

# HISTORY of the CHRISTIAN CHURCH

BY

PHILIP SCHAFF, D.D., LL.D.

## HISTORY

OF

## THE SWISS REFORMATION IN TWO VOLUMES

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### § 137. Calvin and Servetus.

We now come to the dark chapter in the history of Calvin which has cast a gloom over his fair name, and exposed him, not unjustly, to the charge of intolerance and persecution, which he shares with his whole age.

The burning of Servetus and the *decretum horribile* are sufficient in the judgment of a large part of the Christian world to condemn him and his theology, but cannot destroy the rock-like foundation of his rare virtues and lasting merits. History knows only of one spotless being—the Saviour of sinners. Human greatness and purity are spotted by marks of infirmity, which forbid idolatry. Large bodies cast large shadows, and great virtues are often coupled with great vices.

Calvin and Servetus—what a contrast! The best abused men of the sixteenth century, and yet direct antipodes of each other in spirit, doctrine, and aim: the reformer and the deformer; the champion of orthodoxy and the arch-

heretic; the master architect of construction and the master architect of ruin, brought together in deadly conflict for rule or ruin. Both were men of brilliant genius and learning; both deadly foes of the Roman Antichrist; both enthusiasts for a restoration of primitive Christianity, but with opposite views of what Christianity is.

They were of the same age, equally precocious, equally bold and independent, and relied on purely intellectual and spiritual forces. The one, while a youth of twenty-seven, wrote one of the best systems of theology and vindications of the Christian faith; the other, when scarcely above the age of twenty, ventured on the attempt to uproot the fundamental doctrine of orthodox Christendom. Both died in the prime of manhood, the one a natural, the other a violent, death.

Calvin's works are in every theological library; the books of Servetus are among the greatest rarities. Calvin left behind him flourishing churches, and his influence is felt to this day in the whole Protestant world; Servetus passed away like a meteor, without a sect, without a pupil; yet he still eloquently denounces from his funeral pile the crime and folly of religious persecution, and has recently been idealized by a Protestant divine as a prophetic forerunner of modern christo-centric theology.

Calvin felt himself called by Divine Providence to purify the Church of all corruptions, and to bring her back to the Christianity of Christ, and regarded Servetus as a servant of Antichrist, who aimed at the destruction of Christianity. Servetus was equally confident of a divine call, and even identified himself with the archangel Michael in his apocalyptic fight against the dragon of Rome and "the Simon Magus of Geneva."

A mysterious force of attraction and repulsion brought these intellectual giants together in the drama of the Reformation. Servetus, as if inspired by a demoniac force, urged himself upon the attention of Calvin, regarding him as the pope of orthodox Protestantism, whom he was determined to convert or to dethrone. He challenged Calvin in Paris to a disputation on the Trinity when the latter had scarcely left the Roman Church, but failed to appear at the appointed place and hour. He bombarded him with letters from Vienne; and at last he heedlessly rushed into his power at Geneva, and into the flames which have immortalized his name.

The judgment of historians on these remarkable men has undergone a great change. Calvin's course in the tragedy of Servetus was fully approved by the best men in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It is as fully condemned in the nineteenth century. Bishop Bossuet was able to affirm that all Christians were happily agreed in maintaining the rightfulness of the death penalty for obstinate heretics, as murderers of souls. A hundred years later the great historian Gibbon echoed the opposite public sentiment when he said: "I am more deeply scandalized at the single execution of Servetus than at the hecatombs which have blazed at auto-da-fés of Spain and Portugal."

It would be preposterous to compare Calvin with Torquemada. But it must be admitted that the burning of Servetus is a typical case of Protestant persecution, and makes Calvin responsible for a principle which may be made to justify an indefinite number of applications. Persecution deserves much severer condemnation in a Protestant than in a Roman Catholic, because it is inconsistent. Protestantism must stand or fall with freedom of conscience and freedom of worship.

From the standpoint of modern Christianity and civilization, the burning of Servetus admits of no justification. Even the most admiring biographers of Calvin lament and disapprove his conduct in this tragedy, which has spotted his fame and given to Servetus the glory of martyrdom.

But if we consider Calvin's course in the light of the sixteenth century, we must come to the conclusion that he acted his part from a strict sense of duty and in harmony with the public law and dominant sentiment of his age, which justified the death penalty for heresy and blasphemy, and abhorred toleration as involving indifference to truth. Even Servetus admitted the principle under which he suffered; for he said, that incorrigible obstinacy and malice deserved death before God and men.

Calvin's prominence for intolerance was his misfortune. It was an error of judgment, but not of the heart, and must be excused, though it cannot be justified, by the spirit of his age.

Calvin never changed his views or regretted his conduct towards Servetus. Nine years after his execution he justified it in self-defence against the reproaches of Baudouin (1562), saying: "Servetus suffered the penalty due to his heresies, but was it by my will? Certainly his arrogance destroyed him not less than his impiety. And what crime was it of mine if our Council, at my exhortation, indeed, but in conformity with the opinion of several Churches, took vengeance on his execrable blasphemies? Let Baudouin abuse me as long as he will, provided that, by the judgment of Melanchthon, posterity owes me a debt of gratitude for having purged the Church of so pernicious a monster."

In one respect he was in advance of his times, by recommending to the Council of Geneva, though in vain, a mitigation of punishment and the substitution of the sword for the stake.

Let us give him credit for this comparative moderation in a semi-barbarous age when not only hosts of heretics, but even innocent women, as witches, were cruelly tortured and roasted to death. Let us remember also that it was not simply a case of fundamental heresy, but of horrid blasphemy, with which he had to deal. If he was mistaken, if he misunderstood the real opinions of Servetus, that was an error of judgment, and an error which all the Catholics and Protestants of that age shared. Nor should it be overlooked that Servetus was convicted of falsehood, that he overwhelmed Calvin with abuse, and that he made common cause with the Libertines, the bitter enemies of Calvin, who had a controlling influence in the Council of Geneva at that time, and hoped to overthrow him.

It is objected that there was no law in Geneva to justify the punishment of Servetus, since the canon law had been abolished by the Reformation in 1535; but the Mosaic law was not abolished, it was even more strictly enforced; and it is from the Mosaic law against blasphemy that Calvin drew his chief argument.

On the other hand, however, we must frankly admit that there were some aggravating circumstances which make it difficult to reconcile Calvin's conduct with the principles of justice and humanity. Seven years before the death of Servetus he had expressed his determination not to spare his life if he should come to Geneva. He wrote to Farel (Feb. 13, 1546): "Servetus lately wrote to me, and coupled with his letter a long volume of his delirious fancies, with the Thrasonic boast, that I should see something astonishing and unheard of. He offers to come hither, if it be agreeable to me. But I am unwilling to

pledge my word for his safety; for if he does come, and my authority be of any avail, I shall never suffer him to depart alive.” It was not inconsistent with this design, if he aided, as it would seem, in bringing the book of Servetus to the notice of the Roman inquisition in Lyons. He procured his arrest on his arrival in Geneva. He showed personal bitterness towards him during the trial. Servetus was a stranger in Geneva, and had committed no offence in that city. Calvin should have permitted him quietly to depart, or simply caused his expulsion from the territory of Geneva, as in the case of Bolsec. This would have been sufficient punishment. If he had recommended expulsion instead of decapitation, he would have saved himself the reproaches of posterity, which will never forget and never forgive the burning of Servetus.

In the interest of impartial history we must condemn the intolerance of the victor as well as the error of the victim, and admire in both the loyalty to conscientious conviction. Heresy is an error; intolerance, a sin; persecution, a crime.

### § 138. Catholic Intolerance.

Comp. vol. VI. §§ 11 and 12 (pp. 50–86), and Schaff: *The Progress of Religious Liberty as shown in the History of Toleration Acts*. New York, 1889.

This is the place to present the chief facts on the subject of religious toleration and intolerance, which gives to the case of Servetus its chief interest and importance in history. His theological opinions are of far less consequence than his connection with the theory of persecution which caused his death.

Persecution and war constitute the devil’s chapter in history; but it is overruled by Providence for the development of heroism, and for the progress of civil and religious freedom. Without persecutors, there could be no martyrs. Every church, yea, every truth and every good cause, has its martyrs, who stood the fiery trial and sacrificed comfort and life itself to their sacred convictions. The blood of martyrs is the seed of toleration; toleration is the seed of liberty; and liberty is the most precious gift of God to every man who has been made in his image and redeemed by Christ.

Of all forms of persecution, religious persecution is the worst because it is enacted in the name of God. It violates the sacred rights of conscience, and it rouses the strongest and deepest passions. Persecution by word and pen, which springs from the hatred, envy, and malice of the human heart, or from narrowness and mistaken zeal for truth, will continue to the end of time; but persecution by fire and sword contradicts the spirit of humanity and Christianity, and is inconsistent with modern civilization. Civil offences against the State deserve civil punishment, by fine, imprisonment, confiscation, exile, and death, according to the degree of guilt. Spiritual offences against the Church should be spiritually judged, and punished by admonition, deposition, and excommunication, with a view to the reformation and restoration of the offender. This is the law of Christ. The temporal punishment of heresy is the legitimate result of a union of Church and State, and diminishes in rigor as this union is relaxed. A religion established by law must be protected by law. Hence the Constitution of the United States in securing full liberty of religion, forbids Congress to establish by law any religion or church. The two were regarded as inseparable. An established church must in self-defence persecute dissenters, or abridge

their liberties; a free church cannot persecute. And yet there may be as much individual Christian kindness and charity in an established church, and as much intolerance and bigotry in a free church. The ante-Nicene Fathers had the same zeal for orthodoxy and the same abhorrence of heresy as the Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers, the mediaeval popes and schoolmen, and the Reformers; but they were confined to the spiritual punishment of heresy. In the United States of America persecution is made impossible, not because the zeal for truth or the passions of hatred and intolerance have ceased, but because the union between Church and State has ceased.

The theory of religious persecution was borrowed from the Mosaic law, which punished idolatry and blasphemy by death. "He that sacrificeth unto any god, save unto Jehovah only, shall be utterly destroyed." He that blasphemeth the name of Jehovah, he shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as the home-born, when he blasphemeth the name of Jehovah, shall be put to death."

The Mosaic theocracy was superseded in its national and temporal provisions by the kingdom of Christ, which is "not of this world." The confounding of the Old and New Testaments, of the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ, was the source of a great many evils in the Church.

The New Testament furnishes not a shadow of support for the doctrine of persecution. The whole teaching and example of Christ and the Apostles are directly opposed to it. They suffered persecution, but they persecuted no one. Their weapons were spiritual, not carnal. They rendered to God the things that are God's, and to Caesar the things that are Caesar's. The only passage which St. Augustin could quote in favor of coercion, was the parabolic "Constrain them to come in" (Luke 14:23), which in its literal acceptance would teach just the reverse, namely, a forced salvation. St. Thomas Aquinas does not quote any passage from the New Testament in favor of intolerance, but tries to explain away those passages which commend toleration (Matt. 13:29, 30; 1 Cor. 11:19; 2 Tim. 2:24). The Church has never entirely forgotten this teaching of Christ and always, even in the darkest ages of persecution, avowed the principle, "*Ecclesia non sitit sanguinem*"; but she made the State her executor.

In the first three centuries the Church had neither the power nor the wish to persecute. Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and Lactantius were the earliest advocates of the liberty of conscience. The Toleration Edict of Constantine (313) anticipated the modern theory of the right of every man to choose his religion and to worship according to his conviction. But this was only a step towards the union of the empire with the Church, when the Church assumed the position and power of the heathen state religion.

The era of persecution within the Church began with the first Oecumenical Council, which was called and enforced by Constantine. This Council presents the first instance of a subscription to a creed, and the first instance of banishment for refusing to subscribe. Arius and two Egyptian bishops, who agreed with him, were banished to Illyria. During the violent Arian controversies, which shook the empire between the first and second Oecumenical Councils (325–381), both parties when in power freely exercised persecution by imprisonment, deposition, and exile. The Arians were as intolerant as the orthodox. The practice furnished the basis for a theory and public law.

The penal legislation against heresy was inaugurated by Theodosius the Great after the final triumph of the Nicene Creed in the second Oecumenical

Council. He promulgated during his reign (379–395) no less than fifteen severe edicts against heretics, especially those who dissented from the doctrine of the Trinity. They were deprived of the right of public worship, excluded from public offices, and exposed, in some cases, to capital punishment. His rival and colleague, Maximus, put the theory into full practice, and shed the first blood of heretics by causing Priscillian, a Spanish bishop of Manichaean tendency, with six adherents, to be tortured, condemned, and executed by the sword.

The better feeling of the Church raised in Ambrose of Milan and Martin of Tours a protest against this act of inhumanity. But public sentiment soon approved of it. Jerome seems to favor the death penalty for heresy on the ground of Deut. 13:6–10. The great Augustin, who had himself been a Manichaean heretic for nine years, justified forcible measures against the Donatists, in contradiction to his noble sentiment: “Nothing conquers but truth, the victory of truth is love.” The same Christian Father who ruled the thinking of the Church for many centuries, and moulded the theology of the Reformers, excluded all unbaptized infants from salvation, though Christ emphatically included them in the kingdom of heaven. Leo I., the greatest of the early popes, advocated the death penalty for heresy and approved of the execution of the Priscillianists. Thomas Aquinas, the master theologian of the Middle Ages, lent the weight of his authority to the doctrine of persecution, and demonstrated from the Old Testament and from reason that heretics are worse criminals than debasers of money, and ought to be put to death by the civil magistrate. Heresy was regarded as the greatest sin, and worse than murder, because it destroyed the soul. It took the place of idolatry in the Mosaic law.

The Theodosian Code was completed in the Justinian Code (527–534); the Justinian Code passed into the Holy Roman Empire, and became the basis of the legislation of Christian Europe. Rome ruled the world longer by law and by the cross than she had ruled it by the sword. The canon law likewise condemns to the flames persons convicted of heresy. This law was generally accepted on the Continent in the thirteenth century. England in her isolation was more independent, and built society on the foundation of the common law; but Henry IV. and his Parliament devised the sanguinary statute *de haeretico comburendo*, by which William Sawtre, a parish priest, was publicly burnt at Smithfield (Feb. 26, 1401) for denying the doctrine of transubstantiation, and the bones of Wiclif were burnt by Bishop Fleming of Lincoln (in 1428). The statute continued in force till 1677, when it was formally abolished.

On this legal and theological foundation the mediaeval Church has soiled her annals with the blood of an army of heretics which is much larger than the army of Christian martyrs under heathen Rome. We need only refer to the crusades against the Albigenses and Waldenses, which were sanctioned by Innocent III., one of the best and greatest of popes; the tortures and autos-da-fé of the Spanish Inquisition, which were celebrated with religious festivities; the fifty thousand or more Protestants who were executed during the reign of the Duke of Alva in the Netherlands (1567–1573); the several hundred martyrs who were burned in Smithfield under the reign of the bloody Mary; and the repeated wholesale persecutions of the innocent Waldenses in France and Piedmont, which cried to heaven for vengeance.

It is vain to shift the responsibility upon the civil government. Pope Gregory XIII. commemorated the massacre of St. Bartholomew not only by a Te

Deum in the churches of Rome, but more deliberately and permanently by a medal which represents "The Slaughter of the Huguenots" by an angel of wrath. The French bishops, under the lead of the great Bossuet, lauded Louis XIV. as a new Constantine, a new Theodosius, a new Charlemagne, a new exterminator of heretics, for his revocation of the Edict of Nantes and the infamous dragoonades against the Huguenots.

Among the more prominent individual cases of persecution, we may mention the burning of Hus (1415) and Jerome of Prague (1416) by order of the Council of Constance, the burning of Savonarola in Florence (1498), the burning of the three English Reformers at Oxford (1556), of Aonio Paleario at Rome (1570), and of Giordano Bruno (1600) in the same city and on the same spot where (1889) the liberals of Italy have erected a statue to his memory. Servetus was condemned to death at the stake, and burnt in effigy, by a Roman Catholic tribunal before he fell into the hands of Calvin.

The Roman Church has lost the power, and to a large extent also the disposition, to persecute by fire and sword. Some of her highest dignitaries frankly disown the principle of persecution, especially in America, where they enjoy the full benefit of religious freedom. But the Roman curia has never officially disowned the theory on which the practice of persecution is based. On the contrary, several popes since the Reformation have indorsed it. Pope Clement VIII. denounced the Toleration Edict of Nantes as "the most accursed that can be imagined, whereby liberty of conscience is granted to everybody; which is the worst thing in the world." Pope Innocent X. "condemned, rejected, and annulled" the toleration articles of the Westphalian Treaty of 1648, and his successors have ever protested against it, though in vain. Pope Pius IX., in the Syllabus of 1864, expressly condemned, among the errors of this age, the doctrine of religious toleration and liberty. And this pope has been declared to be officially infallible by the Vatican decree of 1870, which embraces all his predecessors (notwithstanding the stubborn case of Honorius I.) and all his successors in the chair of St. Peter. Leo XIII. has moderately and cautiously indorsed the doctrine of the Syllabus.

