, or to sense reprobate,
And with blindness internal struck.

No wonder is it that Calvin himself said: "*Nescio quid dicam, nisi fatali vesania fuisse correptum ut se praecepitem jaceret.*"

After remaining a month in Geneva, Servetus proposed to go to Zurich, and ordered a boat to convey him over the lake. But just as he had made preparations for departure on the 13th of August, 1553, a sheriff appeared and arrested him in the name of the council. How it became known that Servetus was in the city, does not appear. Some relate that he was recognized in church. Musculus says, that he wished to take advantage of the disaffection of some of the principal citizens against Calvin, in order to disseminate farther his own heretical principles and make disturbance. If it were so, his presence in the city would not probably long remain a secret from Calvin. Be this as it may, it seems that Calvin was the immediate cause of the arrest. He speaks of it in several letters, and expresses the firmest confidence that by taking measure, for silencing or causing a retraction of the blasphemous teachings of this man, he was rendering a service to God, to the church and to humanity. It is perfectly evident that Calvin felt it to be his imperative duty to inform the council that Servetus was in the city. Not only his love for the truth, but the civil law of the city which had come down from the previous dominion of the Emperors, requiring the infliction of the same punishment upon heretics and those guilty of high-treason, made it his duty to give this information to the council.¹ It appears, how-

¹ He says in his Refutation of the Errors of Servetus: *Nec sane dissimulatio mea opera consilioque jure in carcerem fuisse conjectum. Quia recepto hujus civitatis jure criminis reum peragere oportuit, causam hujusque me esse pro-*

ever, that Calvin had little expectation that the issue of the trial would be such as it proved to be, in consequence of the obstinacy and blindness of the Spaniard. Calvin wished only to prevent the evil which he believed the dissemination of such impious dogmas was causing, and had no malicious designs upon the life of his enemy. He says: "No danger of a more severe punishment threatened him, if he had only been reclaimable (*sana-bilis*)."—"I wish this only to be known, that I felt no such hostility to him that he could not have saved his life, by the simple exercise of discretion (*sola modestia*), if he had not been insane." He also later exclaims in sorrow for his fate: "if we could only have obtained from Servetus as from Gentilis a retraction!" Still he all the time felt that Servetus was deserving of the most summary punishment if he did not change his course. And thus during his trial, when speaking of his dogmas and his conduct, in letters to Farel, he frequently expresses the hope that he will receive capital punishment, but wishes it to be in a mild form.¹

Nicholas de la Fontaine, a student and scribe of Calvin, who had been six years with him, and was well grounded in theological knowledge,² immediately appeared as complainant, according to the Genevan law, that the accuser, in case the accused is found guiltless, shall subject himself to the punishment due to the crime for which the accusation is made. His arrest met with general approbation, for Servetus was looked upon by all good citizens as an outlaw. The next day after the arrest, La Fontaine, in order to show his heresy, brought forward thirty-eight (or forty) propositions which Calvin had prepared. To the first thirty-six articles Servetus freely answered, acknowledged himself the author of the *Restitutio*, and said that he did not think that he had uttered anything blasphemous, but if it could be shown that he had, he would retract. When objection was made to the seventh article, upon the Trinity, he professed to believe in a Trinity, but understood by person something different from the modern doctrine. His book was adduced as a proof, that by inveighing against Cal-

cutum fateor. And again: *Qui non dissimulo, me auctore factum esse ut in hac urbe deprehensus ad causam dicendam postularetur. Obstrepan licet vel malevoli vel maledici homines, ego libenter fateor ac prae me fero, (quia secundum urbis leges aliter cum homine jure agi non poterat,) ex me prodisse accusatorem.*

¹ *Spero capitale saltem fore judicium, poenae vero atrocitatem remitti cupio.*
Letter to Farel, Aug. 20, 1553.

² Not an ignorant servant, as the opponents of Calvin pretend.

vin he defamed the doctrine held in the city, and he replied: "that since Calvin had inveighed against him in many books, he had answered him and shown that he had erred in various respects."

At the second and some of the following examinations the attendance of all the clergy of the city was requested. The principal enemies of Calvin, the leaders of the Libertine party, were also present. Calvin defended all the points of the accusation with so much power and justice, that Servetus was driven to consequences, especially in reference to his pantheistical notions, which seemed little else than nonsensical and contradictory. In opposition to the principle of Servetus that all things were made of the substance of God, Calvin answered: "The devil then is substantially God." "Do you doubt it?" said Servetus scoffingly.—"God dwells in the devils. Yea more, in each devil are several Gods; since the Deity has been committed equally to them [in the process of formation] and to wood and stone."¹ Servetus addressed Calvin in this examination with unreasonable violence, and heaped reproaches and abuse upon him in the most insulting manner. In fine, not his dogmas only, but his whole bearing was such that his judges felt that he deserved punishment. La Fontaine was dismissed from prison upon the bail of Anthony Calvin, and Servetus was placed in close confinement.

It should be kept distinctly in mind during all this trial, that Calvin's authority was not dominant in Geneva. The Libertines had the ascendancy in the council of the Two Hundred, and used every exertion to destroy the influence of Calvin. But Calvin maintained a trusting and conciliatory spirit, notwithstanding the abuse which poured in upon him from all sides. His letters show that he was far more agitated by the disordered state of things at Geneva, the prevalence of vice, and by the frequent accounts of the wholesale butchery of the Protestants in France, than by anxiety in reference to the trial, which was managed by the government and not by himself. He, however, felt called upon to preach against the doctrines of the Spaniard, so as to prevent the farther contamination of the citizens, which the Libertines were exerting themselves to bring about. But it is ridiculous and false in the extreme, when he is reproached with rendering the prisoner's condition in captivity uncomfortable. In the first place the

¹ It is not strange that Servetus was thought guilty of blasphemy during this examination. He speaks of the Godhead as a "*Monstrum impossibile, Cerberum, monstrum Geryonis, tres illusiones Daemoniorum, bestiae trinitatem ignem infernalem esse apud Deum. Deum esse ipsam rerum universitatem.*"

care of him did not devolve upon Calvin, nor did he assume it; and further, the situation of Servetus was not so utterly comfortable as it might have been. Pen, ink and paper were furnished him, and Calvin loaned him whatever books he wanted from his own library, or obtained them for him from other sources.

