

Michael Servetus:  
Intellectual Giant, Humanist, Martyr

Marian Hillar  
with  
Claire S. Allen

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Dedicated to the memory of brother Henry



*Illusi ergo sunt hodie, qui magica quadam cognitione,  
quam vocant fidem, se solos iustos existimant:  
cum tamen eos veram Christi fidem ignorare, sit satis ostensum*  
Mistaken are those today who claim that only they are righteous  
because they have a certain magical knowledge they call faith,  
for it is sufficiently clear that they do not know the true faith of Christ.  
Servetus, *Christianismi restitutio*, p. 354.

*Qui nobis hic ponitur scopus, ut est maiestate sublimis,  
ita perspicuitate facilis, et demonstratione certus:  
omnium maxima, lector, Deum cognoscere substantialiter  
manifestatum ac divinam ipsam naturam vere communicatam. ....  
Modos veros aperte referemus, quibus se nobis exhibuit Deus,  
externe visibilem verbo, et interne perceptibilem spiritu,  
mysterium utrinque magnum, ut Deum ipsum homo videat, et possideat.*  
The purpose toward which we aim is as sublime in its greatness  
as it is easy to understand and demonstrate with certainty:  
There is nothing greater, reader, than to know God  
manifested in substance and his proper divine nature communicated.  
....We shall explain clearly the true modes through which God  
manifested himself to us: externally in a visible way as the Word;  
internally in a perceptible way as the Spirit. Both are a great mystery  
in order that man might know and possess God.  
Servetus, *Christianismi restitutio*, p. 3.

*Omnium eximia est ac maxima charitas, ardua, permanens, sublimis,  
Deo magis similis, et perfectioni futuri seculi magis propinqua.*  
The most excellent of all and the greatest is love:  
ardent, durable, sublime. It most resembles God and  
is closest to the perfection of the age to come.  
Servetus, *Christianismi restitutio*, p. 354.

*Quia proprium naturae divinae est amare, non credere.*  
For the property of divine nature is to love, not to believe.  
Servetus, *Christianismi restitutio*, p. 351.

The property of human nature, too, is to love, not to believe.  
Author



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## Foreword

Michael Servetus, born in the Northern province of Huesca, Spain, and burned alive 42 years later in Geneva, Switzerland, under the spell of John Calvin for his supposedly heretical doctrines, is not well known yet by the general public in spite of the efforts of his scholarly admirers and the affectionate devotion of those who, like the Unitarian Universalists, share some of his theological, philosophical, and religious doctrines. Unfortunately, his role in the progress of several scientific disciplines and his role in the Reformation battles are not counterbalanced by his popular recognition as one of the pioneers in several fields in the Renaissance, as the most remarkable representative of what the late George Hunston Williams called "Radical Reformation," and as the starting point of the polemics that, put in motion by protesters against his death and developed in the Enlightenment, lead to the proclamation of freedom of thought, association, and expression as natural rights of every person in a civilized society. This is why a new book on him must be welcome – especially on the occasion of the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death, October 27, 1553 – one that will offer his students and followers an opportunity to organize commemorative events in several countries to disseminate his ideas and try to popularize his immensely attractive personality.

Since his youth Michael was a man on the run and in disguise. He is better known in many countries as Servet, the French adaptation of Serveto, the name of the family's ancestral town near the Spanish Pyrenees. Except for a couple of years at the University of Toulouse in Southern France and later in Paris, we know nothing about his studies in Spain. However, he must have been exposed very early to some Jewish as well as Moorish influence and to the study of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew as a seminarian at the nearby monastery of Montearagón before entering the service at the court of Emperor Charles. He thus experienced first hand the common sources of the three "religions of the book" but also the reciprocal rift among them. He therefore felt that he had discovered the aim and meaning of his life: to fight, like a new archangel Michael, for the *restitution* of the true scriptural idea of the common God and for the renewal of Christianity along the principles of the pristine tradition that was lost at the time of its "constantinization."

Deeply attracted by Erasmus and the revolutionary convictions of Luther, he must have met Melancthon in the summer of 1530 at the Diet of Augsburg, to whom he later sent his impressive *Apology*, and must have learnt about his meetings with Alfonso de Valdés, one of Charles's secretaries, intent on making peace with Rome. He was scandalized to see that reciprocal tolerance was not politically possible or fashionable anymore. After leaving in frustration the Catholic camp, spending some time with Lutherans and suffering from them the same rejection for his early writings, when he was just 20, he had to hide under a new name in France. As Michel de Villeneuve he devoted himself to study and to publish successfully in the fields of Astronomy, Geography, Medicine, and the Bible before settling in Vienne, south of Lyon. He had to disguise his real beliefs and behave as a daring "Nicodemite," the term proposed by Delio Cantimori, following one of Calvin's treatises, earning his living as the personal doctor of the archbishop-primate of France.

It is not important today - not even meaningful - to either blame Calvin for Servet's death or deny the worth and glory of his martyrdom while repeating in mental obtuseness that he was a heretic. Christian confessions, either the inquisitorial Catholics or the intolerant Protestants of yesterday or today, have no right whatsoever to accuse each other of not having fulfilled the most fundamental mandate of Christ, that of charity and fraternal love. Let those who are blameless of intolerance throw the first stone. On the other hand, most significantly in our days of purported Christian interconfessional pacifism and interfaith cooperation, it is imperative to deeply review Servet's ideas about the reinterpretation of the Trinity, Jesus the Christ as the son of the eternal God but not the eternal son of God; the spiritual - not temporal or worldly - structure of any Christian Church worth this title; the sacraments, some ecclesiastical and liturgical practices, and his concept of Christian society. For him, as for true reformers old and new, going back to the Christian origins marks the best path for an authentic and continuous reform.

Servet's intrepid attitude in life and death, his complex humanistic accomplishments, his uncompromising search for truth no matter what the consequences, his profound devotion bordering on a peculiar Christocentric mysticism, his defense of the right to express one's convictions in freedom, have always been a source of inspiration for restless and unsatisfied souls eager to transcend the realm of everyday reality, happier perhaps in the joyful effort of the journey than in the quietness of the arrival. This is why Servetism and Servet, who did not

found a church or gather disciples, have so much to teach us individually and collectively at the beginning of this convulsed new millennium which is open to all kinds of doctrinal revisions but also to much worse types of ethnic, social, and religious intolerance than those for which Servet's age is famous. Nobody can say what Christianity, even Europe, would have become had it not refused the invitation of Servet to a thorough analysis of its sources and orientation. It must be recognized that many, if not most, of his radical proposals were - and by many still are - discarded without the necessary intellectual honesty and respect to a supremely intelligent scholar, perhaps out of fear that he was, and still is, more right than his adversaries believe. In fact, many, if not most, of his doctrines are routinely rejected, but have not been demonstrated false.

Since the epoch-making book on Servet by Roland Bainton in 1953, none has been written on his life, death, doctrines and their consequences with more clarity, authority and usefulness for the general public, while at the same time avoiding abstruse theological discussions presented in other recent books, than this remarkable work by Dr. Marian Hillar. A biochemist turned theologian and historian, he wisely applies to his writings the synthetical precision of the scientific method; an admirer of political liberty, he delights in tracing our commonly accepted freedom of conscience to the struggles of Servet's admirers for tolerance of dissent, the most human way to advance our knowledge of truth and to make possible the necessary art of living together, of our *convivencia*. As a native Spaniard who has devoted to the Servet studies many years of dedication in Spain and in the United States, I gratefully welcome Dr. Hillar's work and hope that it will significantly contribute to the better public knowledge of this great man.

Ángel Alcalá  
Emeritus Professor  
City University of New York



## Preface

There is no figure in the history of ideas that would match the breadth and scope of Michael Servetus's outlook and his importance to the evolution of culture in Western Europe. He saw that the Reformation with all its positive sides did not go far enough in overhauling the Christianity of his epoch, corrupt morally and ideologically. Just as Anabaptists and other reformers demanded radical changes in the social structures of the society and doctrines of the church, so Servetus demanded a radical evaluation of the entire ideological religious system of assertions and dogmas imposed on Western Europe since the fourth century. He built single-handedly a new Christian religion closer to the Christianity of the first century. Among the doctrines which Servetus propounded there are two which stand out, especially from the perspective of our position and our hindsight. One is his antitrinitarianism based on the critical evaluation of the doctrine of the Trinity as having no biblical, historical or rational basis and as being a Greek religio-philosophical accretion to the Christian story; the other is his doctrine of justification which emphasizes human natural capabilities of recognizing moral values and making moral judgment. This is the outstanding expression of Servetus's humanism in realizing that human nature is not depraved or corrupt as all Christian dogmas from the Catholic to the Calvinist claimed. This trait of Servetus's thought unites him with the ancient optimistic humanism as well as with the modern outlook on the human condition supported by modern studies in the history of ethics and its rational and natural origin.

Servetus sacrificed his life defending his ideas. His sacrifice induced another humanist, Sebastian Castellio, to rethink the mental framework of how religion treated the issue of intellectual inquiry and its repression. Castellio's thoughts became crucial in forcing thinking people to evaluate the morality of prevailing church ideology. Servetus's theological inquiry

initiated the study of the Bible and an attempt to uncover the real religious doctrines contained in it. The ferment that Servetus and Castellio originated eventually found its expression first in the religious movement of Socinianism and later in the Enlightenment leading directly to the establishment of American democracy and prompting the French Revolution.

The results of my research on the ideas and roles which were played by both these great figures set against a background of prevalent ideas and their historical development, were the subject of my previous publication, *The Case of Michael Servetus (1511-1553) – The Turning Point in the Struggle for Freedom of Conscience* (The Edwin Mellen Press, 1997). The approaching 450th anniversary of the death of Michael Servetus prompted me to publish the current book which is a revised and shortened description of his biography and ideas for the general reader.

Several people and institutions contributed to the writing of this book. My thanks and gratitude go to Marianne Tsioli of the Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire in Geneva, Nieck Mulder of Amsterdam, and Liliane Bugaighis of Annemasse for providing me with many photocopies of documents. My special thanks go to Professor Ángel Alcalá of the City University of New York who read the whole manuscript and gave me valuable critical advice and again to Professor Anthony F. Buzzard of Atlanta Bible College who contributed to my original book on which this one is based.

I also express my thanks to several libraries, primarily to those of Amsterdam University, Rice University, the University of Geneva, and to the Municipal Council of Annemasse for the documents concerning the monument of Servetus in that city. As with my first book on Servetus, I am again indebted to Claire S. Allen of Houston for the many hours spent on reviewing the material, correcting the syntax where necessary, at times clarifying some points, as well as proofreading the entire text. However, the research and selection of resources are mine and I take full responsibility for any factual deficiencies or errors.

M. Hillar  
Houston, May 2002.  
Center for Philosophy and Socinian Studies



## INTRODUCTION

The ancient western world did not have the concept of "heresy" or "heretic." Greco-Roman society tolerated all religions and did not impose restrictions on free thought. Acts of intolerance were rare, and if they occurred, they were never justified by deviations from one doctrine or another. All this was dramatically changed with the advent of Christianity. Initially, this was a messianic movement among Jews, but by the fourth century it became the religion of the emperors and established itself as the exclusive and obligatory state religion. From the fourth century on, the profession of religious, mythical beliefs became the touchstone of morality, reversing the humanistic principles of ancient morality; and the first totalitarian system was established with a religious hierarchical organization as the exclusive ideological, political party and with a secular state power as its executive branch. Laws were introduced that legalized religious, dogmatic assertions, imposed obligatory adherence, and prohibited any deviation in thought. The people of Western Europe were born and baptized into it. Their whole lives were controlled on earth and their destiny in the hereafter was determined. This ecclesiastical state reached its peak during the Middle Ages and lasted for about 15 centuries.<sup>1</sup> Opponents were punished -- too often by death, torture, and confiscation of property -- their only "crime" being that of daring to speak out against the scheme imposed by a totalitarian, ecclesiastical party. In this theocratic society the designation of "heretic" became the catch word for the elimination of any inconvenient person or group. Bloody persecution of any deviation in thought was declared a moral virtue and a divine command.

The Reformation brought new trends in religious practice: the assertion of individual, personal experience as a basis for religion, an emphasis on biblical studies, and the search for biblical principles. It also underscored the need for tolerance, at least in the initial phase, for its own survival. Unfortunately, the "reformed" churches quickly became as intolerant as the old Roman church and ossified into the old dogmatic tradition. The few leaders of liberal religious thought who did emerge did not attempt to develop a systematic formulation of the Christian faith from this new approach. Their assertions were partial, limited, and concerned more with the application of religion in practical life than with dogmata. They opposed the moral corruption and power of the popes and the clergy, the prostitution of the ecclesiastical offices for money<sup>2</sup>, the selling of religious "rewards" (e.g., indulgences) for financial benefit, the idolatry of saintly images, and the worship of saints. Superstitious worship of relics proliferated to astronomical figures -- e.g.,

Wittenberg was a museum of 5000 relics!<sup>3</sup> However, any real investigation of the accepted dogmas or dogmatic assertions was persecuted by both Roman Catholic and Protestant churches.

Out of this background then stands out the solitary figure of Michael Servetus, a bold mind daring to analyze afresh accepted dogmas and the authority of the ancient creeds and medieval theologians. The Christianity Servetus found in his life time was a syncretic religion taking its sources from the historical and messianic Jewish tradition, from the Greek religion and Greek metaphysical concepts of the logos, and from the Egyptian religious concepts of triune divinity and divine resurrection. This Christianity had little in common with the scripture and its practice produced disastrous results in societies. He dared to question fundamental religious premises and single-handedly developed an alternative Christianity closer to the letter and spirit of the scripture. He also combined his religious doctrine with the naturalistic world view of his time in a unifying system of thought. He was unequalled in his time and remains one of the greatest minds in human history, one who contributed to universal culture.

With the rediscovery of humanism in the first half of the fifteenth century, Servetus became one of its most prominent representatives. His understanding of humanism was much more profound than the one propagated by the Renaissance humanists who were focused primarily on the studying of ancient literature and culture, and limited to the secular interests in the everyday life. They still retained religious condemnation of human nature. The humanism of Servetus went much deeper and he understood it as a defense of human dignity, liberty, and potential for self-redemption through the good works which were to be the highest values in Christian life. He remained a deeply religious person with Christ as the central motif of his existence and guide for his personal and professional conduct.

In the realm of theology Servetus combined a rational mind with a deep mysticism devoted to the person of Jesus Christ and a return to the original, as he thought, messianism of pre-Nicaean Christianity. His theology was not based on following the established doctrines, but on biblical exegesis. He analyzed critically all previous thought, but conceded final authority only to the Bible, though he used philosophy to provide the theoretical background for his theological speculations. He could not accept the eternity of Jesus's Sonship. He looked for the foundation of the dogma of the Trinity in harmony with the Bible, and not with Greek philosophical and religious speculation. He agreed with Thomas Münzer and David Joris only in his opposition to infant baptism. He was not interested in Anabaptism as an expression of social class interests under the cover of religious reform and a return to the social model of primitive Christianity. Anabaptists, however, had a legitimate reason to blame the church for betraying the moral and social values of original Christianity.

The church had not applied the moral principle it supposedly propagated to its own organization or to the political institutions of society. It always tried to affiliate itself with the groups holding power regardless of the social and economic infrastructure.

Servetus's humanism in the realm of medical studies was expressed in the acceptance of Galenism, but his version of Galenism was subordinate to the method of observation and not to the dogmatic following of immutable knowledge received from antiquity. Many before him made observations on the disproportionate anatomical size of the pulmonary artery and its suggested role as supplier of nutrition to the lungs. His critical thinking allowed him to break with the old concepts and to formulate pulmonary circulation for the first time in print. But he was not yet a man of the Enlightenment. He ascribed much more importance to theology than to experimental and scientific knowledge and even placed the description of his discovery in a theological treatise since his theological concept of the soul as residing in the blood was its principal premise.

The genius of Michael Servetus extends to many fields of human endeavor: jurisprudence, mathematics, meteorology, geography, astrology, philosophy, medicine, theology, and biblical criticism, listed in increasing order of his preference. Several scholars<sup>4</sup> succinctly described his role in the history of human thought. The biographer of John Calvin, E. Stähelin, wrote: "[Servetus] was in intellectual endowments undoubtedly the peer of the greatest men of his century, Calvin included." Friedrich Trechsel, nineteenth century church historian, wrote: "Servetus personified the antitrinitarian spirit, and worked it out into a comprehensive system, giving it its first speculative and systematic form. Previous Antitrinitarians had either been merely negative, or their teaching had gone off on a tangent, and had left only sketches and hints, and were less concerned with dogma than with practical ends." The German scientist Karl Vogt declared him "the greatest savant of his century." The French theologian Henri Tollin said he was one of the greatest mystics in Spanish literature of all time. The greatness of Servetus did not escape even Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, Spanish scholar, enemy of the Reformation and a great supporter of the Catholic Inquisition, who said: "Of all the Spanish heresiarchs none surpasses Servetus in boldness and originality of ideas, in the order and consistency of his system, in logical vigor, and in the ultimate consequence of his error."<sup>5</sup> The German theologian Adolf von Harnack thus described the importance of Servetus' thought: "The representative of the most remarkable union of the two tendencies -- speculative mysticism and cold rationalism -- was Michael Servetus, the Spanish thinker who is distinguished also for his profound piety. In him was found the fusion of all that was the best in the sixteenth century development if one puts aside the evangelical Reformation. Servetus equally distinguished himself as a learned experimenter, as a critical thinker, as a speculative philosopher, and as a

Christian reformer in the best sense of the word."<sup>6</sup> Auguste Dide, the French Senator and the president of the International Committee for the Monument to Michael Servetus, in his inaugural speech at the unveiling of Servetus's statue in Annemasse in 1908 said: "The day when Servetus, tortured, captive, and facing death, opposed the arrogant absolutism and pride of his persecutors and executioners, with the doctrine of the never ending progress, Servetus placed himself in league with the emancipators who would create a new secular Europe and who prepared the French Revolution."<sup>7</sup> At the same ceremony, professor of philosophy Otto Karmin said: "Amidst the most inhuman sufferings, he affirmed the principles of free thought which has triumphed since and the principle of free belief which became the Magna Carta of the Unitarian Protestants and of the liberal churches. These churches live by the doctrines for which Servetus sacrificed his life."<sup>8</sup> José Barón Fernández,<sup>9</sup> who emphasized the contribution of Servetus to medicine, which alone would guarantee him immortality, called him one of the brightest geniuses through whom Spain contributed to universal culture: "The profound knowledge of any of the disciplines on which he discoursed manifests the depth of his erudition combined with the rigor and honesty of the inquiry." Nevertheless, Barón Fernández acknowledges Servetus's singular role in history by the fact that he was burned in effigy by the Catholic Inquisition at Vienne and alive by the Protestant Calvinists at Geneva. Such a circumstance did not befall any other dissenter persecuted for theological ideas. Professor Ángel Alcalá, the translator of *Christianismi restitutio* into Spanish (*Restitución del Cristianismo*), calls Servetus the author of "one of the most original books that have ever been written."<sup>10</sup>

During his lifetime, Servetus was often accused of being proud, vain, and arrogant. But his stubbornness and rigidity should not be confused with his fidelity to his principles. The sixteenth century, as an epoch of controversies and polemics, offered a style expressed in heated and offensive debates. Servetus remained a humble man open to rational argument. During the process at Geneva in the debate with Calvin he was ready to modify his views provided that his opponent's arguments were extracted from the biblical text. After he was condemned to death, Servetus with humility asked Calvin, who was directly responsible for his unjust martyrdom, for forgiveness. To be saved from the stake he only had to state "Jesus Christ the eternal Son of God." Instead, his last words were: "Jesus Christ, Son of the eternal God." He was convinced of the correctness of his reading of the scripture, which he revered, and died defending not his life but his doctrines.

His personal sacrifice opened the eyes of thinking people to the madness of the established religious, social, moral, and political principles. Soon after his death, a polemic on the freedom of religious thought was initiated by the treatises of Protestant humanist Sebastian Castellio and culminated later in the mature Socinian

tractates demanding separation of church and state and absolute freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. The Socinian tradition in turn opened the gates of the Enlightenment with writings of philosopher Pierre Bayle, John Locke, Voltaire, John Stuart Mill, and David Hume, leading eventually to the establishment of the principles of American democracy by James Madison and Thomas Jefferson.<sup>1</sup> From a historical perspective, Servetus died in order that freedom of conscience could become a civil right of the individual in modern society.

## Michael Servetus Chronology

September 29, 1509 or 1511	born in Villaneuva de Sijena, Spain
1522	early education, some suggested at the local monastery, University of Zaragoza, Lerida or Barcelona
1525 or 1526	entered service of Juan de Quintana Franciscan friar and doctor of University of Paris, member of Cortes of Aragón
1527/8	sent to University of Toulouse (at age of 16) for three years to study law
July 1529 - April 1530	accompanied Quintana in entourage of Emperor Charles V
February 22-24, 1530	present at Emperor Charles V's double coronation in Bologna
May, 1530	left Quintana's service
July, 1530	arrived in Basel, stayed 10 months
October, 1530	visited Johannes Oecolampadius in Basel where he expressed his views on the Trinity and was threatened to be denounced
May, 1531	in Strassburg; met Martin Bucer and Fabricius Capito
1531	persuaded Johannes Setzer to publish his book and moved to Haguenau in Alsace to be closer to printer
July, 1531	published book, <i>De Trinitatis erroribus</i> , back again in Basel
1532	published pamphlet, <i>Dialogorum de Trinitate libri duo</i> plus treatise <i>De Iusticia regni Christi capitula quatuor</i>
April, 1532	Aleander's report on the <i>De Trinitatis</i>
May 24, 1532	Inquisition at Zaragoza takes action against him
June 17, 1532	decree for his apprehension is issued at Toulouse
1532	in Lyon then went to Paris, at University of Paris (Collège de Calvi) then at the College of Lombards studying mathematics
1533	speech by rector of University of Paris, Nicolas Cop, at the inauguration of the

	academic year; speech was written by John Calvin and was an exposition of Calvin's theory of the certitude of salvation due to the grace of God
1534	in Lyon, working as corrector of proofs for printers Melchior and Kasper Trechsel influenced by Symphorien Champier
1534	back in Paris studying medicine; also as a professor of mathematics
1534	in Paris; failed to meet secretly with Calvin to debate theological issues
1535	published Ptolemy's <i>Geography</i> in Lyon
1536	in Lyon, published <i>In Leonardum Fuchsium Apologia defensio apologetica pro Symphoriano Campe-- gio, autore Michaele Villanovano</i> (note assumed name)
1536-1538	back at University of Paris (College of Lombards) studying geography and medicine
1537	published in Paris <i>Syruporum universa ratio ad Galeni censuram diligenter expolita</i>
1538	predicted eclipse of Mars by the moon on February 12, 1538
March 24, 1538 (old style 1537)	matriculation at the University of Paris
February-March, 1538	published in Paris pamphlet, <i>Michaelis Villanovani in quendam medicum apologetica disceptatio pro astrologia</i>
Summer, 1538	took residence at Charlieu, testified he stayed there for two or three years
1540	at University of Montpellier (may have earned medical degree there)
1540 (new style 1541)	edited Bible of Santis Pagnini in Lyon (in which he stated that he had a medical degree)
1541	second edition of Ptolemy in Lyon
February 4, 1541	signed a contract to edit <i>Bible</i> in 7 volumes
1542	sponsored by Archbishop Pierre Palmier to be his adjunct physician
1542	in Lyon aiding ill during plague outbreak
1545	completion of the Pagnini <i>Bible</i> in seven volumes

1545-1548	successive editions of <i>Syruporum</i>
1546	correspondence with Calvin, manuscript of <i>Christianismi restitutio</i> sent to Calvin, Calvin's letter to Farel of Feb. 13, 1546
1546	describes pulmonary circulation in his manuscript <i>Christianismi restitutio</i>
September 27, 1552	printing of the <i>Christianismi restitutio</i> commenced on the day of St. Michael
January 3, 1553	printing completed
February 26, 1553	first letter of Guillaume de Trie/Calvin exposing him in Vienne
March 15-17, 1553	interrogated in Vienne
April 4, 1553	imprisoned in Vienne
April 7, 1553	escapes from prison in Vienne
June 17, 1553	condemned to death (in absentia) in Vienne by Catholic Inquisition and burned in effigy
August 13, 1553	recognized and imprisoned in Geneva
October 26, 1553	condemned to death by Council of Geneva
October 27, 1553	informed about condemnation and burned at stake
December 23, 1553	posthumous sentence of the ecclesiastical court at Vienne
February, 1554	publication of Calvin's book, <i>Defensio orthodoxae fidei</i>



## Notes and Bibliography

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1. Literature on church history is extremely abundant. The reader will find, however, a good and objective introduction to the field with extensive lists of sources in:
 

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2. For example Pope Agapet II became Pope at the age of 18, Pope Benoit IX at the age of 10; the archbishop of Reims was nominated at the age of 5; Jean de Lorraine became bishop of Metz at age of 4, and, at the same time, had benefices from 3 archbishoprics, 11 bishoprics, and 5 abbeys; Leo X was created a cardinal at the age of 9; Odet de Chastillon, brother of Coligny, became cardinal at the age of 9.
3. Doumergue, Émile, *Jean Calvin. Les hommes et les choses de son temps*. (Lausanne, Paris: 1899-1927; Slatkine Reprints: Genève, 1969). Tome I, pp. 32-49.
4. Quotes are cited by Earl Morse Wilbur in *A History of Unitarianism. Socinianism and its Antecedents*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1945), p. 50.
5. Menéndez y Pelayo, Marcelino,(1856-1912), *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles: erasmistas y protestantes, sectas místicas, judaizantes y moriscos, artes mágicas*. Prologo de Arturo Farinelli. (Mexico: Editorial Porrúa, 1982). p. 142.
6. Harnack, Adolf von, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, fourth edition. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1990). Vol. III, pp. 660, 661, quoted by Doumergue, É., *op. cit.*, Vol., VI, p. 251.
7. Inaugural speech of Auguste Dide, published in *Progrès de la Haute-Savoie*, October 31, 1908.
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## CHAPTER 1

From Villaneuva to Basel:  
*De Trinitatis erroribus* and  
*Dialogorum de Trinitate*

Michael Servetus was born in an age of religious turmoil, caught between the Catholic Inquisition and the Protestant Reformation. The turmoil was about doctrines and dogmas, which each side claimed were contained in or derived from the Bible, and not about the message of Jesus's teachings, and thus it had to end up in a struggle for control, power, and influence. The power and influence of the Catholic church, epitomized in the Inquisition, was being challenged by the Protestant Reformation. However, the reform -- necessary and important as it was -- was narrow, principally concerned with eliminating corrupt church practices. Any real investigation of the accepted dogmas and doctrines was not only discouraged, but even actively persecuted by both sides.

It was probably inevitable that Servetus, who was perhaps unequalled intellectually in his day, would develop an interest in the Reformation, especially in the potential for broadening the mission into reforming church doctrine as well as organization. Unfortunately, the Protestant establishment did not understand Servetus's aims and was too content with its achievements and too anxious to preserve its own influence and power. His case is a classical example of an individual who surpassed his contemporaries and developed a totally new and coherent alternative system of religious thought, as a matter of fact, a new Christianity. Historians of religion still struggle trying to classify his thought within the framework of established categories and criteria. It is best, it seems, to treat Servetus and his system as special and unique, though having certain aspects in common with other trends and doctrines.

### **Background Influences**

Servetus<sup>1</sup> is known in the French speaking countries as Michel Servet, and in the countries where English is the dominant language by his latinized name, Michael Servetus. His original name was Miguel Serveto Conesa alias Revés. According to his declaration at the naturalization process in Vienne in 1548 and later at the trial there, he was born in the small town of Tudela in southern Navarre. However, at the trial in Geneva he declared himself a native of Villaneuva de Sijena in Aragón. New research and recently discovered documents confirm the place of his origin as Villaneuva de Sijena.<sup>2</sup> It is assumed that he was born on the day of St. Michael (hence, his first name) on September 29, in 1509 or in 1511. At the trial in Geneva in 1553, he declared himself to be 44 years old, but at the trial in Vienne a few months earlier as

42 years old. However, the latter supports what he stated in a book published in 1531 that he was 20 years old. Some researchers speculate that his father moved to Villaneuva de Sijena (called in Catalán, Vilanova de Xixena) where the young Servetus was brought up, but this is not based on fact. From 1536, Servetus assumed the pseudonym of Michel Villeneuve (Villanovanus) disguising his true name to avoid imprisonment.