### § 139. Protestant Intolerance. Judgments of the Reformers on Servetus.

The Reformers inherited the doctrine of persecution from their mother Church, and practised it as far as they had the power. They fought intolerance with intolerance. They differed favorably from their opponents in the degree and extent, but not in the principle, of intolerance. They broke down the tyranny of popery, and thus opened the way for the development of religious freedom; but they denied to others the liberty which they exercised themselves. The Protestant governments in Germany and Switzerland excluded, within the limits of their jurisdiction, the Roman Catholics from all religious and civil rights, and took exclusive possession of their churches, convents, and other property. They banished, imprisoned, drowned, beheaded, hanged, and burned Anabaptists, Antitrinitarians, Schwenkfeldians, and other dissenters. In Saxony, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark no religion and public worship was allowed but the Lutheran. The Synod of Dort deposed and expatriated all Arminian ministers and school-teachers. The penal code of Queen Elizabeth and the successive acts of Uniformity aimed at the complete extermination of all

dissent, whether papal or protestant, and made it a crime for an Englishman to be anything else than an Episcopalian. The Puritans when in power ejected two thousand ministers from their benefices for non-conformity; and the Episcopalians paid them back in the same coin when they returned to power. "The Reformers," says Gibbon, with sarcastic severity, "were ambitious of succeeding the tyrants whom they had dethroned. They imposed with equal rigor their creeds and confessions; they asserted the right of the magistrate to punish heretics with death. The nature of the tiger was the same, but he was gradually deprived of his teeth and fangs."

Protestant persecution violates the fundamental principle of the Reformation. Protestantism has no right to exist except on the basis of freedom of conscience.

How, then, can we account for this glaring inconsistency? There is a reason for everything. Protestant persecution was necessary in self-defence and in the struggle for existence. The times were not ripe for toleration. The infant Churches could not have stood it. These Churches had first to be consolidated and fortified against surrounding foes. Universal toleration at that time would have resulted in universal confusion and upset the order of society. From anarchy to absolute despotism is but one step. The division of Protestantism into two rival camps, the Lutheran and the Reformed, weakened it; further divisions within these camps would have ruined it and prepared an easy triumph for united Romanism, which would have become more despotic than ever before. This does not justify the principle, but it explains the practice, of intolerance.

The Reformers and the Protestant princes and magistrates were essentially agreed on this intolerant attitude, both towards the Romanists and the heretical Protestants, at least to the extent of imprisonment, deposition, and expatriation. They differed only as to the degree of severity. They all believed that the papacy is anti-christian and the mass idolatrous; that heresy is a sin against God and society; that the denial of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ is the greatest of heresies, which deserves death according to the laws of the empire, and eternal punishment according to the Athanasian Creed (with its three damnatory clauses); and that the civil government is as much bound to protect the first as the second table of the Decalogue, and to vindicate the honor of God against blasphemy. They were anxious to show their zeal for orthodoxy by severity against heresy. They had no doubt that they themselves were orthodox according to the only true standard of orthodoxy—the Word of God in the Holy Scriptures. And as regards the dogmas of the Trinity and Incarnation, they were fully agreed with their Catholic opponents, and equally opposed to the errors of Servetus, who denied those dogmas with a boldness and contempt unknown before.

Let us ascertain the sentiments of the leading Reformers with special reference to the case of Servetus. They form a complete justification of Calvin as far as such a justification is possible.

Luther.

Luther, the hero of Worms, the champion of the sacred rights of conscience, was, in words, the most violent, but in practice, the least intolerant, among the Reformers. He was nearest to Romanism in the condemnation of

heresy, but nearest to the genius of Protestantism in the advocacy of religious freedom. He was deeply rooted in mediaeval piety, and yet a mighty prophet of modern times. In his earlier years, till 1529, he gave utterance to some of the noblest sentiments in favor of religious liberty. "Belief is a free thing," he said, "which cannot be enforced." "If heretics were to be punished by death, the hangman would be the most orthodox theologian." "Heresy is a spiritual thing which no iron can hew down, no fire burn, no water drown." To burn heretics is contrary to the will of the Holy Spirit." False teachers should not be put to death; it is enough to banish them."

But with advancing years he became less liberal and more intolerant against Catholics, heretics, and Jews. He exhorted the magistrates to forbid all preaching of Anabaptists, whom he denounced without discrimination as false prophets and messengers of the devil, and he urged their expulsion. He raised no protest when the Diet of Speier, in 1529, passed the cruel decree that the Anabaptists be executed by fire and sword without distinction of sex, and even without a previous hearing before the spiritual judges. The Elector of Saxony considered it his duty to execute this decree, and put a number of Anabaptists to death in his dominions. His neighbor, Philip of Hesse, who had more liberal instincts than the contemporary princes of Germany, could not find it in his conscience to use the sword against differences of belief. But the theologians of Wittenberg, on being consulted by the Elector John Frederick about 1540 or 1541, gave their judgment in favor of putting the Anabaptists to death, according to the laws of the empire. Luther approved of this judgment under his own name, adding that it was cruel to punish them by the sword, but more cruel that they should damn the ministry of the Word and suppress the true doctrine, and attempt to destroy the kingdoms of the world.

If we put a strict construction on this sentence, Luther must be counted with the advocates of the death-penalty for heresy. But he made a distinction between two classes of Anabaptists—those who were seditious or revolutionary, and those who were mere fanatics. The former should be put to death, the latter should be banished. In a letter to Philip of Hesse, dated November 20, 1538, he urgently requested him to expel from his territory the Anabaptists, whom he characterizes as children of the devil, but says nothing of using the sword. We should give him, therefore, the benefit of a liberal construction.

At the same time, the distinction was not always strictly observed, and fanatics were easily turned into criminals, especially after the excesses of Münster, in 1535, which were greatly exaggerated and made the pretext for punishing innocent men and women. The whole history of the Anabaptist movement in the sixteenth century has to be rewritten and disentangled from the *odium theologicum*.

As regards Servetus, Luther knew only his first work against the Trinity, and pronounced it, in his Table Talk (1532), an "awfully bad book." Fortunately for his fame, he did not live to pronounce a judgment in favor of his execution, and we must give him the benefit of silence.

His opinions on the treatment of the Jews changed for the worse. In 1523 he had vigorously protested against the cruel persecution of the Jews, but in 1543 he counselled their expulsion from Christian lands, and the burning of their books, synagogues, and private houses in which they blaspheme our Saviour and the Holy Virgin. He repeated this advice in his last sermon, preached at Eisleben a few days before his death.

### Melanchthon.

Melanchthon's record on this painful subject is unfortunately worse than Luther's. This is all the more significant because he was the mildest and gentlest among the Reformers. But we should remember that his utterances on the subject are of a later date, several years after Luther's death. He thought that the Mosaic law against idolatry and blasphemy was as binding upon Christian states as the Decalogue, and was applicable to heresies as well. He therefore fully and repeatedly justified the course of Calvin and the Council of Geneva, and even held them up as models for imitation! In a letter to Calvin, dated Oct. 14, 1554, nearly one year after the burning of Servetus, he wrote:—

“Reverend and dear Brother: I have read your book, in which you have clearly refuted the horrid blasphemies of Servetus; and I give thanks to the Son of God, who was [the awardee of your crown of victory] in this your combat. To you also the Church owes gratitude at the present moment, and will owe it to the latest posterity. I perfectly assent to your opinion. I affirm also that your magistrates did right in punishing, after a regular trial, this blasphemous man.”

A year later, Melanchthon wrote to Bullinger, Aug. 20, 1555: —

“Reverend and dear Brother: I have read your answer to the blasphemies of Servetus, and I approve of your piety and opinions. I judge also that the Genevese Senate did perfectly right to put an end to this obstinate man, who could never cease blaspheming. And I wonder at those who disapprove of this severity.”

Three years later, April 10, 1557, Melanchthon incidentally (in the admonition in the case of Theobald Thamer, who had returned to the Roman Church) adverted again to the execution of Servetus, and called it, a pious and memorable example to all posterity.” It is an example, indeed, but certainly not for imitation.

This unqualified approval of the death penalty for heresy and the connivance at the bigamy of Philip of Hesse are the two dark spots on the fair name of this great and good man. But they were errors of judgment. Calvin took great comfort from the endorsement of the theological head of the Lutheran Church.

### Martin Bucer.

Bucer, who stands third in rank among the Reformers of Germany, was of a gentle and conciliatory disposition, and abstained from persecuting the Anabaptists in Strassburg. He knew Servetus personally, and treated him at first with kindness, but after the publication of his work on the Trinity, he refuted it in his lectures as a “most pestilential book.” He even declared in the pulpit or in the lecture-room that Servetus deserved to be disembowelled and torn to pieces. From this we may infer how fully he would have approved his execution, had he lived till 1553.

## The Swiss Churches.

The Swiss Reformers ought to have been in advance of those of Germany on this subject, but they were not. They advised or approved the exclusion of Roman Catholics from the Reformed Cantons, and violent measures against Anabaptists and Antitrinitarians. Six Anabaptists were, by a cruel irony, drowned in the river Limmat at Zürich by order of the government (between 1527 and 1532). Other cantons took the same severe measures against the Anabaptists. Zwingli, the most liberal among the Reformers, did not object to their punishment, and counselled the forcible introduction of Protestantism into the neutral territories and the Forest Cantons. Ochino was expelled from Zürich and Basel (1563).

As regards the case of Servetus, the churches and magistrates of Zürich, Schaffhausen, Basel, and Bern, on being consulted during his trial, unanimously condemned his errors, and advised his punishment, but without committing themselves to the mode of punishment.

Bullinger wrote to Calvin that God had given the Council of Geneva a most favorable opportunity to vindicate the truth against the pollution of heresy, and the honor of God against blasphemy. In his Second Helvetic Confession (ch. XXX.) he teaches that it is the duty of the magistrate to use the sword against blasphemers. Schaffhausen fully agreed with Zürich. Even the authorities of Basel, which was the headquarters of the sceptical Italians and enemies of Calvin, gave the advice that Servetus, whom their own Oecolampadius had declared a most dangerous man, be deprived of the power to harm the Church, if all efforts to convert him should fail. Six years afterwards the Council of Basel, with the consent of the clergy and the University, ordered the body of David Joris, a chiliastic Anabaptist who had lived there under a false name (and died Aug. 25, 1556), to be dug from the grave and burned, with his likeness and books, by the hangman before a large multitude (1559).

Bern, which had advised moderation in the affair of Bolsec two years earlier, judged more severely in the case of Servetus, because he “had reckoned himself free to call in question all the essential points of our religion,” and expressed the wish that the Council of Geneva might have prudence and strength to deliver the Churches from “this pest.” Thirteen years after the death of Servetus, the Council of Bern executed Valentino Gentile by the sword (Sept. 10, 1566) for an error similar to but less obnoxious than that of Servetus, and scarcely a voice was raised in disapproval of the sentence.

The Reformers of French Switzerland went further than those of German Switzerland. Farel defended death by fire, and feared that Calvin in advising a milder punishment was guided by the feelings of a friend against his bitterest foe. Beza wrote a special work in defence of the execution of Servetus, whom he characterized as “a monstrous compound of mere impiety and horrid blasphemy.” Peter Martyr called him “a genuine son of the devil,” whose “pestiferous and detestable doctrines” and “intolerable blasphemies” justified the severe sentence of the magistracy.

Cranmer.

The English Reformers were not behind those of the continent in the matter of intolerance. Several years before the execution of Servetus, Archbishop Cranmer had persuaded the reluctant young King Edward VI. to sign the death-warrant of two Anabaptists—one a woman, called Joan Becher of Kent, and the other a foreigner from Holland, George Van Pare; the former was burnt May 2, 1550, the latter, April 6, 1551.

The only advocates of toleration in the sixteenth century were Anabaptists and Antitrinitarians, who were themselves sufferers from persecution. Let us give them credit for their humanity.

#### Gradual Triumph of Toleration and Liberty.

The reign of intolerance continued to the end of the seventeenth century. It was gradually undermined during the eighteenth century, and demolished by the combined influences of Protestant Dissenters, as the Anabaptists, Socinians, Arminians, Quakers, Presbyterians, Independents, of Anglican Latitudinarians, and of philosophers, like Bayle, Grotius, Locke, Leibnitz; nor should we forget Voltaire and Frederick the Great, who were unbelievers, but sincere and most influential advocates of religious toleration; nor Franklin, Jefferson, and Madison in America. Protestant Holland and Protestant England took the lead in the legal recognition of the principles of civil and religious liberty, and the Constitution of the United States completed the theory by putting all Christian denominations on a parity before the law and guaranteeing them the full enjoyment of equal rights.

Hand in hand with the growth of tolerance went the zeal for prison reform, the abolition of torture and cruel punishments, the abrogation of the slave trade, serfdom, and slavery, the improvement of the condition of the poor and miserable, and similar movements of philanthropy, which are the late but genuine outgrowth of the spirit of Christianity.

#### § 140. The Early Life of Servetus.

For our knowledge of the origin and youth of Servetus we have to depend on the statements which he made at his trials before the Roman Catholic court at Vienne in April, 1553, and before the Calvinistic court at Geneva in August of the same year. These depositions are meagre and inconsistent, either from defect of memory or want of honesty. In Geneva he could not deceive the judges, as Calvin was well acquainted with his antecedents. I give, therefore, the preference to his later testimony.

Michael Serveto, better known in the Latinized form Servetus, also called Reves, was born at Villa-nueva or Villanova in Aragon (hence “Villanovanus”), in 1509, the year of the nativity of Calvin, his great antagonist. He informed the court of Geneva that he was of an ancient and noble Spanish family, and that his father was a lawyer and notary by profession.

The hypothesis that he was of Jewish or Moorish extraction is an unwarranted inference from his knowledge of Hebrew and the Koran.

He was slender and delicate in body, but precocious, inquisitive, imaginative, acute, independent, and inclined to mysticism and fanaticism. He seems to have received his early education in a Dominican convent and in the University of Saragossa, with a view at first to the clerical vocation.

He was sent by his father to the celebrated law-school of Toulouse, where he studied jurisprudence for two or three years. The University of Toulouse was strictly orthodox, and kept a close watch against the Lutheran heresy. But it was there that he first saw a complete copy of the Bible, as Luther did after he entered the University of Erfurt.

The Bible now became his guide. He fully adopted the Protestant principle of the supremacy and sufficiency of the Bible, but subjected it to his speculative fancy, and carried opposition to Catholic tradition much farther than the Reformers did. He rejected the oecumenical orthodoxy, while they rejected only the mediaeval scholastic orthodoxy. It is characteristic of his mystical turn of mind that he made the Apocalypse the basis of his speculations, while the sober and judicious Calvin never commented on this book.

Servetus declared, in his first work, that the Bible was the source of all his philosophy and science, and to be read a thousand times. He called it a gift of God descended from heaven. Next to the Bible, he esteemed the ante-Nicene Fathers, because of their simpler and less definite teaching. He quotes them freely in his first book.

We do not know whether, and how far, he was influenced by the writings of the Reformers. He may have read some tracts of Luther, which were early translated into Spanish, but he does not quote from them.

We next find Servetus in the employ of Juan Quintana, a Franciscan friar and confessor to the Emperor Charles V. He seems to have attended his court at the coronation by Pope Clement VII. in Bologna (1529), and on the journey to the Diet of Augsburg in 1530, which forms an epoch in the history of the Lutheran Reformation. At Augsburg he may have seen Melancthon and other leading Lutherans, but he was too young and unknown to attract much attention.

In the autumn of 1530 he was dismissed from the service of Quintana; we do not know for what reason, probably on suspicion of heresy.

We have no account of a conversion or moral struggle in any period of his life, such as the Reformers passed through. He never was a Protestant, either Lutheran or Reformed, but a radical at war with all orthodoxy. A mere youth of twenty-one or two, he boldly or impudently struck out an independent path as a Reformer of the Reformation. The Socinian society did not yet exist; and even there he would not have felt at home, nor would he have long been tolerated. Nominally, he remained in the Roman Church, and felt no scruple about conforming to its rites. As he stood alone, so he died alone, leaving an influence, but no school nor sect.

From Germany Servetus went to Switzerland and spent some time at Basel. There he first ventilated his heresies on the trinity and the divinity of Christ.

He importuned Oecolampadius with interviews and letters, hoping to convert him. But Oecolampadius was startled and horrified. He informed his friends, Bucer, Zwingli, and Bullinger, who happened to be at Basel in October, 1530, that he had been troubled of late by a hot-headed Spaniard, who denied the divine trinity and the eternal divinity of our Saviour. Zwingli advised him to try to convince Servetus of his error, and by good and wholesome arguments to win him over to the truth. Oecolampadius said that he could make no impression upon the haughty, daring, and contentious man. Zwingli replied: "This is indeed a thing insufferable in the Church of God. Therefore do

everything possible to prevent the spread of such dreadful blasphemy.” Zwingli never saw the objectionable book in print.

Servetus sought to satisfy Oecolampadius by a misleading confession of faith, but the latter was not deceived by the explanations and exhorted him to “confess the Son of God to be coequal and coeternal with the Father;” otherwise he could not acknowledge him as a Christian.

#### § 141. The Book against the Holy Trinity.

Servetus was too vain and obstinate to take advice. In the beginning of 1531, he secured a publisher for his book on the “Errors of the Trinity,” Conrad Koenig, who had shops at Basel and Strassburg, and who sent the manuscript to Secerius, a printer at Hagenau in Alsace. Servetus went to that place to read the proof. He also visited Bucer and Capito at Strassburg, who received him with courtesy and kindness and tried to convert him, but in vain.

In July, 1531, the book appeared under the name of the author, and was furnished to the trade at Strassburg, Frankfort, and Basel, but nobody knew where and by whom it was published. Suspicion fell upon Basel.