During several of the examinations which soon ensued after his committal, different accusations were brought against the prisoner. The opinions of Capito and Oecolampadius, and of Melancthon, expressed in his *Locis*, were adduced. But Servetus replied that their opinion was not a judicial sentence upon him. His declaration of the false representations of Moses in the Pentateuch in reference to the fertility of Canaan, was also brought before the court. At first he denied, with truth, that he was the author of the words, for he had adopted them from a previous editor of Ptolemy; but when Calvin represented the dishonesty of using the works of another without credit, he angrily replied, that if he were the author of the passage in question, there was nothing wrong in it. This declaration called forth an able defence of the ancient historian from the Genevan reformer. Servetus' false interpretations of Scripture, especially the Messianic portions of the Old Testament, his blasphemous language in reference to the Trinity, his heresies in reference to baptism, his pantheistical views, all passed in review before the tribunal, and the consequences of such dogmas were expounded by Calvin. Servetus sometimes defended his positions and at other times, when he found no other way of escape, modified his earlier views. For example, he had affirmed previously that God's being was in all things, but now, he said, he would express himself differently: "God through his omnipresence is necessarily present to all things, yet these things themselves are not a part of God, but the prototype or idea or conception of all things is in God." On the fourth day of the examination the Syndics decided that the accusation was substantiated, and the judge Colladon proclaimed that there had been sufficient proof adduced, and the prisoner, according to custom, was given over to the chief procurator for further trial, as required by law.

After four days (Aug. 21) Servetus was again brought before the council. Calvin had not arrived, and a letter was read from Arnoullet to Vertet, bookseller at Chatillon, requesting him to burn all the copies of the work of the Spaniard which had been sent to Frankfort, for he had been deceived by Gueroult in reference to the nature of the contents of the book. When Calvin

and the rest of the clergy arrived, the examination commenced. Servetus, in a previous trial, had maintained that he advocated, in his *Restitutio*, the same doctrine in respect to the Trinity, which was held by the primitive Fathers. Calvin now came prepared to show that Ignatius, Polycarp, Irenaeus, Tertullian and others before the council of Nice, taught the same doctrine which was generally held by the church. When he argued from Justin, holding the volume in his hand, Servetus called for a Latin translation. Calvin answered that there was none. This apparent ignorance of the Greek language in one who was the editor of learned works, and made so much pretence of deriving his doctrines from the Fathers, appears very strange, and was not satisfactorily explained. The controversy turned upon the use of the word *ἐνώτασις* among the Fathers, Calvin maintaining that it indicated a real distinction of persons in the Godhead, and Servetus, that it only designated an external appearance. The discussion was a warm one, and Servetus finally dealt so much in personal invective, and was so devoid of all respect for either Calvin or the council, that even the judges were ashamed and grieved at his conduct.¹ Calvin, mindful of the dignity of character which belonged to him, rose up and with the other clergy left the tribunal. Thus this examination closed. Servetus desired to purchase several of the books which Calvin had brought in, and they were readily delivered to him.

At the commencement of the examination on the following day, Servetus presented a request to be released, since in the primitive church heretics were not tried before a civil tribunal, and besides, he had not made any trouble within the jurisdiction of Geneva. The procurator, however, proceeded with the examination of the previous day, and laid thirty questions before the prisoner, who now, seeing the danger of his position, begged with tears to be set at liberty; excusing himself for his last work, by pleading good intentions, and saying that he had no reference to the church of Germany or Geneva, but to the questions of the schools, in his harsh censures. He also retracted his errors upon infant baptism. The milder bearing of Servetus on this day, has been attributed to the absence of Calvin, who was never present at the trial, except in accordance with the request of the council.

The council was again assembled a few days after. The pro-

¹ Cum plenis buccis convitia subinde evomeret, quorum iudices ipsos pudebat ac pigebat, ab ejus insectatione obstinui.

carator decided, that the request of Servetus previously made, could not be granted, that the laws of the church required that heretics should be punished wherever found, and that he was not entitled to the services of an advocate. Servetus from this time began to show more courage and self-control. Yet he did not cease from his bitterness to Calvin, and sought every means of escape from his fate. He did not, however, entreat for favor as he had done before, when the decision in reference to his petition was made known to him, but declared that he would remain firm in his convictions.

It was decided to give the prisoner still another opportunity to plead his cause, and thirty-eight new questions were added to those before propounded to him. Calvin was present on this occasion, and Servetus again defended the position, that the ancient church did not punish heretics, excused his calumnies against the reformed preachers, and attempted to maintain his claim of agreement in opinion with Capito and Oecolampadius. He however affirmed that if he could be convinced by the Scriptures, he would change his opinions. As this had all along been the chief object of the trial, it was desired that an opportunity should be given for this purpose. But in the midst of these discussions, on the last day of August, the overseer of the prison where Servetus was confined in Vienne came, and requested that he might be given up to him, to be taken back to that city. The council decided that Servetus might have his choice, to go to Vienne or remain in Geneva. Falling upon his knees he begged, with copious tears, that the Syndics of Geneva might be his judges, and do with him as they should see best. On this day he repeated the unjust accusation which he had previously made against Calvin, that his hatred was the cause of his first arrest at Vienne and of all his sufferings. He however expressed his penitence for his hypocrisy, in pretending among the Catholics to adhere to those usages against which he had written with so much warmth. "I have sinned," he says, "the fear of death was the cause." The messenger returned to Vienne, after he had obtained proof, that Servetus escaped from prison without the knowledge of the officer under whom he was placed.