Villaneuva de Sijena is a little village on the Alcanadre river, located in the province of Huesca, in the diocese of Lerida, sixty miles northeast of Zaragoza. The house where he was born still stands there. The village was elevated to the status of a town (*villa*) by a decree of the government of the Spanish Republic in September 22, 1931, in honor of its illustrious son. In the same year a commemorative plaque was placed on the façade of the house. And in 1975 a monument was erected to his memory on the church square.<sup>3</sup> The nickname "revés" in some parts of Cataluña and Valencia means *bofetón* (a blow) but in the figurative meaning it is applied to describe a person or a thing *revesado* (reverse, opposite, opposed) or *avieso* (distorted, crooked).

His father, Anthón Serveto, was a notary at Sijena from 1511 to 1538, and was descended from an old Catholic family belonging to a class of nobility, designated by the title *infanzones*, nobles of the second category. There is a document in the Archivo de la Corona de Aragón, in which the noble, hereditary title of *infanzonía*, *infanzón hermunio*, given to the Servetus family, is already recorded in 1327.<sup>4</sup> The family probably originated in the small village of Serveto in the region of Huesca. It based its privileges either on blood or knighthood and had the same economic status as nobles of the first category, called *magnates*. The word *infanzón* seems to derive from the word *infans*, which, with the suffix *-on*, was transformed into an augmentative meaning "son of the grand."

Servetus's mother was Catalina Conesa, from the noble family of Pedro Conesa and Beatriz Çaporta. She bore three sons: Miguel, the future physician and theologian; Pedro, a notary; and Juan who entered the priesthood and became rector of the church at Poleñino, a village some twenty miles from Sijena. The sons of Pedro, thus nephews of Michael Servetus, Marco Antonio and Pedro Antonio entered the ecclesiastical service and became prelates of rank. The first became the abbot of the Montearagón monastery, and the second was elected to be a bishop of Albarracín, but he died before he took his office.<sup>5</sup> In 1558, to appease the disgrace of heterodoxy of its famous member, the Serveto family erected an altar in the parish church of Villaneuva (destroyed in 1938 during the Civil War). The inscription above the altar, still preserved, reads "Mosen Juan Serveto de Reves clerigo infanzon rector de Poliño." The date is legible but it can be interpreted either as 1548 or 1558 (MDXXXXVIII or MDXXXXXVIII).

Spanish scholars hotly debate the issue whether Servetus family descended from the converted Jews or not. Some bring forth sophisticated arguments from the Freudian

analysis of Servetus's pronouncements at the trials or even his description of the circumcision implying that he himself was circumcised. These are twisted arguments without any basis and they throw more light on their authors than on Servetus. The issue has no bearing on the work and role of Michael Servetus. He himself was an ardent Christian and his attempt at the reformation of the Christian dogma was a sincere act of faith. Reading, however, this literature one has an impression that the authors suggest that if Servetus had this Jewish background, this would supposedly explain his deviation from the orthodox Catholic doctrine, making Servetus's discovery of the falsification of the original meaning of the scripture less meaningful thus ignorable.<sup>6</sup>

Once three religions -- Christianity, Judaism, and Islam -- coexisted peacefully in Spain. This situation was drastically changed after the Crusades when persecutions and forced conversions were imposed on non-Christians. The converted Jews, the so-called *conversos* and pejoratively named *marranos*<sup>7</sup> (term describing in Spanish a person or thing dirty, filthy, a pig) often retained their old customs, and were considered suspect and susceptible to relapse by the Catholic clergy as long as the believers of other religions were around. The solution was to expel all nonconverted non-Catholics from the country. Tomás de Torquemada, a Dominican monk and inquisitor general for Castilla and Aragón, appeared before the ruling King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella and flinging his crucifix on the table he is reported to have said: "For thirty pieces of silver, Judas betrayed his Master and you would sell Him for thirty thousand."

The same solution was applied to Muslims after the fall of Granada in the same year of 1492. The converted Christians of Muslim origin were called *moriscos* (from *moro* = inhabitant of the Northern Africa) and were also suspect as to their faith, especially in the doctrine of the Trinity, the most difficult to accept for the Muslim. As a result the Spaniards developed an unjust reputation in Europe as not believing in Christ. The major accusation or suspicion concerning religion was succinctly summarized in a motto "*peccadiglio di Spagna*" originated by Lodovico Ariosto (1474-1533), the Renaissance Italian poet, explaining that Spaniards did not believe in Christ and in the "unity of the Spirit, the Father and the Son."<sup>8</sup> He referred to a Spanish knight in his *Orlando furioso* as "Ah, mancator di fé, márrano! .... Voi Spagnuoli, non credete in Cristo, non che in altro."<sup>9</sup> This lack of belief in the Trinity was called ironically "peccadiglio" (from *pecadillo*, a Spanish diminutive that was soon accepted into the Italian language) because of an anecdote that was current in the sixteenth century: "A Spaniard, after having confessed all his sins, returned to the confessor to say that he had forgotten one small sin (*peccadiglio*), namely that he did not believe in God."<sup>10</sup> Martin Luther (1483-1546), the Protestant reformer, said: "The Spaniards are all Marranos and, whereas other heretics defend their opinions obstinately, the Marranos shrug their shoulders and hold nothing for certain."<sup>11</sup>

### Erasmian Influence in Spain

The young Servetus was brought up in a climate of intellectual ferment of Erasmian humanism introduced to Spain by Cardinal Francisco Ximénes de Cisneros (1436-1517),<sup>12</sup> founder of the University of Alcalá, and who supervised the publication of the whole Bible in its original languages known as the *Complutensian Polyglot* (1522). He was also confessor of Queen Isabella and the inquisitor of Spain from 1509. Cisneros is considered a pre-reformer who by founding a university at Alcalá that opened in 1509, created a reformist atmosphere in Spain and prepared the country for an Erasmian type of reformation. This pre-Reformation, labelled "*quichotisme réformateur*," consisted of a critique of the scholastic nominalism that initiated the intellectual trend emphasizing separation of reason from the faith.

The vogue of Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus (1467-1536) in Spain lasted from 1522 to 1532. Erasmus represented an ideal of nondogmatic piety dreaming of restoring Christianity to its original purity and simplicity. He attacked the abuses of the church, its moral degeneration, its vices, superstitious ceremonies, and rituals. But he never attempted to correct the established dogmas. He loved the two traditions -- the Hellenic and the Christian. His main interest, like most of the humanists, was the study of the ancient language for its own sake.<sup>13</sup> Luther had a very low opinion of Erasmus: "Erasmus is like an eel. Nobody can grasp him except Christ alone. He is a double-dealing man." "Erasmus mocks both God and religion." Luther even called Erasmus a "snake."<sup>14</sup>

To explain the sudden vogue of Erasmianism in Spain one has to understand the larger movement on the Spanish scene which was labeled by the Inquisition as the movement of the *alumbrados* or illuminism.<sup>15</sup> The Spanish illuminism was born before the reform initiated by Luther in 1517 and represented a distinct movement different from Protestantism.

The new spirit, however, found its expression in the illuminism movement that tended to internalize religious experience and to achieve a certain degree of intimate relationship with God.<sup>16</sup> These *alumbrados* were condemned by the Inquisition in 1525 in an edict in Toledo. The inquisitorial tribunal extracted 48 articles from their confessions which were considered their doctrine. The articles extracted by the Inquisition do not represent a credo but rather a proposition to describe positions and statements of various personalities. The document also records the rumor that the *alumbrados* formed conventicles which differed from those of the common faithful. However, it does not present any evidence for the existence of chapels or any initiation into the sect. The movement was rather a specific attitude towards Christianity in which the adherents attempted to internalize mystical religious experience and express it in certain formulas. Generally two tendencies were differentiated: contemplation (*recogimiento*) and abandonment (*dejamiento*).

Contemplation was practiced by the reformed Franciscans as a method of searching

for one's God by detachment from the world and was considered the highest degree of meditation. This tendency found its expression in the work of Father Francisco de Osuna *El tercer abecedario espiritual*. The work is a detailed guide to practices having as a goal the freeing of the heart from any attachment to worldly possessions and desires. In this way the soul becomes purified by moral virtues, illuminated by theological virtues and perfected by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Though this mystical theology was quite different from scholasticism, it was professed by monks in every Christian tradition and was not subject to inquisitorial censure.

The second tendency, abandonment to God, seemed to be more controversial to the Inquisition. We know about this tendency from the declarations of Nicolas de Eubid and of the priest Olivares de Pastrana. They were disciples of Pedro Ruiz Alcaraz who based his method on the Bible, especially on the Epistles of St. John. The practitioners of this method, the so-called *dejados*, went one step further in the method of contemplation and repudiated the method of induced ecstasy, but relied on the miraculous action of God in man. This action did not require any unusual or abnormal appearances. For the everyday miracle is love induced in man by God: "love of God in man is God," and "Christ is present in a more perfect way in the soul of the just than in the Holy Sacrament of the altar."

These statements were censored by the Inquisition since they led to an ethical doctrine of impeccability. To the Inquisition it was essential to abandon oneself to the love of God for this will dispose a person in such a manner that any sin will be prevented. Alcaraz, on the other hand, preached that all our good deeds proceed from God and man cannot do anything by himself except to submit to God's will. But in the objections of the Inquisition, there was no element of moral laxity, on the contrary, the *alumbrados* were accused of "gathering secretly or publicly in conventicles," of a certain moral radicalism based on the Sermon on the Mount, and of reliance on divine inspiration. They were accused of paying little attention to the current ecclesiastical and external practices such as: the monastic life, papal bulls, indulgences, excommunications, fasts, and auricular confession. The Inquisition sensed the danger of "Lutheranism" in these tendencies and considered abandonment as a form of heterodoxy and contemplation as a form of spirituality, which, though orthodox, nevertheless one surpassing the norm of Catholic piety.

Erasmus published the first Greek edition of the New Testament from the manuscripts, but soon was criticized by the Spanish theologian, Diego López Zúñiga (d. 1531), for omitting the famous spurious verse known as *Comma Johanneum* from the first Epistle of John that refers to the three witnesses in heaven (1 John 5.7,8 a). Erasmus was judged as being critical of the Vulgate of Jerome and accused of clandestinely taking the side of Arius. Zúñiga published in 1521 his critique of Erasmus' edition of the New Testament entitled *Annotationes contra Erasmum Roterodamum in defensionem tralationis Novi Testamenti*. Zúñiga was a member of

the team assembled by Cardinal Francisco Ximénez de Cisneros to produce the Complutensian Polyglot Bible. He followed the Englishman Edward Lee who wrote a similar critique. Erasmus replied with the *Apologia contra Stunicam*,<sup>17</sup> but it did not silence the Spanish theologian. He continued accusing Erasmus of heterodoxy and tried to insinuate that Erasmus was the source for Luther. In 1522 he published in Rome a pamphlet against Erasmus, *Erasmi Roterodami blasphemiae et impietates nunc primum propalatae ac proprio volumine alias redargutae*. According to him, Erasmus was impious because he referred to the pope as the "vicar of Peter" and not the "vicar of Christ," and was reviving the attack on the papal authority. Erasmus found a defender in the person of a canon of Alcalá and Spanish humanist, Juan de Vergara of Toledo (1492-1557).<sup>18</sup>

Actually, Erasmus omitted this *Comma Johanneum* because it was not found in the oldest Greek manuscripts only introduced later by the scribes to make a theological point. The spurious text in the first Epistle of John 5:8 reads: "There are three that give testimony in Heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one." The original passage reads: "There are three on earth that bear witness, the Spirit, the water and the blood, and these three agree in One." Erasmus then demanded to be shown the oldest manuscripts in the Vatican library and confirmed the absence of this verse! For the sake of peace and tolerance, however, he included the *Comma Johanneum* in the third edition of the New Testament because it was supported by a Greek manuscript found in England; but, he added, "I suspect that this manuscript was corrected to make it conform to ours." Erasmus was willing to defer the discussion of the Trinity to Judgment Day, but he would not reject the authority of the church in order not to disrupt the unity of Christian Europe. The Trinitarian addendum was not known to the church Fathers or they would have made use of it in their controversy with the Arians. Erasmus also noticed that the term God was used in the Gospels exclusively for the Father;<sup>19</sup> he drew no conclusions, but the implications were obvious.

Servetus certainly grew up in the atmosphere of the antidogmatism of Erasmus, of his doctrine of returning Christianity to its origins, and of his insistence on studying the Bible. He was not familiar, however, with Erasmus' edition of the New Testament.

In 1530 the Inquisition initiated the persecution of many Erasmians such as Juan de Vergara, Miguel de Equía, Alfonso de Virués, and Alfonso de Valdés, brother of Juan de Valdés.<sup>20</sup> Many others, like Erasmian and Antitrinitarian, Juan de Valdés, sought refuge in Italy.<sup>21</sup>

### **Education and Early Training**

The education of Miguel started at an early age, especially in languages (Latin, Greek, Hebrew), and it is logical to deduce that his father was his mentor. We know nothing about his early schooling though it was conjectured that Servetus was sent to the local monastery, University of Zaragoza or to Lerida and even to Barcelona. One



who influenced Servetus most at this early stage was a Franciscan friar, Juan de Quintana,<sup>22</sup> a doctor of the University of Paris and member of the Cortes of Aragón, who later, in 1529, became confessor of Emperor Charles V. After his service to the emperor, Quintana became the abbot of the monastery of Montearagón in May 25, 1532. He died two years later in Segovia. Quintana represented an Erasmian type of humanism, though in public, in order not to be labeled so, he was inflexible and intransigent. He was present at the conference at Valladolid in 1527 where the Erasmian viewpoint concerning the biblical verse *Comma Johanneum* was discussed and where he expressed the opinion that the Erasmian view was not fully Catholic.<sup>23</sup> The contact of Servetus with Quintana probably took place through the professional dealings of his father with the prelate. Servetus entered the service of Quintana as his secretary between 1525 and 1526. Servetus certainly had a chance to travel with his master across Spain and may even have been present at the Valladolid conference.

At the age of 16 Servetus was sent to the University of Toulouse to study law for three years. Servetus arrived in the city in the fall of 1528 after a plague epidemic. At that time Toulouse had the most celebrated school of law and the city was known for its extreme piety. These two factors were probably decisive in the selection of this city by his father. De Běze (1519-1605), Calvin's successor in Geneva, described the environment in Toulouse, somewhat later, but still appropriately thus:

[The city] was very superstitious, full of relics and other instruments of idolatry, so that it was sufficient to be condemned as a heretic if one did not take off his hat before an image or did not bend his knee at the sound of the bell calling for the Ave María, or if one tasted a single morsel of meat on a prohibited day. And there was no one who had delight in languages or letters who would not be watched and considered suspected of heresy.<sup>24</sup>

The city was one big temple with crucifixes and images displayed everywhere, with numerous processions and all kinds of acts of piety. Intolerance reached the highest levels. The members of the Toulouse City Council ordered the construction of an iron cage attached to a wooden platform floating permanently on the Garonne to be used as a drowning device for "blasphemers." This was the official punishment for any heterodoxy. Though this is the picture of one city, it reflects the dominant atmosphere in sixteenth century Europe.

The university consisted of four faculties -- theology, medicine, letters and jurisprudence. Theology was the dominant discipline and since the fourth century, the theological "doctrines" were incorporated into the law. For example, the Justinian Code prescribing the death penalty for the repetition of baptism and the denial of the Trinity was part of the city's civil code. The university had a very large student body, about 10,000, and some 600 professors. The student body was diversified and, according to custom, was organized in associations by nationality. The students

attached great importance to the exchange of opinions and displayed a tendency for tolerance. They brought with them books written by reformers such as Philip Melanchthon's (1497-1560) *Loci communes* (first published in 1521)<sup>25</sup> and the practice of reading the Bible which was strictly forbidden in Toulouse. The City Council opposed any new doctrine vigorously by cruel repression and several of the proponents of new ideas were burned alive in Salín Square. It is here that Servetus perfected his knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, secretly read the Bible, and developed his interest in studying it.<sup>26</sup> He probably was using the *Complutensian Polyglot* edition of 1522.

By the age of 20 Servetus was fluent in Latin, Greek and Hebrew, read the works of the Fathers of the church, was trained in scholastic philosophy, and read the Koran, as he makes references to it in his book *Christianismi restitutio*.<sup>27</sup>

One of the books Servetus read in Toulouse was *Theologia naturalis* by Ramón de Sabunde (Sabonde) (also called Sibiuda, d. in 1432), a Catalán erudite of the fifteenth century, who was a professor at the university of Toulouse and here composed his book. This book was translated into French (1569) by Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592) ten years after it was placed on the index of prohibited books. In it Sabunde maintains that God gave us two books: the book of nature, of things created that cannot be falsified and difficult to interpret erroneously, and the Sacred Scriptures that can be interpreted erroneously.<sup>28</sup> This was the philosophy Servetus was faithful to all his life.

At Toulouse Servetus got a new religious experience from his biblical studies. He wrote later that much of his formal religious learning was not confirmed by the Bible because he found in it "not one word about the Trinity, nor about its Persons, nor about Essence, nor about a unity of the Substance." It might be noted here that for not professing this doctrine that has no basis in the Bible, 800,000 Jews were banished from Spain and many thousands of Moors were burned at the stake in Andalusía. It was probably then that he felt destined to promote reform further beyond that of Luther and to restore the biblical doctrines of Christianity. While at Toulouse, Servetus was called to the service of his former master, friar Juan de Quintana, who was promoted now to the post of confessor of Emperor Charles V. This service took him with his master to Bologna in 1530 for the emperor's double coronation.

Charles V, the king of Spain, Italy, Netherlands and Austria, after spending seven years in Spain was ready to take an interest in the rest of Europe. He had a quarrel with the pope who happened to support France, so he sent his imperial troops to sack Rome taking the pope prisoner in 1527. But now in order to restore the prestige of the pope, and in a gesture of reconciliation, Charles decided to go to Bologna and accept the crown from his hands. Charles V was crowned three times: ten years earlier at Aix-la-Chapelle with a silver crown as emperor of Germany, on February 22, 1530, in Bologna with an iron crown as king of Lombardy, and two days later with the golden crown as emperor of the Holy Roman Empire by Pope Clement VII.<sup>29</sup> At the occasion

of the emperor's coronation, young Servetus could observe luxury, splendor, and extravagance unprecedented in the history of Italy. The pope was surrounded by twenty cardinals, fifty-three archbishops and bishops. He was carried from his palace to the church of St. Petronius with his triple gold crown, *tiara*, on the *sedia gestatoria* also made of gold. When the pope and the emperor met, His Majesty kissed the feet of His Holiness, and begged to be received as his son. During the mass the pope handed to the emperor the sword charging him with the mission of spreading the Catholic faith: "Take this holy sword, the divine gift, with which you will destroy the enemies of the people of the God of Israel."

Servetus was able here to observe the worldliness and ambition of the church.

I have seen with my own eyes how the pope was carried on the shoulders of the princes, with all the pomp, being adored in the streets by the surrounding people. All those who managed to kiss his feet or his sandals were considered more fortunate than the rest and proclaimed to have obtained many indulgences to reduce the years of their infernal suffering. Oh the most evil of the beasts! ....

He who believes that the pope is an Antichrist, he also has to believe that the papal Trinity, infant baptism and the rest of the papal sacraments are teachings of the devil. Jesus Christ, sweet liberator, who so frequently have liberated people from the anxiety and misery, liberate us from the continuation of Babylon, Antichrist and his tyranny and from his idolatry.<sup>30</sup>

Such arrogant extravagance made a tremendous negative impression on him to the point that for him the pope personified the foretold Antichrist. He recalled later in his *Christianismi restitutio* the idolatry of the pope "adored as a God upon earth .... no one has ever dared try anything more wicked .... O beast of beasts most wicked, harlot most shameless."

Servetus stayed with the emperor's entourage from July 26, 1529 to April 25, 1530 and took part in the emperor's travels through Italy. From Bologna he traveled to Geneva through Lyon and then to Basel.<sup>31</sup> It is not certain if he was at Augsburg on June 25, 1530 during the famous Diet at which Melanchthon read his *Confession*. If he was there he certainly could see and meet the leaders of the organized reform churches, Philip Melanchthon, Martin Bucer, Wolfgang Capito. His theological preparation could justify his determination to polemicize with the most distinguished leaders of the Reformation.

### **Basel**

We do not know when Servetus left the service of Quintana or why, but in October of 1530, he visited Johannes Oecolampadius (1482-1531) (originally Johann Hausschein) in Basel and, according to the custom of the epoch, he stayed in his house

for ten months.<sup>32</sup> One can surmise that the direct experience of the corruption of the church, the travesty of the pope's office, who instead of being a spiritual pastor was apolitical autocrat, led Servetus to make a decision not to return to his studies of the law at Toulouse and to devote his life to the restoration of the Christianity to its original pre-Nicaean beliefs and its simple and pure spirituality. Oecolampadius was a distinguished reformer, trained at Heidelberg and at Bologna who consolidated the Reformation in Basel. Basel was the city that, until then, was known for its tolerance. Here many who were persecuted found refuge, among them Erasmus who stayed here until 1529.<sup>33</sup>

Servetus was probably looking for a suitable environment to continue his mission of reformation and expected to find Erasmus and engage him in discussions. He certainly read Erasmus's preface to the edition of church Father, Hilary of Poitiers (ca 315-367),<sup>34</sup> who fought against the Arians in the West of the Roman Empire, published in 1523:

The ancients philosophized very little about divine things. The curious subtlety of the Arians drove the orthodox to greater necessity .... Let the ancients be pardoned .... but what excuse is there for us, who raise so many curious, not to say impious, questions about matters far removed from our nature? We define so many things which may be left in ignorance or in doubt without loss of salvation. Is it not possible to have fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit without being able to explain philosophically the distinction between them and between the nativity of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit? If I believe the tradition that there are three of one nature, what is the use of labored disputation? If I do not believe, I shall not be persuaded by any human reasons .... You will not be damned if you do not know whether the Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son has one or two beginnings, but you will not escape damnation, if you do not cultivate the fruits of the Spirit which are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, long suffering, mercy, faith, modesty, continence, and chastity .... The sum of our religion is peace and unanimity, but these can scarcely stand unless we define as little as possible, and in many things leave each one free to follow his own judgment, because there is great obscurity in many matters, and man suffers from this almost congenital disease that he will not give in when once a controversy is started, and after he is heated he regards as absolutely true that which he began to sponsor quite casually .... Many problems are now reserved for an ecumenical council. It would be better to defer questions of this sort to the time when, no longer in a glass darkly, we see God face to face .... Formerly, faith was in life rather than in the

profession of creeds. Presently, necessity required that articles be drawn up, but only a few with apostolic sobriety. Then the depravity of the heretics exacted a more precise scrutiny of the divine books .... When faith came to be in writings rather than in hearts, then there were almost as many faiths as men. Articles increased and sincerity decreased. Contention grew hot and love grew cold. The doctrine of Christ, which at first knew no hair splitting, came to depend on the aid of philosophy. This was the first stage in the decline of the Church .... The injection of the authority of the emperor into this affair did not greatly aid the sincerity of faith .... When faith is in the mouth rather than in the heart, when the solid knowledge of Sacred Scripture fails us, nevertheless by terrorization we drive men to believe what they do not believe, to love what they do not love, to know what they do not know. That which is forced cannot be sincere, and that which is not voluntary cannot please Christ.<sup>35</sup>

This preface is one of the most contested writings of Erasmus. In 1526 it was censured by the Faculty of Theology of the University of Paris and again in 1527 at the conference at Valladolid in Spain. But Erasmus was not recommending change or denial, only condemning the debate and recommending peace. He believed that he could affect the reform from the desk of his study. He declared war on the church, one conducted in a cultured and elegant manner through satire and dialogue.<sup>36</sup> Servetus had a different view, he claimed we should not demand belief in that which cannot be known as essential to faith, the more so, if the tenets which we impose can be demonstrated from the scriptures to be in error.

Johannes Oecolampadius was the reformer in Basel, where he functioned as a preacher and assisted Erasmus with his edition of the Greek New Testament (1516). But he assumed a tough line in dealing with any heterodoxy and he deplored the fact that the City Council initially issued decrees granting everyone freedom of religion and freedom from attending religious services. Oecolampadius introduced several changes in the liturgy and external expressions of the religious cult. He opposed the ritual of the Mass and veneration of images demanding their removal. Upon pressure from the mob, the City Council yielded and on February 9, 1529, Mass was abolished and all images in the city were destroyed.

By the time Servetus arrived in Basel, it was changed dramatically and the authorities now imposed harsh measures against heterodoxy and exiled and repressed the Anabaptists. Servetus, a youth of 19, tried to get the reformers to understand the need for purifying Christianity of all the additions acquired over the centuries, of the scholastic speculations of medieval theologians, and for restoring the simplicity of the original doctrines, especially the doctrine of the unity of God. The topic of the discussion with Oecolampadius as shown in his letter to Servetus concerned the

foundation of the Christian faith -- the Trinity:

You maintain that the Church of Christ has been for such a long time removed from the foundation of its faith. You cannot demand that we employ new definitions for the doctrinal statements as you allow yourself in comments fabricated according to your desire. You hold the honor of Tertullian in higher esteem than that of the whole church. You presume that we speak in human terms of the generation of the God's Son and misrepresent or dishonor him, just what you do with your greatest blasphemy. I detect in your statements a diabolic cunning. In the meantime, while I do not display the maximum patience, grieving over Christ the Son of God being so dishonored, I seem to you to show not enough Christian patience. For I will tolerate other things but not the blasphemies against Christ.<sup>37</sup>

The second letter of Oecolampadius was addressed to Servetus as follows: "To Servetus the Spaniard who negates that Christ is the consubstantial Son of God."<sup>38</sup> Oecolampadius, 48 year-old professor at the University of Basel and head of the city clergy, at first was patient with Servetus, a youth of 19, but lost patience when Servetus spoke what was considered blasphemy. Servetus, ignored by Oecolampadius, approached Bucer and Erasmus trying to convince them of the need for dogmatic reforms. Oecolampadius reported Servetus's views to Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) and the Swiss reformers became alarmed at the possible resurgence of Arianism. Their apprehension became known twenty-five years later through a report of Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575), a disciple of Zwingli, about a meeting of theologians called in Basel in 1530 which included Oecolampadius, Martin Bucer, Wolfgang Capito (who was residing at that time at Strassburg), Zwingli, and Bullinger. During this conference on how to deal with the Catholic church, Oecolampadius reported trouble with Servetus and his Arian views. Zwingli at first tried to convert the Spaniard to their cause but since the measures did not work he now proposed to use all possible means "to prevent propagation of these horrible blasphemies and damage to the Christian religion." Bullinger concluded his report stating: "not long after, Servetus, or rather Perderetus, left Basel."<sup>39</sup>

### **Strassburg**

Servetus, now threatened to be denounced by Oecolampadius, had to flee Basel. We find him in May of 1531 in Strassburg where he approached two leaders of the church who had a reputation for being liberal: Martin Bucer (1491-1551),<sup>40</sup> minister and professor of the New Testament at the university and a disciple of Erasmus, and Wolfgang Fabricius Capito (d. 1541), a minister at another congregation, who was accused earlier by Luther of being unorthodox as to the Trinity and deity of Christ. Capito was for some time under the influence of Servetus and his antitrinitarianism.<sup>41</sup> Bucer was a parish priest at the church of Saint Aurelian who followed the doctrines of

Zwingli. Strassburg was considered among the more tolerant cities of the epoch, though a decree was issued against the Anabaptists. Bucer, before he embraced the Reformation and became a follower of Luther, was a Dominican monk. He, too, was tolerant even of the Anabaptists until they made other doctrinal demands beyond the issue of baptism, namely their views on the sociopolitical issues which led to the peasant revolution in Germany in the sixteenth century. Nor could he tolerate the deviation of Servetus in which he saw a repetition of the heresies of Nestorius and Arius. But with time even Bucer became a victim of the changing trends in Strassburg having been forced to give up his position as superintendent of the church in Strassburg, because he had urged the rejection of the terms of the "Interim Peace" which Emperor Charles V had imposed upon German Protestants after he had won the Smalcaldic War. Bucer took refuge in England in 1549, where he was invited by the archbishop of Canterbury, and died two years later on February 28, 1551, in Cambridge where he had been appointed Regius Professor of Divinity. Later when Mary, a Catholic sister of King Edward VI, became the queen, Bucer was posthumously condemned as a "heretic" at a formal trial; his bones were taken from his grave and publicly burned in the market square on February 6, 1556. He was rehabilitated in a public ceremony during the reign of the Protestant Queen Elizabeth in 1560. During his stay in England, Bucer wrote *De Regno Christi* as an advice and program for the young King Edward VI. In fourteen points he suggested the establishment of a Christian state (*respublica Christiana*) under the rule and control of the church just like the Roman Empire under the rule of Theodosius or Justinian, or like Israel under the Jewish kings of the Old Testament. In his proposal Bucer linked the kingdom with religion stating that, "The kings of this world also ought to establish and promote the means of making their citizens devout and righteous who rightly acknowledge and worship their God and who are truly helpful toward their neighbors in all their actions. For this purpose, the kings of this world ought also to be ready to undergo any dangers, exile, and even death itself."<sup>42</sup> He advised that rulers can use coercion: to bring conformity within the church, to encourage church attendance and sanctification of the houses of worship, for the observance of Christian laws of marriage and divorce and for Christian education.