This book is a very original and, for so young a man, very remarkable treatise on the Trinity and Incarnation in opposition to the traditional and oecumenical faith. The style is crude and obscure, and not to be compared with Calvin’s, who at the same age and in his earliest writings showed himself a master of lucid, methodical, and convincing statement in elegant and forcible Latin. Servetus was familiar with the Bible, the ante-Nicene Fathers (Tertullian and Irenaeus), and scholastic theology, and teemed with new, but ill-digested ideas which he threw out like firebrands. He afterwards embodied his first work in his last, but in revised shape. The following is a summary of the Seven Books on the Trinity:—

In the first book he proceeds from the historical Jesus of Nazareth, and proves, first, that this man is Jesus the Christ; secondly, that he is the Son of God; and thirdly, that he is God. He begins with the humanity in opposition to those who begin with the Logos and, in his opinion, lose the true Christ. In this respect he anticipates the Socinian and modern humanitarian Christology, but not in a rationalistic sense; for he asserts a special indwelling of God in Christ (somewhat resembling Schleiermacher), and a deification of Christ after his exaltation (like the Socinians). He rejects the identity of the Logos with the Son of God and the doctrine of the communication of attributes. He distinguishes between the Hebrew names of God: Jehovah means exclusively the one and eternal God; Elohim or El or Adonai are names of God and also of angels, prophets, and kings (John 10:34–36). The prologue of John speaks of things that were, not of things that are. Everywhere else the Bible speaks of the man Christ. The Holy Spirit means, according to the Hebrew *ruach* and the Greek *pneuma*, wind or breath, and denotes in the Bible now God himself, now an angel, now the spirit of man, now a divine impulse.

He then explains away the proof texts for the doctrine of the Trinity, 1 John 5:7 (which he accepts as genuine, though Erasmus omitted it from his first edition); John 10:30; 14:11; Rom. 11:36. The chief passages, the baptismal formula (Matt. 28:19) and the apostolic benediction (2 Cor. 13:14) where the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are coordinated, he understands not of three persons, but of three dispositions of God.

In the second book he treats of the Logos, the person of Christ, and the Spirit of God, and chiefly explains the prologue to the fourth Gospel. The Logos is not a metaphysical being, but an oracle; the voice of God and the light of the world. The Logos is a disposition or dispensation in God, so understood by Tertullian and Irenaeus. Before the incarnation the Logos was God himself speaking; after the incarnation the Logos is Jesus Christ, who makes God known to us. All that God before did through the Word, Christ does in the flesh. To him God has given the kingdom and the power to atone and to gather all things in him.

The third book is an exposition of the relation of Christ to the divine Logos.

The fourth book discusses the divine dispositions or manifestations. God appeared in the Son and in the Spirit. Two divine manifestations are substituted for the orthodox tripersonality. The position of the Father is not clear; he is now represented as the divinity itself, now as a disposition and person. The orthodox christology of two natures in one person is entirely rejected. God has no nature (from *nasci*), and a person is not a compound of two natures or things, but a unit.

The fifth book is a worthless speculative exposition of the Hebrew names of God. The Lutheran doctrine of justification is incidentally attacked as calculated to make man lazy and indifferent to good works.

The sixth book shows that Christ is the only fountain of all true knowledge of God, who is incomprehensible in himself, but revealed himself in the person of his Son. He who sees the Son sees the Father.

The seventh and last book is an answer to objections, and contains a new attack on the doctrine of the Trinity, which was introduced at the same time with the secular power of the pope. Servetus probably believed in the fable of the donation of Constantine.

It is not surprising that this book gave great offence to Catholics and Protestants alike, and appeared to them blasphemous. Servetus calls the Trinitarians tritheists and atheists. He frivolously asked such questions as whether God had a spiritual wife or was without sex. He calls the three gods of the Trinitarians a deception of the devil, yea (in his later writings), a three-headed monster.

Zwingli and Oecolampadius died a few months after the publication of the book, but condemned its contents beforehand. Luther's and Bucer's views on it have already been noticed. Melancthon felt the difficulties of the trinitarian and christological problems and foresaw future controversies. He gave his judgment in a letter to his learned friend Camerarius (dated 5 Id. Febr. 1533):

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“You ask me what I think of Servetus? I see him indeed sufficiently sharp and subtle in disputation, but I do not give him credit for much depth. He is possessed, as it seems to me, of confused imaginations, and his thoughts are not well matured on the subjects he discusses. He manifestly talks foolishness when he speaks of justification. [On the subject of the Trinity] you know, I have always feared that serious difficulties would one day arise. Good God! to what tragedies will not these questions give occasion in times to come: [is the Logos an hypostasis]? [is the Holy Spirit an hypostasis]? For my own part I

refer to those passages of Scripture that bid us call on Christ, which is to ascribe divine honors to him, and find them full of consolation.”

Cochlaeus directed the attention of Quintana, at the Diet of Regensburg, in 1532, to the book of Servetus which was sold there, and Quintana at once took measures to suppress it. The Emperor prohibited it, and the book soon disappeared.

Servetus published in 1532 two dialogues on the Trinity, and a treatise on Justification. He retracted, in the preface, all he had said in his former work, not, however, as false, but as childish. He rejected the Lutheran doctrine of justification, and also both the Lutheran and Zwinglian views of the sacrament. He concluded the book by invoking a malediction on “all tyrants of the Church.”

### § 142. Servetus as a Geographer.

As Servetus was repulsed by the Reformers of Switzerland and Germany, he left for France and assumed the name of Michel de Villeneuve. His real name and his obnoxious books disappeared from the sight of the world till they emerged twenty years later at Vienne and at Geneva. He devoted himself to the study of mathematics, geography, astrology, and medicine.

In 1534 he was in Paris, and challenged the young Calvin to a disputation, but failed to appear at the appointed hour.

He spent some time at Lyons as proof-reader and publisher of the famous printers, Melchior and Caspar Trechsel. He issued through them, in 1535, under the name of “Villanovanus,” a magnificent edition of Ptolemy’s Geography, with a self-laudatory preface, which concludes with the hope that “no one will underestimate the labor, though pleasant in itself, that is implied in the collation of our text with that of earlier editions, unless it be some Zoilus of contracted brow, who cannot look without envy upon the zealous labors of others.” A second and improved edition appeared in 1541.

The discoveries of Columbus and his successors gave a strong impulse to geographical studies, and called forth several editions of the work of Ptolemy the famous Alexandrian geographer and astronomer of the second century. The edition of Villeneuve is based upon that of Pirkheimer of Nürnberg, which appeared at Strassburg, 1525, with fifty charts, but contains considerable improvements, and gave to the author great reputation. It is a very remarkable work, considering that Servetus was then only twenty-six years of age. A year later Calvin astonished the world with an equally precocious and far more important and enduring work—the Institutes of the Christian Religion.

The most interesting features in the edition of Villeneuve are his descriptions of countries and nations. The following extracts give a fair idea, and have some bearing on the church history of the times: —

“The Spaniard is of a restless disposition, apt enough of understanding, but learning imperfectly or amiss, so that you shall find a learned Spaniard almost anywhere sooner than in Spain. Half-informed, he thinks himself brimful of information, and always pretends to more knowledge than he has in fact. He is much given to vast projects never realized; and in conversation he delights in subtleties and sophistry. Teachers commonly prefer to speak Spanish rather

than Latin in the schools and colleges of the country; but the people in general have little taste for letters, and produce few books themselves, mostly procuring those they want, from France ... . The people have many barbarous notions and usages, derived by implication from their old Moorish conquerors and fellow-denizens ... . The women have a custom, that would be held barbarous in France, of piercing their ears and hanging gold rings in them, often set with precious stones. They besmirch their faces, too, with minium and ec-ruse—red and white lead—and walk about on clogs a foot or a foot and a half high, so that they seem to walk above rather than on the earth. The people are extremely temperate, and the women never drink wine ... . Spaniards are notably the most superstitious people in the world in their religious notions; but they are brave in the field, of signal endurance under privation and difficulty, and by their voyages of discovery have spread their name over the face of the globe.”

“England is wonderfully well-peopled, and the inhabitants are long-lived. Tall in stature, they are fair in complexion, and have blue eyes. They are brave in war, and admirable bowmen ....”

“The people of Scotland are hot-tempered, prone to revenge, and fierce in their anger; but valiant in war, and patient beyond belief of cold, hunger, and fatigue. They are handsome in person, and their clothing and language are the same as those of the Irish; their tunics being dyed yellow, their legs bare, and their feet protected by sandals of undressed hide. They live mainly on fish and flesh. They are not a particularly religious people ....”

“The Italians make use in their everyday talk of the most horrid oaths and imprecations. Holding all the rest of the world in contempt, and calling them barbarians, they themselves have nevertheless been alternately the prey of the French, the Spaniards, and the Germans ....”

“Germany is overgrown by vast forests, and defaced by frightful swamps. Its climate is as insufferably hot in summer as it is bitterly cold in winter .... Hungary is commonly said to produce oxen; Bavaria, swine; Franconia, onions, turnips, and licorice; Swabia, harlots; Bohemia, heretics; Switzerland, butchers; Westphalia, cheats; and the whole country gluttons and drunkards ... . The Germans, however, are a religious people; not easily turned from opinions they have once espoused, and not readily persuaded to concord in matters of schism; every one valiantly and obstinately defending the heresy he has himself adopted.”

This unfavorable account of Germany, borrowed in part from Tacitus, was much modified and abridged in the second edition, in which it appears as “a pleasant country with a temperate climate.” Of the Swabians he speaks as a singularly gifted people. The fling at the ignorance and superstition of the Spaniards, his own countrymen, was also omitted.

The most interesting part of this geographical work on account of its theological bearing, is the description of Palestine. He declared in the first edition that “it is mere boasting and untruth when so much of excellence is ascribed to this land; the experience of merchants and travellers who have visited it, proving it to be inhospitable, barren, and altogether without amenity. Wherefore you may say that the land was promised indeed, but is of little promise when spoken of in everyday terms.” He omitted this passage in the second edition in deference to Archbishop Palmier. Nevertheless, it was made a ground of accu-

sation at the trial of Servetus, for its apparent contradiction with the Mosaic account of the land, flowing with milk and honey.”

### § 143. Servetus as a Physician, Scientist, and Astrologer.

Being supplied with the necessary funds, Servetus returned to Paris in 1536 and took his degrees as magister and doctor of medicine. He acquired great fame as a physician.

The medical world was then divided into two schools,—the Galenists, who followed Hippocrates and Galen, and the Averrhoists, who followed Averrhoes and Avicenna. Servetus was a pupil of Champier, and joined the Greek school, but had an open eye to the truth of the Arabians.

He published in 1537 a learned treatise on Syrups and their use in medicine. It is his most popular book, and passed through four editions in ten years.

He discovered the pulmonary circulation of the blood or the passage of the blood from the right to the left chamber of the heart through the lungs by the pulmonary artery and vein. He published it, not separately, but in his work on the Restitution of Christianity, as a part of his theological speculation on the vital spirits. The discovery was burnt and buried with this book; but nearly a hundred years later William Harvey (1578–1658), independently, made the same discovery.

Servetus lectured in the University on geography and astrology, and gained much applause, but excited also the envy and ill-will of his colleagues, whom he treated with overbearing pride and contempt.

He wrote an “Apologetic Dissertation on Astrology,” and severely attacked the physicians as ignoramuses, who in return denounced him as an impostor and wind-bag. The senate of the University sided with the physicians, and the Parliament of Paris forbade him to lecture on astrology and to prophecy from the stars (1538).

He left Paris for Charlieu, a small town near Lyons, and practised medicine for two or three years.

At his thirtieth year he thought that, after the example of Christ, he should be rebaptized, since his former baptism was of no value. He denied the analogy of circumcision. The Jews, he says, circumcised infants, but baptized only adults. This was the practice of John the Baptist; and Christ, who had been circumcised on the eighth day, was baptized when he entered the public ministry. The promise is given to believers only, and infants have no faith. Baptism is the beginning of regeneration, and the entrance into the kingdom of heaven. He wrote two letters to Calvin on the subject, and exhorted him to follow his example.

His arrogance made him so unpopular that he had to leave Charlieu.

### § 144. Servetus at Vienne. His Annotations to the Bible.

Villeneuve now repaired to Vienne in Dauphiné and settled down as a physician under the patronage of Pierre Palmier, one of his former bearers in Paris, and a patron of learning, who had been appointed archbishop of that see. He was provided with lodgings in the archiepiscopal palace, and made a comfortable living by his medical practice. He spent thirteen years at Vienne, from 1540 to 1553, which were probably the happiest of his fitful life. He con-

formed to the Catholic religion, and was on good terms with the higher clergy. Nobody suspected his heresy, or knew anything of his connection with the work on the "Errors of the Trinity."

He devoted his leisure to his favorite literary and theological studies, and kept the publishers of Lyons busy. We have already mentioned the second edition of his "Ptolemy", which he dedicated to Palmier with a complimentary preface.

A year afterwards (1542) he published a new and elegant edition of the Latin Bible of Santes Pagnini, a learned Dominican monk and pupil of Savonarola, but an enemy of the Reformed religion. He accompanied it with explanatory notes, aiming to give "the old historical but hitherto neglected sense of the Scriptures." He anticipated modern exegesis in substituting the typical for the allegorical method and giving to the Old Testament prophecies an immediate bearing on their times, and a remote bearing on Christ. Thus he refers Psalms II., VIII., XXII., and CX. to David, as the type of Christ. It is not likely that he learned this method from Calvin, and it is certain that Calvin did not learn it from him. But Servetus goes further than Calvin, and anticipates the rationalistic explanation of Deutero-Isaiah by referring "the servant of Jehovah" to Cyrus as the anointed of the Lord. Rome put his comments on the Index (1559). Calvin brought them up against him at the trial, and, without knowing that the text of the book was literally taken from another edition without acknowledgment, said that he dexterously filched five hundred livres from the publisher in payment for the vain trifles and impious follies with which he had encumbered almost every page of the book.

#### § 145. Correspondence of Servetus with Calvin and Poupin.

While engaged in the preparation of his last work at Vienne, Servetus opened a correspondence with Calvin through Jean Frellon, a learned publisher at Lyons and a personal friend of both. He sent him a copy of his book as far as then finished, and told him that he would find in it "stupendous things never heard of before." He also proposed to him three questions: 1) Is the man Jesus Christ the Son of God, and how? 2) Is the kingdom of God in man, when does man enter into it, and when is he born again? 3) Must Christian baptism presuppose faith, like the Lord's Supper, and to what end are both sacraments instituted in the New Testament?

Calvin seems to have had no time to read the whole manuscript, but courteously answered the questions to the effect, 1) that Christ is the Son of God both according to his divine nature eternally begotten, and according to his human nature as the Wisdom of God made flesh; 2) that the kingdom of God begins in man when he is born again, but that the process of regeneration is not completed in a moment, but goes on till death; 3) that faith is necessary for baptism, but not in the same personal way as in the Lord's Supper; for according to the type of circumcision the promise was given also to the children of the faithful. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are related to each other as circumcision and the passover. He referred to his books for details, but was ready to give further explanation if desired.

Servetus was by no means satisfied with the answer, and wrote back that Calvin made two or three Sons of God; that the Wisdom of God spoken of by Solomon was allegorical and impersonal; that regeneration took place in the

moment of baptism by water and the spirit, but never in infant baptism. He denied that circumcision corresponded to baptism. He put five new theological questions to Calvin, and asked him to read the fourth chapter on baptism in the manuscript of the *Restitutio* which he had sent him.

To these objections Calvin sent another and more lengthy response. He again offered further explanation, though he had no time to write whole books for him, and had discussed all these topics in his *Institutes*.

So far there is nothing to indicate any disposition in Calvin to injure Servetus. On the contrary we must admire his patience and moderation in giving so much of his precious time to the questions of a troublesome stranger and pronounced opponent. Servetus continued to press Calvin with letters, and returned the copy of the *Institutes* with copious critical objections. "There is hardly a page," says Calvin, "that is not defiled by his vomit."

Calvin sent a final answer to the questions of Servetus, which is lost, together with a French letter to Frellon, which is preserved. This letter is dated Feb. 13, 1546, under his well-known pseudonym of Charles Despeville, and is as follows:—

"Seigneur Jehan, As your last letter was brought to me on my departure, I had no leisure to reply to the enclosure it contained. After my return I use the first moment of my leisure to comply with your desire; not indeed that I have any great hope of proving serviceable to such a man, seeing him disposed as I do. But I will try once more, if there be any means left of bringing him to reason, and this will happen when God shall have so wrought in him that he has become altogether another man. Since he has written to me in so proud a spirit, I have been led to write to him more sharply than is my wont, being minded to take him down a little in his presumption. But I could not do otherwise. For I assure you there is no lesson he needs so much to learn as humility. This must come to him through the grace of God, not otherwise. But we, too, ought to lend a helping hand. If God give such grace to him and to us that the present answer will turn to his profit, I shall have cause to rejoice. If he persists, however, in the style he has hitherto seen fit to use, you will only lose your time in soliciting me further in his behalf; for I have other affairs that concern me more nearly, and I shall make it a matter of conscience not to busy myself further, not doubting that he is a Satan who would divert me from more profitable studies. Let me beg of you, therefore, to be content with what I have already done, unless you see occasion for acting differently."

Frellon sent this letter to Villeneuve by a special messenger, together with a note in which he addresses him as his "dear brother and friend."