On the next day (Sept. 1), a messenger arrived from the lord in Vienne, whose son had received Servetus' property from the king, requesting him to name all his debtors, which he refused to do, as some of them were not able to pay. He was sustained in his refusal by the Syndics. On this same day Calvin went with

the clergy before the council, and began an argument to convince Servetus of his errors. To prevent any evasion he had taken all the questions out of the prisoner's own works. Servetus now pleaded that he was prevented by internal anxiety from employing himself about such things, and that the church, and not a civil tribunal, was a suitable place for the hearing of matters of faith; and besides, it was not proper to examine such questions while he was in prison. Calvin replied, that he, believing the cause to be a good one, would willingly defend it in the church, before all the people, but that it was lawfully brought before a civil tribunal according to the code of Justinian; and furthermore, the church were there by their representatives, the clergy. Servetus answered that the church first lost its innocence and purity in the time of Justinian, and that the church of Geneva could not judge him, as his enemy Calvin was its soul; he would joyfully submit himself to the decision of other churches. Calvin readily acceded to the proposition, that other churches should be consulted, but he and Servetus could not agree upon the manner in which the case was to be brought before them. Finally, in their absence, the council decided that Calvin should briefly state the errors of Servetus in Latin, and that he should answer them in the same language. An indefinite time, they decreed, should be given to the Spaniard, so that he might retract erroneous statements and correct those which were distorted, and the whole should be laid before the Swiss churches for their decision. The mildness and consideration of the council in this arrangement, is certainly deserving of commendation, and is a decisive evidence that they did not wish to condemn Servetus "after a mere mockery of a trial."

Calvin did not present his abstract of the heresies of the Spaniard, which was the work of one evening, until the end of fourteen days, in order to give him time to collect himself and become entirely calm. But this delay, which was intended for the benefit of the prisoner, proved his injury. He became impatient, and sent a petition to the council, in which he stated that he had been six weeks in prison in a wretched condition, and wished to have his cause brought before the Two Hundred, to whose decision he would submit. But a little while ago, it will be remembered, a civil tribunal was not a suitable place for deciding upon matters of faith; now it is demanded in preference to the churches. Why this change? If it could be made to appear that Servetus was guided, in any considerable degree, by firm principle, his

course would be a perfect enigma. But selfish ends are too prominent in his whole career. This change of views is accounted for by turning the attention, for a moment, to the party of the Libertines. They desired to make use of Servetus in crushing the influence of Calvin. Perrin was able to command the majority of voices in this council, and had undoubtedly communicated to the prisoner the situation of the city, and his reasons for hope of escape by means of the larger council.¹ The Syndics who had been so lenient and so ready to grant any proper request of the prisoner, now refused to accede to his wish, but gave command that he should be better cared for in prison.

Calvin finally presented to Servetus thirty-eight propositions, all taken from his last work without addition or remark. These of course did not include his objections to the inspiration of the Pentateuch, or his erroneous interpretations of Scripture, as these were contained only in previous works. Servetus' answer was more like the ravings of a maniac than the words of reason and truth. He exhibited a surprising indifference in regard to the erroneous doctrines which were imputed to him, and sought mainly for hard epithets to apply to Calvin. He accused him of being incapable of understanding the truth, of ignorance, of attempting to stun the hearing of the judges, merely by his noisy barking, of being a murderer and a disciple of Simon Magus. The margin of the paper containing the propositions, was covered with such expressions as the following: "Thou dreamest, thou liest," "Thou canst not deny that thou art Simon the sorcerer," etc. This spiteful answer² was handed back to the clergy for an reply, and the council, whose patience was becoming quite exhausted, allowed Calvin only two days in which to prepare it.

Calvin again confuted the errors of Servetus, especially in reference to the Trinity, showing that many of the proof-passages which he had adduced from the Fathers were directly against him, and that tried by their standard he was manifestly heretical in his views. He also reproached Servetus with his want of proofs for his dogmas, and his indulgence in personal invective against himself. Servetus sent in reply a writing to the council, in which he attempted to excuse himself for the marginal notes

¹ See proof of this in Henry's Calvin, III. 172.

² Waterman, in his *Life of Calvin*, p. 118, says of this reply of Servetus: "It is no presumption to say that in point of abuse and scurrility, this defence stands unrivalled, by any one that was ever made by any defendant, however infatuated, in the most desperate cause."

upon the propositions of Calvin, and another to Calvin himself, but they were of little importance in respect to the points in question. No further answer was made to him. All were dissatisfied and disappointed at his course, and his sincerity seemed almost impossible. His assertions of his convictions of duty and apparent firmness were too evidently the result of angry feeling towards Calvin, obstinacy in error, and especially a false hope of safety from the Libertines.

On the twenty-first of September, the writings interchanged between Calvin and Servetus, were sent with the *Restitutio* to the churches of Zurich, Berne, Basil and Schaffhausen. About a fortnight before, Calvin had written to Bullinger and acquainted him with all the circumstances of the case. He now wrote to Sulzer, preacher at Basil, in consequence of the enemies of the Genevans there, especially Castalio. After the communications were sent to the Swiss churches, the enemies of Calvin were unceasing in their exertions. They induced Servetus to issue a most singular protest against Calvin. He complained of him as a false accuser, an unworthy servant of God in consequence of his persecuting spirit, an enemy of Christ and a heretic. He says in the conclusion: "Therefore, my Lords, I demand that my false accuser be punished, 'poena talionis,' and be detained prisoner as I am, until the cause is determined by my death or his, or by some other punishment. For this purpose I inscribe myself against him on the said 'poena talionis', and am ready to die if he is not convicted of this [false accusation], as well as other things, which I shall allege against him. I demand justice of you my Lords, justice, justice, justice.—Done in your prison at Geneva, Sept. 22, 1553." The council did not of course give heed to the accusation, but merely committed it to the public registers. Servetus asked also, repeatedly, for audiences with the council, which were not granted. He also issued a complaint in reference to his unpleasant position in prison. Calvin in the mean time wrote to his friends, expressing his belief that the hostile party would attempt to carry some measure against the church by tumult, and he wished, at this most important juncture, for the aid of Farel and Viret. Yet he exhibited his characteristic reliance upon the justice of his cause, and the aid of a supreme Disposer of all events. He even mentions in his letters passing events, as a marriage, or the occasion of a festival, with all the ease and naturalness of one in perfect quiet. He did not seem like one standing upon ground where he knew were planted nets and

gins and all the paraphernalia of destruction, which a thousand eager eyes were watching to put in operation.