#### ***De Trinitatis erroribus***

Servetus, not finding any success with the reformers, decided to put his views into print. A Basel printer, Konrad Roesch (or Konrad Rous), arranged for Johannes Setzer (Secerius) to print his work at Hagenau in Alsace, some fifteen miles from Strassburg where Servetus moved to be closer to the printer. The work appeared in 1531 entitled *Concerning the Errors of the Trinity. In seven Books, by Michael Servetus, Spaniard from Aragonia, also known as Reves (De Trinitatis erroribus, libri septem per Michaelem Serveto, alias Reves ab Aragonia Hispanum)*.<sup>43</sup> Servetus saw no reason why he should not disclose his name as the author of the book, but the

printer knew better and did not include his own name. The work contains 119 pages and attests to the theological erudition of its author accumulated during the first 20 years of life. The book was translated in 1620 into Dutch by Reiner Talle, and into English in 1932 by Earl Morse Wilbur.<sup>44</sup> Servetus knew that during the history of theological disputes no other theme produced so much opposition and led to so many schisms as the interpretation of the dogma of the Trinity, which was declared for the first time at the Council of Nicaea in 325. He studied all the known sources and all the interpretations of the matter. However, his final authority and source for all doctrines was the scripture which he analyzed rationally: "*Omnia quae deum spectant si Scripturis non probentur, sunt mendacia, quia omnis homo mendax.*"<sup>45</sup> Servetus considered questions and problems raised by the doctors of the church as "dubious, insoluble, knotty and also absurd." He described the irrelevance of their speculations concisely thus: "*Qui ambulat in tenebris, nescit quo vadat.*"<sup>46</sup>

Servetus considered post-Nicaean Christianity on matters concerning the Trinity an abstruse system of doctrines when stated in the technical language of the scholastics. They understood the Trinity as one entity in substance or essence but present in three persons or hypostases known as the Father, the Word (Logos) or the Son, and the Holy Spirit. All are equal and each of them is God, all are eternally divine yet they are different and are one. The second person, the Word or the Son, has two natures -- divine and human -- possessed by a mysterious *communicatio idiomatum* or mutual sharing of properties, and which possesses all the properties of the other.<sup>47</sup> This doctrine, according to Servetus, was an obstacle to unity with the Jews and Muslims and was incomprehensible to Christian believers who were obliged to accept it on faith and not permitted to question it.<sup>48</sup>

But insisting on this doctrine proved only that the church missed the essence of Christianity as revealed in the New Testament. Servetus himself understood the Trinity in his own way and as he believed, according to the scripture. The New Testament does not contain the terms used by the church -- *Trinity, hypostases, persons, substance, essence* -- all were invented by philosophers for whom Christ was an abstraction. Servetus wished to get to the historical Christ, to his reality, and the only useful and valid method for him was the analysis of the scripture which he knew superbly. To him the historical Jesus Christ was a real human being as was thought by the first disciples and early church Fathers; but he also was the Son of God, supernaturally begotten, a God/man who shared the fullness of deity without the human imperfections. He recognized in Christ the wisdom of the Father and in his words the new law and interpretation of the ancient one.<sup>49</sup> The central question was who was Jesus Christ? Jesus is an appropriate name for a man. Also anointed (christus) can only be a human nature.<sup>50</sup> But Jesus was not only a man, he possessed qualities surpassing all mortals. He should be called the Son of God because he was born by the power of God's Word instead of the seed of man, thus his seed was the



Word of God.<sup>51</sup> Jesus Christ was thus literal Son of God. He appeared like an ordinary man, but the semen from which he was formed was divine creating a direct biological linkage between the Father and the Son -- this was the true meaning of consubstantiality and Servetus explicitly denied any adoptionist scheme<sup>52</sup> or any so-called communication of idioms.<sup>53</sup> Servetus insisted that in Jesus Christ the two substances, the divine and the human, were united or mixed together.<sup>54</sup> Even John said that the Word became flesh (*Verbum caro factum est*), thus this Word was transformed into flesh, into a being who is called Jesus Christ, and who is the true, real, and natural Son of God, and not some metaphysical hypostasis or figure, and not that the Word became united or mixed with flesh.<sup>55</sup>

For Jesus Christ to exist as the real and natural Son of God, and not some hypostasis (metaphysical individual) or for Christ not to be only a man, the Word could not be any longer in existence. The Word was in the Law "prefiguration" of Christ, his "shadow" (*umbra*). The Word is spoken of by John as "was" not as "is." Though Servetus uses the word "person" for the Word, it does not have a meaning as describing a metaphysical individuality, but as "prefiguration," "representation" (*typus*), "shadow" (*umbra*).<sup>56</sup>

Thus Servetus drew a distinction between the Word and the Son, and between the Word and Christ. How would it be possible for Christ to have been Word and for him to have been the Son of God, yet at the same time for the Word not to have been the Son of God?<sup>57</sup> Elucidations came later in the *Christianismi restitutio* that the mystery of Christ is differentiated into the three secondary phases of revelation: before incarnation in the "shadow," during incarnation in the "weakness of the body," and after resurrection in the "glory and power."<sup>58</sup>

Jesus, though possessed both appearances, he chose the use of the humbler one among men.<sup>59</sup> Servetus recognized the divine qualities of Jesus and his double nature, but excluded eternity. Christ could be God without ceasing to be a man since for him there is no antagonism between humanity and divinity. Jesus Christ, the Son of God is the Word because he declares the mind of God and gives knowledge of it. Thus the Word was eternal as the mind of God and his substance but it made itself flesh in Servetus doctrine unlike in many unitarian doctrines. The term, "Word," refers to the preincarnation. Servetus emphasizes that he was born of Mary by the power and through the agency of the Holy Spirit. The Word thus as a prefiguration of Christ ceased to be. The Word was eternal, but the Son (Jesus) was not, "generated in human fashion" by "putting on flesh or was incarnated ... as if it were some other being that puts flesh on and off like a garment." Thus Christ had two natures and was fully partaking of God and man, and it did not matter to Servetus whether we considered these natures mixed or united.<sup>60</sup> Christ was a temporal being while the Word was part of the Godhead, his Wisdom and his substance, light, but not a separate being. Servetus understands the Word literally as God's expression and not as the

philosophical Logos, at the same time, however, it was God's substance, thus implying some mechanism of emanation.<sup>61</sup> The crucial point was that there is now no word.<sup>62</sup> The Word ceased to exist with the generation of the Son.

It seems, however, that the Servetus's concept runs against the possession of a true human nature by Jesus, similarly Servetus speaks as if Christ was "clothed in humanity" or put on a garment,<sup>63</sup> though Servetus may speak in a figurative way. In spite of insistence that Christ was fully man, his humanity was always qualified and conditional. Biological concept of linkage was far too potent to permit a concept of true humanity other than being born of a woman. Divine Sonship implied divinity not humanity. How then Christ remained God and was a man too?

Eventually Servetus denied true human flesh and advanced the notion of the divine flesh. But it seems that this concept refers rather to the situation after the resurrection. The other problem in Servetus's early christology was related to the soteriology. He simply stated: "believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God you shall have eternal life in his name. What more can I say?"<sup>64</sup>

All honors are awarded to Christ but not as an abstract being. To believe in him as Christ the Son of God is to be a Christian and to be assured of salvation. Similarly, the paraclete promised by Christ, the Holy Spirit, is not a person understood as a separate individual, the third Divine Being, since such a view would lead to a plurality of Gods.

It is an activity or power of God animating all men and all things.<sup>65</sup> A certain harmony exists between the three in the unity of God that may be called One. If one must use philosophical terms, then God's divinity is shown in each of three "dispositions" or "characters" as Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; there are three wonderful God's dispositions, manifestations or aspects, three names, but not three separate beings. And from each of them divinity shines forth, thus one might understand from this a Trinity. However, what is called in the orthodox Christianity as three distinct persons, are only multiform aspects of the divinity (*multiformes deitatis aspectus*), its diverse manifestations and external appearances (*diversae facies et species*).<sup>66</sup>

The defense of this understanding of the Trinity by Servetus was needed from the soteriological point of view. It expressed the need of divine grace for human salvation and the manner in which it was conveyed to humans. The means of renewing the man's state is Jesus Christ, the mediator, through whose life and death and resurrection man was forgiven and given a possibility of being reunited with God. For this reason Christ had to combine two natures, human and divine. Christianity by belief in the Christ, the Son of God, ensures our salvation and makes us sons of God. Lutherans do not understand what justification is. Servetus expressed his contempt for the traditional views and used strong epithets against those who held them.<sup>67</sup>

As to the traditional third person of the Trinity, Servetus stressed that the scripture treats the matter in a different way from the Father and the Son. There is no mention of the existence of the Holy Spirit as an individual, a being, but as an activity of God, as

an expression of his power.<sup>68</sup> Thus it had many forms and diversified function. This is how Servetus describes its treatment in the scripture:

[Scripture understands the Holy Spirit as], now God himself, now an angel, now the spirit of man, or some instinct or divine inspiration in mind, a mental impulse or a breath. One should however notice a difference between a breath and spirit. And some would understand by the Holy Spirit nothing else than right understanding and reason of man.<sup>69</sup>

Servetus distinguished between the Spirit of God and the Holy Spirit. "it is called the spirit of God when it is sent to all the earth." Holy Spirit, however, is called Holy "because it is sent for sanctification of our spirits".<sup>70</sup> And Servetus explains that the Spirit of God acts "within" and "without," but it is that which is within that is sanctified. Further, the difference between "breath" and "spirit" is such that what comes from without is called breath, but when it acts within illuminating and sanctifying human spirit it is called Holy Spirit.<sup>71</sup>

The Spirit of God itself was subdivided into two separate types of activity. One is life- giving substance breathed into man: "For I said that God gives us his Spirit only in this way that he gives us the breath of life. For life does not derive from us nor from nature, but it is given by God's grace." And further Servetus explains, in accordance with the status of physiological knowledge of his time, that in matter of every breath there is divine energy and vivifying spirit which sustains our life.<sup>72</sup> This point explains his interest in the physiology of breathing and the mechanism of acquiring the vivifying spirit through pulmonary respiration. The other type of God's Spirit is an outward message, speech or understanding as for example carried by the angels "For what is done by outward understanding, speech or revelation is said to be done by an angel, as if it were done by some man." And it should be differentiated from the Holy Spirit because it not appeared by way of breath.<sup>73</sup> Thus all appearances in the Old Testament were the manifestations of the Spirit of God.

Thus the Spirit of God acting in us is the Holy Spirit but after the resurrection it is essentially and substantially associated with Christ's celestial nature and transmitted to man with a singular function of "teaching us all things". Whereas it is only the Spirit of God when it is imparted to us in the breath of life or in a divine message.<sup>74</sup> In the final analysis the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit and the Paraclete are all one entity, the God himself, but each name represents a specific and particular function within historical time period. The Spirit of God grants through respiration life, religious messages through various manifestations and is the source of the primary grace. The Holy Spirit imparts sanctification and moral vitality through the secondary grace.<sup>75</sup>

It is clear that Servetus treated the concept of the Trinity as the expression of God's three aspects, modes, manifestations or functions progressively expressed in human history, but not as differentiated three separate persons, beings or individuals in the

divinity. Divinity is one, inseparable but it may be expressed under three manifestations. Moreover God was known to humanity under different names in different historical periods. And this was so because God progressively revealed himself to man in different roles in the world with various religious messages under different names. For example name YHWH meant that God is "the source of all being," or Elohim as meaning "God and His Word." Different names reflect changing human understanding of God and attitude toward him as well as the changing relationship of God to man. Despite the fact that God was known under various names in various historical contexts he remains one, unchangeable personage.<sup>76</sup> Thus revelation was a historical process of God's self disclosure in several stages, beginning with the incomprehensible stage in the Old Testament during the creation, and ending with the stage of fulfillment of disclosure in the New Testament in which man has seen him in flesh.<sup>77</sup> The final stage of the Christ's triumph over evil Servetus will discuss in his later work *Christianismi restitutio*. Thus Servetus's "trinitarianism" can best be described as progressive, historical, and modalistic revelationism, and it can be contrasted with the traditional orthodox trinitarianism which can be described as the ontological one. Strictly speaking Servetus was a modalistic, progressive unitarian.

Servetus's first work was focused on a single issue of errors and abuses inherent in the trinitarian thought. He neglected many other theological issues, e.g. anthropology, the question of sin, the nature of righteousness, salvation and redemption, which he will discuss and treat systematically in his later writings.

Servetus's book spread all over Europe and he sent several copies to his friends in Italy. It became the seed from which was born Socinianism, an antitrinitarian religious movement which was organized in Poland in the second half of the sixteenth century. Melancthon, in order to stop the spread of these ideas, sent to the ministers of Venice a letter with a warning against the "impious error of Servetus."<sup>78</sup> In his eagerness Servetus also sent copies to Spain, even one to the archbishop of Zaragoza, and to Erasmus. Erasmus did not judge the work favorably and wanted to distance himself from the antitrinitarian ideas since he already had enough problems.

The reformers in the Strassburg community took the accepted doctrine of the Trinity without modification, aware that it had no biblical justification. However, they avoided discussion in order not to cause more controversy and to strengthen the Reformation against the Catholic church. Servetus did not encounter here much enmity and even found some friendly receptive ears. Capito wrote to Oecolampadius that "the book became remarkably popular."<sup>79</sup> Bucer addressed Servetus in a letter "*Michaeli Reves in Domino dilecto*" and called him "*Michael dilecte*."<sup>80</sup> Servetus at the trial in Geneva stated that some ministers supported his views, e.g., Capito, and some did not, e.g., Bucer.<sup>81</sup> Sebastian Franck, a liberal Catholic priest influenced by the Reformation, wrote from Strassburg, "The Spaniard, Servetus, contends in his tract that there is but one person in God. The Roman church holds that there are three persons in one

essence. I agree rather with the Spaniard."<sup>82</sup> Bucer described the book in these terms: "*Pestilentissimum illum de Trinitate librum,*" and complained in a letter to Ambrosius Blaurer, a theologian in Esslingen, that it aroused in some an "impious curiosity" to which imprudent Capito gives too much attention.<sup>83</sup>

Oecolampadius in Basel feared that in France the Swiss churches would be deemed "the authors of such blasphemies" (*nos quasi autores essemus tantarum blasphemiarum*) and urged Bucer to write a refutation "no matter how much this beast might have spread."<sup>84</sup> He informed Bucer that the sale of the book in Basel was prohibited by the City Senate.

Bucer wrote a letter to Servetus promising a refutation as soon as he is free from his public responsibilities. He indicated also that Servetus should not expect any danger from him personally and would not be harmed by him as long he did not disturb or convert anybody while he stayed in Strassburg. But he warned Servetus not to stay since the magistrate would not tolerate him there.<sup>85</sup>

Servetus, however, already influenced some of the Protestant clergy who publicly contradicted Bucer, such as Wolfgang Schultheiss in the neighboring Schiltigheim. Caspar Schwenckfeld (1490-1561), a Silesian nobleman, who first was attracted to Luther and then became estranged on the issue of the interpretation of the Lord's Supper, also was suspected and called on to justify himself. He admitted having discussions with Servetus in his book *On the Origin of Christ's Flesh*,<sup>86</sup> but that he considered Servetus's thought as erring. Inquiries to Bucer for his opinion of Servetus came from a number of theologians: from Johannes Haller in Berne, from Ambrosius Blaurer in Esslingen, from Simon Grynaeus in Basel, the successor of Oecolampadius (who died on November 22, 1531), and from Christopher Hoss in Speyer. Bucer, annoyed, finally answered in a public lecture<sup>87</sup> that Servetus deserved to be drawn and quartered and circulated a manuscript refuting the doctrine. As expected, the sale of the Servetus book was everywhere forbidden. Bucer advised Servetus to leave the city.

The main reason for the rejection was Servetus' uncompromising stand and his offensive reference to Luther's favorite doctrine -- justification by faith.<sup>88</sup> Servetus brought into the open the doctrine which though accepted by the Reformers, could not be supported by scriptural analysis, thus forcing them either to reject and condemn Servetus or to accept his position. They also feared a further split between the Lutherans and Zwinglians on the issue of the Lord's Supper and were afraid of stirring up the emperor and the Catholic church to the point that the induced anger might wipe them out. Oecolampadius and Zwingli contended that Christ's body cannot be in the bread and wine upon the altar since Christ has already ascended to the right hand of the Father, thus his body is located in heaven. Luther, on the other hand, was convinced that Christ as God pervaded all reality including the physical. Servetus's position with respect to these doctrines was closer to that of Luther.

Back in Basel, Servetus was not persecuted, and Oecolampadius recommended that the City Council ignore him if he recanted his views. He wrote: "Servetus's book contained some good things which were rendered dangerous by the context. The work should be either completely suppressed or read only by those who would not abuse it."<sup>89</sup> Servetus requested in a letter to Oecolampadius permission to stay and to be able to send the copies destined for France undisturbed. He defended his cause pleading for religious freedom and freedom of conscience:

If you find me in error in one point you should not on that account condemn me in all .... The greatest of the Apostles were sometimes in error. Even though you see clearly how Luther errs in some points you do not condemn him. And I sought your instruction but instead you rejected me. Such is the frailty of the human condition that we condemn the spirit of others as impostors and impious and except our own, for no one recognizes his own errors. I beg you for God's sake, spare my name and fame .... You say that I want all to be thieves and that no one should be punished or killed. I call Almighty God as witness that this is not my opinion and I detest it. But if ever I said anything it is because I consider it a serious matter to kill men because they are in error on some question of scriptural interpretation, when we know that even the elect ones may be led astray into error.<sup>90</sup>

### *Dialogorum de Trinitate*

It appears that Servetus received permission, tacit or expressed, to stay. But the sale of the book was prohibited in Basel. He was also afraid for his life as is attested by his letter to Oecolampadius. We do not know how long Servetus stayed in Basel, but before leaving the city again he published in the Fall of 1532 a second pamphlet of 22 double pages, *Dialogues on the Trinity in Two Books (Dialogorum de Trinitate libri duo)*, to which he added a treatise of 25 double pages, *On the Righteousness of Christ's Kingdom (De Iusticia regni Christi, ad iusticiam legis collata, et de charitate)*, with the intention of stating more precisely his views on the subject.<sup>91</sup> He began his treatise stating that he retracts what he wrote recently on the Trinity, but not because it was wrong, but because what he wrote was incomplete. He did not retract anything, but alarmed by the danger, he was exposing himself to, he moderated his expressions and language. As a method of presentation he chose a dialogue between two persons - Michael and Petrucius.

In the previous book Servetus claimed that Christ was the Son of God by grace not by nature. In his new thesis he stated that because the glory of the Father belongs naturally to the Son he has two natures. Previously Servetus objected to calling the Holy Spirit a "person," now he said that after the departure of Christ, the Spirit became personalized by dwelling in us, though strictly speaking there is no

"person" or the individual in the Spirit. Previously Servetus differentiated the incarnate Son from the pre-existent Word. Now he admitted that Word is Christ, though the Word did not have any substance until Christ was revealed. That which we call Word we consider as God's presence prolated into the world. And that which we call spirit we consider as his power emanating into the world. Thus the substance of the Word is the substance of the Christ's flesh and the substance of the God's spirit is the substance of the Christ's spirit. In it [the substance of the Christ's spirit] there is now as before dignity and potency. And the spirit of the Word became the spirit of the Christ's flesh, thus the Word became the flesh as well as man. Due to the gifts of Christ not only are we redeemed by flesh and blood, but also by his spirit we are vivified.<sup>92</sup>

And he conceded that Christ had divine nature.<sup>93</sup> Word ceased to exist with Christ incarnation, but it came into existence again with Christ resurrection. After resurrection "There is nothing now in Christ which is animal. Christ has been wholly perfected and glorified by his resurrection so that he has returned to the original state of the Word and exists as God and is in God as before."<sup>94</sup> Thus Christ was always God both in spirit and in flesh, but in the form of a man though not possessing the nature of man. This will be emphasized more in *the Restoration of Christianity* when Servetus talks about the concept of the celestial Son of God in neoplatonic terms. Jesus Christ was a reflection of the Father and did not possess separate nature, but was a progressive expression of Word, the Son and the Christ.

Servetus advanced in *Dialogues* more radical concept of Christ divine flesh: "Therefore a great mystery lies hidden in the knowledge of Christ's flesh, and those who do not admit that Christ's flesh is one substance with God prattle uselessly in their defending the divinity of Christ, since they defend a chimera and not Christ."<sup>95</sup> And this is so because God could have brought from his own flesh not only Christ's flesh, but a stone as well. Thus the flesh of Christ is no "confusion" of things or "plurality" but one thing, one hypostasis or substance, and "*plasma*" of the celestial semen planted in the earth coalesced in the substance.<sup>96</sup> And Christ came as a man because it was the most effective way to save mankind. Thus Christ did not have autonomy because he was merely a specific means of salvation used by the Father. Salvation function was not needed to be rooted in the humanity, that was merely accidental and of no significance.

Servetus accomplished what he intended to accomplish, to reject the need for multiplicity of persons in the Godhead and obviate the Trinity. To the question whether there is a difference between Christ and God, between the Father and the, Servetus gave a simple answer, namely "to refer to the Son is to refer to the Father" just as we say, "in the name of His majesty."<sup>97</sup>

The most important part in this new work of Servetus was the added treatise "*The Righteousness of Christ's Kingdom*" in which he assumed the role of a mediator between the reformers who were quarrelling about the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. The Strassburg theologians wanted to mediate between the Lutherans and the Swiss theologians. Servetus took the position of Oecolampadius and Bucer that there is a real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, though not physical: "The body of Christ is mystically eaten." "It is through the spirit that we eat and drink the flesh of Christ." "Only figuratively do we speak of the bread as the body of Christ." At the same time he adopted Luther's concept to prevent the trivialization of the physical presence of Christ's body. Luther claimed that Christ's body is divine, "spiritual flesh" diffused universally and not localized. Servetus also maintained the omnipresence of the deified body of Christ: "Christ walks upon the wings of the wind and sits upon the circle of the earth. He measures the heavens with a span, and the waters of the sea in his hands." Yet he is not as Luther said in sewers and other unsavory places, but he is "in spiritual things and that which is capable of his habitation." His flesh is divine and consubstantial with God.

Similar views to those of Servetus's were propagated by Caspar Schwenckfeld and Melchior Hoffman (ca 1495-1543), one of the Anabaptist leaders, who were concerned with the flesh of Christ. Schwenckfeld's analysis of the sacrament concluded that it was a glorified body -- just as Servetus claimed it to be deified body. Hoffman reasoned that the sinlessness of Jesus could not be conserved if his flesh were like our human flesh and subject to infirmity and sin. Even the virgin birth, according to him, was not a safeguard unless it was assumed that Christ in the process of birth was not contaminated! Hoffman claimed that Christ was not born of Mary but through Mary.

Servetus's view here was similar too, but different in some respects. Schwenckfeld assumed that the glorification of the body of Christ took place at the resurrection; Servetus assumed that the body fell from heaven like manna and assumed, contrary to Hoffman, that our human body also is capable of being glorified.

Schwenckfeld emphasized the differences between himself and Servetus and refuted the charge that he derived his theory of the glorified body of Christ from Servetus. His evaluation of Servetus's work was: "There is some good in his book but, on the fundamentals of the Christian faith, he errs egregiously and his book, *On the Errors of the Trinity*, is damnable."

Servetus on the whole did not agree with anybody on a specific set of religious tenets and represented a new trend in free religious thought that demanded mutual toleration. His explanations used the current phraseological terms. The central issue was the same, but he softened his stance against Luther claiming that Luther and the Catholic church were partly wrong and partly right. The book ends with an appeal for tolerance and understanding: "*Nec cum istis, nec cum illis, in omnibus consentio, out dissentio. Omnes mihi videtur habere partem veritatis, et partem erroris, et quilibet alterius*



*errorem dispicit, et nemo suum videt."*

All seem to me to have a part of truth and a part of error and each espies the error of others and fails to see his own. May God in His mercy enable us without obstinacy to perceive our errors. It would be easy to judge if it were permitted to all to speak in peace in the church that all might vie in prophesying and that those who are first inspired, as Paul says, might listen in silence to those who next speak, when anything is revealed to them. But today all strive for honor. May the Lord destroy all the tyrants of the Church. Amen.<sup>98</sup>

Servetus continually manifested his mysticism regarding Christ: "Christ is the unique one in whom the Word of God was made into flesh. Salvation comes only by faith in Christ the Son of God as Peter, Paul and Christ himself teach us. Christ is of the same substance and power as the Father."

Servetus's purpose was revision of the official dogmas, their purification and bringing them closer to the meaning of the scriptural text. His concepts are difficult to classify since they are very particular; his doctrines are described usually as *sui generis*, and they gave an impulse to the development of unitarianism. Servetus broke with the traditional trinitarian doctrine not finding any justification for it in the scripture.

The second book, too, was denounced. Melancthon wrote in response in his second edition of *Loci communes* (1535), a theological apotheosis of the Godhead.

Luther was most apprehensive about the spread of Servetus's views in Italy when he said that Italy was full of dangerous opinions from which dreadful abominations would arise; and that "The Italians laugh at us because we believe everything in the Scripture."<sup>99</sup> But Luther paid little attention to Servetus himself and he apparently had not read *De Trinitatis erroribus*, otherwise he would be enraged by the Servetus's critique of his theory of justification. A report of Luther's *Table Talk* reads: "When an exceedingly virulent book was published in 1532 against the Trinity he [Martin Luther] said, 'These people do not realize that others, too, have been assailed by doubts about this article. But to set my opinion over against the Word of God and the Holy Spirit is insupportable.'"<sup>100</sup> Also when lecturing on Genesis in 1536 Luther said:

Our time will also bring punishment upon Germany, we see how Satan is making haste, how restless he is, and how he tries every means to obstruct the Word of God. How many sects he has stirred up in our lifetime while we exerted ourselves with all diligence to maintain purity of doctrine. What will happen when we are dead? He will surely lead forth whole packs of sacramentarians, Anabaptists, antinomians, followers of Servetus and Campanus, and other heretics who now are in hiding after being routed for the moment by the purity of the Word and the diligence of godly teachers, but who are eagerly waiting for any

opportunity to establish their doctrines.<sup>101</sup>

Melanchthon read the book and wrote: "I find Servetus acute and subtle, but not very solid. He seems to me to have confused imaginings .... On justification he is plainly demented. As for the Trinity you know I have always feared this would break out some day. Good God, what tragedies this question will excite among those who come after us!"<sup>102</sup> And: "I am reading Servetus a great deal. He entirely distorts Tertullian .... Irenaeus<sup>103</sup> himself is confused. I hope to talk with you personally about these questions soon."<sup>104</sup> And to another correspondent he wrote: "In Servetus there are many marks of a fanatical spirit. On justification you see that he derides the doctrine of faith .... He is completely astray on the difference between the Old and New Testament, since he takes the Holy Spirit away from the prophets .... He misinterprets Tertullian and as it seems to me even Irenaeus. This does not please me that Servetus does not make Christ truly a natural Son of God, that is, having physically something of God's substance .... I am getting out a new edition of *Loci*."<sup>105</sup> In the successive editions of *Loci* he becomes more and more critical and abusive of Servetus.<sup>106</sup> He warned the Senate of Venice against the Servetus treatise in July of 1539. Servetus gained there some popularity and Melanchthon signaled them that Servetus's treatise "revives the error of Paul of Samosata." He advised the Senate to chase, to reject, and "to eradicate the impious error of Servetus,"<sup>107</sup> and he was later the strongest supporter of Servetus' death penalty during the Geneva trial in 1553.