On the same day Calvin wrote the famous letter to Farel already quoted. He had arrived at the settled conviction that Servetus was an incorrigible and dangerous heretic, who deserved to die. But he did nothing to induce him to come to Geneva, as he wished, and left him severely alone. In 1548 he wrote to Viret that he would have nothing more to do with this desperately obstinate heretic, who shall force no more letters from him.

Servetus continued to trouble Calvin, and published in his *Restitutio* no less than thirty letters to him, but without dates and without replies from Calvin. They are conceived in a haughty and self-sufficient spirit. He writes to the greatest divine of the age, not as a learner, or even an equal, but as a superior.

In the first of these printed letters he charges Calvin with holding absurd, confused, and contradictory opinions on the sonship of Christ, on the Logos, and on the Trinity. In the second letter he tells him: "You make three Sons of God: the human nature is a son to you, the divine nature is a son, and the whole Christ is a son . . . . All such tritheistic notions are a three-headed illusion of the Dragon, which easily crept in among the sophists in the present reign of Antichrist. Or have you not read of the spirit of the dragon, the spirit of the beast, the spirit of the false prophets, three spirits? Those who acknowledge the trinity of the beast are possessed by three spirits of demons. These three spirits incite war against the immaculate Lamb, Jesus Christ (Apoc. 16). False are all the invisible gods of the Trinitarians, as false as the gods of the Babylonians. Farewell." He begins the third letter with the oft-repeated warning (*saepius te monui*) not to admit that impossible—monster of three things in God. In another letter he calls him a reprobate and blasphemer (*improbis et blasphemus*) for calumniating good works. He charges him with ignorance of the true nature of faith, justification, regeneration, baptism, and the kingdom of heaven.

These are fair specimens of the arrogant, irritating, and even insulting tone of his letters. At last Servetus himself broke off his correspondence with Calvin, who, it seems, had long ceased to answer them, but he now addressed his colleagues. He wrote three letters to Abel Poupin, who was minister at Geneva from 1543 to 1556, when he died. The last is preserved, and was used in evidence at the trial. It is not dated, but must have been written in 1548 or later. Servetus charges the Reformed Christians of Geneva that they had a gospel without a God, without true faith, without good works; and that instead of the true God they worshipped a three-headed Cerberus. "Your faith in Christ," he continues, "is a mere pretence and without effect; your man is an inert trunk, and your God a fabulous monster of the enslaved will. You reject baptismal regeneration and shut the kingdom of heaven against men. Woe unto you, woe, woe!"

He concludes this remarkable letter with the prediction that he would die for this cause and become like unto his Master.

#### § 146. "The Restitution of Christianity."

During his sojourn at Vienne, Servetus prepared his chief theological work under the title, "The Restitution of Christianity." He must have finished the greater part of it in manuscript as early as 1546, seven years before its publication in print; for in that year, as we have seen, he sent a copy to Calvin, which he tried to get back to make some corrections, but Calvin had sent it to Viret at Lausanne, where it was detained. It was afterwards used at the trial and ordered by the Council of Geneva to be burnt at the stake, together with the printed volume.

The proud title indicates the pretentious and radical character of the book. It was chosen, probably, with reference to Calvin's, *Institution of the Christian Religion*." In opposition to the great Reformer he claimed to be a Restorer. The Hebrew motto on the title-page was taken from Dan. 12:1: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince;" the Greek motto from Rev. 12:7: "And there was war in heaven," which is followed by the words, "Michael and his angels going forth to war with the dragon; and the dragon

warred, and his angels; and they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.”

The identity of the Christian name of the author with the name of the archangel is significant. Servetus fancied that the great battle with Antichrist was near at hand or had already begun, and that he was one of Michael’s warriors, if not Michael himself.

His “Restitution of Christianity” was a manifesto of war. The woman in the twelfth chapter of Revelation he understood to be the true Church; her child, whom God saves, is the Christian faith; the great red dragon with seven heads and horns is the pope of Rome, the Antichrist predicted by Daniel, Paul, and John. At the time of Constantine and the Council of Nicaea, which divided the one God into three parts, the dragon began to drive the true Church into the wilderness, and retained his power for twelve hundred and sixty prophetic days or years; but now his reign is approaching to a close.

He was fully conscious of a divine mission to overthrow the tyranny of the papal and Protestant Antichrist, and to restore Christianity to its primitive purity. “The task we have undertaken,” he says in the preface, “is sublime in majesty, easy in perspicuity, and certain in demonstration; for it is no less than to make God known in his substantial manifestation by the Word and his divine communication by the Spirit, both comprised in Christ alone, through whom alone do we plainly discern how the deity of the Word and the Spirit may be apprehended in man . . . . We shall now see God, unseen before, with his face revealed, and behold him shining in ourselves, if we open the door and enter in. It is high time to open this door and this way of the light, without which no one can read the sacred Scriptures, or know God, or become a Christian.” Then he gives a brief summary of topics, and closes the preface with this prayer:—

“O Christ Jesus, Son of God, who hast been given to us from heaven, who in thyself makest the Deity visibly manifest, open thyself to thy servant that so great a manifestation may be truly understood. Grant unto me now, who entreats thee, thy good Spirit, and the efficacious word; direct my mind and my pen that I may declare the glory of thy divinity and give expression to the true faith concerning thee. The cause is thine, and it is by a certain divine impulse that I am led to treat of thy glory from the Father, and the glory of thy Spirit. I once began to treat of it, and now I am constrained to do so again; for the time is, in truth, completed, as I shall now show to all the pious, from the certainty of the thing itself and from the manifest signs of the times. Thou hast taught us that a lamp must not be hidden. Woe unto me if I do not preach the gospel. It concerns the common cause of all Christians, to which we are all bound.”

He forwarded the manuscript to a publisher in Basel, Marrinus, who declined it in a letter, dated April 9, 1552, because it could not be safely published in that city at that time. He then made an arrangement with Balthasar Arnoullet, bookseller and publisher at Vienne, and Guillaume Guérout, his brother-in-law and manager of his printing establishment, who had run away from Geneva for bad conduct. He assured them that there were no errors in the book, and that, on the contrary, it was directed against the doctrines of Luther, Calvin, Melancthon, and other heretics. He agreed to withhold his and their

names and the name of the place of publication from the title-page. He assumed the whole of the expense of publication, and paid them in advance the sum of one hundred gold dollars. No one in France knew at that time that his real name was Servetus, and that he was the author of the work, "On the Errors of the Trinity."

The "Restitution" was secretly printed in a small house, away from the known establishment, within three or four months, and finished on the third of January, 1553. He corrected the proofs himself, but there are several typographical errors in it. The whole impression of one thousand copies was made up into bales of one hundred copies each; five bales were sent as white paper to Pierre Martin, type-founder of Lyons, to be forwarded by sea to Genoa and Venice; another lot to Jacob Bestet, bookseller at Chatillon; and a third to Frankfort. Calvin obtained one or more copies, probably from his friend Frellon of Lyons.

The first part of the "Restitution" is a revised and enlarged edition of the seven books "On the Errors of the Trinity." The seven books are condensed into five; and these are followed by two dialogues on the Trinity between Michael and Peter, which take the place of the sixth and seventh books of the older work. The other part of the "Restitution," which covers nearly two-thirds of the volume (pp. 287–734), is new, and embraces three books on Faith and the Righteousness of the Kingdom of Christ (287–354), four books on Regeneration and the Reign of Antichrist (355–576), thirty letters to Calvin (577–664), Sixty Signs of Antichrist (664–670), and the Apology to Melanchthon on the Mystery of the Trinity and on Ancient Discipline (671–734). Calvin and Melanchthon are the two surviving Reformers whom he confronts as the representatives of orthodox Protestantism.

## § 147. The Theological System of Servetus.

Calvin, in his *Refutatio Errorum Mich. Serveti*, Opera, vol. VIII. 501–644, presents the doctrines of Servetus from his writings, in thirty-eight articles, the response of Servetus, the refutation of the response, and then a full examination of his whole system.—H. Tollin: *Das Lehrsystem Michael Servet's genetisch dargestellt*. Gütersloh, 1878, 3 vols. 8°. The most complete exposition of the theological opinions of Servetus.

Calvin and Tollin represent two opposite extremes in the doctrinal and personal estimate of Servetus: Calvin is wholly polemical, and sees in the *Restitutio* a volume of ravings ("volumen deliriorum") and a chaos of blasphemies ("prodigiosum blasphemiarum chaos"); Tollin is wholly apologetical and eulogistic, and admires it as an anticipation of reverent, Christocentric theology; neither of them is strictly historical.

Trechsel's account (I. 119–144) is short, but impartial.—Baur, in his "History of the Doctrine of the Trinity and the Incarnation" (Tübingen, 1843, 3 vols.) devotes, with his usual critical grasp and speculative insight, fifty pages to Servet's views on God and Christ (I. 54–103). Dorner, in his great "History of the Doctrine of the Person of Christ" (Berlin, 1853), discusses his Christology profoundly, but rather briefly (II. 649–656). Both recognize the force of his arguments against the dyophysitism of the Chalcedonian Christology, and compare his Christology with that of Apollinaris.

Before we proceed to the heresy trial, we must give a connected statement of the opinions of Servetus as expressed in his last and most elaborate work.

To his contemporaries the *Restitutio* appeared to be a confused compound of Sabellian, Samosatenic, Arian, Apollinarian, and Pelagian heresies, mixed

with Anabaptist errors and Neo-platonic, pantheistic speculations. The best judges—Calvin, Saisset, Trechsel, Baur, Dorner, Harnack—find the root of his system in pantheism. Tollin denies his pantheism, although he admits the pantheistic coloring of some of his expressions; he distinguishes no less than five phases in his theology before it came to its full maturity, and characterizes it as an “intensive, extensive, and protensive Panchristism, or ‘Christocentrism.’”

Servetus was a mystic theosophist and Christopantheist. Far from being a sceptic or rationalist, he had very strong, positive convictions of the absolute truth of the Christian religion. He regarded the Bible as an infallible source of truth, and accepted the traditional canon without dispute. So far he agreed with evangelical Protestantism; but he differed from it, as well as from Romanism, in principle and aim. He claimed to stand above both parties as the restorer of primitive Christianity, which excludes the errors and combines the truths of the Catholic and Protestant creeds.

The evangelical Reformation, inspired by the teaching of St. Paul and Augustin, was primarily a practical movement, and proceeded from a deep sense of sin and grace in opposition to prevailing Pelagianism, and pointed the people directly to Christ as the sole and sufficient fountain of pardon and peace to the troubled conscience; but it retained all the articles of the Apostles’ Creed, and especially the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation. It should be noticed, however, that Melancthon, in the first edition of his *Loci* (1521), omitted these mysteries as objects of adoration rather than of speculation, and that Calvin, in the controversy with Caroli, spoke lightly of the Nicene and Athanasian terminology, which was derived from Greek philosophy rather than from the Bible.

Servetus, with the Bible as his guide, aimed at a more radical revolution than the Reformers. He started with a new doctrine of God and of Christ, and undermined the very foundations of the Catholic creed. The three most prominent negative features of his system are three denials: the denial of the orthodox dogma of the Trinity, as set forth in the Nicene Creed; the denial of the orthodox Christology, as determined by the Oecumenical Council of Chalcedon; and the denial of infant baptism, as practised everywhere except by the Anabaptists. From these three sources he derived all the evils and corruptions of the Church. The first two denials were the basis of the theoretical revolution, the third was the basis of the practical revolution which he felt himself providentially called to effect by his anonymous book.

Those three negations in connection with what appeared to be shocking blasphemy, though not intended as such, made him an object of horror to all orthodox Christians of his age, Protestants as well as Roman Catholic, and led to his double condemnation, first at Vienne, and then at Geneva. So far he was perfectly understood by his contemporaries, especially by Calvin and Melancthon. But the positive features, which he substituted for the Nicene and Chalcedonian orthodoxy, were not appreciated in their originality, and seemed to be simply a repetition of old and long-condemned heresies.

There were Antitrinitarians before Servetus, not only in the ante-Nicene age, but also in the sixteenth century, especially among the Anabaptists—such as Hetzer, Denck, Campanus, Melchior Hoffmann, Reed, Martini, David Joris. But he gathered their sporadic ideas into a coherent original system, and gave them a speculative foundation.

## 1. Christology.

Servetus begins the “Restitution,” as well as his first book against the Trinity, with the doctrine of Christ. He rises from the humanity of the historical Jesus of Nazareth to his Messiahship and Divine Sonship, and from this to his divinity. This is, we may say, the view of the Synoptical Gospels, as distinct from the usual orthodox method which, with the Prologue of the fourth Gospel, descends from his divinity to his humanity through the act of the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity. In this respect he anticipates the modern humanitarian Christology. Jesus is, according to Servetus, begotten, not of the first person of God, but of the essence of the one undivided and indivisible God. He is born, according to the flesh, of the Virgin Mary by the overshadowing cloud of the Spirit (Matt. 1:18, 20, 23; Luke 1:32, 35). The whole aim of the gospel is to lead men to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (comp. John 20:31). But the term “Son of God” is in the Scriptures always used of the man Jesus, and never of the Logos. He is the one true and natural son of God, born of the substance of God; we are sons by adoption, by an act of grace. We are made sons of God by faith (John 1:12; Gal. 3:26; Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:5). He is, moreover, truly and veritably God. The whole essence of God is manifest in him; God dwells in him bodily.

To his last breath Servetus worshipped Jesus as the Son of the eternal God. But he did not admit him to be the eternal Son of God except in an ideal and pantheistic sense, in which the whole world was in the mind of God from eternity, and comprehended in the Divine Wisdom (Sophia) and the Divine Word (Logos).

He opposed the Chalcedonian dualism and aimed (like Apollinaris) at an organic unity of Christ’s person, but made him a full human personality (while Apollinaris substituted the divine Logos for the human spirit, and thus made Christ only a half man). He charges the scholastic and orthodox divines, whom he calls sophists and opponents of the truth, with making two Sons of God—one invisible and eternal, another visible and temporal. They deny, he says, that Jesus is truly man by teaching that he has two distinct natures with a communication of attributes. Christ does not consist of, or in, two natures. He had no previous personal pre-existence as a second hypostasis: his personality dates from his conception and birth. But this man Jesus is, at the same time, consubstantial with God. As man and wife are one in the flesh of their son, so God and man are one in Christ. The flesh of Christ is heavenly and born of the very substance of God. By the deification of the flesh of Christ he materialized God, destroyed the real humanity of Christ, and lost himself in the maze of a pantheistic mysticism.

## 2. Theology.

The fundamental doctrine of Servetus was the absolute unity, simplicity, and indivisibility of the Divine being, in opposition to the tripersonality or threefold hypostasis of orthodoxy. In this respect he makes common cause with the Jews and Mohammedans, and approvingly quotes the Koran. He violently assails Athanasius, Hilary, Augustin, John of Damascus, Peter the Lombard, and other champions of the dogma of the Trinity. But he claims the ante-

Nicene Fathers, especially Justin, Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus, and Tertullian, for his view. He calls all Trinitarians “tritheists” and “atheists.” They have not one absolute God, but a three-parted, collective, composite God—that is, an unthinkable, impossible God, which is no God at all. They worship three idols of the demons,—a three-headed monster, like the Cerberus of the Greek mythology. One of their gods is unbegotten, the second is begotten, the third proceeding. One died, the other two did not die. Why is not the Spirit begotten, and the Son proceeding? By distinguishing the Trinity in the abstract from the three persons separately considered, they have even four gods. The Talmud and the Koran, he thinks, are right in opposing such nonsense and blasphemy.

He examines in detail the various patristic and scholastic proof texts for the Trinity, as Gen. 18:2; Ex. 3:6; Ps. 2:7; 110:1; Isa. 7:14; John 1:1; 3:13; 8:58; 10:18; 14:10; Col. 1:15; 2:9; 1 Pet. 3:19; Heb. 1:2.

Yet, after all, he taught himself a sort of trinity, but substitutes the terms “dispositions,” “dispensations,” “economies,” for hypostases and persons. In other words, he believed, like Sabellius, in a trinity of revelation or manifestation, but not in a trinity of essence or substance. He even avowed, during the trial at Geneva, a trinity of persons and the eternal personality of Christ; but he understood the term, “person” in the original sense of a mask used by players on the stage, not in the orthodox sense of a distinct hypostasis or real personality that had its own proper life in the Divine essence from eternity, and was manifested in time in the man Jesus.

Servetus distinguished—with Plato, Philo, the Neo-Platonists, and several of the Greek Fathers—between an ideal, invisible, uncreated, eternal world and the real, visible, created, temporal world. In God, he says, are from eternity the ideas or forms of all things: these are called “Wisdom” or “Logos,” “the Word” (John 1:1). He identifies this ideal world with “the Book of God,” wherein are recorded all things that happen (Deut. 32:32; Ps. 139:16; Rev. 5:1), and with the living creatures and four whirling wheels full of eyes, in the vision of Ezekiel (1:5; 10:12). The eyes of God are living fountains in which are reflected all things, great and small, even the hairs of our head (Matt. 10:30), but particularly the elect, whose names are recorded in a special book.

The Word or Wisdom of God, he says, was the seed out of which Christ was born, and the birth of Christ is the model of all births. The Word may be called also the soul of Christ, which comprehends the ideas of all things. In Christ was the life, and the life was the light of the world (John 1:4 sqq.). He goes here into speculations about the nature of light and of the heavenly bodies, and ventilates his Hebrew learning. He distinguishes three heavens—the two material heavens of water and air, spoken of by Moses in the account of creation, and a third, spiritual heaven of fire, the heaven of heavens, to which Paul was elevated (2 Cor. 12:2), in which God and Christ dwell, and which gives splendor to the angels. Christ has revealed the true heaven to us, which was unknown to the Jews.