The case had not long been submitted to the Swiss churches, before the clergy had come to a decision, and it was noised abroad that they were opposed to Servetus. As a consequence, expostulations were sent to the magistrates to oppose the clergy. An anabaptist who lived at Basil under a feigned name, was especially active in this matter, saying, if the good and pious man as he thought Servetus to be, were a heretic, he should be admonished in a friendly manner, and then banished. But these admonitions were unavailing. Substantially the same answer was returned by all the churches: They wished that Servetus should be prevented from exerting an evil influence either in Geneva or elsewhere. Calvin says, and his assertion is borne out by the original documents which remain: "With one mouth, all declare that Servetus has again revived the impious errors, by which Satan in earlier ages distracted the church, and that he is a monster which cannot be endured." The Zurichers, he says in a letter to Farel, are "omnium vehementissimi" and the Basilians, "cordati." None of the churches specify distinctly in what manner punishment shall be inflicted, but they all feel it necessary that Servetus should in some way be prevented from doing further mischief, and that the Genevans by punishing him, should free themselves from the charge of holding heretical dogmas.

Servetus' Condemnation, last Days and Death.

After the answers were received from the churches, the Synods and the Council of Sixty were assembled, as sentence of death could not be pronounced but by a majority of the votes of these two bodies in joint session. Their deliberations continued three days. They were divided in opinion. Some preferred perpetual banishment, some imprisonment during life, but the majority desired the infliction of capital punishment, unless the prisoner should retract. But in what way should the execution be performed? The greater number finally decided, in accordance with the ancient law, in favor of punishment by fire. During these deliberations, Perrin feigned sickness and the factious party seemed to lose courage. But they again rallied, when it was too late. Perrin appeared, and attempted to obtain a reversion or suspension of the decision. "Our comic Caesar,"¹ says Calvin,

¹ Calvin was accustomed, according to Beza, to call Perrin "Caesar comi-

"after he had pleaded sickness for three days, finally showed himself again in the council, in order to free this wicked man from punishment. He did not blush to demand that the whole matter should be committed to the Two Hundred."—As soon as Calvin learned the decision of the council, he assembled the clergy, and they with him unanimously petitioned to fix upon a milder form of punishment. Thus Calvin showed until the last, that he had no malicious or vindictive feeling towards Servetus. The good of the church, he erroneously judged, required the destruction of so impious a heretic; he therefore rejoiced in the decision, but desired the object to be accomplished in the way that would cause the least suffering to the victim. He had previously expressed the same opinion to Farel, who was then in favor of severe measures. After this petition, he again wrote to Farel: "We have attempted to mitigate the severity of the condemnation, but in vain; the reason I will give when I see you." The entire refusal of the council to comply with so reasonable and merciful a request, was probably occasioned by the difficulty, in the distracted state of the little republic, of coming to such a decision, and the desire to avoid the protracted discussions which would ensue, if a change was attempted.

On the twenty-sixth day of October the jailor opened the door of the prison and the beadle entered unexpectedly to Servetus, and read to him the decision of the council, that "he should, on the following morning, be burned alive until his whole body become ashes." He was at first as dumb, as if a thunder bolt from on high had fallen upon him. Then, after deep sighs which resounded through the whole room in which he was, followed by most terrible moanings and howlings, he cried aloud: "mercy, mercy." But he soon composed himself, and showed signs of a repentant spirit. It is not related in what manner he passed the night following. The twenty-seventh of October dawned brightly and cheerfully upon that so variously agitated little community. The snow-capt mountains around, contrasting so beautifully with the greenness which still lingered in the valley, neither assumed a darker hue or sent forth a more chilling blast in sympathy with the sad scene that was that day to be enacted, and the distant glaciers clothed themselves even in unwonted brilliancy. Farel, deputed by Calvin to accompany the unfortunate man to his place

cus" and "Caesar tragicus," to designate his boldness, his love of power and his empty pretension. Mosheim, (*Gesch. Servet.* S. 192,) thinks that "tragicus" and "comicus" had special reference to his manner of speaking, at one time solemn and pompous, and at another sportive.

of execution, was present at seven o'clock and left an account of the occurrences of the day. The hearty old man was soon introduced into the prison, and, with all his roughness, surely a better companion for the last stage of his journey could not have been found by Servetus. Little asperities are easily passed over when a way is so soon and so abruptly to terminate, and a new course of existence so speedily to be entered upon.