In April of 1532, during the Diet at Ratisbon (Regensburg), Servetus's book *De Trinitatis erroribus* was on sale and the German Johannes Cochlaeus (1479-1552),<sup>108</sup> a liberal Catholic but chief opponent of the Reformers, brought it to Quintana, now the head of the counsel of censors at Augsburg. Quintana, annoyed by the abominable "heresies" and the fact that his countryman and former secretary was the author, banned the book at Augsburg and sent it to Bishop Girolamo Aleandro, a papal representative at the emperor's court. Cochlaeus also discovered Servetus's *Dialogorum de Trinitate libri duo* and characterized Servetus as an author with a vehement temper, well versed in Greek and Hebrew which was "the common disease of almost all the recent theologians."<sup>109</sup> Servetus's book must have caused fear in Ratisbon as judged from a letter dated April 17, 1532, from the papal nuncio, Jerome (Girolamo) Aleandro, to Sanga, secretary to Pope Clement VII. The letter begins with a statement that the end of the world ought to be close and informs him that the Diet also received its copy. At the same time the emperor's confessor, Juan de Quintana, confirmed that he knew the author whom he characterized as a brilliant and great sophist. Aleandro suspected, however, that this was a collaboration between the theologians of Strassburg and Basel, and announced a plan to convene a committee of theologians to condemn the book by the Apostolic See. Aleandro threatened Servetus with formal censure, ordering the burning of the book in Spain and punishing the "heretic" *al modo di Spagna*, by burning him alive or, if unavailable, in effigy. He

complained that the Protestants, if they were good Christians, should punish these heretics.<sup>110</sup> He also expressed the wish that "these German 'heretics,' Lutherans or Zwinglians wherever the Spaniard may be, ought to punish him if they are so very Christian and evangelical and defenders of the faith, as they boast, because he is as much opposed to their profession as to the Catholic. In some passages of his work he contradicts Luther by name, and yet he is in Lutheran territory."<sup>111</sup>

In Toulouse a decree for the arrest of about forty fugitives, monks and students, was issued on June 17, 1532. Among them, first on the list, was Servetus. The Inquisition in Spain noticed the Servetus publications and initiated its investigation. On May 24, 1532, less than a year after the publication of *De Trinitatis* in Germany, the Supreme Council of Inquisitors at Medina del Campo issued a letter addressed to the inquisitor of Aragón with accusations against Servetus.<sup>112</sup> It gives instructions concerning edicts to be issued and calls Servetus to respond to the denunciations. It ends with an appeal for speed and adds that all these proceedings are in order to "fulfill the service to God and for the good and growth of our holy Catholic faith." A *post scriptum* is most revealing about the methods of the Catholic Inquisition, recommending recourse to cunning in the capture of Servetus:

After writing the above and thinking further on this matter, which is of such great importance for our Christian religion, we consider it expedient to try every possible means to lure the said Miguel Reves back to Spain enticing him by promises of favor or other offers, and if this does not succeed then we advise to use pressure. We thought of a few suggestions to that end. Use them or such of them as you consider convenient, but in such a way that those with whom you deal may not suppose that the Holy Office would use any pressure other than to bring him back to the Church, which is indeed the case, so that others of our nation, who are abroad may be recalled to the faith, seeing the good treatment accorded to him. For this purpose it is not wise to publish the edict so solemnly as we said. Rather it should be read with dissimulation so that no one may suppose or understand that the said Reves, is summoned by the Inquisition, for that would be to notify his relatives and friends and they would alert him to accept no offer that might be made. And do not affix the edict to the church doors, or if you do, let it be done at an hour when no one can read, and take it down before any one has read it. This precaution in announcing the edict is necessary in order that you may use the measures that we thought of. If they fail the trial against the said Reves will not take place. As for the inquiry which we mentioned with regard to his person, lineage and other qualities, it would seem well to entrust this to some person who would secure the information with secrecy and

dissimulation so that no one would suppose that he was sent by the Inquisition. All this should be done speedily and with secrecy as the importance of the case requires, and let us know later about the results.<sup>113</sup>

Simultaneously two other letters were sent one to the archbishop of Zaragoza and the other to the magistrates of the city. They emphasized the importance of the matter "for the service of God and of your Majesties and for the honor of our Spanish nation." The latter statement was a new approach. It guaranteed justification of orthodoxy on the ground of patriotism introducing a new principle that a Spaniard with honor should not fall into a so-called heresy.

The cunning of the Inquisition went so far as to charge his own brother Juan Servetus, who was a chaplain of the archbishop of Santiago de Compostela, with the task of bringing Servetus back to Spain. We find Juan in Germany already on July 24, 1532. We do not know if Juan Servetus cooperated voluntarily or was threatened for this mission, and whether he met his brother in Germany or not. History is full of cases which show how religion destroyed the natural bonds between people and their moral sensitivities. The record of the Inquisition indicates only that his mission was not successful and he could not provide any information concerning Michael Servetus.<sup>114</sup> The matter must have preoccupied the Inquisitors for a long time since even in 1538 their documents complain of the delay and still request that Servetus be informed that he is expected before the Council of Inquisitors.

Servetus did not find a following, he was too young for this, but he inspired a certain Claude d'Aliod (Claudius Aliodus) known as Claude of Savoy who was a native of Moûtier in Savoy and a preacher at Neuchâtel and colleague of the reformer, Guillaume Farel. D'Aliod was persecuted for his antitrinitarian views and was arrested and banished from city to city: Berne, Constanz, Zürich, Basel, Lausanne, Augsburg, Memmingen. He disappeared in 1550 from the historical records.<sup>115</sup>

Servetus is considered as a precursor of the XVIth century Unitarianism while the actual initiators of the movement are considered Laelio and Faustus Sozzini. This is based on the analysis of the earlier works of Servetus (*On the Errors Concerning the Trinity*, and *Dialogues on the Trinity*) which were widely read in Europe, and had a great influence on the Italian intellectual radicals. Servetus, however, was not a Unitarian in the Socinian sense, neither was he Trinitarian in the orthodox sense. In fact, he rejected the view on Christ as totally human and understood in adoptionist terms. Unitarians who developed their doctrines later in the XVIth century did not pay much attention to the mature doctrines of Servetus presented in his later writings.<sup>116</sup> Servetus was a total reformer, creator of a new understanding of the Christian religion which, he believed, was a return to the original Christian thought. His goal was to find a religious appeal not only to Christians, but also to Jews and Arabs, converted or not yet converted.<sup>117</sup> His treatment of biblical exegesis, anthropology, soteriology, christol-

ogy, and deity was presented as a historical process of divine revelation.

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  76. *De Trinitatis, op. cit.* pp. 96b-102b.
  77. *De Trinitatis, op. cit.*, pp. 118b-119b.
  78. Fernández, J.B., *op. cit.*, p. 52.  
*Philippi Melancthonis Opera*, Vol. III, p. 748. *Ad Senatium Venetium*. In *Corpus Reformatorum*. Edidit Carolus Grottlieb Bretschmeiler. (Holis saxonum apud C.A. Schwetschke et Filium, 1835). (Johnson Reprint Corporation New York and London; Minerva G.m.b.H. Frankfurt am Main).
  79. Calvini, J., *Opera, op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, p. 866.
  80. *Ibidem*, p. 869.
  81. *Ibidem*, pp. 768, 779, 780.
  82. Quoted by Bainton, R. H., *Hunted Heretic. The Life and Death of Michael Servetus 1511-1553* (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1953). p. 60.
  83. Calvini, J., *Opera, op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, p. 779.
  84. *Ibidem*, p. 867.
  85. *Ibidem*, p. 868.
  86. Bainton, R.H., *op. cit.*, p. 66.
  87. Calvini, J., *Opera, op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, p. 779.
  88. *Ibidem*, pp. 866, 867, 868.

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89. *Ibidem*, p. 865 (July 18, 1531).
  90. *Ibidem*, pp. 861-862.
  91. They were reprinted together with *De Trinitatis erroribus ....* in 1965. Servetus, M., *De Trinitatis, op. cit.*
  92. *Dialogorum*, pp. C 5b -C 6a.
  93. *Dialogorum*, p. B 6b.
  94. *Dialogorum*, p. B 8a.
  95. *Dialogorum*, B 6b.
  96. *Dialogorum*, p. B 7a.
  97. *De Trinitatis*, p. 28b.
  98. *De Iusticia regni Christi, op. cit.*, F 7b-8a.
  99. Luther, M., in *Luther's Works. op. cit.*, Vol. 54, *Table Talk*, edited and translated by Theodore G. Tappert, No. 1327, No, 1324.
  100. *Luther's Works, op. cit.*, Vol. 54, p. 32. *Table Talk*, No. 237.
  101. *Luther's Works, op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 18. *Lectures on Genesis*.
  102. *Melanchthonis Opera, op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 630. Letter to Ioachimo Camerario of February 9, 1533.
  103. Irenaeus (125-202), Greek Father of the Church, was bishop of Lyon.
  104. *Melanchthonis Opera*. Letter to Ioachino Camerario of March 15, 1533; 2:640.
  105. *Ibidem*, pp. 660-661. Letter to Iohannis Brentio, of July 1533.
  106. *Melanchthons Werke, op. cit.*, Band II. 1, *Loci praecipui theologici* of 1559, pp.164-352; pp. 189, 192, 194.
  107. *Philippi Melanchthonis Opera, Ad Senatium Venetium*. In *Corpus Reformatorum*, Vol. III, pp. 748-750.
  108. Cochlaeus is also noted for stopping the publication of Tindale's New Testament. William Tindale (1494-1536) was an English reformer who was strangled and burned in Germany for publishing his translation and "heresy." David Daniell, *William Tyndale. A Biography* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1994).
  109. *Commentaria Joannis Cochlaei, De Actis et Scriptis Martini Lutheri*, 1549, pp. 233-236.
  110. His letter is transcribed in Fernández, J.B., *op. cit.*, pp. 309-310.
  111. Document transcribed in Fernández, J.B., *op. cit.*, pp. 309-310.
  112. The text of the document is transcribed in Fernández, J.B., *op. cit.*, pp. 310-312.
  113. Letter quoted by Fernández, J.B. in the Appendix in *op. cit.*, pp. 310-312.

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114. *Ibidem*, p. 59.
  115. Wilbur, Earl Morse, *A History of Unitarianism. Socinianism and its Antecedents*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1945, 1972), pp. 73-74.
  116. Bainton, Roland "The Present State of Servetus Studies." In *Journal of Modern History* IV (1932), p. 78.
  117. *De Trinitatis, op. cit.*, pp. 37a, 42a-43b.



## CHAPTER 2

Alias Michel de Villeneuve:  
Editor and Docteur en Médecine

### **Michel de Villeneuve: Editor**

Servetus left Basel, though we do not know if he was forced to go. He later wrote that when he was a youth of scarcely twenty, persecuted and exiled, he felt discouraged and considered giving up his cause and even thought of leaving Europe for America: "as Jonah rather to flee to the sea, or to one of the New Islands."<sup>1</sup> He went first to Paris for a short time and eventually to Lyon, disguising himself under the name of Michel de Villeneuve (Villeneuve in old French orthography; Michael Villanovanus) and disappearing as a person. Several rumors were spread about his fate. He appeared again as Servetus after twenty one years, discovered by Calvin with tragic consequences.

In Lyon Servetus at first was employed for two-to-three years as a corrector of proofs for the press of Melchior and Kaspar Trechsel, a very honorable employment that required scholarly knowledge and languages. Erasmus was also once a corrector for the press of Aldus Manutius in Venice. Servetus probably corrected medical books that were printed at that time in Lyon, the works of Galen and Hippocrates in Greek and Latin with the French translation by François Rabelais. Soon the brothers Trechsel charged him with the new edition of *Geography* by Claudius Ptolemy of Alexandria, the second century Egyptian astronomer of which more later. Servetus also developed wide contacts with the local prominent personalities.

During this time he occupied himself studying mathematics, geography, and astronomy and got interested in medicine reading the medical works coming off the press written by Symphorien Champier (known also in the latinized form as Campegius, ca. 1471-1537), founder of the Medical Faculty at Lyon. Champier, an illustrious physician, theologian, botanist, and astronomer was a typical man of the Renaissance. After studying medicine in Paris and Montpellier, he settled in Lyon, and became a physician of the duke of Lorraine. Servetus, younger than Champier by 39 years, became his amanuensis and student. He certainly was influenced by Champier's philosophical humanism and eventually prompted to study medicine in Paris. Champier obviously had no influence on Servetus's theological views, since Servetus's theological knowledge was superior to that of Champier. Champier adhered to the ancient idea that the universe constituted a coherent unity, reviving the naturalistic, wholistic concepts of Cicero intended to integrate the elements of physiology, theology and the influence of the astral bodies in man. Champier, like Servetus and many humanists of the Renaissance, believed in the final unity of the religious and philosophical doctrines. This insistence on the central position of man in the universe explains why the subsequent discovery of pulmonary circulation by

Servetus he later treated in a book on theology. In his theological views, however, Champier was inclined to accept the decisions of the church, to believe in all and everything that the Fathers of the church taught, including the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. Servetus was, on the contrary, driven by innate curiosity, by the impulse to find truth by observation and experimentation, as in medicine, or from investigation of the scripture, as in religion. Champier in his medical views followed the natural system -- *vis naturae medicatrix* -- and thought that a physician should aid this natural force. He was progressive and relied more on observation *ab oculos* than on established authority. For example, he had the courage to object to blood letting advised by Galen and advocated the use of plants that had a moderate effect, e.g., natural plants of the country. This was in an epoch when the use of the powder of mummies was very fashionable and costly, besides being absolutely ineffective.

The second person who influenced Servetus in Lyon was Sebastian Montanus Rivoriensis, a prominent physician of the Cardinal de Tournon, from the distinguished Lyonese family of Rivoire. Here Servetus also got acquainted with astrology through the work of another famous physician-astrologer, Gonzalvez of Toledo, friend of Champier, who edited *Amicus medicorum*, the work of a Franciscan Jean Ganivet at Trechsels.

Champier, a French Catholic, and his contemporary German anatomist, physician, and biologist, Leonard Fuchs (1501-1566), were opposed on theological and medical issues. Fuchs embraced Protestantism but had much in common with Champier and Servetus -- humanist culture, knowledge of classical languages, and propagation of Galenism. He was in Ansbach the personal physician of the Margrave George of Brandenburg and later he became in 1535 professor of anatomy at the University of Tübingen at the invitation of Ulric, the duke of Württemberg.

The study of medicine in these times amounted to little more than the philological interpretation of Greek and Latin texts which were rediscovered during the Renaissance. Many scholars wrote treatises trying to purify the medical concepts of Hippocrates and Galen from the additions and modifications introduced by the Arabs. Thus Fuchs published in 1530 a treatise, *Errata recentiorum medicorum*, in which he defended the Greek school claiming the superiority of Hippocrates and Galen over the Arabs, especially Avicenna's *Canon*. The topic of special interest was the use of plants as purgatives, prescribed by the Arabs, and the origin of the new disease syphilis and its possible relation to the disease described by the Greeks as "lichen." In his enthusiasm for the Greek school, he jumped often to many unjustified conclusions which were later criticized by Champier. The Dutch physician Lorenz Fries defended the Arabs advocating studying Avicenna in a work *Defensio medicorum Principis Avicennae ad Germaniae medicos* (1530).

In 1533 Champier entered the quarrel with his work, *Epistola responsiva in defensionem Avicennae Laurentii Frisi*, in which he criticized Fuchs and later, with

*Annotatio in Fuchsium*, directly attacking Fuchs. In the latter work, translated for Fuchs by his friend Arabist Sebastian Montanus (Monteux or Montuus), Champier tried to discredit the earlier corrections of medical concepts made by Fuchs. Fuchs replied in turn by the work *Paradoxa medicinae* (1535), a polemic on the errors of contemporary medicine, directed against the Arabists and Champier. Champier brought the book to the attention of the inquisitors in Paris on the basis of certain theological Lutheran tendencies (e.g., the doctrine of justification by faith). As a result of the inquiry, the book was condemned by the Sorbonne and burned in public as heretical.

Fuchs in turn responded by a work *Apologia* to which now Servetus, as a friend of Champier, a known Galenist and Antiarabist, replied by publishing a work in defense of Champier thus paying his debt of gratitude -- *In Leonardum Fuchsium Apologia defensio apologetica pro Symphoriano Campegio, autore Michaelae Villanovano* (Lyon 1536).<sup>2</sup> Nobody could suspect that there was any connection between Servetus and Villanovanus. Here Servetus defended not only the medical views of Champier (e.g., the use of scammony made from the juice of a certain plant), but he also defended the orthodox Catholic doctrine against the doctrine of Fuchs and Luther of justification by faith: "For the Lutherans whose arguments it will not be difficult to refute and whose errors to uncover, do not wish to attribute anything to works, because they do not sufficiently understand the force of justification."

In 1534 we find Servetus back in Paris studying at the Collège de Calvi where he became professor of mathematics and prepared himself for a career in medicine. It was the time when the *Parlement* of Paris (a judicial body) and the Inquisition were on their way to eradicate any heterodoxy in France. Already a year earlier Calvin declared his first dogmatic assertions in Paris, became known as a reformer, and had to flee in 1533 to safety. In 1534 John Calvin returned secretly to Paris. Paris and France were controlled by the Faculty of Theology at the University.<sup>3</sup> The University since its beginning in 1252 until 1792 was divided into three superior Faculties -- Theology, Medicine and Law, and seven orders or corporations according to the nationalities which were the Faculties of Letters. Calvin was studying in Paris since 1523 under Professor Mathurin Cordier (1477-Feb. 9, 1564), a known latinist. He was enrolled first in the Collège de la Marche as an extern, and later in the Collège de Montaigu where he was a student of Natalis Béda (d. 1536), principal of the college.

### **French Reformation and Catholic Reaction**

The Reformation came to France with the Renaissance awakening the human spirit and rejecting the dust of the Middle Ages. Together with the return to the classics and rediscovery of antiquity, the humanists attempted to return to the spirit of early Christianity, to rediscover the truth of the Gospels: "*Christum ex fontibus praedicare.*" They were deeply religious and pious and their enthusiasm was almost

universal in finding support among progressive clergy and the king. Their goal in religious matters was to reform the church and restore it to its original purity.<sup>4</sup>

The first ideas of church reform in France were developed by Jacques Le Fèvre d'Étaples (Fabri) (ca 1435-1535), a professor of mathematics and philosophy, who in 1512 published in Latin the *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul*. This book is considered the first Protestant book published in France postulating a return to the original apostolic principles and to the doctrine of apostolic justification by faith emphasizing grace. Le Fèvre also attacked the celibacy of priests, the practice of fasts and the Latin liturgy, he negated the sacrifice of the Mass and accepted the real presence and omnipresence of Christ's body in the Eucharist which was later adopted by Luther and rejected by Calvin. Le Fèvre was the second (after Jean de Rely in 1478) translator of the Bible into French (New Testament in 1523; Old Testament in 1528). His views represented the earliest form of French Protestantism, labelled Fabrisian Protestantism. Le Fèvre gained a few disciples, among them Guillaume Farel, the future friend of Calvin. Initially the reaction from the church hierarchy was rather weak, and the church tried to negotiate, debate and discuss with the enthusiastic reformers. The peace was illusory as the church was simply regrouping its forces and preparing an offensive which would end with its complete victory. Le Fèvre had to leave Paris in 1521 for Meaux to avoid a hostile reaction from the Faculty of Theology and Catholic clergy, but Farel and others organized a secret church that was functional at the time of Calvin's arrival in 1523.

A Catholic reaction to the reform developed assuming the form of "antibiblicism." The Bible was the first target since the reformers recognized it as the source of their authority and doctrine and not that of the church. Pierre Sutor, doctor of theology, wrote a book in 1525 criticizing Le Fèvre's translation of the Bible,<sup>5</sup> claiming among other assertions that one should not study languages for the purpose of translating the Bible, since the old Vulgate version is sufficient. Those who do, do so for the purpose of developing heresies and should be treated as heretics; moreover, that spreading the Bible among the people is pernicious.

Formal sanction of the persecutions came with the papal bull of May 17, 1525, that ordered the church and civil authorities to proceed "without noise, without trial and without appeal." Papal nuncio Campeggio, at the Diet in 1530, dictated to the Emperor Charles V the three measures to be taken to eliminate the Reformation: to organize an armed league of all Catholic princes; to destroy all heretics by fire and sword; and to establish the Inquisition in all countries with the task of exterminating the Reformation.

The Reformation started after King François I ascended the throne in 1515. The first period of his reign (1515-1529) was very fluid as many clergy were inspired by the spirit of reform, and the king protected many reformers. However, In 1525 Cardinal Duprat established a commission, a provisory Inquisition for the repression



of heresy.

In the second period of the reign of François I (1529-1535), the Sorbonne Theological Faculty attacked Marguerite de Navarre, the enlightened and tolerant royal sister. The king in an attempt to stem the influence of the Sorbonne established the first lay school in the country, the future Collège de France in 1530. In 1534 the famous affair of the placards took place followed by mass executions of heretics.<sup>6</sup> During the night of October 17/18 placards were posted in Paris, Orléans, and Amboise in support of the Reformation. They were brought from Neuchâtel, written by the first pastor in this city, Antoine Marcourt, a refugee from Lyon. On the Sunday of October 18, the burghers of Paris saw the posters and a terrible, fanatical reaction followed. On Monday, October 19, the Chambre des Vacations decided to organize an expiatory procession on October 22 from the Sainte Chapelle to Notre Dame. The price of 100 *écus* was set for the heads of "Lutherans" and soon the prisons were filled. Already on November 10, ten sentences of death were issued and Barthélemi Milon, the first victim was burned. On January 21, 1535, the clergy organized another expiatory procession in which the king was obliged to walk from church to church with a lit candle in his hand while at the same time six stakes were set on fire in Paris. From then on the victims to be burned at the stakes were burned alive, whereas previously, for the sake of mercy, their necks were first broken. Moreover, to increase the agony of the victims they were suspended on an iron chain above the fire and alternately lowered into and lifted up from the flames. The king was forced to preside over such barbarities and on January 29, 1535, the *Parlement* published an edict ordering the extermination of all heretics and the suppression of all printing.

After the death of Duprat (July 9, 1535), the King offered the office of state chancellor to Antoine de Bourg who started to reverse the damage done by the cardinal and his clique. Thus in the third period of the king's reign (1535-1538) he issued on July 16, 1535, the edict of Coucy, ordering amnesty and revoking the earlier January edict of releasing prisoners and even of opening negotiations with Melanchthon. At this period Farel became the chief figure of the Reformation in Geneva. But the hopes for the evangelicals were illusory, the church regrouped and prepared for the final victory. The Pope skillfully played political games with the emperor, Spain, and the king of France. He subjugated the king by promising him the rule over Milan for his son. In 1538 de Bourg died and was replaced by Guillaume Poyet. Under the pressure of Cardinals Charles de Lorraine and François de Tournon, the final edict was issued in 1539 ordering the complete extermination of all heretics.

Now the whole legal machinery was created for this job -- special legislation was promulgated, special police were organized, the old system of justice was reorganized to accommodate the new task. Three agencies were used by the church

to exterminate religious dissidents: the clergy and ecclesiastical courts who would determine the guilt and pass the victims on to the secular power for execution; the civil courts that were empowered to arrest and examine the cases of those suspected of deviation from orthodoxy; and the omnipotent and ubiquitous Inquisition with its own courts and instruments of torture. Trials were ordered in the secular courts, one quarter of the confiscated goods of the victims was allocated to the accusers to encourage accusations. Previously the Inquisition was not recognized by all cities in France, but now the edict issued on June 24, 1539, ordering persecution was recognized by all *Parlements* in France and again, another on June 1, 1540, at Fontainebleau made the Inquisition operative in all of France.

### **Calvin in Paris**

After his arrival in Paris in 1523 Calvin quickly became acquainted with the events and movements among humanists and reformers and joined the secret Protestant church. He was introduced to French Protestantism by a new friend, his cousin, Pierre Robert, called Olivétan,<sup>7</sup> who was considered to be the founder of the French language because of his translation of the Bible into French. Calvin developed an interest in reading the Bible here and after leaving Paris for Orléans in 1528, he continued to study languages and theology. He was back again in Paris in 1530 studying in the Collège des Trois-langues (later called Collège royal and Collège de France) newly opened by King François I.

Until 1533 Calvin probably considered himself an innovator and did not intend to break with the church. The turning point and the declaration of new faith by Calvin took place in a famous speech delivered at the inauguration of the academic year on November 1, 1533. The speech was delivered by the Rector of the University and friend of Calvin, Nicolas Cop, but was written by Calvin.<sup>8</sup> It was an attack on the sophists of the Theological Faculty at the Sorbonne and an exposition of Calvin's doctrine of the certitude of salvation due to the grace of God which later became the basis of his theory of predestination. The speech ended with the glorification of those who are persecuted for religion, a cry for missionary zeal in propagating the new *philosophia christiana*, a biblical doctrine, as opposed to the accepted scholastic doctrine, and an appeal for peace in the church based on "the word and not on the sword." Calvin, however, reversed his role twenty years later and became himself a persecutor.

The Cop speech caused a strong reaction from the Theological Faculty at the Sorbonne and the *Parlement* ordered his and Calvin's imprisonment for "heresy." Both escaped from Paris, Cop to Basel and Calvin to Saintonge.<sup>9</sup> Calvin spent two years as a refugee in various places, and he was even imprisoned in his native town of Noyon under suspicion of heresy, but managed to escape. He returned to Paris secretly in 1534 between April and October while Servetus was still there. Servetus and Calvin were to meet secretly in Paris and debate theological issues. Calvin

wanted to convince Servetus of his errors and arranged a meeting; however, Servetus failed to appear at the appointed place in the rue St. Antoine.<sup>10</sup> Thus, from the beginning, their relations were strained and augured nothing but tragedy for Servetus.

### **Ptolemy's *Geography***

In 1535, Servetus published Claudius Ptolemy's *Geography*, which constituted a major contribution to geographical science of the sixteenth century. What was called geography at that time, would be called ethnography today. The discoverers and explorers were more interested in the descriptions of people than in the physical description of the lands and territories. Ptolemy was a second century Alexandrian geographer and his work was translated for the first time into Latin in Florence in 1409 and printed in 1473. As the only Latin version of the work available, it contributed to the discoveries in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The book was edited several times, supplemented with new additions and, as such, presented as Ptolemy's *Geography*.

In 1513 Martin Waldseemüller (ca 1470 -ca 1522) designed new maps and established the name America for the New World. In 1522 Lorenz Fries, the previously mentioned Dutch physician now in Strassburg, published another edition with new maps, but the most important was the edition published by a humanist erudite, linguist, mathematician and geographer, Willibald Pirckheimer (1470-1530), in Strassburg in 1525. The Greek original of the work was published in 1533 by Erasmus in Basel. Servetus reedited, corrected, and supplemented Pirckheimer's edition using also the Greek original and several previous editions. Its complete title is, *Claudii Ptolemaei alexandrini geographicae enarrationis. Libri octo. Ex Willibaldi Pirckheimeri translatione, sed ad graeca & prisca exemplaria a Michaelae Villanovano iam primum recogniti. Ludguni ex officina Melchioris et Gasparis Trechsel fratrum, MDXXXV.*<sup>11</sup>

Servetus added in the book an account of the new discoveries, e.g., of the New World, adding that it was an error to call it America:

... Columbus returned with the rest in two ships to Spain where he was received honorably by the rulers and at their orders was saluted by all as viceroy, admiral and governor of the aforesaid new world; and thereafter he returned to the continent where he discovered many other islands which are now happily ruled by the Spanish. And those err to high heaven, as it is said, who contend that this continent should be called America, since Amerigo approached that land long after Columbus, not with Spaniards but with the Portuguese and for purposes of commerce and trade.

The word America stood on the map of the Western Hemisphere in the middle of Brazil. The island of Cuba was emphasized, called Isabella's Island, with the legend

that this land was discovered by Columbus in 1492.

Most of the book deals with Asia, Africa and Europe. When talking about Europe, Servetus characterized it as a land where none dared proclaim the truth of God from the sacred Word save at peril of his life. This was contrasted with the description of Arab countries: "Remarkable it is that the Arabs, though contiguous with the Medes, Persians, Greeks and Romans, have conserved their freedom and have been conquered by none. And indeed they adopted the religion of Mohammed entirely of their own accord in which they persist."

Talking about Germany he described the dismal situation of German peasants:

The condition of the agricultural peasants is miserable since they live scattered in the rural areas in huts of wood and mud built by little more than from the earth and covered with straw. Their bread is oatmeal porridge or boiled beans, their drink water and whey. There are prefects for each district who are called Schilder and who maintain the peasants in irremissible servitude and abuse and oppress them. Hence in our time we have seen the conspiracy and revolt of the peasants against the nobles. But they always fail miserably.