All things are one in God, in whom they consist. There is one fundamental ground or principle and head of all things, and this is Jesus Christ our Lord.

In the fifth book, Servetus discusses the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. He identifies him with the Word, from which he differs only in the form of existence. God is, figuratively speaking, the Father of the Spirit, as he is the Father of Wisdom and the Word. The Spirit is not a third metaphysical being, but the

Spirit of God himself. To receive the Holy Spirit means to receive the anointing of God. The indwelling of the Spirit in us is the indwelling of God (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:22). He who lies to the Holy Spirit lies to God (Acts 5:4). The Spirit is a *modus*, a form of divine existence. He is also called the Spirit of Christ and the Spirit of the Son (Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:9; 1 Pet. 1:11). The human spirit is a spark of the Divine Spirit, an image of the Wisdom of God, created, yet similar. God breathes his Spirit into man in his birth, and again in regeneration.

In connection with this subject, Servetus goes into an investigation of the vital spirits in man, and gives a minute description of the lesser circulation of the blood, which, as we have seen, he first discovered. He studied theology as a physician and surgeon, and studied medicine as a theologian.

He discusses also the procession of the Spirit, which he regards not as a metaphysical and eternal process, but as a historical manifestation, identical with the mission. Herein he differs from both the Greek and the Latin theories, but unjustly charges the Greeks (who distinguish the procession from the Father alone, and the mission from the Father and the Son) with error in denying the *Filioque*. The Spirit, he says, proceeds from the Father and the Son, and he proceeds from the Father through the Son, who is the proper fountain of the Spirit. But he dates this procession from the day of Pentecost. In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit was unknown, which he proves from John 7:39 and Acts 19:2 (but contrary to such passages as Ps. 51:13; 1 Sam. 10:6; 16:13; Isa. 11:2; 61:1; 1 Pet. 1:11). The spirit in the Old Testament was only a spirit of servitude and fear, not of adoption and love (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). Christ calls us friends and brethren (John 15:15; 20:17). The Jews knew only a sanctification of the flesh and external things, not of the spirit. The anointing we receive from Christ is the anointing of the Spirit (2 Cor. 1:21; 1 John 2:20, 27). The Holy Spirit becomes ours in regeneration. We are deified or made partakers of the divine nature by Christ.

### 3. Christopanteism.

The premises and conclusions of the speculations of Servetus are pantheistic. He adopts the conception of God as the all-embracing substance. "All is one and one is all, because all things are one in God, and God is the substance of all things." As the Word of God is essentially man, so the Spirit of God is essentially the spirit of man. By the power of the resurrection all the primitive elements of the body and spirit have been renewed, glorified, and immortalized, and all these are communicated to us by Christ in baptism and the Lord's Supper. The Holy Spirit is the breath from the mouth of Christ (John 20:22). As God breathes into man the soul with the air, so Christ breathes into his disciples the Holy Spirit with the air . . . . The deity in the stone is stone, in gold it is gold, in the wood it is wood, according to the proper ideas of things. In a more excellent way the deity in man is man, in the spirit it is spirit." "God dwells in the Spirit, and God is Spirit. God dwells in the fire, and God is fire; God dwells in the light, and God is light; God dwells in the mind, and he is the mind itself." In one of his letters to Calvin he says: "Containing the essence of the universe in himself, God is everywhere, and in everything, and in such wise that he shows himself to us as fire, as a flower, as a stone." God is always in the process of becoming. Evil as well as good is comprised in his essence.

He quotes Isa. 45:7: "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I am the Lord, that doeth all these things." The evil differs from the good only in the direction.

When Calvin charged him with pantheism, Servetus restated his view in these words: "God is in all things by essence, presence, and power, and himself sustains all things." Calvin admitted this, but denied the inference that the substantial Deity is in all creatures, and, as the latter confessed before the judges, even in the pavement on which they stand, and in the devils. In his last reply to Calvin he tells him: "With Simon Magus you shut up God in a corner; I say, that he is all in all things; all beings are sustained in God."

He frequently refers with approval to Plato and the NeoPlatonists (Plotin, Jamblichus, Proclus, Porphyry).

But his views differ from the ordinary pantheism. He substitutes for a cosmopanteism a Christopanteism. Instead of saying, The world is the great God, he says, Christ is the great God. By Christ, however, he means only the ideal Christ; for he denied the eternity of the real Christ.

#### 4. Anthropology and Soteriology.

Servetus was called a Pelagian by Calvin. This is true only with some qualifications. He denied absolute predestination and the slavery of the human will, as taught first by all the Reformers. He admitted the fall of Adam in consequence of the temptation by the devil, and he admitted also hereditary sin (which Pelagius denied), but not hereditary guilt. Hereditary sin is only a disease for which the child is not responsible. (This was also the view of Zwingli.) There is no guilt without knowledge of good and evil. Actual transgression is not possible before the time of age and responsibility, that is, about the twentieth year. He infers this from such passages as Ex. 30:14; 38:26; Num. 14:29; 32:11; Deut. 1:39.

The serpent has entered human flesh and taken possession of it. There is a thorn in the flesh, a law of the members antagonistic to the law of God; but this does not condemn infants, nor is it taken away in baptism (as the Catholics hold), for it dwells even in saints, and the conflict between the spirit and the serpent goes on through life. But Christ offers his help to all, even to infants and their angels.

In the fallen state man has still a free-will, reason, and conscience, which connect him with the divine grace. Man is still the image of God. Hence the punishment of murder, which is an attack upon the divine majesty in man (Gen. 9:6). Every man is enlightened by the Logos (John 1:17). We are of divine origin (Acts 17:29). The doctrine of the slavery of the human will is a great fallacy (*magna fallacia*), and turns divine grace into a pure machine. It makes men idle, and neglect prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. God is free himself and gives freedom to every man, and his grace works freely in man. It is our impiety which turns the gift of freedom into slavery. The Reformers blaspheme God by their doctrine of total depravity and their depreciation of good works. All true philosophers and theologians teach that divinity is implanted in man, and that the soul is of the same essence with God.

As to predestination, there is, strictly speaking, no before nor after in God, as he is not subject to time. But he is just and merciful to all his creatures, es-

pecially to the little flock of the elect. He condemns no one who does not condemn himself.

Servetus rejected also the doctrine of forensic justification by faith alone, as injurious to sanctification. He held that man is justified by faith and good works, and appealed to the second chapter of James and the obedience of Abraham. On this point he sympathized more with the Roman theory. Justification is not a declaratory act of imputation, but an efficacious act by which man is changed and made righteous. Love is greater than faith and knowledge, because God is love. It embraces all good works which clothe, preserve, and strengthen faith and increase the reward of future glory. He who loves is better than he who believes.

## 5. The Sacraments.

Servetus admitted only two sacraments, therein agreeing with the Protestants, but held original views on both.

(a) As to the sacrament of Baptism, he taught, with the Catholic Church, baptismal regeneration, but rejected, with the Anabaptists, infant baptism.

Baptism is a saving ordinance by which we receive the remission of sins, are made Christians, and enter the kingdom of heaven as priests and kings, through the power of the Holy Spirit who sanctifies the water. It is the death of the old man and the birth of the new man. By baptism we put on Christ and live a new life in him.

But baptism must be preceded by the preaching of the gospel, the illumination of the Spirit, and repentance, which, according to the preaching of John the Baptist and of Christ, is the necessary condition of entering the kingdom of God. Therefore, Servetus infers, no one is a fit subject for baptism before he has reached manhood. By the law of Moses priests were not anointed before the thirtieth year (Num. 4:3). Joseph was thirty years old when he was raised from the prison to the throne (Gen. 41:46). According to the rabbinical tradition Adam was born or created in his thirtieth year. Christ was baptized in the Jordan when he was thirty years (Luke 3:21–23), and that is the model of all true Christian baptism. He was circumcised in infancy, but the carnal circumcision is the type of the spiritual circumcision of the heart, not of water baptism. Circumcision was adapted to real infants who have not yet committed actual transgression; baptism is intended for spiritual infants—that is, for responsible persons who have a childlike spirit and begin a new life.

(b) Servetus rejected Infant Baptism as irreconcilable with these views, and as absurd. He called it a doctrine of the devil, an invention of popery, and a total subversion of Christianity. He saw in it the second root of all the corruptions of the Church, as the dogma of the Trinity was the first root

By his passionate opposition to infant baptism he gave as much offence to Catholics and Protestants as by his opposition to the dogma of the Trinity. But while on this point he went further than the most fanatical Anabaptists, he did not belong to their society, and rejected the revolutionary opinions concerning obedience to government, and holding civil and military offices.

Children are unfit to perform the office of priests which is given to us in baptism. They have no faith, they cannot repent, and cannot enter into a covenant. Moreover, they do not need the bath of regeneration for the remission of sins, as they have not yet committed actual transgression.

But children are not lost if they die without baptism. Adam's sin is remitted to all by the merits of Christ. They are excluded from the Church on earth; they must die and go to Sheol; but Christ will raise them up on the resurrection day and save them in heaven. The Scripture does not condemn the Ismaelites or the Ninevites or other barbarians. Christ gives his blessing to unbaptized children. How could the most merciful Lord, who bore the sins of a guilty world, condemn those who have not committed an impiety?

Servetus agreed with Zwingli, the Anabaptists, and the Second Scotch Confession, in rejecting the cruel Roman dogma, which excludes all unbaptized infants, even of Christian parents, from the kingdom of heaven.

(c) In the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, Servetus differs from the Roman Catholic, the Lutheran, and the Zwinglian theories, and approaches, strange to say, the doctrine of his great antagonist, Calvin. Baptism and the Lord's Supper represent the birth and the nourishment of the new man. By the former we receive the spirit of Christ; by the latter we receive the body of Christ, but in a spiritual and mystical manner. Baptism kindles and strengthens faith; the eucharist strengthens love and unites us more and more to Christ. By neglecting this ordinance the spiritual man famishes and dies away. The heavenly man needs heavenly food, which nourishes him to life eternal (John 6:53).

Servetus distinguishes three false theories on the Lord's Supper, and calls their advocates transubstantiatores (Romanists), impanatores (Lutherans), and tropistae (Zwinglians).

Against the first two theories, which agree in teaching a carnal presence and manducation of Christ's body and blood by all communicants, he urges that spiritual food cannot be received by the mouth and stomach, but only by the spiritual organs of faith and love. He refers, like Zwingli, to the passage in John 6:63, as the key for understanding the words of institution and the mysterious discourse on eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ.

He is most severe against the papal doctrine of transubstantiation or transselementation; because it turns bread into no-bread, and would make us believe that the body of Christ is eaten even by wild beasts, dogs, and mice. He calls this dogma a Satanic monstrosity and an invention of demons.

To the Tropists he concedes that bread and wine are symbols, but he objects to the idea of the absence of Christ in heaven. They are symbols of a really present, not of an absent Christ. He is the living head and vitally connected with all his members. A head cut off from the body would be a monster. To deny the real presence of Christ is to destroy his reign. He came to us to abide with us forever. He withdrew only his visible presence till the day of judgment, but promised to be with us invisibly, but none the less really, to the end of the world.

## 6. The Kingdom of Christ, and the Reign of Antichrist.

We have already noticed the apocalyptic fancies of Servetus. He could not find the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven, so often spoken of in the Gospels (while Christ speaks only twice of the "Church"), in any visible church organization of his day. The true Church flourished in the first three centuries, but then fled into the wilderness, pursued by the dragon; there she has a place prepared by God, and will remain "a thousand two hundred and threescore prophetic days" or years (Rev. 12:6)—that is, from 325 till 1585.

The reign of Antichrist, with its corruptions and abominations, began with three contemporaneous events: the first Oecumenical Council of Nicaea (325), which split the one Godhead into three idols; the union of Church and State under Constantine, when the king became a monk; and the establishment of the papacy under Sylvester, when the bishop became a king. From the same period he dates the general practice of infant baptism with its destructive consequences. Since that time the true Christians were everywhere persecuted and not allowed to assemble. They were scattered as sheep in the wilderness.

Servetus fully agreed with the Reformers in opposition to the papacy as an antichristian power, but went much further, and had no better opinion of the Protestant churches. He called the Roman Church “the most beastly of beasts and the most impudent of harlots.”

He finds no less than sixty signs or marks of the reign of Antichrist in the eschatological discourses of Christ, in Daniel 7 and 12), in Paul (2 Thess. 2:3, 4; 1 Tim. 4:1), and especially in the Apocalypse (Rev. 13–18).

But this reign is now drawing to a close. The battle of Michael with Antichrist has already begun in heaven and on earth, and the author of the “Restitution” has sounded the trumpet of war, which will end in the victory of Christ and the true Church. Servetus might have lived to see the millennium (in 1585), but he expected to fall in the battle, and to share in the first resurrection.

He concludes his eschatological chapter on the reign of Antichrist with these words: “Whosoever truly believes that the pope is Antichrist, will also truly believe that the papistical trinity, paedobaptism, and the other sacraments of popery are doctrines of the daemons. O Christ Jesus, thou Son of God, most merciful deliverer, who so often didst deliver thy people from distresses, deliver us poor sinners from this Babylonian captivity of Antichrist, from his hypocrisy, his tyranny, and his idolatry. Amen.”

## 7. Eschatology.

Servetus was charged by Calvin and the Council of Geneva with denying the immortality of the soul. This was a heresy punishable by death. Etienne Dolet was executed on the place Maubert at Paris, Aug. 2, 1546, for this denial. But Servetus denied the charge. He taught that the soul was mortal, that it deserved to die on account of sin, but that Christ communicates to it new life by grace. Christ has brought immortality to light (2 Tim. 1:10; 1 Pet. 1:21–25). This seems to be the doctrine of conditional immortality of believers. But he held that all the souls of the departed go to the gloomy abode of Sheol to undergo a certain purification before judgment. This is the baptism of blood and fire, as distinct from the baptism of water and spirit (1 Cor. 3:11–15). The good and the bad are separated in death. Those who die without being regenerated by Christ have no hope. The righteous progress in sanctification. They pray for us (for which he gives six reasons, and quotes Zach. 1:12, 13; Luke 15:10; 16:27, 28; 1 Cor. 13:18); but we ought not to pray for them, for they do not need our prayers, and there is no Scripture precept on the subject.

The reign of the pope or Antichrist will be followed by the millennial reign of Christ on earth (Rev. 20:4–7). Then will take place the first resurrection.

Servetus was a chiliast, but not in the carnal Jewish sense. He blames Melancthon for deriding, with the papal crowd, all those as chiliasts who believe

in the glorious reign of Christ on earth, according to the book of Revelation and the teaching of the school of St. John.

The general resurrection and judgment follow after the millennium. Men will be raised in the flower of manhood, the thirtieth year—the year of baptismal regeneration, the year in which Christ was baptized and entered upon his public ministry. “Then wilt thou,” so he addresses Philip Melancthon, who, next to Calvin, was his greatest enemy, “with all thy senses, see, feel, taste, and hear God himself. If thou dost not believe this, thou dost not believe in a resurrection of the flesh and a bodily transformation of thy organs.”

After the general judgment, Christ will surrender his mediatorial reign with its glories to the Father, and God will be all in all (Acts 3:21; 1 Cor. 15:24–28).

### § 148. The Trial and Condemnation of Servetus at Vienne.

See D’artigny in *Nouveaux Memoires d’histoire*, etc.; Mosheim’s *Neue Nachrichten*, etc.; and Calvin’s *Opera*, VIII. 833–856.

Shortly after the publication of the “Restitution,” the fact was made known to the Roman Catholic authorities at Lyons through Guillaume Trie, a native of Lyons and a convert from Romanism, residing at that time in Geneva. He corresponded with a cousin at Lyons, by the name of Arneys, a zealous Romanist, who tried to reconvert him to his religion, and reproached the Church of Geneva with the want of discipline. On the 26th of February, 1553, he wrote to Arneys that in Geneva vice and blasphemy were punished, while in France a dangerous heretic was tolerated, who deserved to be burned by Roman Catholics as well as Protestants, who blasphemed the holy Trinity, called Jesus Christ an idol, and the baptism of infants a diabolic invention. He gave his name as Michael Servetus, who called himself at present Villeneuve, a practising physician at Vienne. In confirmation he sent the first leaf of the “Restitution,” and named the printer Balthasar Arnoullet at Vienne.

This letter, and two others of Trie which followed, look very much as if they had been dictated or inspired by Calvin. Servetus held him responsible. But Calvin denied the imputation as a calumny. At the same time he speaks rather lightly of it, and thinks that it would not have been dishonorable to denounce so dangerous a heretic to the proper authorities. He also frankly acknowledges that he caused his arrest at Geneva. He could see no material difference in principle between doing the same thing, indirectly, at Vienne and, directly, at Geneva. He simply denies that he was the originator of the papal trial and of the letter of Trie; but he does not deny that he furnished material for evidence, which was quite well known and publicly made use of in the trial where Servetus’s letters to Calvin are mentioned as pieces justificatives. There can be no doubt that Trie, who describes himself as a comparatively unlettered man, got his information about Servetus and his book from Calvin, or his colleagues, either directly from conversation, or from pulpit denunciations. We must acquit Calvin of direct agency, but we cannot free him of indirect agency in this denunciation.