Farel in his desire to lead the soul of the doomed man to true faith, began once more to confute his errors in respect to the Trinity, and then passed to an admonition to Christian affection. Servetus retained without change his previous explanation, and desired it to be proved from the Scriptures that Christ was called Son of God before his assumption of human nature. Farel argued with him, but he would not give up his delusion. "He had nothing to answer," it is said, "and yet he remained unyielding." This controversy continued a long time and as the hour of execution approached, Farel and some other of the clergy who were present, warned Servetus that if he would die like a Christian, he must become reconciled to Calvin whom he had treated in so hostile a manner. He assented, and Calvin was called in. When he appeared, attended by two of the Syndics, the prisoner received him quietly and with composure. The seriousness of his last hour aroused his conscience, checked his arrogance and subdued his anger. Calvin says: "When one of the councillors asked him what he desired of me, he said he wished to ask my forgiveness. I answered frankly and in accordance with the real truth, that I had never pursued any personal offence in him; with much mildness I reminded him, that sixteen years before I had used all my exertions even with apparent danger to my life, in order to enlist him on the side of our Lord; and it was not my fault that all the pious did not extend their fellowship to him, if he had only shown any discernment; that, although he took to flight, I still readily exchanged letters with him; that finally, no office of kindness was omitted on my part, until he, embittered by my free admonitions, had delivered himself up not so much to anger as to a real rage against me. But averting the conversation from myself, I besought him rather to direct his thoughts to the attainment of forgiveness from the eternal God whom he had terribly blasphemed, by striving to annihilate he three persons," etc.—Servetus made no reply, and the conclusion of the interview is given in the words of Calvin: "Since I by persuasions and warnings availed nothing, I wished not to be wise beyond the

direction of my master. I drew myself back from a man who sinned as a heretic, and in my heart I pronounced the judgment in Titus 3: 10, 11: 'A man that is an heretic, after the first and the second admonition, reject; knowing that he that is such, is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.' " After Calvin left, and some hours before his execution, Servetus smote upon his breast and invoked God with tears, calling upon Jesus Christ for pardon, and recognizing him as his Saviour. "The unfortunate man could not, however," says Farel, "be prevailed upon to confess that Christ is the Eternal Son of God, but only that he is the Son of God because of his miraculous conception."

The council was in session the whole morning, in order either to receive the retraction which they hoped Servetus would give, or to read to him the sentence that had been passed. He was brought before them, and the staff broken over him. When the sentence of the judge was read, he fell down at the feet of the magistrates and besought, that they would put an end to his life by the sword, in order that he might not through great pain be driven to desperation, and thus lose his own soul. If he had sinned he had done it unintentionally,—his desire had been to promote the glory of God. Farel interposing told him that he must in good faith confess his misdeeds, before he could hope for mercy. Servetus answered, that "he suffered unjustly and was led as a victim to slaughter, but he prayed to God, that he would be merciful to his persecutors." Farel felt so strongly that this was mere mockery in one who would act the part of martyr, that he could not silently endure it. He accordingly threatened Servetus if he continued in that strain, that he would leave him, and give him up to the judgment of God. Servetus was afterwards silent and no longer attempted to justify himself. This deeply affected the excitable Farel, and he now besought the council with tears to mitigate the severity of his punishment. But the council were so firmly convinced of his wickedness, that they remained immovable, and replied that the sentence could not be changed.

The hour for the execution having nearly arrived, Servetus might be seen with Farel and many others, descending with hesitating steps from the council-house, and proceeding towards the place of execution, on the Hill Champel, at a little distance from the city. Several times while on the way, he exclaimed, "O God, save my soul! Jesus, Son of the eternal God, have compassion upon me." But he could not be persuaded to call upon

the eternal Son of God. When they arrived in sight of the pile of oak-wood, which had been hastily prepared for the execution, Servetus threw himself upon the ground, and remained for some minutes in silent prayer. In the mean time Farel addressed the assembled multitude, saying: "You see what power Satan has when he takes possession of any one. This man is eminently learned, and perhaps supposed that he acted rightly, but he is now possessed by a devil, which may also happen to you."¹ Servetus then rose up, and Farel urged him to speak to the people. Deeply sobbing, he exclaimed, "O God, O God!" When asked by Farel if he had nothing else to say, he replied, "What else can I speak than of God." After saying to him that if he had any will to make, a notary was present, and inquiring if he had any messages to send to near friends, Farel again asked him if he would not request the people to implore God for him.¹ He finally was prevailed upon to make this request of those about him.² Farel then once more urged him to call upon the eternal Son of God, which he would not do; yet he did not again repeat his own belief, which Farel, in accordance with the spirit of the times, believed to be a special interposition of providence, whereby "Satan was hindered from uttering his blasphemies."

Whilst they were placing Servetus upon the pile, Farel admonished the people to pray for the unfortunate man, that the Lord would have mercy upon a creature lost and condemned, unless he was turned from his sad errors.—Unfortunately for Servetus, and as if to entirely thwart the wishes of Calvin and the other clergy, that he should die an easy death, the executioner of Geneva was less skilled in his terrible work, than those of many other places in that age. The pile was constructed of green oak wood covered with leaves, and Servetus was fastened upon it with the manuscript and a printed copy of his *Restitutio* tied to him. As soon as this had been done, the wretched man requested that his sufferings should be ended as speedily as possible. The fire was brought and soon enveloped its victim, who shrieked so piteously that the whole assembled multitude was exceedingly moved. And in consequence of the slow progress of the fire, persons from the crowd brought bundles of wood and threw

¹ See *Mosheim Gesch. des. M. Servet.* S. 449.

² This seems to have been urged by Farel, because Servetus had said, that the church at Geneva were without a God, and prayed to the devil.

them upon it. When the fire had well nigh accomplished its work, with a powerful voice the miserable man cried out: "Jesus thou Son of the eternal God, have mercy upon me." Thus, by the form of this petition, as was supposed, proclaiming with his last breath, the dogma, which more than any other had been the means of his wretched end, this ill fated man passed to receive an unerring sentence before a higher tribunal.—Sad indeed is the whole scene from the first examination before the council, until the fire had gone out upon Champel. But we do not see, if there must have been such a trial, how in the circumstances, it could have been conducted more fairly and kindly, both on the part of Calvin and the council. It is true, an advocate was refused Servetus, but it does not appear that it was from any ill-will to him. The whole examination, we suppose, was considered rather as a discussion or arbitration. The object was first to find what Servetus' views were, and then to attempt by argument to induce him to retract. Surely there was little occasion for an advocate in such a process.