At the end of the description of France, Servetus comments on the ostensibly curative power of the king, the so-called royal touch who by a simple touch was supposed to be able to cure a scrofulous disease of the skin. Servetus wrote: "I myself have seen how the king touched many afflicted by this disease, but I have not seen any one who would be cured."

The most negative description was given to Spain with its Inquisition:

In Spain great authority is held by those called the inquisitors of the faith, who have acted with great severity against the *marranos*, heretics and Saracens. There is another remarkable institution of justice called Hermandad. It is a sworn fraternity of citizens and at a sound of a bell from individual cities many thousands of men come forth to pursue any malefactor through the whole province, and when messengers have been sent ahead to the other cities it is almost impossible to escape. He who is apprehended is tied alive to a stake and shot with arrows.

This Hermandad was a system of neighborhood vigilantes, who tracked down all the refugees trying to evade the law or persecution by the church.

Based on reports of the contemporary travelers and merchants, Servetus included the passage describing Palestine taken from the editions of Pirckheim and Fries: "Nevertheless be assured, reader, that it is sheer misrepresentation to attribute such excellence to this land which the experience of merchants and travellers proves to be barren, sterile and without charm, so that you may call it in the vernacular the promised land only in the sense that it was promised, not that it had any promise."

Such a passage was part of the postcrusade literature in which people tried to depreciate the Holy Land after the failure of the crusades. In fact, it was during the crusades that the term Holy Land appeared and not before. This passage, though describing the then contemporary Palestine, and not the ancient one of Moses, was taken later during his trial at Geneva as a basis for one of the indictments, namely that Servetus defamed Moses!<sup>12</sup>

The book was corrected and again published in 1541 by Hugues de la Porte in Lyon. In the dedication Servetus listed as consultants Nicolaus Angelus Florentinus, Ioannes Berenherus, and Erasmus. The edition of 1541 contained also new maps, prepared by an Alexandrian geographer Agatodemon and was dedicated to Servetus's protector and archbishop of Dauphiné, Pierre Palmier. Servetus informs his readers in an eulogy that Archbishop Palmier was his auditor while lecturing at the University of Paris.<sup>13</sup> It is interesting to note that in this edition the paragraph on Palestine was removed and the statement about the royal healing touch was modified to soften Servetus's disbelief: "I have heard that from time to time many were cured." Interesting also is the allegorical drawing on the front page of the edition of 1541 representing Samson breaking the gates of the city and carrying the planks with the inscription: "*Libertatem meam mecum porto.*" It was a motto of the printing house of Hugues de la Porte. This symbol in the Middle Ages represented Christ breaking the gates of Hades, but the inscription suggests a personal inner freedom regardless of the condition of the individual. As such it could well describe Servetus's belief.

#### **Michel de Villeneuve, Docteur en Médecine**

In 1536 Servetus returned to Paris studying geography and medicine probably on the advice of Symphorien Champier. He matriculated at the University of Paris in the College of Lombards as Michael Villaneuva Cesaraugustanens. dioc. on March 24, 1537 (or 1538 according to the new calendar). Among his professors were such famous names as Jacobus Sylvius, Jean Fernel, Guinther de Ardenach. He supported himself by giving lectures in mathematics within the wide range accepted at that time: astrology, astronomy, and geography. He already gained some recognition for the publication of Ptolemy's *Geography* the year before. At that time the medical world was divided into two opposing groups with respect to the use of syrup as a medical treatment. The so-called Arabists supported the use of it as helpful in hastening the curative process, whereas the so-called Galenists opposed it as useless. Servetus took part in the dispute taking an independent position advocating its discriminatory use. He wrote a popular book on the subject, *Syruporum universa ratio ad Galeni censuram diligenter expolita*, Paris 1537 (several editions of the work appeared, in Venice in 1545; in Lyon in 1546, 1547, 1548).<sup>14</sup> According to Servetus, "Syrups are neither worthless nor should they be accepted blindly".

Servetus in this work demonstrated a deep knowledge of the Greek medical works

of Galen but as a humanist, he did not hesitate to correct him, if observation proved him wrong. His knowledge of ancient and contemporary works was astonishing -- he cites Galen, Hippocrates, Avicenna (980-1037), Rhazes (865-925), Oribaso (325-403), Manardus (Giovanni Manardi, 1462-1536), Aristotle, etc. He reversed himself on the teachings of the Arabs, advising a critical approach to their works and did not follow blindly one school or the other. But in the theoretical analysis he supported the Hippocratic physiological and medical concepts. The problem concerned the use of syrups for digestion, called at that time, the "concoction." The Arabs supported the idea that the syrups enhanced the independent *vis concoctrix*, whereas the Hippocratic school, supported by Servetus, followed the idea of the *vis medicatrix naturae*: "... there is no need of the syrups for the normal concoction (digestion) if the organ is not affected: in this case sleep, rest, massage, baths, drinks and foods moderately warm are sufficient."

Servetus was an active student taking part in the dissection of cadavers, serving as a prosector for Professor Jean Guinther de Andernach. Jean de Andernach praised Servetus in his work *Institutiones anatomicae* (Basel, 1539): "After him [Andreas Vesalius, 1524-1564, Flemish anatomist] is Miguel Villanovanus, who was my friendly assistant in dissections -- a person who is an honor in any field of erudition - - and does not have an equal in the knowledge of Galen."<sup>15</sup> But both were not Guinther's assistants at the same time, since Vesalius left Paris in 1536. With Andreas Vesalius,<sup>16</sup> Servetus is recognized as the father of modern anatomy. But there is no record of Servetus obtaining any degree from the University. There is only one record showing him as a public lecturer in geography, mathematics, and medicine, for which one had to have first a Master of Arts degree before one might enter the study of medicine or give public lectures. Nevertheless, during the trial at Paris he is spoken of only as *scholastiens medicinae*; at the trial at Vienne he called himself *Docteur en Médecine*.

Servetus could thus continue his examinations for the degree of doctor. He confirmed having this degree at the trial in Geneva.<sup>17</sup> However, there is no record of his degree in the registers of the Faculty of Medicine of Paris. The documents show only that he was a student of medicine during 1536-1538 at the University of Paris and that he resided in Paris in 1532 as a student of mathematics at the Collège of Calvi. Chronologically he could not have the degree since four years of studies were required. He, however, stated several times that he had the degree -- when he signed the contract in Lyon three years later for editing the Bible of Pagnini and in the document of naturalization at Vienne, signed by the king.<sup>18</sup> The issue may not be of great importance since many physicians at that time, e.g., Thiebault, did not have this title. Also there are no records of even Vesalius ever obtaining a degree of *Docteur en Médecine*. This issue may be also closely linked to the issue of his native town. There is a record in the register at the University of Montpellier (where he

stayed in 1540) of a certain Michel Navarrus -- which would correspond to Servetus especially that he claimed at the trial at Vienne to be from Tudela, in the Kingdom of Navarra. Also in the book of Acts of the Faculty of Medicine of Paris the dean describes Michael Villanovanus as claiming to be from Navarra. In the document of naturalization he says he was born in Tudela in the Kingdom of Navarra. During the trial at Vienne he mentioned that he visited Avignon, after Paris, thus, he could even have bought the title of doctor of medicine according to the practice of this school.

Whether or not he had the degree, Servetus left Paris and opened his medical practice in Charlieu, a town in the Department of Loire, some 500 km from Paris and 80 km from Lyon. Servetus lived in Charlieu in a house which was the property of the family Rivoire, mentioned by Servetus in his *In Leonardum Fuchsium* and connected with the Cardinal de Tournon. His goal was to practice medicine and not to attract attention. Here he was a country doctor who later described pulmonary circulation and became the private physician of the primate of France. We know about this period only from his testimony at the trial in Vienne and in Geneva.<sup>19</sup> He stayed there for about three years.

Later, the judges in Geneva must have known something about his stay there since they asked him if he did not hurt or wound anybody there. One night when going to see a patient, Servetus was attacked and hurt by the relatives of an envious competing physician and during the fight he hurt one of the attackers. He was imprisoned for three days. While in Charlieu he even contemplated marriage, but abandoned the idea thinking he was not physically fit. Later his judges at the Geneva trial tried to discredit Servetus at any price. Calvin pressed charges that Servetus led a dissolute life. They asked him why he did not marry, to which Servetus replied he was not fit for marriage since he had an operation at the age of about five for some unexplained reason.<sup>20</sup> Servetus conditioned his entire life on moral and doctrinal principles to which he remained faithful. He sublimated the concept of love considering virginity a merit compatible with salvation.<sup>21</sup> We do not know whether or not he really was impotent. Most probably he had an easy excuse for a doctrinal position that would take him long to explain.

He finally met at Lyon in 1540 Archbishop Pierre Palmier who was his auditor at the University of Paris. Palmier persuaded the printer Kaspar Trechsel to set up a press at Vienne and also sponsored Servetus giving him a position as his adjunct physician and settled him in an apartment in the palace precinct. Lyon was at that time the second city in France after Paris, an intellectual and commercial center.<sup>22</sup> It was the place where the first manufacture of silk was established in 1536. Since the fifteenth century Lyon was a large center for printing books and by the sixteenth century it had about 100 printers. Among the most famous were Jean Lascaris, Sébastien Gryphe, Hubert Sussanneau and Étienne Dolet. Servetus developed cordial relations with the aristocracy in the region. He cured the daughter of Antoine

de la Court, the Vice-bailiff and judge, and showed devotion to the ill during the plague of 1542. Nominally Servetus was a Catholic, attended church and abstained from religious discussions. He also continued to work as a corrector for the Trechsel press set up in Vienne.

### Humanists of Lyon

Printer Étienne Dolet belonged to a circle of humanists in Lyon and when, during the counter-Reformation, he had to take sides with either the Catholic church or the Protestants, he took a stand against both of them.<sup>23</sup> For this he got a reputation as a champion of impiety and atheism, but in fact he believed more in God than the judges who condemned him to be burned at the Place Maubert in Paris in 1546. Today there is a statue erected to him in the center of the Place with the Greek inscription bearing the phrase which motivated his condemnation -- σ\_ γάρ ο\_κ \_ σει (su gar ouk esei, you will no longer be). In the translation of the dialogue ascribed to Plato, *Axiochus*, Dolet added to the Greek phrase the words "*rien du tout*" (at all) that did not change the meaning of the text. The theologians of the Faculty of Theology of the Sorbonne declared on November 14, 1544, that the passage was "badly translated and against the intention of Plato." They themselves could not even spell the title of the book they condemned. The condemnation of the translation was in fact only a pretext -- the Sorbonne really wanted to condemn and burn Dolet as the editor of the Bible. Dolet himself was aware of this when he wrote a poem:

C'est seulement que me suis addonné  
(Sans mal penser) depuis ung certain temps  
De mettre en vente en François et Latin  
Quelques livres de Saincte Esriture  
Voyla mon mal, voyla ma forfaiture.

Dolet was a typical representative of the Lyonese humanists who were inspired by the Renaissance movement, the return to classical thought and original Christianity, and Christian piety as advocated by Erasmus: "*Christum ex fontibus praedicare.*" They rediscovered the Gospel as they did the *Iliad*.

Another famous member of the humanist circle of Lyon was François Rabelais (1490-1553), French writer and physician. His *Pantagruel* was considered by the Sorbonne Faculty of Theology as an obscene work. At the time of the publication of his books he was inclined towards Protestantism, but he never joined the movement.

Calvin expressed his severe critique of Rabelais in *De Scandalis* for "having desecrated the holy and sacred assurance of the eternal life [Gospel] by the audacious sacrilege through jokes and laughter."<sup>24</sup> Rabelais did take revenge on Calvin in his fourth book published in 1553. He called Geneva "Île farouche" and Calvin a "démoniacle," "imposteur de Genève." There could be no relation between the two: one an inveterate jester and the other an austere Reformer; one the seeker of the possible truth and the other the defender of "the very sure of God's truth;" one the



founder of the cult of natural rational humanity and the other a tireless preacher of original sin, of the fall, and radical corruption.<sup>25</sup> The hopes and expectations of the humanists were illusory; to their astonishment they were called the enemies of the church, makers of schism, accomplices of heresies. As such they were brutally persecuted from about 1536 when Cardinal de Tournon was appointed to exterminate all heresy in the region.

The Collège de la Trinité was an especially famous school there which attracted the youth and where Sebastian Castellio (1515-1563), a French Protestant theologian and classic scholar, studied. It was placed in the hands of the city in 1527 in spite of threats from the church to the aldermen. One of the founders and defenders of the college was the already noted Symphorien Champier, future founder of the medical school at Lyon. The school was well known for its method of teaching Latin simultaneously with French. One of the most famous professors was Barthélémy Aneau who taught rhetoric from 1529, and became the principal of the school in 1540. He studied under a Lutheran professor of Greek, Melchior Wolmar (1496-1560), and was codisciple of Calvin and Théodore de Bèze (1519-1605) in Bourges and in Orléans. He became a victim of a massacre organized by the Jesuits in 1561 in order that they could take over the school which they branded as being the center of heresy.

Pierre Palmier himself was an unusual person. He was interested not only in theology, but also in science and new knowledge. This, however, did not make him less eager to exterminate heresy and heretics. He wanted to convert his archbishop's palace into a cultural center under his patronage. In 1528 he was nominated archbishop of Vienne and accepted as his physician Jean Perelle who in 1535 dedicated to Palmier his edition of the work of Teodoro Gaza (1398 - 1478) *De mensibus atticis*. Six years later in 1541 Servetus will dedicate his edition of Ptolemy's *Geography* to Palmier and will state in the dedication that Jean Perelle was his co-disciple in the Faculty of Medicine in Paris.<sup>26</sup>

### **The Santes Pagnini Bible**

In 1540 Servetus appears as the editor of the Bible of Santes Pagnini. The most important disciplines in this period were theology and medicine. Theology was studied through the Bible in the Latin translation and the texts of Galen in the Arabic translation were the basis for medicine. There were several editions of Bible translations including the Complutensian Polyglot Bible, the publication of which was coordinated by Cardinal Francisco Ximénes de Cisneros in cooperation with the most distinguished scholars in Europe such as Nebrija, Vergara, Coronel y López de Zúñiga in Spain, Erasmus in Holland, Calvin in Geneva, Santes Pagnini in Lyon and Sébastien Castellion in Switzerland. Santes Pagnini (1470 -1541) was a Dominican monk from Lucca, a pupil of Savonarola (1452-1498, who was hanged and burned in Florence for heresy and critique of the church practices), an erudite in Hebrew and

classical languages. Pagnini became a professor of classical languages at the College of Oriental Languages, founded by Pope Leo X. He dedicated twenty-five years to the translation of his Bible from the original languages into Latin, which was first published at Lyon in 1527/1528. This edition is said to be the first to be divided into chapters. The next edition appeared in 1541 in Cologne edited by Melchior Novesianus and then was corrected by Servetus and published by Hugues de la Porte in 1542 as *Biblia Sacra ex Santes Pagnini tralatione sed ad Hebraicos linguae amussim novissime ita recognita et scholiis illustrata ut plane nova editio videri posit.* Lugduni, apud Hugonem a Porta. MDXLII, cum privilegio ad sex annos. Servetus added a preface and notes to the Pagnini Bible recommending in the prologue the study of the history of the Hebrews for a better understanding of the Bible. He accused biblical studies for not reaching for the literal and historical sense but searching in vain for the mystical meaning. Servetus's reputation grew and he was contracted next by the Compagnie des Libraires at Lyon to correct and edit the Pagnini Bible in seven volumes which was published in 1545: *Biblia Sacra cum glossis...* Lugduni anno MDXLV. At the beginning of the seventh volume containing only the index, one finds the name of Michel Villeneuve as the sole corrector.

Servetus presented the Bible in a new way. He modified the titles of the chapters, added many new commentaries that in most part constitute a heterodox interpretation. Servetus insisted on the analysis of the historical meaning of the Bible and in this he was on common ground with the Erasmian tradition. He insisted that for the proper understanding of the Bible one had to get a knowledge of the Hebrew language and then had to study Jewish history. As Servetus treated historical events as products of God's acts and his revelation to man each successive stage could not be consciously predicted by the prophets.

Did the prophets not see the future? I respond, they had visions under the cover of the shadow. That which they predicted was not clear to them in the sense as we understand it. As Daniel: 'I heard and I did not understand.' Similarly Habakkuk preached from ignorance.

Prophets are limited by their time and cannot understand the deeper meaning of their own words.

And that which is revealed by the prophets is not revealed for them, but it is revealed for us, and for us they prophesy .... Thus there were no enigmatic vision of the future, but rather view of the present things grasped in vision.<sup>27</sup>

Thus Servetus rejected the prophecies of the Old Testament understood in traditional way as direct foretelling of the coming of Christ and a link between the Judaism and Christianity, the so-called types of the New Testament. He retained, however, a certain interpretation of typology, but modified with respect to the orthodox one.

For him the types could be discovered only in what actually happened, that is, to discover the exact meaning of Hebrew words as they referred to the actual events. Only then can we seek a deeper, hidden, mystical meaning which was not known even to the writers of the scripture:

Scripture has a double face ... and contains beneath the oldness of the letter that kills the newness of the spirit that gives life, so that when one sense is elucidated it would be wrong to omit the other, the more so because the historical discloses the mystical. We have tried, therefore, in our notes to restore the literal old historical sense everywhere neglected, so that through it as a type the true mystical sense might be known, and we all, with unveiled face, might clearly see Jesus Christ, our God, the end of all, veiled in shadows and figures on which account the blind Jews saw him not.

He rejected altogether the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 as referring to the virgin birth: "Behold, the Lord himself shall give you a sign and a virgin shall conceive." This was taken by the early church as a prediction of the virgin birth of Jesus and probably because of this we have the story in the New Testament. Unfortunately the word virgin was derived from a mistaken translation in the Septuagint. Servetus indicated that the original Hebrew word, as pointed out also by the Jewish exegetes, signified a "young woman" and not a virgin. In the story of Isaiah the one who should conceive was the wife of Hezekiah, the King of Judea.<sup>28</sup>

The *Song of Songs* was in the Middle Ages interpreted as an allegory of love of Christ for the church. Servetus in his edition completely eliminated the chapter headings that used to convey this interpretation. The fifty third chapter of Isaiah was throughout the Christian centuries interpreted as prefiguring the suffering of Christ. Servetus simply regarded it as referring to Cyrus.

Such an interpretation of the Bible was consistent with the Servetus view of religion as a historical and progressive process in which Christ was just a step or phase in God's self revelation. The purpose of such treatment was to develop a theology of the Father and less a soteriological scheme as it was more emphasized in the traditional Christianity. The theologians in Louvain suspected the Pagnini Bible of heresy and placed the book on the Louvain *Index librorum prohibitorum*. It was also prohibited by the Spanish Inquisition. The Council of Trent in 1546 did not accept it for use by the church, but instead selected the inferior Vulgate.

Among other works he published there may have been an edition of the *Summa* of Thomas Aquinas in Spanish, but no exemplar has been found and it is not known where it might have been published; also, there were various treatises on grammar translated from the Latin into Spanish. This information was given by Jean Frelon, a bookseller from Lyon, in his declaration of May 23, 1553.<sup>29</sup> It is interesting that he published a Hebrew lexicon and perhaps an edition of the Koran in Arabic. In 1953

another work was identified as his opus, *Declarationis Jesu Christi filii Dei libri V.*

### **Astrology and Servetus**

There is an interesting recorded episode when Servetus lectured on astrology which adds a new dimension to his multifaceted life. The belief in astrology was quite widespread in the sixteenth century though it was on the decline, primarily due to the propaganda of humanists like Francesco Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1470-1533), author of *Disputationes adversus astrologiam*, and Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374). Many prominent people believed in it or used the services of astrologers, e.g., Charles V, Francis I, Marguerite de Navarre, Philip II, the Medicis, Cardinal Richelieu (1585-1642), Melanchthon, and most popes. Pope Nicholas V (1397-1455) believed in astrology to such a degree that he organized his life and function of his office according to its predictions: he nominated cardinals and arranged liturgy in accordance with astrological forecasts. Calixtus III (1378-1458) was afraid of a comet and ordered prayers for several days to avoid disaster. Pope Paul II (1417-1471) behaved more like an astrologer than a priest. As a cardinal he brought to the conclave astrological predictions concerning the election of the pope. As a pope he rewarded an astrologer with a good benefice for predicting him a long life. Pope Paul III (1468-1549) was friendly with astrologers and remained under their influence. Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly (1350-1420) cultivated astrology. Even the Council of Trent was opened on the specific day of March 16 because it was favorable according to the astrological predictions.<sup>30</sup>

Among the Reformers, Calvin opposed astrology and even wrote a treatise against it in 1549.<sup>31</sup> He described it as an "insane curiosity to judge from the stars future events in man's life" and called it a "diabolic superstition."<sup>32</sup> But even he was not completely free of astrological connotations. He accused only those astrologers who took what he considered the "true" maxim that i.e., that "the terrestrial bodies and in general all inferior creatures are subjected to the celestial order from which they acquire certain qualities" and applied it in the wrong direction. Calvin did not oppose the use of astrological predictions in medical treatment and considered it a true science for physicians to determine the appropriate time for blood letting, application of medical concoctions and other medicaments. "Thus," he said, "one has to admit that there is a certain relationship between the stars and planets and the dispositions of the human body. And this is the object of the study of natural astrology."<sup>33</sup> He still believed that God could act through the celestial events stating: "Nevertheless, I do not deny that when God wants to extend his hand in order to pass a judgment to the world worthy to be remembered, he may sometimes use the comets for this purpose. But this does not mean, however, that men and their condition are perpetually influenced by the heaven."<sup>34</sup> One can imagine now how much the uneducated of that period relied on astrology!

Astrology was practiced in two branches: medical and judicial. Medical astrology

was a descriptive science of the effects of celestial bodies on the objects on earth including the human body, and therefore regarded as legitimate. The ancient base of astrology was the idea that the phenomena of the universe (macrocosmos) are linked to those of the man (microcosmos) and exercise a direct influence on him good or bad. Hence in astrological medicine every part or organ of the human body had a corresponding action of the zodiac sign or astral activity. The so-called astral constitution was determined by the position of the stars at the moment of birth. Galen postulated a relationship between the crisis of the disease and the critical days connected to changes of the moon. He considered cyclic astral changes causes of the periodical manifestations of certain diseases. Ptolemy was the first to bring a scientific explanation to the stellar influences on the basis of Aristotelian (or rather Hippocratic) theory of four elements described in his *Tetrabiblos*.

The other type of astrology was the so-called judicial science, trying to predict the future and fate of man. It had its origins in the Assyrian-Chaldaic culture with its astral divinities. This type of astrology was condemned by Cicero and Dio- cletian. The church also rejected judicial astrology but not the influence of the stars on the body. The first burning at the stake of an astrologer, Cecco d'Ascoli, took place in 1327. Cecco calculated the birth and death of Christ using astrological technique. The Bible itself accepts astrology in general and makes prominent use of it. With the publication in 1543 of Copernicus's *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* and the demolition of Ptolemy's system, a decisive blow was given to the principles of astrology. Nevertheless, astrology is not dead and even today it goes together with religion. For proof, it is sufficient to turn on the television set and listen to a Puerto Rican Catholic astrologer Walter Mercado who combines the arcana of astrology with his Roman Catholicism in a most curious but undigestible mixture.

Interest in astrology rekindled at the end of the twelfth century due to the Arab invasions and translations of ancient texts. The center of interest was in Chartres and corresponds to the years of Gerardo de Cremona (1114-1187), an Italian by origin, who settled in Toledo. He translated works related to astrology, among them the *Almagesto (The Astronomical Syntax)*, and Aristotle's *Meteorologia* and *De Generatione et Corruptione*. Others like Ramon Lull combatted and condemned astrology from the religious point of view: "A heretic is one who has greater fear of Gemini and Cancer than God." The Aristotelian canon was a decisive factor in accepting the astrological doctrine of the influence of celestial bodies and it was accepted by the interpreters of Aristotle: Averroes, Avicenna, Thomas Aquinas, Albert the Great, and Dante. Augustine accepted the influence of the stars on the human body, but he retained the independence of the human free will.

Since Servetus had an extensive knowledge of astronomy, he was also able to predict the eclipse of Mars by the Moon on February 13, 1538. But at the same time when Mars was to be in the vicinity of a star called Lion's Heart (Cor Leonis),

Servetus predicted the appearance of wars, pestilence etc.: "I predicted it would happen that in this year the hearts of lions, that is the minds of the princes, would be aroused more greedily to take up arms with Mars, and much would be laid waste by fire and sword, and the church would suffer much, certain princes would die and in addition plagues and other things would occur ...." Servetus certainly did not need astrology to make such general, vague, yet often true predictions. Servetus's lecturing on astronomy strayed into the second type of astrology which the dean of the Medical Faculty at the University of Paris, Jean Tagault, tried to stamp out. The rumors must have spread about this as Servetus says: "When I was lecturing publicly on astronomy at Paris a certain physician [Jean Tagault] interrupted my lectures and attempted by two arguments to overthrow the entire subject, that part which predicts from the stars as well as the other which observes the celestial movements by the use of instruments."<sup>35</sup> Judicial astrology was punishable by burning at the stake, so the academic authorities forbade Servetus to lecture on this subject, but he ignored them. We have the complete description of events preserved in the acts of the Medical Faculty of Paris from 1538.<sup>36</sup>

When Servetus's course was terminated, he responded with a pamphlet of 16 pages *Michaelis Villanovani in quendam medicum apologetica disceptatio pro astrologia*, Paris 1538.<sup>37</sup> This pamphlet was opposed and censured by the Medical Faculty at the University. Servetus was ordered again to withdraw his pamphlet but he refused, so Tagault brought the matter before the procurator general of the king. A council was called which included three theologians, two doctors of jurisprudence, the procurator, and the dean on March 18, 1538. The sentence admonished Servetus to cease the practice of judiciary astrology. The Faculty also decided to request the *Parlement* of Paris to prohibit the printing of the *Apology*. Since Servetus already distributed the work gratis for wider readership, the matter was presented to the *Parlement* on a formal basis. The plaintiffs were the rector and the dean of the University, Servetus the defendant. There were many laws at that time, civil and canonical, condemning judiciary or divinatory astrology and punishing it by fire because such astrology was considered a prediction of the future which was reserved only to God. Servetus defended himself on grounds that he talked only about natural things -- the eclipse of the Moon by the star Lion's Heart and that in medical matters he referred to Hippocrates and others. The court acquitted him, ordered him only to withdraw the exemplars of his pamphlet from the printers and booksellers under penalty of a fine, and prohibited him from publicly and privately teaching judiciary astrology. He could, however, practice astrology for the observation and disposition of natural phenomena.

Servetus's was an extraordinary defense and he was indeed fortunate, since he could have been burned at the stake. He demonstrated in his *Apology* an enormous erudition and fantastic dialectic skill. In his defense Servetus attacked the ignorance

of his opponents and hid behind the greatest authorities of antiquity: Plato, Aristotle, Hippocrates, and Galen.

It is interesting to review the 16-page pamphlet<sup>38</sup> not only to know the arguments he used for a successful exoneration, but also from the point of view of his broad scholarship and knowledge. Servetus gives a brief account of the origins of astrology. He states that it is a knowledge passed on from the Babylonians and Egyptians as attested by Aristotle in *Meteorologica* and by Galen in *De Diebus Decretoris*; that Josephus in *Antiquitates Judaicae* attested that Abraham gave astrology to the Egyptians, and that Abraham himself received it from the Chaldeans, that the greatest philosophers -- Porphyrius, Thales of Miletus, Solon, Pythagoras, Democritus -- all learned astrology. With great sophistry Servetus wrote: "Therefore, to the greatest philosophers those things seemed worthy of belief which today seem ridiculous to the unskilled." He skillfully mixes the obvious natural phenomena related to movements of the celestial bodies with the predictions and effects speculated by the ancients because of their peculiar world view and underlying philosophy. Servetus says that Plato showed in the *Republic* that the movement of the heavens is the cause of change in terrestrial affairs; in *Timaeus* Plato claims that one star in the heavens has been assigned to each kind of living thing; in *Critas* Plato states that the influence of the seven planets adjusts to the seven metals, influencing the generation of all things; Aristotle in *Physica* claims that astrology is more natural than geometry, and he relates all terrestrial things to the celestial motions; in *De Generatione et Corruptione* Aristotle claims that motions of the heavens are necessary for the coming-to-be and passing-away of things on earth; in *De Coelo* Aristotle judges an astrologer "worthy of respect" and he "grants those things considered by astrologers." Servetus continues his defense:

In book twelve of the *Metaphysica*, he [Aristotle] says that astrology is the most akin to philosophy. You hear that is the most akin to philosophy which today our philosophers reject .... Note the words of Aristotle, for no one was ever so ignorant who upon observation did not realize the day to be warmer as the moon is growing to fullness than when it is diminishing. And on the last chapter of book four he says that the moon, almost another and smaller sun, conduces to all generation and completions; for he adds that the motion of these celestial bodies causes heat and cold just as the air and wind are affected according to the circuit of the sun and the moon .... Furthermore, in the book, *De Proprietatibus Elementarum*, he testifies that death and famine follow from the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter .... Also in the book *De Mundo* he says that the heavens have a force and power to determine by their motions the appearance, weakness and death, and the space of life, and from this also he says,

all things take life, and from this marvelous and strange phenomena come into existence which are accomplished in definite times. Hence the force of the winds roams everywhere, lightning and tempestuous and stupendous rains fall from the sky.