Calvin’s indirect agency, in the first, and his direct agency in the second arrest of Servetus admit of no proper justification, and are due to an excess of zeal for orthodoxy.

Arneys conveyed this information to the Roman Catholic authorities. The matter was brought to the knowledge of Cardinal Tournon, at that time archbishop of Lyons, a cruel persecutor of the Protestants, and Matthias Ory, a regularly trained inquisitor of the Roman see for the kingdom of France. They at once instituted judicial proceedings.

Villeneuve was summoned before the civil court of Vienne on the 16th of March. He kept the judges waiting for two hours (during which he probably destroyed all suspicious papers), and appeared without any show of embarrassment. He affirmed that he had lived long at Vienne, in frequent company with ecclesiastics, without incurring any suspicion for heresy, and had always avoided all cause of offence. His apartments were searched, but nothing was found to incriminate him. On the following day the printing establishment of Arnoullet was searched with no better result. On the return of Arnoullet from a journey he was summoned before the tribunal, but he professed ignorance.

Inquisitor Ory now requested Arneys to secure additional proof from his cousin at Geneva. Trie forwarded on the 26th of March several autograph letters of Servetus which, he said, he had great difficulty in obtaining from Calvin (who ought to have absolutely refused). He added some pages from Calvin's Institutes with the marginal objections of Servetus to infant baptism in his handwriting. Ory, not yet satisfied, despatched a special messenger to Geneva to secure the manuscript of the *Restitutio*, and proof that Villeneuve was Servetus and Arnoullet his printer. Trie answered at once, on the last of March, that the manuscript of the *Restitutio* had been at Lausanne for a couple of years (with Viret), that Servetus had been banished from the churches of Germany (Basel and Strassburg) twenty-four years ago, and that Arnoullet and Guérout were his printers, as he knew from a good source which he would not mention (perhaps Frellon of Lyons).

The cardinal of Lyons and the archbishop of Vienne, after consultation with Inquisitor Ory and other ecclesiastics, now gave orders on the 4th of April for the arrest of Villeneuve and Arnoullet. They were confined in separate rooms in the Palais Delphinal. Villeneuve was allowed to keep a servant, and to see his friends. Ory was sent forth, hastened to Vienne, and arrived there the next morning.

After dinner Villeneuve, having been sworn on the Holy Gospels, was interrogated as to his name, age, and course of life. In his answers he told some palpable falsehoods to mislead the judges, and to prevent his being identified with Servetus, the heretic. He omitted to mention his residence in Toulouse, where he had been known under his real name, as the books of the University would show. He denied that he had written any other books than those on medicine and geography, although he had corrected many. On being shown some notes he had written on Calvin's Institutes about infant baptism, he acknowledged at last the authorship of the notes, but added that he must have written them inconsiderately for the purpose of discussion, and he submitted himself entirely to his holy Mother, the Church, from whose teachings he had never wished to differ.

At the second examination, on the sixth day of April, he was shown some of his epistles to Calvin. He declared, with tears in his eyes, that those letters were written when he was in Germany some twenty-five years ago, when there was printed in that country a book by a certain Servetus, a Spaniard, but from what part of Spain he did not know! At Paris he had heard Mons. Calvin

spoken of as a learned man, and had entered into correspondence with him from curiosity, but begged him to keep his letters as confidential and as brotherly corrections. Calvin suspected, he continued, that I was Servetus, to which I replied, I was not Servetus, but would continue to personate Servetus in order to continue the discussion. Finally we fell out, got angry, abused each other, and broke off the correspondence about ten years ago. He protested before God and his judges that he had no intention to dogmatize or to teach anything against the Church or the Christian religion. He told similar lies when other letters were laid before him.

Servetus now resolved to escape, perhaps with the aid of some friends, after he had secured through his servant a debt of three hundred crowns from the Grand Prior of the monastery of St. Pierre. On the 7th of April, at four o'clock in the morning, he dressed himself, threw a night-gown over his clothes, and put a velvet cap upon his head, and, pretending a call of nature, he secured from the unsuspecting jailer the key to the garden. He leaped from the roof of the outhouse and made his escape through the court and over the bridge across the Rhone. He carried with him his golden chain around his neck, valued at twenty crowns, six gold rings on his fingers, and plenty of money in his pockets.

Two hours elapsed before his escape became known. An alarm was given, the gates were closed, and the neighboring houses searched; but all in vain.

Nevertheless the prosecution went on. Sufficient evidence was found that the "Restitution" had been printed in Vienne; extracts were made from it to prove the heresies contained therein. The civil court, without waiting for the judgment of the spiritual tribunal (which was not given until six months afterwards), sentenced Servetus on the 17th of June, for heretical doctrines, for violation of the royal ordinances, and for escape from the royal prison, to pay a fine of one thousand livres tournois to the Dauphin, to be carried in a cart, together with his books, on a market-day through the principal streets to the place of execution, and to be burnt alive by a slow fire.

On the same day he was burnt in effigy, together with the five bales of his book, which had been consigned to Merrin at Lyons and brought back to Vienne.

The goods and chattels of the fugitive were seized and confiscated. The property he had acquired from his medical practice and literary labors amounted to four thousand crowns. The king bestowed them on the son of Monsieur de Montgiron, lieutenant-general of Dauphiné and presiding judge of the court.

Arnoullet was discharged on proving that he had been deceived by Guérout, who seems to have escaped by flight. He took care that the remaining copies of the heretical book in France should be destroyed. Stephens, the famous publisher, who had come to Geneva in 1552, sacrificed the copies in his hands. Those that had been sent to Frankfort were burnt at the instance of Calvin.

On the 23d of December, two months after the execution of Servetus, the ecclesiastical tribunal of Vienne pronounced a sentence of condemnation on him.

#### § 149. Servetus flees to Geneva and is arrested.

Rilliet: *Relation du procès*, etc., quoted above, p. 684. (Tweedie's translation in his *Calvin and Servetus*, pp. 62 sqq.) Opera, VIII. 725–856.

Escaped from one danger of death, Servetus, as by “a fatal madness,” as Calvin says, rushed into another. Did he aspire to the glory of martyrdom in Geneva, as he seemed to intimate in his letter to Poupin? But he had just escaped martyrdom in France. Or did he wish to have a personal interview with Calvin, which he had sought in Paris in 1534, and again in Vienne in 1546? But after publishing his abusive letters and suspecting him for denunciation, he could hardly entertain such a wish. Or did he merely intend to pass through the place on his way to Italy? But in this case he need not tarry there for weeks, and he might have taken another route through Savoy, or by the sea. Or did he hope to dethrone the pope of Geneva with the aid of his enemies, who had just then the political control of the Republic?

He lingered in France for about three months. He intended, first, as he declared at the trial, to proceed to Spain, but finding the journey unsafe, he turned his eye to Naples, where he hoped to make a living as physician among the numerous Spanish residents. This he could easily have done under a new name.

He took his way through Geneva. He arrived there after the middle of July, 1553, alone and on foot, having left his horse on the French border. He took up his lodging in the Auberge de la Rose, a small inn on the banks of the lake. His dress and manner, his gold chain and gold rings, excited attention. On being asked by his host whether he was married, he answered, like a light-hearted cavalier, that women enough could be found without marrying. This frivolous reply provoked suspicion of immorality, and was made use of at the trial, but unjustly, for a fracture disabled him for marriage and prevented libertinage.

He remained about a month, and then intended to leave for Zürich. He asked his host to hire a boat to convey him over the lake some distance eastward.

But before his departure he attended church, on Sunday, the 13th of August. He was recognized and arrested by an officer of the police in the name of the Council.

Calvin was responsible for this arrest, as he frankly and repeatedly acknowledged. It was a fatal mistake. Servetus was a stranger and had committed no offence in Geneva. Calvin ought to have allowed him quietly to proceed on his intended journey. Why then did he act otherwise? Certainly not from personal malice, nor other selfish reasons; for he only increased the difficulty of his critical situation, and ran the risk of his defeat by the Libertine party then in power. It was an error of judgment. He was under the false impression that Servetus had just come from Venice, the headquarters of Italian humanists and sceptics, to propagate his errors in Geneva, and he considered it his duty to make so dangerous a man harmless, by bringing him either to conviction and recantation, or to deserved punishment. He was determined to stand or fall with the principle of purity of doctrine and discipline. Rilliet justifies the arrest as a necessary measure of self-defence. “Under pain of abdication,” he says, “Calvin must do everything rather than suffer by his side in Geneva a man whom he considered the greatest enemy of the Reformation; and the critical position in which he saw it in the bosom of the Republic, was one

motive more to remove, if it was possible, the new element of dissolution which the free sojourn of Servetus would have created ... . To tolerate Servetus with impunity at Geneva would have been for Calvin to exile himself ... He had no alternative. The man whom a Calvinist accusation had caused to be arrested, tried, and condemned to the flames in France, could not find an asylum in the city from which that accusation had issued."

### § 150. State of Political Parties at Geneva in 1553.

Calvin's position in Geneva at that time was very critical. For in the year 1553 he was in the fever-heat of the struggle for church discipline with the Patriots and Libertines, who had gained a temporary ascendancy in the government. Amy Perrin, the leader of the patriotic party, was then captain-general and chief syndic, and several of his kinsmen and friends were members of the Little Council of Twenty-five. During the trial of Servetus the Council sustained Philibert Berthelier against the act of excommunication by the Consistory, and took church discipline into its own hands. The foreign refugees were made harmless by being deprived of their arms. Violence was threatened to the Reformer. He was everywhere saluted as "a heretic," and insulted on the streets. Beza says: "In the year 1553, the wickedness of the seditions, hastening to a close, was so turbulent that both Church and State were brought into extreme danger .... Everything seemed to be in a state of preparation for accomplishing the plans of the seditious, since all was subject to their power." And Calvin, at the close of that year, wrote to a friend: "For four years the factions have done all to lead by degrees to the overthrow of this Church, already very weak. Behold two years of our life have passed as if we lived among the avowed enemies of the gospel."

The hostility of the Council to Calvin and his discipline continued even after the execution of Servetus for nearly two more years. He asked the assistance of Bullinger and the Church of Zürich to come to his aid again in this struggle. He wrote to Ambrose Blaurer, Feb. 6, 1554: "These last few years evil disposed persons have not ceased on every occasion to create for us new subjects of vexation. At length in their endeavors to render null our excommunication, there is no excess of folly they have left unattempted. Everywhere the contest was long maintained with much violence, because in the senate and among the people the passions of the contending parties had been so much inflamed that there was some risk of a tumult."

We do not know whether Servetus was aware of this state of things. But he could not have come at a time more favorable to him and more unfavorable to Calvin. Among the Libertines and Patriots, who hated the yoke of Calvin even more than the yoke of the pope, Servetus found natural supporters who, in turn, would gladly use him for political purposes. This fact emboldened him to take such a defiant attitude in the trial and to overwhelm Calvin with abuse.

The final responsibility of the condemnation, therefore, rests with the Council of Geneva, which would probably have acted otherwise, if it had not been strongly influenced by the judgment of the Swiss Churches and the government of Bern. Calvin conducted the theological part of the examination of the trial, but had no direct influence upon the result. His theory was that the Church may convict and denounce the heretic theologically, but that his con-

demnation and punishment is the exclusive function of the State, and that it is one of its most sacred duties to punish attacks made on the Divine majesty.

“From the time Servetus was convicted of his heresy,” says Calvin, “I have not uttered a word about his punishment, as all honest men will bear witness; and I challenge even the malignant to deny it if they can.” One thing only he did: he expressed the wish for a mitigation of his punishment. And this humane sentiment is almost the only good thing that can be recorded to his honor in this painful trial.

## § 151. The First Act of the Trial at Geneva.

Servetus was confined near the Church of St. Pierre, in the ancient residence of the bishops of Geneva, which had been turned into a prison. His personal property consisted of ninety-seven crowns, a chain of gold weighing about twenty crowns, and six gold rings (a large turquoise, a white sapphire, a diamond, a ruby, a large emerald of Peru, and a signet ring of coralline). These valuables were surrendered to Pierre Tissot, and after the process given to the hospital. The prisoner was allowed to have paper and ink, and such books as could be procured at Geneva or Lyons at his own expense. Calvin lent him Ignatius, Polycarp, Tertullian, and Irenaeus. But he was denied the benefit of counsel, according to the ordinances of 1543. This is contrary to the law of equity and is one of the worst features of the trial. He was not subjected to the usual torture.

The laws of Geneva demanded that the accuser should become a prisoner with the accused, in order that in the event of the charge proving false, the former might undergo punishment in the place of the accused. The person employed for this purpose was Nicolas de la Fontaine, a Frenchman, a theological student, and Calvin’s private secretary. The accused as well as the accuser were foreigners. Another law obliged the Little Council to examine every prisoner within twenty-four hours after his arrest. The advocate or “Speaker” of Nicolas de la Fontaine in the trial was Germain Colladon, likewise a Frenchman and an able lawyer, who had fled for his religion, and aided Calvin in framing a new constitution for Geneva.

The trial began on the 15th of August and continued, with interruptions, for more than two months. It was conducted in French and took place in the Bishop’s Palace, according to the forms prescribed by law, in the presence of the Little Council, the herald of the city, the Lord-Lieutenant, and several citizens, who had a right to sit in criminal processes, but did not take part in the judgment. Among these was Berthelier, the bitter enemy of Calvin.

Servetus answered the preliminary questions as to his name, age, and previous history more truthfully than he had done before the Catholic tribunal, and incidentally accused Calvin of having caused the prosecution at Vienne. It is not owing to Calvin, he said, that he was not burnt alive there.

The deed of accusation, as lodged by Nicholas de la Fontaine, consisted of thirty-eight articles which were drawn up by Calvin (as he himself informs us), and were fortified by references to the books of Servetus, which were produced in evidence, especially the “Restitution of Christianity,” both the manuscript copy, which Servetus had sent to Calvin in advance, and a printed copy.

The principal charges were, that he had published heretical opinions and blasphemies concerning the Trinity, the person of Christ, and infant baptism. He gave evasive or orthodox-sounding answers. He confessed to believe in the trinity of persons, but understood the word "person" in a different sense from that used by modern writers, and appealed to the first teachers of the Church and the disciples of the apostles. He denied at first that he had called the Trinity three devils and Cerberus; but he had done so repeatedly and confessed it afterwards. He professed to believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God according to his divinity and humanity; that the flesh of Christ came from heaven and of the substance of God; but as to the matter it came from the Virgin Mary. He denied the view imputed to him that the soul was mortal. He admitted that he had called infant baptism "a diabolical invention and infernal falsehood destructive of Christianity." This was a dangerous admission; for the Anabaptists were suspected of seditious and revolutionary opinions.

He was also charged with having, "in the person of M. Calvin, defamed the doctrines of the gospel and of the Church of Geneva." To this he replied that in what he had formerly written against Calvin, in his own defence, he had not intended to injure him, but to show him his errors and faults, which he was ready to prove by Scripture and good reasons before a full congregation.

This was a bold challenge. Calvin was willing to accept it, but the Council declined, fearing to lose the control of the affair by submitting it to the tribunal of public opinion. The friends of Servetus would have run the risk of seeing him defeated in public debate. That charge, however, which seemed to betray personal ill-feeling of Calvin, was afterwards very properly omitted.

On the following day, the 16th of August, Berthelier, then smarting under the sentence of excommunication by the Consistory, openly came to the defence of Servetus, and had a stormy encounter with Colladon, which is omitted in the official record, but indicated by blanks and the abrupt termination: "Here they proceeded no further, but adjourned till tomorrow at midday."

On Thursday, the 17th of August, Calvin himself appeared before the Council as the real accuser, and again on the 21st of August. He also conferred with his antagonist in writing. Servetus was not a match for Calvin either in learning or argument; but he showed great skill and some force.

He contemptuously repelled the frivolous charge that, in his Ptolemy, he had contradicted the authority of Moses, by describing Palestine as an unfruitful country (which it was then, and is now). He wiped his mouth and said, "Let us go on; there is nothing wrong there."

The charge of having, in his notes on the Latin Bible, explained the servant of God in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, as meaning King Cyrus, instead of the Saviour, he disposed of by distinguishing two senses of prophecy—the literal and historical sense which referred to Cyrus, and the mystical and principal sense which referred to Christ. He quoted Nicolaus de Lyra; but Calvin showed him the error, and asserts that he audaciously quoted books which he had never examined.

As to his calling the Trinity "a Cerberus" and "a dream of Augustin," and the Trinitarians "atheists," he said that he did not mean the true Trinity, which he believed himself, but the false trinity of his opponents; and that the oldest teachers before the Council of Nicaea did not teach that trinity, and did not use the word. Among them he quoted Ignatius, Polycarp, Clement of Rome, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria. Calvin refuted his assertion by

quotations from Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and Origen. On this occasion he charges him, unjustly, with total ignorance of Greek, because he was embarrassed by a Greek quotation from Justin Martyr, and called for a Latin version.

In discussing the relation of the divine substance to that of the creatures, Servetus declared that "all creatures are of the substance of God, and that God is in all things." Calvin asked him: "How, unhappy man, if any one strike the pavement with his foot and say that he tramples on thy God, wouldst thou not be horrified at having the Majesty of heaven subjected to such indignity?" To this Servetus replied: "I have no doubt that this bench, and this buffet, and all you can show me, are of the substance of God." When it was objected that in his view God must be substantially even in the devil, he burst out into a laugh, and rejoined: "Can you doubt this? I hold this for a general maxim, that all things are part and parcel of God, and that the nature of things is his substantial Spirit."