Calvin's Defence of the Execution of Servetus.

In consequence of the execution of Servetus, much hatred was exhibited towards Calvin and the council of Geneva. Pamphlets in prose and verse were issued against them. They were reproached with establishing a new inquisition. Even if Christ should come to Geneva, it was said, he would be crucified. There was a pope there, as well as in Rome. At the same time the clergy preached against Servetus, and in justification of the course pursued in his punishment. But others contended that heretics should be confined in prison, or banished, or be allowed to go entirely free. Calvin did not for a time show that he took any notice of this ebullition of hostile feeling. He considered his opponents to be, as they really were at the time, although right in principle, enemies of good order who were best answered by silence. He did not think it important, he said, "to refute calumnies invented to asperse him by factious, foolish or malicious men or drunkards." But this feeling of hostility spread so much, that Bullinger urged him to defend the position, that it was the duty of magistrates to punish heretics. The danger of disunion in the church, which Calvin had labored so much to prevent, finally influenced him to publish, in French, his Work against Servetus. He first endeavored to show that magistrates were

under obligation to punish with death not those who were simply errorists, but those who wickedly and obstinately persisted in heresy and blasphemy. Even Servetus with all his boasted love of freedom, as appears from his *Restitutio*, defended this same principle.¹ In the second place, Calvin showed, from his life, his relation to himself, his trials before the civil authorities of Vienne and Geneva and from his works, that Servetus was justly denominated an irreclaimable heretic and a blasphemer, and consequently deserving of the punishment which he had received. All the Genevan preachers, fifteen in number, signed this writing and it was published.

This work caused much dissatisfaction, even among some who were not favorers of Servetus. It was objected that it was too brief for the difficulty and obscurity of the subject, and Calvin himself says in a letter to Bullinger, that his efforts to make the subject clear in so short a space are not entirely satisfactory. Some also reproach him for making Servetus' character a subject of remark after his death. A passage in a letter to Bullinger shows that he was far from any feeling of hatred or ill will to Servetus in this matter. "But I count it fortunate, that I have you as a partaker with me in this sin, if indeed it be a sin, for you are the proper author and *instigator* of it." Answers appeared to this work from various quarters, and the Libertines made use of the excited state of feeling for attempting to crush the influence of their enemy, but their efforts, as is well known, were fruitless.

The Voice of the Age in reference to the Execution of Servetus, and upon Toleration.

It has already been mentioned that the Swiss churches virtually recommended the course pursued by the council of Geneva. They seem to have believed that Servetus was possessed by Satan; and they accordingly desired to free themselves from the reproach of participation in his errors. The clergy of Zurich in their letter, after enumerating some of the proofs of the "pestilential errors and insufferable blasphemies" of Servetus, say: "We therefore judge that you need to exercise great faith and diligence in opposing this man, especially as our churches are reported abroad as being heretical and as favoring heretics. Surely the holy providence of God has, in the present case, afforded you an opportu-

¹ Hoc crimen [i. e. obstinate wickedness and blasphemy] est morte simpliciter dignum et apud deum et apud homines.

nity of freeing both yourselves and us from the vile suspicion of this crime, if you shall be vigilant, and promptly take care, that the contagion of his poisonous errors spread no further by his means." The letter from Schaffhausen is perhaps even more decided: "We doubt not," they say, "that you, in the exercise of your distinguished prudence, will suppress his attempts, in order that his blasphemies may not, like a cancer, feed upon the members of Christ. For what else is it, to oppose his ravings by long arguments, than to be insane with one who is insane."¹ But neither the opposition of the churches to him, nor that of the clergy and council of Geneva, was founded merely on his defence of dogmas, which they considered heretical. Laelius Socinus at Zurich was suffered to defend nearly the same dogma which was made most prominent in Servetus' trial, without molestation. If Servetus had only attacked the doctrine of the Trinity by arguments, he would have been answered by arguments; and without danger of persecution by the Protestants, he might have gone on defending it, until called to answer for his belief by him whose character he had impugned. Argument was not that which Calvin and his contemporaries opposed by the civil tribunal. It was insult and ribaldry, and that too, against the Most High, whose character they would defend in the midst of a perverse and rebellious generation. It cannot be denied that Servetus had done all in his power to provoke the feeling of the Christian church. It has been well said that "if ever a poor fanatic thrust himself into the fire, it was Michael Servetus."²

It has also been stated that the civil law, which had been in operation at Geneva from the time of the emperor Frederic II, required the punishment of heretics. This law, it should also be mentioned, was not repealed until long after the time of Calvin. The spirit of the Catholic church at this time is too well known to need any comment. Their whole course is stained with innocent blood. The year of Servetus' death is signalized by the triumph of a great number of martyrs in France. In May of that year, five students, who had gone from Geneva to proclaim the truth in different places in France, were burned. The condemnation of Servetus at Vienne was delayed by the Catholics, only by the want of proof that he was really the author of the work im-

¹ See the letters from which these extracts are made, as well as those from the other churches, in Calvin, *Opp. Omn. ed. Amst.*, Tom. IX. *Epistolae*, p. 72 sq.

² S. T. Coleridge, quoted in the *Bib. Repertory*, Vol. VIII. p. 94.

puted to him. This fact was known by the Protestants at Geneva, and yet months passed before they could decide upon his fate. How different the spirit manifested by the two parties, even where the Catholics had interest in showing unusual lenity!