Turning to Hippocrates, the father of medicine, Servetus reminds his opponents that Hippocrates in *The Airs, Waters and Places*, attributes astronomy the greatest contribution to medicine:

For if anyone comprehends the changes of times and the rise and decline of the stars, he will foresee and prognosticate what kind of year it will be. If anyone prognosticates these things, he says, he will be able to predict the sicknesses which will commonly occur in a city, and be able to aid each individually and particularly by change of life or diet. And a little after he teaches that certain times must be avoided in the giving of drugs, such as the summer solstice and the autumnal equinox. Likewise, he says, one must beware the rising and setting of certain stars, such as the rising of the dog star and the setting of the Arcturus and the Pleiades. For, according to him, these generally cause mischief, at least in respect to strong purgations and weak bodies. With what countenance will physicians ignoring astronomy dare to read here the immortal god Hippocrates? Let them imitate this teacher who foreseeing a coming plague, warned the Athenians and having sent his disciples, was of great aid to them, as Soranus recalls; whereupon they presented him with great gifts and honors.

Servetus skillfully equates the prediction of Hippocrates with his own: "This year in imitation of him [Hippocrates] I, if I may be believed, warned the Parisians, just as the Christian princes ought to be warned, that they should arrange peace or at least a truce in this threatening year; for in this manner prudent men are able to be guided by the stars."

Servetus discusses most extensively the views of Galen who in *De Epidemis* says that "only an astrologer-physician is able to foreknow the future sicknesses and to prevent them breaking out by advising contrary things." Galen even wrote an entire book devoted to medical predictions from the moon, *De Praedictionibus ex Luna*, though his views were not original but followed Hippocrates. It is certain that Servetus truly believed in the assertions of medical astrology as did almost all his contemporaries. It is doubtful, however, whether he took seriously the predictions of judicial astrology. It seems rather that his prediction was an exercise in dialectics and was stimulated by his extensive reading.

The reason given for the mild condemnation of Servetus was that the private Protestant physician of the King François I, Jean Thiebault, was cited during the



hearings as an opponent of the University Faculty and supporter of Servetus. He faced the University Faculty of Medicine earlier in a trial for defending astrology as a useful tool to predict the constitution of the sick, the course of the disease and its termination. But he was also opposed by the Medical Faculty for his critique of scholastic medicine and support of empiricism.

Another person who, through his works, is cited as playing an important role in the defense of Servetus was a physician, Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim (1486-1535).<sup>39</sup> He also criticized scholastic ideology and emphasized the merits of Thiebault. Calvin characterized von Nettesheim as blasphemous. The role of both of them, however, in view of the powerful argument presented by Servetus, seems to be exaggerated.

## Notes and Bibliography

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1. The Servetus text is transcribed by Fernández, *op. cit.* p. 319, from the unpublished manuscript pages, a draft of the theological treatise for the *Christianismi restitutio*, attached to the Edinburgh copy of *Christianismi restitutio*.
2. Its English translation was published by Charles David O'Malley, *Michael Servetus. A Translation of his Geographical, Medical and Astrological Writings with Introductions and Notes*, (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1953), pp. 38-54.
3. For a discussion of Paris and early French Protestantism, see Doumergue, *op. cit.*, T. I, pp. 49 & ff.
4. On the establishment of the Reformation in France, Buisson, F., *op. cit.*, T. 1; Doumergue, É., *op. cit.*, T. I, pp. 78-111.
5. Sutor, Pierre, *De translatione Bibliae et novarum reprobatione interpretationum*, 1525. Doumergue, É., *op. cit.*, T. I, p. 103.
6. Doumergue, É., *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 501 & ff.
7. Pierre Robert translated the Bible from Hebrew and Greek published in 1535. Persecuted in France, he left for Strassburg in 1528. He died in Geneva or Ferrara in 1538. Doumergue, É., *op. cit.*, pp. 117-125.
8. Calvini, J., *Opera*, *op. cit.*, Vol. X, pp. 30-36.
9. De Bčeze, Théodore, *Histoire de la vie et mort de J. Calvin*, Genève 1657, (nouvelle édition publiée et annotée par Alfred Franklin, Paris: J. Cherbuliez, Libraire, 1864), pp. 19-22.
10. The meeting was mentioned by Théodore de Bčeze in his *Histoire ecclesiastique des Églises réformées au royaume de France*, Ambers 1580; *op. cit.*, tome I,

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- p. 14. De Bče, Théodore, *Histoire de la vie et mort de J. Calvin*, Genève 1657, (nouvelle édition publiée et annotée par Alfred Franklin, Paris: J. Cherbuliez, Libraire, 1864), p. 22. Calvini, J., *Opera, op. cit.*, Vol. XII, p. 57. Calvin himself mentions it in a reference to the conversation with Servetus, shortly before his death: "For more than 16 years I did not gain anything trying to win him for Our Lord, and not without danger to my own life." Calvini, J., *Opera, op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, p. 826.
11. Fragments were translated into English by O'Malley, Charles David, *Michael Servetus. A Translation of his Geographical, Medical and Astrological Writings with Introductions and Notes*, (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1953), pp. 15-37.
  12. Calvin, J., *Defensio orthodoxae fidei*, in *Opera, op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, p. 496.
  13. O'Malley, C. D., *op. cit.*, p. 192.
  14. Its English translation was published by O'Malley, Charles David, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-167.
  15. Guinther de Andernach, J., *Institutiones anatomicae*, Basel 1539, quoted by Fernández, J.B., *op. cit.*, pp. 99-100.
  16. The major work of Andreas Vesalius is *De humani corporis fabrica libri septem*. (Basileae ex officina Ioannis Oporini, 1543).
  17. Calvini, J., *Opera, op. cit.*, Vol. VIII. pp. 767, 776, 780.
  18. The document is transcribed by Fernández, J.B., *op. cit.*, p. 313-314.
  19. Calvini, *Opera, op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, p. 769.
  20. *Ibidem*, pp. 765, 769, 781.
  21. *Dialogorum de Trinitate* p. 46b; *Christianismi restitutio* p. 340, 341, 634. Already in 1546 he wrote to Calvin asking him if according to the Gospel one would not receive a special divine reward for preserving his virginity claiming that he chose celibacy for himself.
  22. A good description of the atmosphere in Lyon is given by Buisson, F. in *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 55 & ff.
  23. Dolet was condemned by Calvin, by Castellion and by Farel. Calvini, J., *Opera, op. cit.*, Vol. XI, pp. 357, 749; Vol. XVII, p. 139.
  24. Calvini, J., *Opera, op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, p. 45.
  25. Doumergue, É., *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 376 & ff.
  26. O'Malley, Charles David, *op. cit.*, 189-194.
  27. *Christianismi restitutio, op. cit.*, p. 318.
  28. *Christianismi restitutio*, p. 69.
  29. D'Artigny, A.G., *Nouveaux mémoires d'histoire, de critique et de littérature*, (Paris: 1749), t. II, p. 68.

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30. Doumergue, É., *op. cit.*, T. I, p. 31.
  31. *Advertissement contre l'Astrologie qu'on appelle iudiciaire et autres curiositez qui regnent auyourd'huy au monde. Par M. Iean Calvin, A Genève, par Iean Girard, 1549.* Calvini, J., *Opera, op. cit.*, Vol. VII, pp. 509-544.
  32. Calvini, J., *Opera, op. cit.*, Vol. VII, pp. 515-516.
  33. *Ibidem*, p. 517-518.
  34. *Ibidem*, p. 534.
  35. *Michaelis Villanovani in quendam medicum apologetica disceptatio pro astrologia* in O'Malley, C. D., *op. cit.*, pp. 173.
  36. Fernández provides the photocopies of the report (Fig. 11, 12, 13) and its summary. *op. cit.*, pp. 107-110.
  37. Two exemplars are preserved in the National Library in Paris. It was also reedited by Henri Tollin in 1889. Its English translation was published by Charles David O'Malley *Michael Servetus. A Translation of his Geographical, Medical and Astrological Writings with Introductions and Notes*, (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1953), pp. 168-188.
  38. All quotes come from the translation of O'Malley, C.D., *op. cit.*, pp. 168-188.
  39. Prost, Auguste, *Les sciences et les arts occultes du XVIe siècle. Corneille Agrippa. Sa vie et ses oeuvres*. Vol. I, II, (Nieuwkoop B. de Graaf, 1965). (Reprint of the Paris edition of 1881-1882). Nettesheim, born in Cologne, was one of the most colorful and interesting personalities of the sixteenth century. He studied law and medicine and aimed at the restoration of the miraculous powers that the early Christian literature is full of and which presumably was possessed by the early Christians. The modern church of his day, according to him, had lost this power by relying more on rational knowledge than on faith. At one point in his career he became the imperial historiographer and archivist and wrote a history of the coronation of the Emperor Charles V.





## CHAPTER 3

Vienne  
and *Christianismi restitutio*

### **Work on the Theological *magnum opus* in Vienne**

After his arrival in France, Servetus did not discuss any religious issues publicly. The edition of the Pagnini Bible rekindled his own plans of broadening the scope of reform and he envisioned a plan for restoring Christianity to its original simplicity and purity free from all accrued traditions of philosophy and misconceptions about the Bible. He found in Lyon a kindred spirit in the printer Jean Frellon who was nominally a Catholic but sympathetic to reform and a friend of Calvin in Geneva. Servetus, eager to see if he could win Calvin to a radical reformation of Christian doctrines, entered into a long correspondence with Calvin using Frellon as an intermediary and sending him copies of his own writings. Calvin was a personage especially interesting to Servetus, since he was one of the most distinguished leaders of the Reformation, highly successful in Geneva, young and erudite. The correspondence started in 1546, when Calvin used the pseudonym of Charles D'Espeville, whereas Servetus was emboldened to use his real name. The correspondence was used by Calvin much later as evidence against Servetus to burn him at the stake. Calvin gave us two of his letters and Servetus's replies in his *Defensio orthodoxae fidei*. Thirty letters/treatises which were included in the *Christianismi restitutio* were never sent to Calvin and they constitute rather a new genre of literary form -- the essay.<sup>1</sup>

The first three questions submitted by Servetus to Calvin were: 1. "Is the man Jesus, the crucified, the Son of God, and if so, how did this come to be?"; 2. "Does the kingdom of Jesus Christ exist among men; and if so, at what moment does one enter it and how is one regenerated?"; 3. "Should the baptism of Christ be a requirement of faith, as is the Lord's Supper, and to what purpose were these instituted under the New Testament?"<sup>2</sup> Calvin first briefly answered the questions and then excused himself politely that he was busy -- he would have to write a book to answer Servetus; thus he referred him to his *Institutio* sending it together with the letter. Servetus annotated the book and sent it back to Calvin.<sup>3</sup>

Servetus was not satisfied with Calvin's response, and in the second letter asked Calvin five more questions and urged him to read the fourth book on baptism in the Servetus manuscript.<sup>4</sup> This was the first mention about a new work by Servetus. Thus Servetus must have included in his first letter a fragment of his manuscript concerning baptism.<sup>5</sup> Calvin wrote to Frellon, the mutual friend, on February 13, 1546, that he received a letter from Servetus written in a proud spirit to which he answered more harshly than usual. But Calvin wanted to teach Servetus a lesson in humility, and added: "If he [Servetus] continues writing in the same style you will lose time only asking me to work on him since I have other more pressing affairs to take care of. And

I will pay more attention to them since I do not doubt that it was Satan who distracted me from my more useful reading."<sup>6</sup> The same day Calvin wrote the third letter to Guillaume Farel, his fellow reformer at Neuchâtel, stating: "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 takes upon him to come hither, if it be agreeable to me. But I am unwilling to pledge my word for his safety, for if he shall come, I shall never permit him to depart alive, provided my authority be of any avail." (*Nam si venerit, modo valeat mea auctoritas, vivum exire nunquam patior*).<sup>7</sup>

The correspondence continued for some time until Calvin became irritated by the insistence of Servetus and his disputational spirit. His patience was finally exhausted and he wrote in a lengthy letter that he was willing to answer only if he knew what Servetus really wanted.<sup>8</sup> Servetus replied again in a defying tone: "Since you fear I am your Satan, I stop. So then return my writings, and farewell. If you really believe the Pope is Antichrist, you will also believe that the Trinity and infant baptism as taught by the Papacy are a doctrine of demons. Again farewell."<sup>9</sup>

Calvin was convinced that Servetus wanted to overthrow traditional religion and paid no attention to the subsequent materials Servetus kept sending him. Servetus was not only recalcitrant, but also obstinate in preparation of his doctrinal exposé. He often cornered Calvin with his logic and quotes taken from the scripture in Hebrew. Calvin was used to giving orders and not taking advice, so he was exasperated by Servetus's writing. Servetus even offered to come to Geneva for a discussion. Calvin did not want to be exposed to a controversy for participating in such a discussion and to diminish his prestige. Long before he already decided that his truth was the only truth.

Calvin never returned Servetus's writings and became his strongest enemy. They were undoubtedly part of the first draft of *Christianismi restitutio* and were accompanied by a note "From your brother and friend Michel Villanovanus, doctor of medicine in Vienne." Servetus also wrote to other reformers such as Abel Poupin, a pastor since 1543 and colleague of Calvin in Geneva. He insisted in the preserved letter on the antievangelical nature of the dogma of the Trinity: "Instead of God you have a Cerberus of three heads: the Trinity." In the same letter Servetus had a premonition of death: "That for this cause I must die, I know full well, but for all that I do not lose courage that I may become a disciple similar to my Master .... Farewell, expect no further letter from me." Servetus in accordance with his attitude is ready to die rather than compromise on a matter of principle. His doctrinal interpretation was not an innovation, it was a restoration of Christianity.<sup>10</sup>

According to the testimony of an enemy of Calvin, Jérôme Bolsec, Calvin was supposed to have written a letter to Cardinal de Tournon in 1546, in which he accused Servetus of heresy.<sup>11</sup> The Cardinal supposedly found it amusing that a heretic would be accusing another heretic. This information is not trustworthy, however, since

Bolsec, after being expelled from Geneva went to Lyon, reconverted to Catholicism and became a puppet of the Catholic cardinals. The incident was never confirmed.

Servetus realized now again that he could not influence the major figures of the Reformation as before he could not influence Oecolampadius or Bucer. His manuscript was practically finished in 1546, but he devoted the next seven years to rewriting and revising his major *opus*, whose fragments were already sent to Calvin together with some thirty letters. It was finished in 1552 and sent to his friend Martin Borrhäus, professor of theology and printer in Basel. Servetus, however, got it back with the reply dated April 9, 1552: "Let God's grace and peace be with you. *Michael carissime*. I received your book with your letter. At present it is not possible to publish it in Basel. I think you yourself know the reasons .... *Marrinus tuus*."<sup>12</sup> Nor was Trechsel, the printer of Ptolemy's *Geography* and the Pagnini Bible willing to do it. He finally found a printer in Vienne, Balthasar Arnoullet and his brother-in-law Guillaume Guérout, who agreed to print the book under certain conditions: that Servetus was to bear the expense, make the corrections himself, sell and distribute the book and pay a bonus of 100 *écus* to each of the printers. Arnoullet was a businessman and Guérout was a literary partner who rendered some Psalms into verses. Both had personal reasons for publishing the book. In 1550 Arnoullet published a book written by Guérout consisting of some satirical woodcuts and verses entitled *Le Premier Livre des Emblèmes*. One of them was dedicated to Ami Perrin, the chief of the Libertine party which was opposing Calvin's theocratic rule. Guérout himself was tried by Calvin for some sexual irregularity, had to pay a fine and was expelled from the city.<sup>13</sup> Later, in a letter dated July 14, 1553, written from prison to a bookseller Jacques Berthet of Geneva who lived in Chastillon-les-Dombes near Bourg in Bresse, Arnoullet accused Guérout of misleading him.<sup>14</sup>

The press for printing Servetus' work was set up in secrecy outside the city operated by three workers. Each page of the manuscript was burned as it was printed. The printing took place between September 27, 1552, and January 3, 1553. The edition contained about 1000 printed copies which were not bound but distributed in bales simulating paper. Three shipments were prepared: one was sent through Frelon to the Frankfurt book fair, the largest in Europe at that time; the second went to bookseller Jacques Berthet's shop in Geneva, probably designated to the printer Robert Estienne; the third was sent via the river Rhône to the shop of Pierre Merrin, the type-caster in Lyon.<sup>15</sup> Berthet was not aware of the heretical nature of the printed book. Calvin, however, got one copy of the book, probably from Frelon who took the liberty of forwarding one to him not foreseeing the danger to Servetus. The identification of the author was no problem since Servetus himself disclosed his true name to Calvin. Calvin began immediately working on a plot against Servetus.

Practically all of the printing was destroyed. In Geneva it was destroyed after establishing contact between Estienne and Calvin. In Frankfurt the load was destroyed



after Calvin wrote to the pastors of the church there on August 23, 1553, forewarning them about the blasphemies and errors of the book.<sup>16</sup> The distributor, forewarned on time, did not put the books up for sale. The load designated to Merrin in Lyon was returned to Vienne and burned together with an effigy of Servetus on June 17, 1553. Such was the fate of the book that, according to the Catholic tribunal of Vienne and the Protestant tribunal in Geneva, justified the death of Servetus at the stake. Though the book had no chance to produce any effect since it was not put up for sale, according to the authorities intention was enough to put someone to death. Shortly before the trial of Servetus in Vienne, five Protestant students who came to Lyon were burned at the stake by the Catholic Inquisition because of their alleged "intention" to propagate their faith.<sup>17</sup>

### **The Misadventures of *Christianismi restitutio***

Only a few copies<sup>18</sup> of *Christianismi restitutio* survive to this day, largely due to bibliophiles more interested in their books than in their faith. One copy is found in Vienna in the National Library of Austria. It belonged to a Unitarian in Transylvania, Daniel Márkos Szent-Ivanyi, who emigrated to London in 1665. Upon returning to his native country he donated the copy to the Unitarian community of Cluj (Claudiopolis) to which he belonged. The community in turn donated it to Count Telecki who gave it to Hapsburg Emperor Josef II in 1786. The emperor rewarded the donor with a diamond. The book eventually passed to the National Library of Austria. From this copy the erudite German follower of Unitarianism, C. G. von Murr, obtained permission to reprint the book in spite of the resistance of ecclesiastical authorities. The printer actually received a handwritten copy and on this basis reproduced the original book. The reprint appeared in Nürnberg in 1790 and today there are about 53 exemplars of this edition preserved in various libraries in the world.<sup>19</sup> The Murr reprint was reproduced in 1964 by new photographic techniques and is now available in most major libraries.

The second copy of *Christianismi restitutio* is in the National Library in Paris. This copy may have come from Germain Colladon, attorney of Nicolas de la Fontaine, who intervened at the Geneva trial as adversary of Servetus. His name is inscribed in the book which was in the library of the landgraff of Hesse. In 1720 the landgraff wanted to show it to Prince François Eugène de Savoye-Carignan, but the copy disappeared. Leibniz mentions it in a letter written to Bishop Thomas Burnet in 1706. Philosopher Leibniz knew of Servetus as the discoverer of pulmonary circulation since it was mentioned by Father Feijoo who cited a letter from the baron he read quoted in the work of Trévoux.<sup>20</sup> This copy was found twenty years later in the library of Richard Mead who sent it between 1740-1744 to Paris to his friend Claudio Gross. After his death this library was sold and the *Restitutio* was bought by a book collector, Cottes, for 1,200 pounds. He in turn sold it to a bibliophile, Gaignot, from whom it was

acquired by the Duke of Vallière in 1769 for 3,810 pounds. Finally, the National Library of Paris bought it in 1783 for 4,120 pounds.

The third copy, not complete since it lacks the first sixteen pages and the title page, is located in the library of the University of Edinburgh. The book belonged to the Duke of Queensbury and passed to the University in 1695. The missing sixteen pages are substituted with a manuscript added in the sixteenth century considered to be copied from a previous draft. In it there is the note mentioned previously which states that, when Servetus was persecuted in his youth, he thought of going to one of the new islands, i.e., America as a new Jonas. It is interesting to mention that there was an attempt to reprint the book on the basis of this Edinburgh exemplar. In 1723 the Dutch antiquarian, Gysbert Dummer, undertook the task of reprinting the work, but when the bishop of London, Gibson, learned about it, he condemned it, and the project was abandoned even though 252 pages were already set in print.

The first known translation of the *Restitutio* is that by a Pole, Gregorio Pauli (Paweł Grzegorz), who translated some chapters into Polish and published it in Cracow already in 1568! The German translation by Bernhard Spiess appeared in Wiesbaden in 1892-1896. The first Spanish translation appeared in two volumes, one containing only the *Christianismi restitutio* by Ángel Alcalá and Luis Betés, and the second by Ángel Alcalá containing the *Thirty Letters to Calvin, Sixty Signs of the Antichrist and Apology against Melanchthon*.<sup>21</sup>

As for the manuscripts -- it is impossible to know how many copies were made by Servetus himself, or how many were made by his followers after his death, especially in Poland and Transylvania. These are the places where the major diffusion of his ideas took place. We know that one copy of Servetus's manuscript was sent to Calvin in 1546, and was never returned. Another copy, certainly redone and annotated, was saved by Servetus and served as the original for printing. Many manuscript copies were distributed by the followers of Servetus secretly after 1546, seven years before printing. Some were distributed in Poland via the printed copy in England.<sup>22</sup> One manuscript is in the National Library in Paris, with the abbreviations Cael. Hor. Cur. (Caelius Horatius Curio) containing 143 pages. Pages 9 and 10 contain the description of the pulmonary circulatory system attesting that Servetus described it already in 1546. The manuscript carries the coat of arms of the famous bibliophile D'Hoym and a note is attached from the previous owner Du Fay, who states that it was the manuscript of the bookseller of Basel, Caelius Horatius Curio, and that it is the first draft of the *Restitutio*. Curio is the son of Servetus' contemporary Caelius Secundus Curio who wrote *Apologia*, defending Servetus, signed by a pseudonym, Alphonsus Lyncurius Tarraconensis. Also the same Caelius Secundus Curio is the author of a prologue to the Servetus' manuscript entitled *Declarationis Jesu Christi*.<sup>23</sup> The manuscript in Paris does not follow the sequence of chapters in the printed version of the *Restitutio*. It also contains three chapters of *De Trinitate* and the text of *Dialogorum*. It has an

inscription indicating that one of the owners of the manuscript was Dr. Richard Mead.

In the library of the Société pour l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français there is a manuscript bound in leather entitled *Serveti Opera* which contains extracts from the *Restitutio*, comments on the doctrine of Servetus, on Calvin, a poem dedicated to Servetus, a copy of the *Restitutio*, and *Sermon V* by Cyprian.<sup>24</sup>

A note on the front page describes the history of the manuscripts. It was bought by a London antiquarian in 1883 from the VII duke of Marlborough, whose descendant was Winston Churchill. The poem contained in the manuscript is an elaboration by the copyist of the manuscript of another poem written by the persecuted French poet, Théophile de Viau (1590-1626), in honor of Socrates: "*Treatise on the immortality of the soul or the death of Socrates:*"

Moy, quidans la cité des gehennes  
 Visitay Servet en prison  
 Et qui vids le bruslant tison  
 Achever ses dernieres peines:  
 Je t'adjure par le discours,  
 Dont il voulut finir ses jours,  
 De lo voir peint dans mon ouvrage,  
 Oú j'ay faict aussy peu d'effort,  
 Qu'en fist ce genereux courage,  
 Dans les ateintes de la mort.<sup>25</sup>

The manuscripts of this selection were copied from another manuscript of Servetus. In the library of the Free Church in Lausanne there is another manuscript copy of the *Restitutio* made by Jordan, the secretary of King Frederick II in the eighteenth century.

### ***Christianismi restitutio*: Highlights and Impact**

Servetus's purpose for writing *Christianismi restitutio* was to advocate a return to the original Christianity, as he understood it, and not the reformation of existing Christian practices by adapting them to new situations and conditions. Such ideas were popular with the Anabaptists -- Johannes Campanus, Bernhard Rothmann, Urbanus Rhegius, and David Joris. Its full title is *Christianismi restitutio. Totius ecclesiae apostolicae est ad sua limina vocatio, in integrum restituta cognitione Dei, fidei Christi, justificationis nostrae, regenerationis baptismi, et coenae domini manducationis. Restitutio denique nobis regno coelesti, Babylonis impiae captivitate soluta, et Antichristo cum suis penitus destructo*. Vienne MDLIII, 734 pp. 8°. It ends with the initials M.S.V. The work exposes the genius of Servetus's thought, presents the full criticism of Catholic and Protestant orthodoxy, and a systematic exposition of a new Christianity, his complete religion. It provides also the complete philosophical background for the religious thought based on platonic and neoplatonic traditions and incorporates his interpretation of patristic and rabbinic literature.

The book is subdivided into six parts: Part I contains seven books on the divine Trinity.<sup>26</sup> In the preface Servetus explains that his purpose is to set forth the way of light without which no one can read the Holy Scripture, know God, or become a Christian. Five books cover the same topics as the seven books of *De Trinitatis erroribus* published in 1531. Part II contains three books on Faith and the Righteousness of Christ, the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, and Love.<sup>27</sup> It constitutes a more detailed exposition of his statements in the *Dialogorum de Trinitate* of 1532. Part III contains four books on the Regeneration and the Kingdom of Antichrist.<sup>28</sup> It deals with the practical side of the Christian faith: grace, preaching, baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Part IV contains thirty letters of Servetus to Calvin.<sup>29</sup> Part V enumerates sixty signs of the Kingdom of Antichrist.<sup>30</sup> Part VI contains an Apology on the Mystery of the Trinity, and a defense of himself against the attacks which were made by Melancthon in the second edition of his *Loci communes* upon Servetus's earlier works.<sup>31</sup> This part presents a compendium of Servetus' thought.

A quote in Hebrew on the front page of the book is the beginning of the phrase taken from Daniel 12.1:

And at that time Michael the great prince shall stand up, one who stands for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of tribulation, such tribulation as has not been from the time that there was a nation on the earth until that time: at that time thy people will be delivered, even every one that is written in the book.

A quote in Greek is the beginning of the phrase taken from the Apocalypse 12.7:

And war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon.

These are the prophecies through which Servetus assumes in his hands the mission and the task of the salvation of Christianity. His major claims were that the Reformation of Calvin and Luther did not go far enough as they did not attempt to revise the theology of the Trinity, Incarnation, and Redemption. Christian theology had to be reconstructed doctrinally as well as in its relation to practical life.

Servetus, disappointed in the development of Christianity, tried to explain it in terms of the three Apocalyptic stages when the Spirit of Christ came: at the creation, at the Pentecost, and the third time -- yet to come -- as a Paraclete. He visualized the coming of Armageddon during his lifetime with him as the armsbearer of the Archangel Michael.<sup>32</sup> Servetus was convinced of the approaching fall of the Antichrist (the Roman church) and the millennial reign of Christ. This is often interpreted as the Anabaptist influence on Servetus. He dated the corruption of the church and the rise of the Antichrist from the time of Emperor Constantine and Roman Bishop Sylvester in the fourth century: when the emperor became a monk and the pope became a pope-king, i.e., the papacy became a political power. "*Quod totum plane a Constantini et Sylvestri tempore factum videmus ... Constantino imperatore facto tunc monacho, et*

*Sylvestro in Papam regem converso, necesse fuit faciem orbis inverti.*"<sup>33</sup> He wrote that at the Council of Nicaea (in 325) the doctrine of three persons to the Godhead was invented by Satan to draw the attention of minds away from the knowledge of the true Christ. Another reason he cited for the fall of the church was the establishment of pedobaptism.