The result of this first act of the trial was unfavorable to the prisoner, but not decisive.

Calvin used the freedom of the pulpit to counteract the efforts of the Libertine party in favor of Servetus.

## § 152. The Second Act of the Trial at Geneva.

The original prosecution being discharged, the case was handed over to the attorney-general, Claude Rigot, in compliance with the criminal ordinance of 1543. Thus the second act of the trial began. The prisoner was examined again, and a new indictment of thirty articles was prepared, which bore less on the actual heresies of the accused than on their dangerous practical tendency and his persistency in spreading them.

The Council wrote also to the judges of Vienne to procure particulars of the charges which had been brought against him there.

Servetus defended himself before the Council on the 23d of August, with ingenuity and apparent frankness against the new charges of quarrelsomeness and immorality. As to the latter, he pleaded his physical infirmity which protected him against the temptation of licentiousness. He had always studied the Scripture and tried to lead a Christian life. He did not think that his book would disturb the peace of Christendom, but would promote the truth. He denied that he had come to Geneva for any sinister purpose; he merely wished to pass through on his way to Zürich and Naples.

At the same time he prepared a written petition to the Council, which was received on the 24th of August. He demanded his release from the criminal charge for several reasons, which ought to have had considerable weight: that it was unknown in the Christian Church before the time of Constantine to try cases of heresy before a civil tribunal; that he had not offended against the laws either in Geneva or elsewhere; that he was not seditious nor turbulent; that his books treated of abstruse questions, and were addressed to the learned; that he had not spoken of these subjects to anybody but Oecolampadius, Bucer, and Capito; that he had ever refuted the Anabaptists, who rebelled against the magistrates and wished to have all things in common. In case he was not released, he demanded the aid of an advocate acquainted with the laws and customs of the country. Certainly a very reasonable request.

The attorney-general prepared a second indictment in refutation of the arguments of Servetus, who had studied law at Toulouse. He showed that the first Christian emperors claimed for themselves the cognizance and trial of heresies, and that their laws and constitutions condemned antitrinitarian heretics and blasphemers to death. He charged him with falsehood in declaring that he had written against the Anabaptists, and that he had not communicated his doctrine to any person during the last thirty years. The counsel asked for was refused because it was forbidden by the criminal statutes (1543), and because there was "not one jot of apparent innocence which requires an attorney." The very thing to be proved!

A new examination followed which elicited some points of interest. Servetus stated his belief that the Reformation would progress much further than Luther and Calvin intended, and that new things were always first rejected, but afterwards received. To the absurd charge of making use of the Koran, he replied that he had quoted it for the glory of Christ, that the Koran abounds in what is good, and that even in a wicked book one may find some good things.

On the last day of August the Little Council received answer from Vienne. The commandant of the royal palace in that city arrived in Geneva, communicated to them a copy of the sentence of death pronounced against Villeneuve, and begged them to send him back to France that the sentence might be executed on the living man as it had been already executed on his effigy and books. The Council refused to surrender Servetus, in accordance with analogous cases, but promised to do full justice. The prisoner himself, who could see only a burning funeral pile for him in Vienne, preferred to be tried in Geneva, where he had some chance of acquittal or lighter punishment. He incidentally justified his habit of attending mass at Vienne by the example of Paul, who went to the temple, like the Jews; yet he confessed that in doing so he had sinned through fear of death.

The communication from Vienne had probably the influence of stimulating the zeal of the Council for orthodoxy. They wished not to be behind the Roman Church in that respect. But the issue was still uncertain.

The Council again confronted Servetus with Calvin on the first day of September. On the same day it granted, in spite of the strong protest of Calvin, permission to Philibert Berthelier to approach the communion table. It thus annulled the act of excommunication by the Consistory, and arrogated to itself the power of ecclesiastical discipline.

A few hours afterwards the investigation was resumed in the prison. Perrin and Berthelier were present as judges, and came to the aid of Servetus in the oral debate with Calvin, but, it seems, without success; for they resorted to a written discussion in which Servetus could better defend himself, and in which Calvin might complicate his already critical position. They wished, moreover, to refer the affair to the Churches of Switzerland which, in the case of Bolsec, had shown themselves much more tolerant than Calvin. Servetus demanded such reference. Calvin did not like it, but did not openly oppose it.

The Council, without entering on the discussion, decided that Calvin should extract in Latin, from the books of Servetus, the objectionable articles, word for word, contained therein; that Servetus should write his answers and vindications, also in Latin; that Calvin should in his turn furnish his replies; and that these documents be forwarded to the Swiss Churches as a basis of judgment. All this was fair and impartial.

On the same day Calvin extracted thirty-eight propositions from the books of Servetus with references, but without comments.

Then, turning with astonishing energy from one enemy to the other, he appeared before the Little Council on the 2d of September to protest most earnestly against their protection of Berthelier, who intended to present himself on the following day as a guest at the Lord's table, and by the strength of the civil power to force Calvin to give him the tokens of the body and blood of Christ. He declared before the Council that he would rather die than act against his conscience. The Council did not yield, but resolved secretly to advise Berthelier to abstain from receiving the sacrament for the present. Calvin, ignorant of this secret advice, and resolved to conquer or to die, thundered from the pulpit of St. Peter on the 3d of September his determination to refuse, at the risk of his life, the sacred elements to an excommunicated person. Berthelier did not dare to approach the table. Calvin had achieved a moral victory over the Council.

In the mean time Servetus had, within the space of twenty-four hours, prepared a written defence, as directed by the Council, against the thirty-eight articles of Calvin. It was both apologetic and boldly aggressive, clear, keen, violent, and bitter. He contemptuously repelled Calvin's interference in the trial, and charged him with presumption in framing articles of faith after the fashion of the doctors of the Sorbonne, without Scripture proof. He affirmed that he either misunderstood him or craftily perverted his meaning. He quotes from Tertullian, Irenaeus, and pseudo-Clement in support of his views. He calls him a disciple of Simon Magus, a criminal accuser, and a homicide. He ridiculed the idea that such a man should call himself an orthodox minister of the Church.

Calvin replied within two days in a document of twenty-three folio pages, which were signed by all the fourteen ministers of Geneva. He meets the patristic quotations of Servetus with counter-quotations, with Scripture passages and solid arguments, and charges him in conclusion with the intention "to subvert all religion."

These three documents, which contained the essence of the doctrinal discussion, were presented to the Little Council on Tuesday the 5th of September.

On the 15th of September Servetus addressed a petition to the Council in which he attacked Calvin as his persecutor, complained of his miserable condition in prison and want of the necessary clothing, and demanded an advocate and the transfer of his trial to the Large Council of Two Hundred, where he had reason to expect a majority in his favor. This course had probably been suggested to him (as Rilliet conjectures) by Perrin and Berthelier through the jailer, Claude de Genève, who was a member of the Libertine party.

On the same day the Little Council ordered an improvement of the prisoner's wardrobe (which, however, was delayed by culpable neglect), and sent him the three documents, with permission to make a last reply to Calvin, but took no action on his appeal to the Large Council, having no disposition to renounce its own authority.

Servetus at once prepared a reply by way of explanatory annotations on the margin and between the lines of the memorial of Calvin and the ministers. These annotations are full of the coarsest abuse, and read like the production of a madman. He calls Calvin again and again a liar, an impostor, a miserable wretch (*nebulo pessimus*), a hypocrite, a disciple of Simon Magus, etc. Take

these specimens: "Do you deny that you are a man-slayer? I will prove it by your acts. You dare not deny that you are Simon Magus. As for me, I am firm in so good a cause, and do not fear death ... . You deal with sophistical arguments without Scripture ... . You do not understand what you say. You howl like a blind man in the desert .... You lie, you lie, you lie, you ignorant calumniator .... Madness is in you when you persecute to death ... . I wish that all your magic were still in the belly of your mother ... . I wish I were free to make a catalogue of your errors. Whoever is not a Simon Magus is considered a Pelagian by Calvin. All, therefore, who have been in Christendom are damned by Calvin; even the apostles, their disciples, the ancient doctors of the Church and all the rest. For no one ever entirely abolished free-will except that Simon Magus. Thou liest, thou liest, thou liest, thou liest, thou miserable wretch."

He concludes with the remark that, his doctrine was met merely by clamors, not by argument or any authority," and he subscribed his name as one who had Christ for his certain protector.

He sent these notes to the Council on the 18th of September. It was shown to Calvin, but he did not deem it expedient to make a reply. Silence in this case was better than speech.

The debate, therefore, between the two divines was closed, and the trial became an affair of Protestant Switzerland, which should act as a jury.

### § 153. Consultation of the Swiss Churches. The Defiant Attitude of Servetus.

On the 19th of September the Little Council, in accordance with a resolution adopted on the 4th, referred the case of Servetus to the magistrates and pastors of the Reformed Churches of Bern, Zürich, Schaffhausen, and Basel for their judgment.

Two days afterwards Jaquemoz Jernoz, as the official messenger, was despatched on his mission with a circular letter and the documents,—namely the theological debate between Calvin and Servetus,—a copy of the "Restitution of Christianity," and the works of Tertullian and Irenaeus, who were the chief patristic authorities quoted by both parties.

On the result of this mission the case of Servetus was made to depend. Servetus himself had expressed a wish that this course should be adopted, hoping, it seems, to gain a victory, or at least an escape from capital punishment. On the 22d of August he was willing to be banished from Geneva; but on the 22d of September he asked the Council to put Calvin on trial, and handed in a list of articles on which he should be interrogated. He thus admitted the civil jurisdiction in matters of religious opinions which he had formerly denied, and was willing to stake his life on the decision, provided that his antagonist should be exposed to the same fate. Among the four "great and infallible" reasons why Calvin should be condemned, he assigned the fact that he wished to "repress the truth of Jesus Christ, and follow the doctrines of Simon Magus, against all the doctors that ever were in the Church." He declared in his petition that Calvin, like a magician, ought to be exterminated, and his goods be confiscated and given to Servetus, in compensation for the loss he had sustained through Calvin.

To dislodge Calvin from his position," says Rilliet, "to expel him from Geneva, to satisfy a just vengeance—these were the objects toward which Servetus rushed."

But the Council took no notice of his petition.

On the 10th of October he sent another letter to the Council, imploring them, for the love of Christ, to grant him such justice as they would not refuse to a Turk, and complaining that nothing had been done for his comfort as promised, but that he was more wretched than ever. The petition had some effect. The Lord Syndic, Darlod, and the Secretary of State, Claude Roset, were directed to visit his prison and to provide some articles of dress for his relief.

On the 18th of October the messenger of the State returned with the answers from the four foreign churches. They were forthwith translated into French, and examined by the magistrates. We already know the contents. The churches were unanimous in condemning the theological doctrines of Servetus, and in the testimony of respect and affection for Calvin and his colleagues. Even Bern, which was not on good terms with Calvin, and had two years earlier counselled toleration in the case of Bolsec, regarded Servetus a much more dangerous heretic and advised to remove this "pest." Yet none of the Churches consulted expressly suggested the death penalty. They left the mode of punishment with the discretion of a sovereign State. Haller, the pastor of Bern, however, wrote to Bullinger of Zürich that, if Servetus had fallen into the hands of Bernese justice, he would undoubtedly have been condemned to the flames.

#### § 154. Condemnation of Servetus.

On the 23d of October the Council met for a careful examination of the replies of the churches, but could not come to a decision on account of the absence of several members, especially Perrin, the Chief Syndic, who feigned sickness. Servetus had failed to excite any sympathy among the people, and had injured his cause by his obstinate and defiant conduct. The Libertines, who wished to use him as a tool for political purposes, were discouraged and intimidated by the counsel of Bern, to which they looked for protection against the hated régime of Calvin.

The full session of the Council on the 26th, to which all counsellors were summoned on the faith of their oath, decided the fate of the unfortunate prisoner, but not without a stormy discussion. Amy Perrin presided and made a last effort in favor of Servetus. He at first insisted upon his acquittal, which would have been equivalent to the expulsion of Calvin and a permanent triumph of the party opposed to him. Being baffled, he proposed, as another alternative, that Servetus, in accordance with his own wishes, be transferred to the Council of the Two Hundred. But this proposal was also rejected. He was influenced by political passion rather than by sympathy with heresy or love of toleration, which had very few advocates at that time. When he perceived that the majority of the Council was inclined to a sentence of death, he quitted the Senate House with a few others.

The Council had no doubt of its jurisdiction in the case; it had to respect the unanimous judgment of the Churches, the public horror of heresy and blasphemy, and the imperial laws of Christendom, which were appealed to by the attorney-general. The decision was unanimous. Even the wish of Calvin to

substitute the sword for the fire was overruled, and the papal practice of the auto-da-fé followed, though without the solemn mockery of a religious festival.

The judges, after enumerating the crimes of Servetus, in calling the holy Trinity a monster with three heads, blaspheming the Son of God, denying infant-baptism as an invention of the devil and of witchcraft, assailing the Christian faith, and after mentioning that he had been condemned and burned in effigy at Vienne, and had during his residence in Geneva persisted in his vile and detestable errors, and called all true Christians tritheists, atheists, sorcerers, putting aside all remonstrances and corrections with a malicious and perverse obstinacy, pronounced the fearful sentence:—

“We condemn thee, Michael Servetus, to be bound, and led to the place of Champel, there to be fastened to a stake and burnt alive, together with thy book, as well the one written by thy hand as the printed one, even till thy body be reduced to ashes; and thus shalt thou finish thy days to furnish an example to others who might wish to commit the like.

“And we command our Lieutenant to see that this our present sentence be executed.”

Rilliet, who published the official report of the trial in the interest of history, without special sympathy with Calvin, says that the sentence of condemnation is “odious before our consciences, but was just according to the law.” Let us thank God that those unchristian and barbarous laws are abolished forever.

Calvin communicated to Farel on the 26th of October a brief summary of the result, in which he says: “The messenger has returned from the Swiss Churches. They are unanimous in pronouncing that Servetus has now renewed those impious errors with which Satan formerly disturbed the Church, and that he is a monster not to be borne. Those of Basel are judicious. The Zürichers are the most vehement of all ... They of Schaffhausen agree. To an appropriate letter from the Bernese is added one from the Senate in which they stimulate ours not a little. Caesar, the comedian [so he sarcastically called Perrin], after feigning illness for three days, at length went up to the assembly in order to free that wretch [Servetus] from punishment. Nor was he ashamed to ask that the case be referred to the Council of the Two Hundred. However, Servetus was without dissent condemned. He will be led forth to punishment tomorrow. We endeavored to alter the mode of his death, but in vain. Why we did not succeed, I defer for narration until I see you.”

This letter reached Farel on his way to Geneva, where he arrived on the same day, in time to hear the sentence of condemnation. He had come at the request of Calvin, to perform the last pastoral duties to the prisoner, which could not so well be done by any of the pastors of Geneva.

### § 155. Execution of Servetus. Oct. 27, 1553.

Farel, in a letter to Ambrosius Blaarer, December, 1553, preserved in the library of St. Gall, and copied in the *Thesaurus Hottingerianus* of the city library of Zürich, gives an account of the last moments and execution of Servetus. See Henry, vol. III. Beilage, pp. 72–75. Calvin, at the beginning of his

“Defence,” Opera, VIII. 460, relates his own last interview with Servetus in prison on the day of his death.

When Servetus, on the following morning, heard of the unexpected sentence of death, he was horror-struck and behaved like a madman. He uttered groans, and cried aloud in Spanish, “Mercy, mercy!”

The venerable old Farel visited him in the prison at seven in the morning, and remained with him till the hour of his death. He tried to convince him of his error. Servetus asked him to quote a single Scripture passage where Christ was called “Son of God” before his incarnation. Farel could not satisfy him. He brought about an interview with Calvin, of which the latter gives us an account. Servetus, proud as he was, humbly asked his pardon. Calvin protested that he had never pursued any personal quarrel against him. “Sixteen years ago,” he said, “I spared no pains at Paris to gain you to our Lord. You then shunned the light. I did not cease to exhort you by letters, but all in vain. You have heaped upon me I know not how much fury rather than anger. But as to the rest, I pass by what concerns myself. Think rather of crying for mercy to God whom you have blasphemed.” This address had no more effect than the exhortation of Farel, and Calvin left the room in obedience, as he says, to St. Paul’s order (Tit. 3:10, 11), to withdraw from a self-condemned heretic. Servetus appeared as mild and humble as he had been bold and arrogant, but did not change his conviction.

At eleven o’clock on the 27th of October, Servetus was led from the prison to the gates of the City Hall, to hear the sentence read from the balcony by the Lord Syndic Darlod. When he heard the last words, he fell on his knees and exclaimed: “The sword! in mercy! and not fire! Or I may lose my soul in despair.” He protested that if he had sinned, it was through ignorance. Farel raised him up and said: “Confess thy crime, and God will have mercy on your soul.” Servetus replied: “I am not guilty; I have not merited death.” Then he smote his breast, invoked God for pardon, confessed Christ as his Saviour, and besought God to pardon his accusers.

On the short journey to the place of execution, Farel again attempted to obtain a confession, but Servetus was silent. He showed the courage and consistency of a martyr in these last awful moments.