But it is not necessary to go to the Catholic church to find parallels to the execution at Geneva. Scarcely three years had passed since the death fires had been kindled at Smithfield, in England, and the good bishop Cranmer had solicited Edward **H VI** to sign the death warrant of Joan of Kent and of George Van Pare. Let any unprejudiced person examine the conduct of Cranmer and his associates and that of Calvin, and say if he can, that one tithe of the cruelty and bigotry is exhibited by Calvin, that appears in the conduct of his neighbors across the channel. Observe, for a moment, Cranmer in company with the young king, who finally yields to the bishop's "arguments and eloquence," and with tears in his eyes says, that if he does wrong, the bishop must answer for it to God, as he signs the warrant for the burning of Joan of Kent only "in submission to his authority;" and then turn your attention to Calvin, as seen after the decision of the council, pleading before that body for a mitigation of its severe sentence. And yet the one case is scarcely known, whilst the other is in the mouth of every opponent of a system of doctrines, which is frequently as little understood as the private character of their author. The Lutheran church, too, cannot wash its hands in innocency in respect of this matter.¹

But our present object is rather to adduce the opinion of the other leaders in the Reformation, in reference to the punishment of Servetus. Zuingli, the year before his death, 1530, and consequently long before Servetus' character and dogmas were fully developed, in a conversation with Oecolampadius, said: "This is intolerable in the church of God; therefore strive in whatever way you can, not to allow his horrible blasphemies to spread abroad to the detriment of Christianity."² Reference has already been made to the opinion of Oecolampadius and Bucer.

Bullinger admonished Calvin in a most decided manner, to use his influence for the punishment of Servetus as a heretic. "The Lord," he says, "has delivered this Spaniard into the hands of your Senate. If then the council shall decree to this miscreant and blasphemer the punishment which he deserves, the whole

¹ See an account of the execution of Nicholas Crell and Peter Günther, Henry III. 223 sq.

² See Mosheim *Gesch. des M. Serveto*, p. 17 note.

world will see, that the Genevans hate blasphemers, that they pursue those heretics who persist in their obstinacy with the sword of righteousness, and avenge the honor of the Divine majesty." Again he says: "My mind is filled with horror when I recollect his heresy and his blasphemies, and I am persuaded that if Satan should come from hell and preach to the world according to his inclination, he would use many of the phrases of the Spaniard Servetus." In a letter written somewhat later to Calvin, Bullinger defends the principle that heretics must not only be restrained and imprisoned, but be put out of the way of injuring others, and expresses the thanks of his church for Calvin's work upon the subject, and adds: "I see not how it was possible to have spared Servetus, the most obstinate of men and the very hydra of heresy." Farel's exhortations to Calvin in favor of severe measures, have been repeatedly noticed, and the feeling of Viret and Beza, it is hardly necessary to say, was entirely in accordance with that of Calvin.¹

Three years after the execution, Peter Martyr gives the following judgment in reference to Servetus: "I have nothing else to say of him, than that he was a genuine child of the devil, whose pestilential and horrible doctrine must everywhere be put down; and the magistrates who condemned him to death, are not to be blamed, since no indications of amendment could be seen in him, and his blasphemies were in no manner to be endured."

But there is one other opinion upon this case, which is still more to the point, and may be taken as an exponent of the feeling of the German reformers; that of the good and gentle Melancthon, then so far advanced in age and experience, as to exclude all danger of hasty judgment. "Most honored man and very dear brother," he writes to Calvin, "I have read your work in which you well oppose the horrible blasphemies of Servetus, and I thank the Son of God, who has been an arbiter and guide of your struggle. To you the church of Christ is now, and will be in all future time, under obligation. I am entirely of your opinion, and I also affirm that your magistrates have acted rightly, in putting this blasphemer to death, after having gone through the trial according to law." In a letter to Bullinger, after commending the piety and judgment exhibited in his writings against Servetus, and expressing his own decided convictions in favor of

¹ See Henry, 111.215 sq.; Beza, *Calvini Vita*; and *Epistola et Responsa, Calvini Opp. Omn.* Tom. IX. ed Amst.

the Genevan council, he adds: "I have been surprised that there are men who blame this severity."²

We have given but a small part of the testimony which might be adduced to show that the course of Calvin and the council of Geneva was approved by the leading men of the time, but it is deemed unnecessary to dwell longer upon a topic, which is far from being a pleasant one. It is exceedingly to be regretted that this remnant of popery had not been cast off with many of its other errors, but it is not strange that the accumulated contaminations of the dark ages were not all purged away at once.

Degree of Calvin's Criminality in respect of his treatment of Servetus.

We have endeavored to give an impartial sketch of the Life of Servetus and Calvin's relation to him, as far as the limits which we have assigned to ourselves would permit. A recapitulation of some of the principal points of the discussion, with special regard to the conduct of Calvin, may not be inappropriate before we close. The character of Servetus is not without interest. It is cheerfully conceded, that he was possessed of superior powers of mind, a versatility which falls to the lot of but few of the children of men, and varied acquirements. But he was restless and unstable, obstinate under restraint, ambitious of distinction, and not sufficiently conscientious in reference to the means of accomplishing his purposes. He seems to have been desirous of signalizing himself as a reformer, and was impatient to find his course entirely hedged up by another. Becoming more violent and contumacious by opposition, he impugned with ribaldry those doctrines which were held sacred by the church. He was finally arrested at Vienne by the Catholics, without the knowledge or connivance of Calvin. But in order to enable a friend to defend his character for integrity, which was brought into jeopardy, in defence of the persecuted Protestants in France, Calvin, by presenting leaves of his Institutes, which had been sent to him with blasphemous and insulting notes upon the margin, and by giving up letters which had been forced upon him contrary to his will, furnished proof that Servetus was the author of a vile book which had been secretly issued. After the clandestine escape of Servetus from Vienne, and after he had been condemned and burned in effigy there, he was arrested at Geneva, at the acknowledged

² See Henry, *Calvini Opp. Omn.*, etc., as quoted above.