From the mystical number of 1260 days spent in the wilderness by a woman quoted in the book of the Revelation 12:6, Servetus calculated that 1260 years of the reign of the Antichrist were nearly ended and expected to live to see the advent of the Millennium.<sup>34</sup> Servetus did not specify the date, but that it could be calculated from the date when Constantine ascended the throne in 305 or from the date of the Nicaean Council in 325. He was sure of its imminent coming already in 1547 when he wrote a letter to the pastor, Abel Poupin, in Geneva.<sup>35</sup> He saw many signs of the approaching struggle between Archangel Michael and his hosts against the Antichrist (Dan. 12:1; Rev. 12:7). He deemed that the Catholic and Protestant doctrines and practices were corrupted and as such indicated the end, that the signs were visible.<sup>36</sup>

Servetus's millenarian doctrine was a part of the apocalyptic scheme in which there was a rivalry between two forces represented by two figures, Christ and Antichrist. Servetus visualized several similarities between the two and the existence of the kingdom of evil on earth since the beginning. The spirit of the Antichrist commenced with the spirit of Christ but it occupied the papal power. With the original sin God withdrew from man and the Satan took over dominion of the world and authority over man. Second time God yielded to evil at the time of the legislation of the laws of the ecumenical council during Constantine and Sylvester when Christ abandoned the church, leaving it in desolation and abomination and Satan became incarnate Antichrist. This was the glorification of the Antichrist which will require now a new glorification of Christ.<sup>37</sup> The historical progression of God's revelation is parallel to the same process concerning the Satan. The remedy for this situation of the dominion of evil over the world will be the second coming and establishing his kingdom for ever.<sup>38</sup> Christ's incarnation was only partially effective by bringing the good news about the redemption from evil and a step in the continuous struggle with the evil.<sup>39</sup> Again, just as in the God's self revelation and expression, there is a historical progression in this struggle. God's revelation allows God's withdrawal but eventually God will be victorious in the coming kingdom of the saints where God will reign and men will be truly made Gods by participating in the deity of Christ.<sup>40</sup>

The last part of the *Restitutio* contains *Sixty signs of the reign of Antichrist and his revelation already present*. Here Servetus vents all of his hate on the doctrines he combats: "The one who truly believes that the pope is an Antichrist will also believe that the papal Trinity, pedobaptism and other papal sacraments are diabolical doctrines.

O Jesus Christ, Son of God, clement liberator, you who so many times liberated the people from their anguish, liberate us miserable ones from the Babylonian captivity of

the Antichrist and his hypocrisy, tyranny and idolatry. Amen."<sup>41</sup>

Man according to Servetus occupies a special place in the world. His soul is produced by inspiration of the divine element and mixing with the elements of blood. All this is in accordance with Plato's contention that man is made of a mixture of the elements and the substance of divinity, with the views of Trismegistus that man was born of divine substance, the light, and life.<sup>42</sup> Even more, making reference to Pythagoras and to Philo of Alexandria Servetus claimed that man is basically divine: "Philo says in the book *On Agriculture* that the soul of man was made with the idea image of the word serving as an exemplar .... Therefore man was made after the example, form, and figure of Christ, in body and in soul."<sup>43</sup> Man is analogous to Christ in composition. The spirit of man is a hypostasis of the spirit of God, so man is hypostasis of the Word of God, and both communicate with us. Servetus's insistence on our closeness to God, even after the fall, is the most outstanding characteristic of Servetus humanism and differentiating him from other humanists. God still communicates with us and this is done through the natural physiological process.<sup>44</sup> This is an innate gift of grace available to all humans. From such an understanding of a natural physiological process comes Servetus's interest in the pulmonary circulation.

Thus human nature cannot be depraved, condemned, utterly corrupt, and helpless, as the reformers and Catholics claimed. There is no inherent necessity for sin in man, no state of sin and depravity. Due to this constant communication with God through, the innate God's spirit, an inner light, we have knowledge of good and evil, and we act by free will, just as Adam acted in the garden of Eden.

There is no sin before transgression. Moreover we learn to recognize about good at the age of about 20. Thus Servetus claims that an individual is capable of sinning only at this age.<sup>45</sup>

This has implications for the antipedobaptism position and cultural relativism. Sin thus becomes qualified, conditioned by historical, cultural and personal factors. And from this Servetus was able to deduce universal and humanistic moral principle:

Naturalis iustitia est reddere uni cuique, quod suum est: est omnibus prodesse et nemini nocere: est facere, quod conscientia et naturalis ratio apud omnes dictat, ut quemadmodum tibi fieri velles, ita alteri tu facias. In hac iustitia ... gentes iustificari, et salvari, sicut Iudaeos.<sup>46</sup>

Thus all nations and peoples are taught from nature. And they observe from innate divinity justification comparable to the law, with works which are dictated by natural reason. Israelites were capable of righteousness through the law and all other people through the inner natural light. Moreover all people had some sort of recognition about wisdom of God, faith in divinity, and some sort of shadow of Christ. Servetus elevated all mankind to equal status, granted all men dignity and recognized equal endowment in ability to recognize good and evil.<sup>47</sup>

So what was the effect of the first sin on mankind? The result of it was not a state of

depravity and general sin but a loss of direct, special communication with God and possibility of being affected by the evil force, serpentine power. Though we still have a natural contact with divinity through the natural process of inspiration of his substance, spirit of God, and his innate gift of grace, only through the new and secondary Christ's grace we can achieve the kingdom of Christ. Only to Christians is available his celestial regeneration which was not available before.<sup>48</sup>

Christ was viewed by the patristic thinkers as God and man, as the "second Adam" whose purpose was to free man from the effects of the deeds of the first Adam. Servetus deviated from such interpretations along his scheme of progressive and modalistic manifestations of God. *Nemo scit Deum, nisi qui scit modum, quo se manifestare nobis voluit.*<sup>49</sup> God manifests himself to mankind through the word and communicates through the spirit. (Rest. p. 166) and there is no real difference between the two other than a mode of manifestation. (Rest. p. 229) Through the word God created the world (bodies) and through the spirit God vivifies, thus creates its powers. Rest. p.166 They are two hands of God, two agencies through which he governs the world. Rest. p.705 Thus Servetus "Trinity" is called the mystery of the double God's essences since his nature is expressed either via word or via spirit though in Christ his expression is substantial and preformed from eternity. Rest. p.705 His mission was partial.

This represented his progressive revelation and it In the old Testament there were different names for the one being, so in the New testament there were a Word, Christ and a Son. Traditional interpretation merged all three in one, the second person of the Godhead. just like the names of the Father all were understood as "God".

Servetus continues to speak of Christ as resulting from an infusion of divine semen in Mary Rest p. 254 yet possessing a double nature of man and God Rest. 16. Jesus thus was capable of both appearances, but he chose a humble one as an aspect of man. rest. 21, 90. Because of his humanity Christ was the first among men Rest. p. 6. The term Jesus and "messiah" could apply only to a human nature Rest. 5-6. But after his resurrection Christ resume his position as the Word. Rest. p. 195.

His concept of the Christ's celestial nature was developed much further than in any previous work:

Christ's own body is a plenitude in which all is fulfilled, completed, recapitulated, and reconciled, God and man, heaven and earth, Jews and gentiles, circumcision and prepuce, kingdom and priesthood, law and the prophets. Christ's own body is the body of the divinity, and his flesh is divine, the flesh of God, the blood of God. The flesh of Christ is generated from the celestial substance of God.<sup>50</sup>

Servetus became less concerned about the human and earthly aspect of Christ:

The body of Christ, as it was in the sepulchre, alone has the divine substance formed of the celestial elements and of substance of light.

His own spirit which he, dying, commended to God, alone contains the elements of our regeneration which at the same time are the elements of the Word.<sup>51</sup>

As in man the soul is attached to the body, so it is in Christ. But in man there are only elements which are created and generated through the natural process. In Christ there are elements created and uncreated. His own body is generated in Mary from the substance of the holy spirit and it is sanctified by the spirit of God at generation. Thus the substance of the spirit of God is substantially communicated to the flesh.

This shift in emphasis is needed to explain the mechanisms of salvation and individual deification (sanctification) of man. And this is done through the regeneration of the spirit of man which represents a secondary grace of God. Because of the celestial nature of Christ, his spiritual quality passes to man: "As the spirit of Christ has the essential breath of incorruptibility, so when it is communicated to us our own spirit is returned inward to its incorruptibility."<sup>52</sup> Return to human perfection and incorruptibility is a result not of some removal of the limitations produced by the original sin, but by adding an element from Christ's being, a new spirit, making us divine, truly participating in deity of Christ and divine nature.<sup>53</sup> Man thus can achieve a state similar the mystical state achieved by the *alumbrados* in Spain. But Servetus in addition believed that man also be physically transformed into a new man just as Word was converted into flesh, so our flesh can be converted into Word.

The vehicle for this transmission of divinity from God to man is the Holy Spirit as the agency or God's activity of communication.<sup>54</sup> The Holy Spirit is treated in the *Restitution* in the same fashion as in earlier writings with the addition only of the deifying function. The Spirit is considered as a "second hand of God," a mental impulse in man, and is manifested under a variety of forms

Servetus was impatient with both the Catholics and the Reformers and was quite direct, as was the practice of his time, in describing them or their doctrines. The pope was Antichrist, Calvin was a thief and a robber, Rome was Babylon, and the Trinity a three-fold Geryon, three-headed Cerberus, and a triple monster Chimaera. He suggested reconstruction begin with the doctrine of the Trinity. His doctrine of God resembles that of Plato in the neo-Platonic version as the ultimate One. God is incomprehensible, invisible, incorporeal, ineffable, immeasurable and transcendental: "God transcends all things and exceeds all intellect and mind ... He is above anything that can be imagined."<sup>55</sup> God is a dynamic being, and engages in self-elaboration by emanations and self-expression through various intermediaries such as wisdom, reason, and a word analogical to the rays of light.<sup>56</sup> Christ is one of such "emanations," being a created wisdom, reason, word or light. This is done because God is an archetype of ideas, principle of form which gives individuation to all other forms. Servetus follows the Aristotelian concept of nature as composed of matter and form. Since everything is composed of matter, and form is part of God, so everything must



be in a special way a part of God. The divine idea gives the specific and individual existence through the essence, form. God confers his divine essence to the celestial spirits and infuses it into all beings thus sustaining them. This dispensation is done by radiating light from God's substance. The reality can be graded by distance from the One and considered God's expression in all creation as his manifestations. Man is at the center of all creation and is able to rise to enter into a union with the One.<sup>57</sup>

There is a lot of reference in Servetus's writing to the "luminous" verses in the Bible. He invokes light as the means of self-disclosure of God and seizes the biblical idea of God as the Father of light. It appears that Servetus interpreted the Bible in terms of Platonic and neo-Platonic ideas relative to the igneous emanations of particles from the One. The neo-Platonic luminous emanations have metaphysical quality, however, contrary to the biblical verses in which they have only the value of signs, of a metaphor. In Plato's Republic, the sun is described as "the offspring of the Good, which the Good begat like to itself so that the sun might be in the visible world in relation to vision and visible objects what the Good is in the intellectual world of the objects of thought."<sup>58</sup> In Plotinus, light is identified with Logos and form.<sup>59</sup> Light for Hermes Trismegistus is a mediator between God and man: "But why is it that he who has recognized himself enters into the Good .... ? I answered, 'It is because the Father of all consists of Light and Life, and from him Man has sprung.' 'You are right,' said he, 'If then, being made of Life and Light, you learn to know that you are made of them, you will go back into Life and Light.'"<sup>60</sup> The light in Servetus' interpretation was a factor bonding the spiritual with the corporeal, the substantial form from which all other forms derived. It is a visible form of all things. Light is the life of spirits and of men. During the process of regeneration light transforms our spirits and likewise light will transform our bodies in the final resurrection.<sup>61</sup> Also a certain pantheism was ascribed to Servetus: "*Deus es id totum quod vides et id totum quod non vides.*"<sup>62</sup> But he was really an emanationist as were the Catholics: "God fills all things, including hell."<sup>63</sup> His emanationism contained three basic assertions: God confers essence to all other material and spiritual beings; God confers individuality upon all that exists; God sustains all that exists.

There is not a trace of the traditional Trinity, of the God-man, though Christ continues to be an object of devotion. However, Christ in this scheme was a spiritual being created by the Father and to whom He conferred His essence of Word. The Word is the form and it preexisted with the Father. By combination of the Word with matter (flesh) they became the Son, so the Son could not exist before the union. However, as to the form one could speak of the preexistence of the Son. Again in the luminous interpretation Christ is the light of the world: "There is one brightness of the sun and another of the moon, another of fire and still another the splendor of water. All these were disposed in light by Christ, the architect of the world, who is the first principle in whom all things consist, celestial and terrestrial, corporeal and spiritual. He

created the material elements and substantially endowed them with light forms, bringing forth light from his treasurer."<sup>64</sup> Christ as a spiritual body is not confined to any particular place in heaven but is above all heavens and is within us as in a new heaven which is within us. God breathes by the spirit of Christ, He speaks through his voice and He illuminates by the light of Christ. The body of Christ is communicable in the Lord's Supper thus it can be eaten.<sup>65</sup>

Servetus's thought displays several affinities with the Anabaptist movement. While Erasmus and the humanists talked about restoring original Christianity, they concentrated their efforts only on the analysis of the written texts. Anabaptists, however, attempted to reconstitute the early Christian communities and to live according to the reconstituted ancient patterns. With Anabaptists, Servetus shared the concept of man which was linked to the doctrine of justification. The doctrine of justification was the basis for the Reformation and central in the theologies of Luther and Calvin. Man in the doctrine of Servetus and the Anabaptists was able to live fulfilling the natural law, and faith alone was not sufficient for salvation. He strongly rejected any notion of our preordination, predestination or election, though he strongly believed in the saving role of our belief and knowledge of Jesus Christ as the true Son of God. However, this gnosis was not for him sufficient for salvation. Faith had to be supported by our willingness to do good works beyond faith and love. The source for them lies in the divine spirit, in the light of Christ penetrating us. The works have justifying effect, by augmenting the grace of God.<sup>66</sup> Together with the Renaissance humanists Servetus believed that man was free and as such was able to ascend to God and unite with Him. But this union with the divine was possible through Christ. "The divine has descended to the human in order that the human might ascend to the divine."<sup>67</sup> This was the essence of his mystical concept of man. Christ as a celestial spirit was communicating his spirit to men, was renewing men day by day. Thus Christ's spirit was combined with the element of our nature producing what Servetus called an inward man. In this way man is truly participating in the divine nature. He writes: "Our inward man is born in baptism having the incorruptible armament of the spirit."<sup>68</sup>

Thus we approach now the question of baptism. The rejection of the baptism of infants as a rite which did not have any biblical justification was one of the main themes of Anabaptists. Servetus became familiar with Anabaptist ideas in Strassburg in 1531 when he published his *De Trinitatis*. Anabaptism appeared as an organized movement in 1520 headed by Pastor Thomas M nzer (1489-1525) in Zwickau, Germany. Doctrinally Anabaptism rejected the validity of infant baptism, establishing it instead at the age of adolescence. But it added a series of politico-economical postulates that ran against the established feudal order, thus inspiring the peasant revolution in Germany in 1525. Thomas M nzer was beheaded after being defeated by the princes of Saxony, Hesse, and Brunswick in the battle of Frankenhausen.

Charles V issued an order in 1529 to exterminate the Anabaptists. They fled the territories under the jurisdiction of Charles V, came to Münster in Westphalia, and established there a theocratic government in 1532 under David Joris, an exile from Holland, and John of Leyden. They were defeated by the German princes in 1535 when two thirds of the population perished at the stake. The Protestant reformers, as well as the Catholic church, never touched the politico-economic basis of the feudal system and therefore enjoyed the support of the princes.

Servetus's Anabaptist doctrine had nothing to do with the temporal social order. He accepted Anabaptism only in its baptismal aspect. He was obviously familiar with the Catholic practice of forced or involuntary baptism in Spain where it was the sign of a conversion to Catholicism. Pogroms in Spain of Muslims and Jews were often done with the cry: "*Que se bautizasen, si no morirán.*" Servetus advised baptism when the young people reached the age of reason, and his doctrine was justified by the scripture. He likewise did not accept the condemnation of a child who died without baptism since our sins commence when knowledge starts. Nevertheless, his Anabaptist ideas still were the reason for his persecution and martyrdom. For Servetus, baptism was the moment when the inward, spiritual man was generated. This was the moment when man acquires the eternal experience by being revived like Christ was by his resurrection. Man then sheds Satan's chains and acquires freedom, glory, and life in Christ.<sup>69</sup> Children are denied this baptism since they are incapable of regeneration, of recognition of good and evil or guilt and sin. Thus children should not be baptized, but only dedicated with a prayer. Their formal admission to the church he called a delusion. Only about the age of 20 is man capable of crystallizing his differentiation of good and evil, but at that time he also becomes numbed by the devil and it takes a long time before his full personality develops. So Servetus advised the postponement of baptism to the age of 30 following the example of Jesus.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, baptism should be preceded by faith and repentance. Servetus himself was rebaptized at the age of 30 in Charlieu or in Vienne.<sup>71</sup>

I call infant baptism a detestable abomination, a quenching of the Holy Spirit, a laying waste of the Church of God, a confounding of the whole Christian profession, an annulling of the renewal made by Christ, and a trampling under foot of his whole kingdom.<sup>72</sup>

The Catholic church and after it the Protestant churches introduced infant baptism as a means to safeguard genetically the perpetuation of the chosen people, members of the church by analogy to the ancient Hebrew concept. Servetus rejected this concept on the ground that the Christian community was a spiritual fellowship with Christ, a new celestial Jerusalem, the Kingdom of Christ within us, humans, and not a physical community of genetically related people.<sup>73</sup> The spiritualization of the inward man and of the church represented, in a way typical for Servetus's thinking, a mystical interpretation of Christianity. He admitted that baptism, and the Lord's Supper were

administered correctly only by the third community, i.e., the radical Reformation, and rejected the Catholic communion as well as the Calvinist concept of the manducation of Christ's body internal and spiritual.<sup>74</sup>

An effort was made at his trial in Geneva to prove that Servetus was an Anabaptist. But he did not adopt the Anabaptist social ideas and rejected all their revolutionary consequences. He approved of submission to the laws of society though he recognized that the laws may be unjust: "From injustice is born a law that is not a sin though it is born out of a sin .... As long as the world lasts, whether we want it or not, we are forced to submit to the order of the world."<sup>75</sup> He approved of one's acting as judge, of bearing the sword to preserve order, though he objected to killing except as a last resort in the case of certain crimes. He approved of giving witness under oath, but objected to taking vows for the future.<sup>76</sup> His thought represented a lifelong and independent reflection on religious matters. His influence might have been greater if he were not suppressed. Today, however, when new discoveries and developed biblical scholarship prove him right in his approach, we may fully appreciate his intellectual integrity in the face of adversity, his moral courage to sacrifice his life for what he considered right, his piety and deep religious devotion to God.

### **Servetus: Contributor to Medical Science**

In addition to being a giant of religious thought, Servetus must be recognized as an outstanding scholar in the natural sciences. Though he described in detail in his last work the pulmonary circulatory system,<sup>77</sup> he also must be credited with the discovery of how blood circulates. Moreover, he described new blood vessels, the capillary vessels in the lungs and in the brain which join the veins with the arteries and perform special functions. The insertion of a new anatomical discovery into a theological text is a fact without precedence in the history of medicine. This text was ignored or overlooked by anatomists for about a century and half. Only in 1694 did William Wotton (1666-1727) reveal that the discovery of the lesser circulation belonged to Servetus.<sup>78</sup> Servetus did not describe in detail the large circulation because it was not necessary for his deductions about the soul and because it was simpler and easier than the pulmonary circulation. Moreover, the initial premises leading to the description of pulmonary and general circulation were already developed in his *Dialogorum de Trinitate*. Servetus believed that the soul of man is infused when he is being born. The first inspiration is this act, and the fetus lives with the soul of its mother. The vivifying spirit (vital spirit) comes from the mother through her arteries. The fetus does not have its own circulation. According to Servetus the scripture and Orphic beliefs agree that the soul is transferred by the wind (in Greek *anemos*) that enters through respiration. Thus at the moment of birth the soul is infused into man with the first breath, then the communications between blood vessels and cavities in the heart open and the "circulation of blood begins that brings life."

Servetus was fully qualified to make this discovery. As was already mentioned, he practiced dissections in Paris where his professor, Jean Guinther de Andernach, praised him in the preface to his work *Institutiones anatomicae*. More evidence of the dissections performed by Servetus comes from the dean of the Medical Faculty in Paris, Tagault, who in the acts of the Faculty describes his work. For Servetus, theology was of primary importance. It was able to explain all natural phenomena, and all the rest was secondary and subordinate. That is probably the reason he did not publish his discovery in his treatise on syrups in 1537. Blood circulation in the theological treatise was only to illustrate a theological point. He thought that when talking about the Holy Spirit, the matter might be explained more clearly by an illustration from anatomy. To understand the divine spirit one has to understand how its complement -- the human spirit (or the soul) -- is produced in the human body by mixing the celestial spirit of God with the spiritualized matter of blood.

According to the scripture, God breathed into Adam's nostrils his divine spirit together with the air (Gen. II:6). The Hebrew word for spirit and breath (or air) is the same. So our soul is created and is like a kind of lantern of God, a spark of the spirit of God, a reflection of His wisdom. "By the breath of God through the mouth and the ears, within the heart and brain of Adam and his children, the celestial aura of the spirit, the spark of the idea, was in essence conjoined with the matter of spiritualized blood and the soul was made." This spirit of divinity is in us even after Adam's sin and it maintains our life, keeps us moving. This truth was, according to Servetus, discovered by Orpheus and Aristotle: they believed in a divine spirit carried by the winds and entering through inspiration. The divine spirit, as taught by Ezekiel, contains some elemental substance which is contained in the blood.

Servetus wanted to find a physiological basis for the ancient concept of the principle of life still maintained by theistic religions in the form of the soul (spirit) as consubstantial with God and his emanation. There were differences in the view on the origin of the principle of life. Aristotle maintained that it was the heart where the heat was generated and according to Galen it was the liver which was the source of the vital spirit circulating then in the blood stream. Thus Servetus reasons that there is a "triple spirit" in humans from the substance of three higher elements: natural, vital, and animal. But it is one "spirit". The vital spirit is that which is communicated to the veins through anastomoses with the arteries. Once in the veins it becomes the natural spirit. The natural spirit is thus the first with its seat in the liver and in the veins. The vital spirit is the second with the location in the heart and in the arteries. The third spirit is the animal spirit, which is like a ray of light, with its seat in the brain and in the nerves of the body. If so, how are all these three elements connected for the function of the living body?

The divine spirit of Adam was drawn into the nostrils, mouth and lungs, but its inspiration extended to the heart, which is the first living thing and the source of heat.

It takes from the blood of the liver a "liquid of life" which it vivifies in a special elaboration. Thus Servetus's reasoning is in accordance with the Hebrew concept of the soul (*nephesh*, vivifying factor) residing in the blood, in the moving part of the body (Gen. IX:3; Levit. XVII:11; Deut. XII:23). Moreover, this idea was more or less in agreement with what Galen taught about the generation of the so-called *pneuma psychicon* (*spiritus vitalis*). The divine spirit in the blood itself is the blood or blood spirit. The divine spirit is not in the walls of the heart or in the parenchyme of the liver but in the blood as it is taught by the Scripture. The vital spirit is generated from the subtle blood component and is nourished by the inspired air. The process is aided greatly by the lungs. This spirit is produced by the force of heat, is of light red color, has fiery power, is a species of clear vapor from very pure blood and containing in itself the substance of air, fire and water. Servetus explains that this spirit is produced by mixing in the lungs of inspired air with elaborated, subtle blood which the right ventricle of the heart communicates to the left.

The idea of a vital spirit was derived from the concept of God who as the creator was the very animating force in the universe suffusing all with his spirit. Being convinced of the ultimate unity between all philosophies, science and religion, Servetus studied blood as the organ in motion (*sanguis est peregrinus* as Champier stated) and connecting all parts of the body thus brilliantly grasping the Hebrew meaning of the soul. Moreover he believed in a special communication of man with God -- through the divine part of our beings -- the soul.

It was known that blood somehow passes from the right ventricle to the left. At the time of Servetus, Galen's view was accepted as the explanation of that movement. Galen, who taught in the second century, claimed that the blood passes through the minuscule orifices in the middle partition, which are open in the living body, but are not observed in the dead body.<sup>79</sup> Moreover the purpose of the blood running to the lungs was to nourish the organ. Galen taught that these valves in the heart partition are not open in the embryo, they open only at the moment of birth; thus the lungs were nourished in the embryo from another side.

Servetus corrected Galen by direct observation of the lack of orifices in the heart partition. He also noticed that the size of the pulmonary artery was too large for nutritive purposes. Thus the blood must be sent there for a different purpose. Moreover, the lungs send the air (the divine or airy spirit) mixed with blood to the left ventricle giving it the light red color. The mixing takes place in the lungs and there is not enough room in the left ventricle of the heart for such mixing. He challenged the old view: "This communication, however, does not take place through the middle partition of the heart, as is commonly believed, but by a grand device the subtle blood is driven from the right ventricle of the heart by a long course through the lungs and from the pulmonary artery (arterial vein) is diffused into the pulmonary vein (venous artery)."

In the pulmonary vein the subtle blood is mixed with the inspired air and through expiration is purified of the dark vapors (*a fulgine*). Finally the mixture is attracted by diastole to the left ventricle of the heart where it becomes the vital spirit. Thus Servetus states, "The heart partition, since it is lacking in vessels and mechanism, is not permeable to the blood and suitable for elaboration though something may possibly sweat through." The blood passes from the right ventricle to the left through a communication joining the "arterial vein" with the "venous artery" through a system of vessels via the lungs. Servetus postulated next that the vital spirit is transfused from the left ventricle to the arteries of the whole body seeking higher regions where it is elaborated further, especially in the retiform plexus at the base of the brain, into the animal spirit, due to the action of the fiery force of the mind which is located in the capillary arteries of the choroid plexuses. The plexuses penetrate the brain, line the inner ventricles of the brain and enfold the nerves and vivify the faculties of sensation and of motion. These vessels are of a new kind, though they are called arteries, they really are terminations of arteries extending to the origins of nerves transfusing the animal spirit into them. This animal spirit is then poured like a ray into the sense organs. The light images of things causing sensation return by the same route. The same new kind of capillary vessels are transfusing from the veins into the arteries in the lungs. Though Servetus described in detail the small circulation, he was only one step from declaring explicitly the existence of general blood circulation. This large circulation was, however, clearly implicated in his description. Thus according to some, he should be recognized as the first discoverer of the general blood circulation.<sup>80</sup>

For Servetus the brain as a cold mass, devoid of sensation, is not the seat of the rational soul. It serves rather as a support for the capillary vessels that hold the animal spirit to be communicated to the nerves. The brain is cold so it cools the fiery heat contained in these vessels. Also the empty cavities of the brain, which contain the spirit, serve a double function. First they are receptors for the purging from the brain of impurities which are released to the palate and the nostrils. When they are filled with the pituita or when excessive heat accumulates from the vessels, various diseases of the mind result. Second, these ventricles receive through the ethmoid bones a certain portion of the inspired air which refreshes and ventilates the animal spirit, mind and soul contained within the vessels. Thus our soul is supported and nourished spiritually by the "airy spirit" through inspiration and expiration and, at the same time, is nourished corporeally from the spiritualized matter of blood. Eventually Servetus identified the vital force with the spirit of Christ and the respiration as an aspect of a divine process.<sup>81</sup>

The description offered by Servetus was astonishing for two reasons: first, it offered a detailed and scientific exposition of a biological phenomenon; second, it joined two sources, judged irrefutable at the time, the Bible and Galen. Servetus declared that the discovery was new, not known to Galen. At the same time he sought the support of

the Bible stating that for a full understanding of the soul and the spirit, one had to understand these physiological phenomena. Since the theological meaning was of the utmost importance to him, Servetus never gave much importance to his physiological discovery, and never mentioned it before the Inquisition in Vienne or before the tribunal in Geneva.