Champel is a little bill south of Geneva with a fine view on one of the loveliest paradises of nature. There was prepared a funeral pile hidden in part by the autumnal leaves of the oak trees. The Lord Lieutenant and the herald on horseback, both arrayed in the insignia of their office, arrive with the doomed man and the old pastor, followed by a small procession of spectators. Farel invites Servetus to solicit the prayers of the people and to unite his prayers with theirs. Servetus obeys in silence. The executioner fastens him by iron chains to the stake amidst the fagots, puts a crown of leaves covered with sulphur on his head, and binds his book by his side. The sight of the flaming torch extorts from him a piercing shriek of “misericordias” in his native tongue. The spectators fall back with a shudder. The flames soon reach him and consume his mortal frame in the forty-fourth year of his fitful life. In the last moment he is heard to pray, in smoke and agony, with a loud voice: “Jesus Christ, thou Son of the eternal God, have mercy upon me!”

This was at once a confession of his faith and of his error. He could not be induced, says Farel, to confess that Christ was the eternal Son of God.

The tragedy ended when the clock of St. Peter's struck twelve. The people quietly dispersed to their homes. Farel returned at once to Neuchâtel, even without calling on Calvin. The subject was too painful to be discussed.

The conscience and piety of that age approved of the execution, and left little room for the emotions of compassion. But two hundred years afterwards a distinguished scholar and minister of Geneva echoed the sentiments of his fellow-citizens when he said: "Would to God that we could extinguish this funeral pile with our tears." Dr. Henry, the admiring biographer of Calvin, imagines an impartial Christian jury of the nineteenth century assembled on Champel, which would pronounce the judgment on Calvin, "Not guilty"; on Servetus, "Guilty, with extenuating circumstances."

The flames of Champel have consumed the intolerance of Calvin as well as the heresy of Servetus.

### § 156. The Character of Servetus.

Servetus—theologian, philosopher, geographer, physician, scientist, and astrologer—was one of the most remarkable men in the history of heresy. He was of medium size, thin and pale, like Calvin, his eyes beaming with intelligence, and an expression of melancholy and fanaticism. Owing to a physical rupture he was never married. He seems never to have had any particular friends, and stood isolated and alone.

His mental endowments and acquirements were of a high order, and placed him far above the heretics of his age and almost on an equality with the Reformers. His discoveries have immortalized his name in the history of science. He knew Latin, Hebrew, and Greek (though Calvin depreciates his knowledge of Greek), as well as Spanish, French, and Italian, and was well read in the Bible, the early fathers, and the schoolmen. He had an original, speculative, and acute mind, a tenacious memory, ready wit, a fiery imagination, ardent love of learning, and untiring industry. He anticipated the leading doctrines of Socinianism and Unitarianism, but in connection with mystic and pantheistic speculations, which his contemporaries did not understand. He had much uncommon sense, but little practical common sense. He lacked balance and soundness. There was a streak of fanaticism in his brain. His eccentric genius bordered closely on the line of insanity. For

"Great wits are sure to madness near allied,  
And thin partitions do their bounds divide."

His style is frequently obscure, inelegant, abrupt, diffuse, and repetitious. He accumulates arguments to an extent that destroys their effect. He gives eight arguments to prove that the saints in heaven pray for us; ten arguments to show that Melancthon and his friends were sorcerers, blinded by the devil; twenty arguments against infant baptism; twenty-five reasons for the necessity of faith before baptism; and sixty signs of the apocalyptic beast and the reign of Antichrist.

In thought and style he was the opposite of the clear-headed, well-balanced, methodical, logical, and thoroughly sound Calvin, who never leaves the reader in doubt as to his meaning.

The moral character of Servetus was free from immorality of which his enemies at first suspected him in the common opinion of the close connection of heresy with vice. But he was vain, proud, defiant, quarrelsome, revengeful, irreverent in the use of language, deceitful, and mendacious. He abused popery and the Reformers with unreasonable violence. He conformed for years to the Catholic ritual which he despised as idolatrous. He defended his attendance upon mass by Paul's example in visiting the temple (Acts 21:26), but afterwards confessed at Geneva that he had acted under compulsion and sinned from fear of death. He concealed or denied on oath facts which he had afterwards to admit. At Vienne he tried to lie himself out of danger, and escaped; in Geneva he defied his antagonist and did his best, with the aid of the Libertines in the Council, to ruin him.

The severest charge against him is blasphemy. Bullinger remarked to a Pole that if Satan himself should come out of hell, he could use no more blasphemous language against the Trinity than this Spaniard; and Peter Martyr, who was present, assented and said that such a living son of the devil ought not to be tolerated anywhere. We cannot even now read some of his sentences against the doctrine of the Trinity without a shudder. Servetus lacked reverence and a decent regard for the most sacred feelings and convictions of those who differed from him. But there was a misunderstanding on both sides. He did not mean to blaspheme the true God in whom he believed himself, but only the three false and imaginary gods, as he wrongly conceived them to be, while to all orthodox Christians they were the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit of the one true, eternal, blessed Godhead.

He labored under the fanatical delusion that he was called by Providence to reform the Church and to restore the Christian religion. He deemed himself wiser than all the fathers, schoolmen, and reformers. He supported his delusion by a fanciful interpretation of the last and darkest book of the Bible.

Calvin and Farel saw, in his refusal to recant, only the obstinacy of an incorrigible heretic and blasphemer. We must recognize in it the strength of his conviction. He forgave his enemies; he asked the pardon even of Calvin. Why should we not forgive him? He had a deeply religious nature. We must honor his enthusiastic devotion to the Scriptures and to the person of Christ. From the prayers and ejaculations inserted in his book, and from his dying cry for mercy, it is evident that he worshipped Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour.

### § 157. Calvin's Defence of the Death Penalty for Heretics.

The public sentiment, Catholic and Protestant, as we have seen, approved of the traditional doctrine, that obstinate heretics should be made harmless by death, and continued unchanged down to the close of the seventeenth century.

But there were exceptions. As in the case of the execution of the Spanish Priscillianists in the fourth century, the genuine spirit of Christianity and humanity raised a cry of indignation and horror through the mouths of St. Ambrose of Milan, and St. Martin of Tours; so there were not a few in the sixteenth century who protested against the burning of Servetus. Most of these—Lelio Socino, Renato, Curio, Biandrata, Alciati, Gribaldo, Gentile, Ochino, and Castellio—were Italian refugees and free-thinkers who sympathized more or less with his heretical opinions. It was especially three professors in the University of Basel Borrahus (Cellarius), Curio, and Castellio—who were

suspected at Geneva of being followers of Servetus. For the same reason some Anabaptists, like David Joris, who lived at that time in Basel under the assumed name of John von Bruck, took his part. Anonymous libels in prose and verse appeared against Calvin. He was denounced as a new pope and inquisitor, and Geneva, heretofore an asylum of religious liberty, as a new Rome. A hundred Servetuses seemed to arise from the ashes at Champel; but they were all inferior men, and did not understand the speculative views of Servetus, who had exhausted the productive powers of antitrinitarianism.

Not only dissenters and personal enemies, but also, as Beza admits, some orthodox and pious people and friends of Calvin were dissatisfied with the severity of the punishment, and feared, not without reason, that it would justify and encourage the Romanists in their cruel persecution of Protestants in France and elsewhere.

Under these circumstances Calvin felt it to be his disagreeable duty to defend his conduct, and to refute the errors of Servetus. He was urged by Bullinger to do it. He completed the work in a few months and published it in Latin and French in the beginning of 1554. It had an official character and was signed by all the fifteen ministers of Geneva.

Beza aided him in this controversy and undertook to refute the pamphlet of Bellius, and did so with great ability and eloquence.

Calvin's work against Servetus gave complete satisfaction to Melancthon. It is the strongest refutation of the errors of his opponent which his age produced, but it is not free from bitterness against one who, at last, had humbly asked his pardon, and who had been sent to the judgment seat of God by a violent death. It is impossible to read without pain the following passage: "Whoever shall now contend that it is unjust to put heretics and blasphemers to death will knowingly and willingly incur their very guilt. This is not laid down on human authority; it is God who speaks and prescribes a perpetual rule for his Church. It is not in vain that he banishes all those human affections which soften our hearts; that he commands paternal love and all the benevolent feelings between brothers, relations, and friends to cease; in a word, that he almost deprives men of their nature in order that nothing may hinder their holy zeal. Why is so implacable a severity exacted but that we may know that God is defrauded of his honor, unless the piety that is due to him be preferred to all human duties, and that when his glory is to be asserted, humanity must be almost obliterated from our memories?"

Calvin's plea for the right and duty of the Christian magistrate to punish heresy by death, stands or falls with his theocratic theory and the binding authority of the Mosaic code. His arguments are chiefly drawn from the Jewish laws against idolatry and blasphemy, and from the examples of the pious kings of Israel. But his arguments from the New Testament are failures. He agrees with Augustin in the interpretation of the parabolic words: "Constrain them to come in" (Luke 14:23). But this can only refer to moral and not to physical force, and would imply a forcible salvation, not destruction. The same parable was afterwards abused by the French bishops to justify the abominable dragoonades of Louis XIV. against the Huguenots. Calvin quotes the passages on the duty of the civil magistrate to use the sword against evil-doers (Rom. 13:4); the expulsion of the profane traffickers from the temple (Matt. 21:12); the judgment on Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1 sqq.); the striking of Elymas with blindness (13:11); and the delivery of Hymenaeus and Alexander to Sa-

tan (1 Tim. 1:20). He answers the objections from the parables of the tares and of the net (Matt. 13:30, 49), and from the wise counsel of Gamaliel (Acts 5:34). But he cannot get over those passages which contradict his theory, as Christ's rebuke to John and James for wishing to call down fire from heaven (Luke 9:54), and to Peter for drawing the sword (Matt. 26:52), his declaration that his kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36), and his whole spirit and aim, which is to save and not to destroy.

In his juvenile work on Seneca and in earlier editions of his *Institutes*, Calvin had expressed noble sentiments on toleration; even as Augustin did in his writings against the Manichaeans, among whom he himself had lived for nine years; but both changed their views for the worse in their zeal for orthodoxy.

Calvin's "Defence" did not altogether satisfy even some of his best friends. Zurkinden, the State Secretary of Bern, wrote him Feb. 10, 1554: "I wish the former part of your book, respecting the right which the magistrates may have to use the sword in coercing heretics, had not appeared in your name, but in that of your council, which might have been left to defend its own act. I do not see how you can find any favor with men of sedate mind in being the first formally to treat this subject, which is a hateful one to almost all." Bullinger intimated his objections more mildly in a letter of March 26, 1554, in which he says: "I only fear that your book will not be so acceptable to many of the more simple-minded persons, who, nevertheless, are attached both to yourself and to the truth, by reason of its brevity and consequent obscurity, and the weightiness of the subject. And, indeed, your style appears somewhat perplexed, especially in this work." Calvin wrote in reply, April 29, 1554: "I am aware that I have been more concise than usual in this treatise. However, if I should appear to have faithfully and honestly defended the true doctrine, it will more than recompense me for my trouble. But though the candor and justice which are natural to you, as well as your love towards me, lead you to judge of me favorably, there are others who assail me harshly as a master in cruelty and atrocity, for attacking with my pen not only a dead man, but one who perished by my hands. Some, even not self-disposed towards me, wish that I had never entered on the subject of the punishment of heretics, and say that others in the like situation have held their tongues as the best way of avoiding hatred. It is well, however, that I have you to share my fault, if fault it be; for you it was who advised and persuaded me to it. Prepare yourself, therefore, for the combat."

## § 158. A Plea for Religious Liberty. Castellio and Beza.

Cf. § 126, p. 627, and especially Ferd. Buisson, Sébastien Castellion. Paris (Hachette et Cie), 1892. 2 vols. 8vo (I. 358–413; II. 1–28).

A month after Calvin's defence of the death penalty of heretics, there appeared at Basel a pseudonymous book in defence of religious liberty, dedicated to Duke Christopher of Würtemberg. It was edited and prefaced professedly by Martinus Bellius, whose real name has never been discovered with certainty. Perhaps it was Martin Borrhaus of Stuttgart (1499–1564), professor of Hebrew learning in the University of Basel, and known under the name of "Cellarius," in honor of his first protector, Simon Cellarius (not to be confounded with Michael Cellarius of Augsburg). He studied at Heidelberg and Witten-

berg, appeared first among the Zwickau Prophets, and then in connection with Carlstadt (who ended his days likewise as a professor at Basel). The book was misdated from Magdeburg, the stronghold of the orthodox Lutherans, in opposition to the tyranny of the Imperial Interim. A French edition appeared, nominally at Rouen, but was probably printed at Lyons, where Castellio had a brother in the printing business.

Calvin at once suspected the true authors, and wrote to Bullinger, March 28, 1554: "A book has just been clandestinely printed at Basel under false names, in which Castellio and Curio pretend to prove that heretics should not be repressed by the sword. Would that the pastors of that church at length, though late, aroused themselves to prevent the evil from spreading wider." A few days afterwards Beza wrote to Bullinger about the same book, and gave it as his opinion that the feigned Magdeburg was a city on the Rhine [Basel], and that Castellio was the real author, who treated the most important articles of faith as useless or indifferent, and put the Bible on a par with the Ethics of Aristotle.

Castellio wrote, however, only a part of the book. He adopted the pseudonym of Basilius (i.e. Sebastian) Montfortius (i.e. Castellio).

The body of this work consists of a collection of testimonies in favor of religious toleration, extracted from the writings of Luther (his book, *Von weltlicher Obrigkeit*, 1523), Brenz (who maintain that heresy as long as it keeps in the intellectual sphere should be punished only by the Word of God), Erasmus, Sebastian Frank, several Church Fathers (Lactantius, Chrysostom, Jerome, and Augustin, in his anti-Manichaean writings), Otto Brunsfeld (d. at Bern, 1534), Urbanus Rhegius (Lutheran theologian, d. 1541), Conrad Pellican (Hebrew professor at Zürich, d. 1556), Caspar Hedio, Christoph Hoffmann, Georg Kleinberg (a pseudonym) and even Calvin (in the first edition of his *Institutes*). This collection was probably made by Curio.

The epilogue is written by Castellio, and is the most important part of the book. He examines the different biblical and patristic passages quoted for and against intolerance. He argues against his opponents from the multiplicity of sects which disagree on the interpretation of Scripture, and concludes that, on their principles, they should all be exterminated except one. He justly charges St. Augustin with inconsistency in his treatment of the Donatists, for which, he says, he was punished by the invasion of the Arian Vandals. The lions turned against those who had unchained them. Persecution breeds Christian hypocrites in place of open heretics. It provokes counter-persecution, as was just then seen in England after the accession of Queen Mary, which caused the flight of English Protestants to Switzerland. In conclusion he gives an allegorical picture of a journey through the centuries showing the results of the two conflicting principles of force and liberty, of intolerance and charity, and leaves the reader to decide which of the two armies is the army of Jesus Christ.

Castellio anticipated Bayle and Voltaire, or rather the Baptists and Quakers. He was the champion of religious liberty in the sixteenth century. He claimed it in the name of the gospel and the Reformation. It was appropriate that this testimony should come from the Swiss city of Basel, the home of Erasmus.

But the leaders of the Swiss Reformation in Geneva and Zürich could see in this advocacy of religious freedom only a most dangerous heresy, which

would open the door to all kinds of errors and throw the Church of Christ into inextricable confusion.

Theodore Beza, the faithful aid of Calvin, took up his pen against the anonymous sceptics of Basel, and defended the right and duty of the Christian magistrate to punish heresy. His work appeared in September, 1554; that is, five months after the book of Martinus Bellius. It was Beza's first published theological treatise (he was then thirty-five years of age).

The book has a polemic and an apologetic part. In the former, Beza tries to refute the principle of toleration; in the latter, to defend the conduct of Geneva. He contends that the toleration of error is indifference to truth, and that it destroys all order and discipline in the Church. Even the enforced unity of the papacy is much better than anarchy. Heresy is much worse than murder, because it destroys the soul. The spiritual power has nothing to do with temporal punishments; but it is the right and duty of the civil government, which is God's servant, to see to it that he receives his full honor in the community. Beza appeals to the laws of Moses and the acts of kings Asa and Josiah against blasphemers and false prophets. All Christian rulers have punished obstinate heretics. The oecumenical synods (from 325 to 787) were called and confirmed by emperors who punished the offenders. Whoever denies to the civil authority the right to restrain and punish pernicious errors against public worship undermines the authority of the Bible. He cites in confirmation passages from Luther, Melancthon, Urbanus Rhegius, Brenz, Bucer, Capito, Bullinger, Musculus, and the Church of Geneva. He closes the argument as follows: "The duty of the civil authority in this matter is hedged about by these three regulations: (1) It must strictly confine itself to its own sphere, and not presume to define heresy; that belongs to the Church alone. (2) It must not pass judgment with regard to persons, advantages, and circumstances, but with pure regard to the honor of God. (3) It must proceed after quiet, regular examination of the heresy and mature consideration of all the circumstances, and inflict such punishment as will best secure the honor due to the divine Majesty and the peace and unity of the Church."

This theory, which differs little from the papal theory of intolerance, except in regard to the definition of heresy and the mode and degree of punishment, was accepted for a long time in the Reformed Churches with few dissenting voices; but, fortunately, there was no occasion for another capital punishment of heresy in the Church of Geneva after the burning of Servetus.

The evil which Calvin and Beza did was buried with their bones; the greater good which they did will live on forever. Dr. Willis, though a decided apologist of Servetus, makes the admission: "Calvin must nevertheless be thought of as the real herald of modern freedom. Holding ignorance to be incompatible with the existence of a people at once religious and free, Calvin had the schoolhouse built beside the Church, and brought education within the reach of all. Nor did he overlook the higher culture."