suggestion of Calvin, and every means was used to convince him of his errors. Although he often attacked Calvin during his trial with the most abusive language, he received from him kind and Christian treatment. Calvin always showed himself free from personal animosity, or desire of personal revenge, and sought only the advancement of the cause of truth. He says in his Defence of the treatment of Servetus: "I wish his errors were buried. But while I hear that they are spreading, I cannot be silent without incurring the guilt of perfidy.—Those things which were done by the Senate, are by many ascribed to me. Nor do I at all dissemble that by my influence and advice, he was by the civil power, committed to prison. For having received the freedom of this city I was bound to impeach him, if guilty of any crime. I confess that I prosecuted the case thus far. From the time that the articles were proved against him, I never uttered a word concerning his punishment. To this fact all good men will bear me witness, and I challenge the wicked to produce whatever they know."¹ These declarations of Calvin himself, made and published at Geneva, and to the world, very soon after the trial, are substantiated by the minute accounts which remain, of all the proceedings against the prisoner. It is believed that not a single well authenticated fact can be adduced, which is inconsistent with the sincere and earnest desire of Calvin for the retraction and repentance of Servetus; but on the contrary, all proper exertions were made by him for this end. At the request of the prisoner, the case was submitted to the Swiss churches, who were unanimous in recommending the suppression of his heresies in some way or other. The execution took place after the repeated solicitation of Calvin for a milder form of punishment, and the conduct of the council in condemning and executing Servetus, was approved by all the leading men among the reformers. Similar punishment was inflicted upon heretics in Germany, England and in other countries where the tenets of the Reformation prevailed.

What then is the decision to which we come in reference to the guilt or innocence of Calvin? It is deemed entirely unnecessary even to mention numerous slanders which have been repeated against him in reference to this matter. The facts in the case are a sufficient confutation of them. Why should Calvin be singled out, as he has often been, as the only person in all

¹ Quoted in Waterman's *Life of Calvin*, p. 93.

antiquity who was in favor of intolerance? Why is the case of Servetus alone mentioned, whilst many others, who were at least no worse than he, suffered the same punishment, without anything like so equitable a trial. It certainly cannot be because there was any peculiar atrocity in this case. Mr. Waterman challenges an opponent¹ of Calvin "to name, not merely in the annals of persecution, but even in the records of criminal justice, an instance of more moderation and liberality, than was exercised by the magistrates of Geneva in the trial of Servetus. Let this learned historian," he continues, "lay his finger on the page of the history of any man, who has been burnt for his religious opinions or writings, that was not a victim to more cruel tyranny and treated with less moderation than that Spaniard." It cannot be denied that the prominence of the actors has contributed to the notoriety of this case. But that the hatred of some of the doctrines of Calvin, has had much more influence seems equally indisputable.² Errorists of different grades, have for a long time been accustomed, when all other arguments fail, to come back upon this, "Calvin burned Servetus." Even the Catholics have shielded themselves, when reproached for want of tolerance, under this poor defence, "Calvin burned Servetus;" as if this one death-fire at Geneva, outshone the myriads that were kindled by their hands throughout Christendom, and this one victim overshadowed the hecatombs of their offerings, the smoke of whose burnings, has gone up as a loathing and an abomination before the Most High God.

The testimony of such men as Francis Turretin and Bishop Hall, who entirely approved of the course pursued in the punishment of Servetus might be quoted, but we will conclude our discussion, already perhaps too much protracted, after quoting the opinion of Dr. Thomas M' Crie, who had thoroughly examined the subject, and had commenced writing a life of Calvin before his death. "I have no doubt," he says, "that, according to the laws in force at Geneva, as well as elsewhere, the punishment of Servetus, on his being found guilty, was a matter of course; nor do I think it can be proved that Calvin did anything in that affair but what he was bound to do, agreeably to those laws, and his own views of Scripture and civil jurisprudence. My objections are

¹ Mr. William Roscoe, whose unjust attack upon Calvin, in a note to his *Life and Pontificate of Leo X.*, Mr. Waterman has very warmly and triumphantly repelled in his *Life of Calvin*, pp. 106—120.

² See Waterman, p. 127 sq.

to the law itself, which authorizes the capital punishment of heretics.— Had the law been against blasphemy, or heresy assuming that form, much might be said in favor of punishing those who rail at or revile the Being whom the State adored, and certainly Servetus was chargeable with this high offence.—Considering the nature of the heretic's conduct, the odium which Geneva had contracted as a receptacle of heretics, and the outcry which had been made against Calvin as an anti-trinitarian, I would have justified the council of Geneva for punishing Servetus, or detaining him in prison. But besides the horror that I feel at blood or fire in anything immediately connected with religion, I am afraid of any principle which leads either to persecution, or to a confounding of the objects of civil and ecclesiastical jurisdiction."¹

Is it right, we ask, to try a man belonging to the sixteenth century by a jury belonging to the nineteenth? Nothing is plainer than that in order to judge intelligently of a person's conduct, we must know the influences which act upon him and the motives by which he is urged to action. It cannot be denied that the measure of Calvin's guilt is that of all the best men of the age. If he deserves the reprobation which he has often received, not one of the early reformers can escape it. We should not forget, in making up our decision upon this case, that Roger Williams had not then lived, and that the great secret of toleration which was first discovered on our own shores, was then shrouded in darkness. Who is sure that if he had lived at the same time, and in the same circumstances, he should have conducted, with as great moderation as Calvin. Who will cast the first stone? If any, let him look well to himself and inquire what manner of spirit he is of. For intolerance in judging those, whose motives we cannot fully appreciate, is allied in its nature to persecution for heretical opinions. Fortunate are we in living at an age when we are not exposed to the temptations which assailed the pioneers of the reformation. We ought ever to rejoice that a more excellent way is discovered, for the treatment of those who differ from the established maxims of the community in religious belief. Where arguments are of no avail, neglect is a far better antidote for heresy than the civil tribunal; and the insane retreat is often a good substitute for the criminal prison, and kind treatment, for the gibbet or the flames.

¹ *Life of Thomas M'Crie, D. D.*, by his son, Edinburgh, 1840, pp 381, 2.