The general circulatory system was not discovered until seventy-five years later by William Harvey (1578-1657) who described it in his *Exercitationes anatomicae de motu cordis et sanguinis in animalibus*, 1628. The discovery made by Servetus was not recognized since his work was suppressed. William Wotton learned about Servetus's discovery from Dr. Charles Bernard: "Mr. Charles Bernard, a very learned and eminent chirurgion of London, who did me the favor to communicate this passage to me, (set down at length in the margin) which was transcribed out of Servetus, could inform me no further, only that he had it from a learned friend of his, who had himself copied it from Servetus." This friend of Dr. Bernard must have seen one of the two existing copies of the *Restitutio* in England. Wotton first describes in his publication *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning* the circulation of the blood as it was presented by Harvey and then goes to a significant length to prove that the ancients did not know that blood circulates. This is how he summarizes the history of the discovery of the circulation of the blood:

One may also observe how gradually this discovery, as all truths of humane disquisition, was explained to the world. Hippocrates first talked of the usual motion of the blood. Plato said, that the heart was the original of the veins, and of the blood, that was carried about every member of the body. Aristotle also somewhere speaks of a recurrent motion of the blood: still all this was only opinion and belief: it was rational, and became men of their genius's; but, not having as yet been made evident by experiments, it might as easily be denied as affirmed. Servetus first saw that the blood passes through the lungs; Columbus went further and shewed the uses of the valves or trap-doors of the heart, which let the blood in and out of their respective vessels, but not the self same road: thus the way was just open when Dr. Harvey came, who built upon the first foundations; to make his work yet the easier, the valves of the veins which were discovered by F. Paul the Venetian, had not long been explained by *Fabricius ab Aqua pendente*, whence the circulation was yet more clearly demonstrated.

To complete the process of discovery, Leeuwenhoek found how the "veins received that blood which the arteries discharged," and "that arteries and veins are really continued syphons variously wound about each other towards their extremities in numberless mazes, over all the body."

This passage shows how Wotton described the role of Servetus in the discovery of the circulation of the blood:



Since the ancients have no right to so noble a discovery, it may be worth while to enquire, to whom of the moderns the glory of it is due; for this is also exceedingly contested. The first step that was made towards it, was, the finding that the whole mass of the blood passes through the lungs, by the pulmonary artery and vein. The first that I could ever find, who had a distinct idea of this matter, was Michael Servetus, a Spanish physician, who was burnt for Arianism, at Geneva, near 140 years ago. Well had it been for the Church of Christ, if he had wholly confined himself to his own profession. His sagacity in this particular, before so much in the dark, gives us great reason to believe, that the world might have had just cause to have blessed his memory. In a book of his entitled *Christianismi restituito*, printed in the year MDLIII he clearly asserts that the blood passes through the lungs, from the left to the right ventricles of the heart; and not through the partition which divides the two ventricles, as was at that time commonly believed. How he introduces it, or in which of the six discourses, into which Servetus divides his book, it is to be found, I know not having never seen the book my self.

Before that the credit for the discovery of the pulmonary circulatory system went to Matteo Realdo Colombo de Cremona, successor of the aforementioned Andreas Vesalius (1514-1564) in Padua as professor of anatomy, who included Servetus's description in his publication *De re anatomica* (Venetiis, 1559), to Juan Valverde de Hamusco, disciple of Colombo, who described it in his work, published in Spanish, *Historia de la composición del cuerpo humano* (Roma, 1556), and to Andres Cesalpino, who published *Questionum peripateticarum* (Venice, 1571) and *Questiones medicorum* (Venice, 1593). It was suggested that Servetus' idea on pulmonary circulation could be distributed to Italy by Giorgio Biandrata, who was a physician himself in addition to being a Unitarian. But in reality, as usually happens in scientific investigations, the discovery was made by several independent investigators. However, today the first description of pulmonary circulation is attributed to the Arabian anatomist Ibn An-Nafis of Damascus (b. ca 1210-d.ca 1280) and recorded in manuscripts written in 1245. Servetus is the second. It was Mahyi ad-Din at Tatawi who published in 1924 the manuscript version of the Ibn An-Nafis description. Nafis was a physician in Cairo, recognized as a second Avicenna. He also wrote on philosophy and in defense of Islam. In 1924 Tatawi translated the chapters from the Ibn An-Nafis manuscript relating to the description of the small circulation. The first Arabic manuscripts with the description of pulmonary circulation were brought to Europe, to Belluno, the native town of the family Alpago by Andres Alpago (ca 1450 - 1521), an Italian physician who practiced medicine for the Italian consul in Damascus. With his nephew, Paulo Alpago, he returned to their native town Belluno in 1520 and became a professor of oriental languages in Padua. The title of the manuscript was

*Commentaries on the anatomy of the Canon. (Saarah Tashrih Al-Qanun).* There were several editions of some parts of his manuscripts (Latin edition by Andres Alpago, published by his nephew Paulo in 1527 and again in 1544, and in 1547), but none contained the description of pulmonary circulation. There are four manuscripts of Nafis preserved today: in Damascus, in Berlin, in Paris, and in the Bodleian library in Oxford. The last manuscript, however, does not contain the description. Until 1924 these manuscripts were ignored until Tatawi read a German translation of the Arabic manuscript he discovered at the inaugural session of the University of Freiburg.<sup>82</sup> This was published by the University with the text of the Arabic manuscript. Again in 1935 M. Meyerhof published two works on the subject one of which included the Arabic text of the manuscript. Nafis gives first a brief summary of the views of Avicenna and then exposes his views:

Avicenna says: "there are in the heart three ventricles." Comment: This is not correct. The heart contains only two ventricles; the right one that is full of blood, and the left one that is full of the spirit. There is no communication between the two ventricles, since otherwise the blood would penetrate to the side of the spirit depriving it of its property. The anatomy has contradicted Avicenna's assertion. The partition interventricular is so dense that it does not permit passage either of the blood, or of the spirit. It is erroneous to affirm that it is always agitated. It was believed that the blood that is found in the left ventricle comes from the right ventricle due to this agitation. This is false since the passage of blood to the left ventricle is done from the lung, after it had been rewarmed and displaced from the right ventricle.<sup>83</sup>

As to the regeneration of the spirit, he maintains that it is done by mixing in the left ventricle the blood highly purified with the aerial substance resulting in the evolution of the spirit. It is essential that animals having lungs have another cavity, the right ventricle, in which the blood could be purified before mixing with the air. The blood made subtle in this cavity must pass to the left ventricle to generate the animal spirit.

But there is no communication, as some thought that it existed between these two cavities, since the partition interventricular is hermetic without any apparent fenestration. Neither are there any invisible pores facilitating the passage of blood as maintained by Galen, since there is no evidence for these pores and the partition is very thick. For this reason, the blood having become subtle, passes through the way of arterial vein (pulmonary artery) to the lungs for circulation and mixing with air in the pulmonary parenchyme. The blood aerated is purified and passes through the venous artery (pulmonary vein) to reach the left cavity of the heart, after having been mixed with air and converted into a proper form for the evolution of the animal spirit. For nutrition, the lungs utilize the residue of the blood

less purified. For that reason the arterial vein is strongly impermeable, with two layers, allowing only the highly subtle substance to pass through them. In contrast, the venous artery is so thin, with only one layer in the wall, to facilitate the absorption of any filtrate in the vein.<sup>84</sup>

### **Servetus's Religious Convictions**

It is clear from the writings of Servetus that he was a pious and devout man, wholly devoted to the Bible. Even his description of pulmonary circulation contained many quotes from the Bible to justify his discovery. His texts are full of prayers to Christ. He does not pray to the Holy Spirit since it has no precedent in the Bible. His theology and writings were not blasphemous as charged by Calvin and the Catholic church. Servetus simply remained faithful to the spirit and word of the Bible rejecting all later speculations read into the original text. He wrote in his introduction to the *Christianismi restitutio*:

Oh Jesus Christ, Son of God who have come from the heaven ... reveal yourself to your servant, so that a manifestation so great could appear with all evidence. To my plea concede your spirit and effective word. Direct my reflection and my pen so that it could narrate the glory of your divinity and express a true belief in you. This cause is yours and it should show the glory that you have received from your Father and that of your spirit. By divine grace this was revealed to me when I tried to fathom your truth. At another time I tried to treat this matter; today I am obliged to return to it since the time is fulfilled as I am going to show to all pious persons, supported by the plain security of the events and the manifest signs of the times .... The cause which is treated here is of concern to all Christians and it is the task of us all to defend it. It only depends on you, dear reader, that you show benevolence with Christ until the end and that you examine the whole of the problem of these discourses without disguise.

His whole life was devoted to Christ. He believed that Christ (or the Logos) became God when he became a man and lacked this divine quality before. His opponents could not produce arguments from the Bible or otherwise against Servetus so they resorted to invectives calling him "Satanas", "blasphemer", or "impious". Servetus explains that his goal is easy for its clarity and sure for its demonstration:

The end of all this is to know God substantially manifested and the divine nature truly communicated: manifested by the Word, communicated by the Spirit, and both expressed in one substance of the Christ. And it is also that only in him we clearly recognize, in a man as he is, total deity of the Word and the Spirit ... He manifested himself anteriorly as a Word, and now in the flesh he communicated himself to us through the Spirit.

Servetus was justly accused of being influenced by Greek neo-Platonic doctrines so

popular during the Renaissance since the foundation of a Platonic Academy in Florence in 1462 by Cosmo de Medicis. Servetus, adhered strictly to the word of the scripture and to the Hebrew traditions. Often, however, he interpreted it in the neo-Platonic tradition.

Another important principle of his doctrine was the rejection of most sacraments. He accepted only two of them - the sacrament of baptism (but not infant baptism) and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Ever since the Council of Trent (1546-1563) the Catholic church was excommunicating everybody who would accept less than seven sacraments. As was already noted, Servetus himself was baptized twice: once in his childhood through his Catholic parents; the second time in Lyon at the age of 30 following the example of the baptism of Jesus at the same age. Certainly, religious people can consider his martyrdom as his third baptism by blood. Servetus knew perfectly well that according to the Bible baptism by blood would serve as justification -- inner sanctification of man by grace -- since the Gospel offers salvation to all who for Christ's sake would lose their temporal life.

Servetus often showed such a strong conviction in his opinions that he sounded arrogant and inflexible. But this certainty was supported by the scripture and was based on a conviction that it was his duty, a task received by God's dispensation, like that of a prophet, to evangelize with great humility and spread the genuine meaning of the scripture even at the price of his own life. Connected with this was the common opinion of the epoch including that of Servetus of the closeness of the end of the world and the return of Jesus Christ and of the kingdom of 1000 years. The German reformers considered themselves called to assume the role of the prophets.

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 "Hinc dicitur anima esse in sanguine, et anima ipsa esse sanguis, sive sanguineus spiritus. Non dicitur anima principaliter esse in parietibus cordis, aut in corpore ipso cerebri, aut hepatis, sed in sanguine, ut docet ipse Deus Genes. 9. Levit. 17. et Deut. 12. Ad quam rem est prius intelligenda substantialis generatio ipsius vitalis spiritus, qui ex aëre inspirato, et subtilissimo sanguine componitur, et nutritur. Vitalis spiritus in sinistro cordis ventriculo suam originem habet, juvantibus maxime pulmonibus ad ipsius generationem. Est spiritus tenuis, caloris vi elaboratus, flavo colore, ignea potentia, ut sit quasi ex puriori sanguine lucidus vapor, substantiam in se continens aquae, aëris, et ignis. Generatur ex facta in pulmonibus mixtione inspirati aëris cum elaborato subtili sanguine, quem dexter ventriculus cordis sinistro communicat. Fit autem communicatio haec non per parietem cordis medium, ut vulgo creditur, sed magno artificio a dextro cordis ventriculo, longo per pulmones ductu, agitur sanguis subtilis: et a vena arteriosa, in arteriam venosam transfunditur. Deinde in ipsa arteria venosa inspirato aëri miscetur, expiratione a fulgine repurgatur. Atque ita tandem a sinistro cordis ventriculo totum mixtum per diastolem attrahitur, apta supellex, ut siat spiritus vitalis."  
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## CHAPTER 4

### Exposure and the Trial at Vienne

#### **Religious Persecution in Southern France and Calvin's Conspiracy**

The environment of Vienne in which Servetus lived was especially hostile to any heterodoxy. The region remained since 1536 under the jurisdiction of the governor of the Lyonese province, Cardinal François de Tournon, a diplomat, politician and an especially vigorous persecutor of "heretics." He was nominated Lieutenant General of the king for all the provinces in the southeast responsible for religion, justice, finance and war. He set up in 1535 an Inquisition by the *Parlement* of Paris that was nicknamed because of its bloody activity the "*chambre ardente*,"<sup>1</sup> to protect France from the influence of Luther and Calvin. During the reign of Henri II, heretics were burned in France by the thousands. Cardinal de Tournon was responsible for the murder of thousands of Valdensians and Albigensians during the many years of his rule.<sup>2</sup>

The *Parlement* of Aix issued on November 28, 1540, an edict ordering handing over the inhabitants of the villages in southern France, who were considered to be heretics, to the "secular arm" and directed that the villages should be razed to the ground.<sup>3</sup> For several years the edict was not executed, but finally the letters from the king were obtained by Cardinal de Tournon on February 1, 1545, ordering its enforcement; the villagers were killed and their dwellings razed to the ground. In the process 2000 men, women, and children, were murdered; 20 villages were razed to the ground; and 800 houses were burned.

In 1553 at age 64, instead of becoming more tolerant, the Cardinal de Tournon became more intolerant and cruel judging from the trial of five innocent students and later Servetus. The role of Cardinal de Tournon in the trial of the five students became known only in 1892 from a study by N. Weiss, a nineteenth century historian.<sup>4</sup> The five students who became Protestants at Berne, returned to Lyon in 1552. The next day, May 1, 1552, they were arrested. Thirteen days later they were tried and condemned by the religious authorities and handed over to the secular authorities for execution. They appealed to the *Parlement* of Paris and remained in prison for more than a year. Many appeals for the attenuation of the punishment were made, especially from Switzerland. An especially ugly role was played by the cardinal, who, pretending to show benevolence and indulgence, impeded the proceedings, appealing to the king and *Parlement* to treat the five young students as ordinary criminals. On February 18, 1553, they were burned alive at the stake in Lyon.

Matthieu Ory was another bloody persecutor, and as president of the Ecclesiastical Court of the Holy Apostolic See, was called from Rome by Cardinal de Tournon and in 1536 nominated Inquisitor General for France and all of Gaul to combat the progress

of "heresies," especially in the diocese of Lyon which was threatened by its proximity to Geneva. In a treatise dedicated to his superior, the Very Reverend Cardinal de Tournon, he made a defense of his sanguinary *métier*. He pointed out that Acts 19:19 of the New Testament commended the burning of occult books: "If then dead books may be committed to the flames, how much more live books, that is to say men? The Scripture says that a witch should not be allowed to live and heretics are spiritual witches. The law of nature commands that a corrupted member be amputated, the tares, of course, were not to be rooted out in Christ's day when the rulers were not yet Christians. The case is altered now."<sup>5</sup>

Servetus in Vienne was aware that Calvin knew his identity, but he did not expect to be betrayed by the Protestants in Geneva. Calvin, upon learning about the book *Christianismi restitutio*, designed an intricate scheme to condemn Servetus. He already had enough material from the manuscript he received in 1546, but now he had it in printed form. His long conspiracy against Servetus and desire to get rid of him reached the culminating point. Already in 1550 he denounced Servetus' doctrine in his work *De Scandalis*,<sup>6</sup> revealing Servetus' name as Villanovanus, his nationality and profession except for the place where Servetus worked. It was only because of some oversight on the part of the Inquisition that Servetus was not investigated earlier.

Evidently disappointed that no action was taken against Servetus by the Inquisition in Vienne, Calvin decided to initiate it himself. However, because of his reputation and standing in Geneva, Calvin could not act on his own, so prevailed upon his intimate, Guillaume de Trie, a merchant in Geneva and former sheriff of Lyon to do it for him. De Trie a fanatical and bigoted Protestant himself, fled to Geneva from the Catholic persecution in 1549. On February 26, 1553, de Trie sent a letter to his cousin Antoine Arneys, a devout and zealous Catholic, accompanied by the first eight pages of Servetus' book, torn from Calvin's exemplar (nobody else could have had a copy of the book) complaining about the "heresies" allowed in Lyon. The letter was dictated by Calvin charging Servetus specifically:

My dear cousin, I express my sincere thanks for your beautiful admonishments which you made trying to brief me on the situation here. I do not doubt that they came from your feelings of deep friendship. Though I am not as versed in letters as you are I would like to clarify the points and articles which you put forward. God gave me enough knowledge that I could answer you this: I am not so ignorant not to know that Jesus Christ is the head of the Church from whom she cannot be separated for her life and prosperity, and that she should be based only on the God's truth contained in the sacred Scripture. Therefore I shall consider all your arguments about the Church a fantasy if they do not have Jesus Christ as the whole authority and the word of God as their foundation and substance. Without this all your statements amount to

nothing. I draw your attention to the liberty which I use in our correspondence and it is not for the purpose of maintaining my cause, but also to give you the occasion to rethink your own. But to make it short I wonder how can you reproach me, among other things, that we do not have here either ecclesiastic discipline or order and those who teach us have introduced a license to bring confusion to everything. I see, however, (thank God) that the vices are corrected better here than by your regulations. And as far as doctrine and religion are concerned, though we have more freedom here than you do, nevertheless we would not suffer that the name of God be blasphemed and that the wrong doctrines and opinions be spread without repression.

And in order not to express empty words he offers an example:

And I can give you an example that attests to your great confusion, as it should be called. That is because you tolerate among you a heretic there who deserves to be burned wheresoever he may be. When I talk about a heretic I understand one man who will be condemned by the Papists as well as by us or who at least should be. For though we differ in many things, we have this in common that in one essence of God there are three persons and that the Father begat his Son, who is his eternal wisdom before all time, and that he has had his eternal power which is his Holy Spirit. So then when a man says that the Trinity, which we hold, is a Cerberus and an infernal monster and when he disgorges all the villainies possible to think of against all this that the Scripture teaches us about the eternal generation of the Son of God, and that the Holy Spirit is the power of the Father and of the Son, and when he mocks loudly all that the ancient doctors have said, I ask in what place and in what esteem would you hold him? .... You will admit that what I have told you is not only an error, but such a detestable heresy that has for its goal to abolish the Christianity. I have to speak frankly. There is no shame in putting to death such men who say that one should invoke only one God in the name of Jesus Christ, that there is no other satisfaction than that which is made by the death and passion of Jesus Christ, that there is no other purgatory than his blood, that there is no other service agreeable to God than that which he commands and approves in his word, that all pictures and images made by man are the idols that profane his majesty, that one should observe the use of the sacraments as it was introduced by Jesus Christ. Thus one should not be content simply to put to death such men, but they should be most cruelly burned. And precisely, the one who names Jesus Christ an idol, who destroys every foundation of the faith, who puts together all the fantasies of all ancient heretics, who even condemns the infant baptism calling it a

diabolic invention, is popular among you and is supported as if he did not err in anything. Please show me where is your zeal you are so proud of and where is the enforcement of law by your splendid hierarchy you so glorify? The man of whom I speak has been condemned by all the churches you reprove, yet you tolerate him among you to the point that he could print his books full of blasphemies that I need say no more. This man is a Portuguese Spaniard, named Michael Servetus by his real name but who is at present using a name of Villeneuve and who practices medicine. He has lived during a certain time in Lyons, and now is at Vienne, where the book about which I talk has been printed in the printing office of a certain Balthazar Arnoullet. And in order that you would not think that I speak without foundation I am sending you the first leaf for your information. You, Catholics, hold that the books which contain other teachings than those which are derived from the pure simplicity of the sacred Scripture, poison the world; and if they come from other places you do not support them -- nevertheless you brew among you a poison whose goal is to annihilate the sacred Scripture and all that you hold for Christianity. I almost got carried away citing you this example, since my letter is four times longer than I intended, but the gravity of the case makes me disregard the length and for that reason also I will not discuss other matters. Also it does not seem to me necessary that I respond to every article. Only, I would ask you to look deep into your conscience and judge for yourselves, so that when the time comes to stand before the great judge, you would not be condemned. For to say it in one word, we do not have any other quarrel than to demand that God be obeyed. Thus, to end my letter, I pray that God give you ears to listen and heart to obey. In the meantime may God protect you. Recommending myself heartily to your good grace and to your brother, my cousin.<sup>7</sup>

Historians debate as to who wrote the letter.<sup>8</sup> But it is clear that the letter could have been written or dictated by Calvin. With it were included the first four leaves of the *Christianismi restitutio* which could come only from Calvin. Moreover, identification of the author was no problem for Calvin. In addition there is a dialogue in *Christianismi restitutio* on p. 199 in which one of the interlocutors addresses the other, "Here you are Servetus, just the person I am looking for." The letter itself confirms that de Trie was not versed in the theological matters discussed, yet it shows knowledge of the theological themes argued against Servetus and the use of words used by Servetus. e.g., "Cerberus." De Trie could acquire information about Servetus from Calvin, and they certainly discussed theological matters and Servetus. But it is very unlikely that de Trie had a copy of *Christianismi restitutio* (it was not on sale in Geneva), so he could acquire it only from Calvin. Thus everything indicates that the

letter was a scheme designed by Calvin to alert the Catholic church authorities about Servetus. If Calvin did not dictate this letter, he certainly knew about it being written and supplied the pages of Servetus's book. One can attempt to excuse the letter by the emotional status of Calvinists in Geneva watching helplessly as their correlative were being burned in Lyon. Calvin's anger could be directed at a target under his reach, one equally objectionable to the Catholics and Protestants. Arneys, as it was expected, communicated the letter from his cousin, together with the pages of Servetus's work, to the Inquisitor of Lyon, the Dominican friar, Matthieu Ory.

### **Proceedings and the Trial**

Upon receiving the letter and materials, the inquisitor communicated all this to the vicar general of the cardinal of Lyon, Benoit Buatier, and both decided to contact Cardinal de Tournon who was at the Châteaux de Rossillon near Vienne. On March 12, Ory wrote a letter to a subordinate of the cardinal, sieur de Villars, asking him to act secretly:

I want to inform you in a high secret about certain books that are being printed at Vienne and which contain execrable blasphemies against the divinity of Jesus Christ and the Holy Trinity whose author and printer are in the region. The Reverend Vicar and I have seen the book and we have agreed that one of us or we both should go and talk to the Monseigneur in order to give the full account of the affair and on our way back to give the proper orders by Monseigneur de Maugiron, Vicebailiff and the Judge. The Reverend Vicar writes to you about this in such a secret that your left hand should not know what your right hand is doing. We ask you only to ask orally Monseigneur the Cardinal if he knows a certain physician named Villanovanus and a printer Arnoullet, because the matter concerns them both.<sup>9</sup>

The cardinal immediately called to his palace the vicar general of Lyon, Buatier and Arzellier, the grand vicar of Archbishop of Vienne for a conference. They decided on March 15 to write a letter to de Maugiron, lieutenant general of the province of Dauphiné, ordering him to take the necessary steps against Servetus and his book. Arzellier and de Maugiron were commissioned for the task of collecting the information on Servetus. The letter urged de Maugiron to act with diligence and in secrecy:

Monsieur, I have called the vicar of Vienne, the carrier of this letter, to come here and discuss the matter which, as you will see, is of great importance, and I have instructed him to inform you so you could give proper orders which the case merits. And I am convinced, as I have indicated to the vicar, that you should call the vicebailiff so he also would do, from his side, everything what you order and consider necessary. And



I have no doubt that he will perform well his duty. And since I have amply discussed the matter and explained my opinion to the vicar, what he will report to you, there is no need for me to make a long discourse, so I will tell only that the matter requires chiefly two things: one is that it requires extreme diligence and the second is that the matter should be kept under the strictest possible secrecy. I am sure of the zeal which you have and that you will not spare even your own son in this matter for the honor of God and his Church, I need say no more...<sup>10</sup>

Buatier, the vicar general of Lyon, collected all the documents: the letter from Geneva, four leaves of the *Christianismi restitutio*, the letter of the inquisitor to sieur de Villars, the letter of Cardinal de Tournon to the Lieutenant General de Maugiron, all in order to present the evidence to the Royal Prosecutor. On March 16, the judges assembled at the house of de Maugiron and sent a message to Servetus that they had something important to say to him. Maugiron, a client of Servetus, warned him of the search at his residence, so Servetus, according to his own declaration in Geneva, had two hours to destroy books, documents and notes.<sup>11</sup> However, de Maugiron's behavior later is interesting. On the twelfth of May 1553, even before Servetus was condemned by the Geneva tribunal, upon reporting to the king the detention of Servetus, he asked that the property of the fugitive Servetus be given to his son, the Baron of Igé.<sup>12</sup> Servetus was interrogated, answering all questions and that he never had been suspected of any theological impropriety. The search for a "heretical" book in the residence of the archbishop was a fact without precedence, but nothing could be found except two exemplars of *Apologetica disceptatio pro astrologia*. Nor was evidence produced by the interrogation of Guérout, brother-in-law of Arnoullet, the workers at the printing house in Vienne, domestics, wives, and servants on the next day, March 17. Arnoullet, who was absent from town and returned on March 18, was also interrogated without result. The judges consulted Archbishop Palmier who indicated that there was insufficient evidence and suggested that Ory come to Vienne himself.

Ory did not give up, but went to Lyon and dictated a letter to be sent from Arneys to de Trie asking him to submit the printed book. On March 26 Calvin replied through de Trie that at the moment he could not send the requested book by Servetus (Calvin already sent it to Viret); so he enclosed a copy of Calvin's book *Institutio religionis christianae* with the notes and comments made by Servetus:

My dear cousin. When I wrote to you the letter which you communicated to those who are in charge, I did not expect that the matter should go so far. My intention was only to demonstrate to you the zeal and devotion of those who call themselves pillars of the Church in spite of the fact that they suffer such a disorder among themselves and yet persecute so harshly the poor Christians who simply wish to follow God. Since the example was well known and I was aware of it, it seemed to me that the occasion

merited mentioning it in my letter and to treat the matter accordingly. Perhaps, since you declared publicly what I intended privately, God wants that it serve to purge Christianity of such trash, or mortal plague. If the intention is to use the case as you say, it seems to me that the matter should be still easier than to provide you with a copy of the printed book which I cannot give you, since I will place in your hands, to convince you, two dozen pieces of writings by the same person in question where a portion of his heresies is contained. If you put before him the printed book, he could deny its authorship, which he will not be able to do with his own hand written writings. Thus the people you mention, after having the matter proved, will have no excuse if they conceal or differ in providing the evidence. All the rest is proven by the book as well as by the other treatises written by the same hand of the author. But I have to confess that it was with big trouble that I obtained from Monsieur Calvin the material which I am sending. And it is not because he does not wish that such blasphemies were not repressed, but because it seems to him that his duty as one who does not have the sword of justice in his hands, is rather to convince heretics by the doctrine than to persecute them by such a means. But I insisted on him reproaching him for the neglect which he could impart to me if he did not aid me. So in the end he agreed to give what you see. Besides, I hope in the future when the case makes progress, to recover from him a bale of paper with what the fellow had printed. For the time being, however, I think you are well provided with pretty good evidence and there is no need for anything more in order to be able to seize that person and submit him to a trial. As for me, I pray God that he would open the eyes of those who discourse wrongly so that they might learn to judge better the desire by which we are moved. I gather from your letter you do not wish to enter into a discourse on the above matter. I leave it in order not to anger you, hoping nevertheless that God in the end will show you that I did not take lightly the part which I took. Recommending myself to your good grace, and praying that God may have you in his.<sup>13</sup>

Obviously Calvin desired the "sword of justice" since he knew perfectly well the goal of the Inquisition. By sending these materials he added a new argument for the Inquisition -- the letters and comments written by Servetus's own hand! In another letter dated March 31, 1553, to Arneys, de Trie/Calvin revealed the past of Servetus and identified Villanovanus as Servetus:

My dear cousin. I hope I have satisfied at least partly your request by sending to you hand written texts by the person who composed the book and in this letter you will find what is his real name, which he had disguised because he does not admit that he assumed the name of

Villeneuve, whereas his real name is Servetus alias Reves, saying only that he took his name from the name of the town where he was born. Moreover, I promise you, if the need arises, to provide you with the Treatises which he printed and his hand written texts as well as his letters. I would get them if they were in this city, but they are at Lausanne for the past two years. I think Monsieur Calvin returned them to the author, for they were not worth reading. But since the author addressed them to many other people, they might have them. Even from what I have heard, the replies of Monsieur Calvin were enough to satisfy a reasonable person, but seeing that answering such work would not be worth the effort, he has never read the rest. These silly fancies and rubbish were too much for him; moreover, they were a repetition of the same old song. And in order that you may understand that it is not only now that this disgraced fellow makes an effort to trouble the Church trying to lead the ignorant to confusion with him, please learn that it is already 24 years that he was rejected and expelled from the main churches in Germany and that if he remained there he might never have left. Among the letters of Oecolampadius, the first and the second are addressed to him with the title: '*Serveto Hispano neganti Christum esse Dei Filium consubstantialem Patri.*' Melancthon talks about him also in several passages. But I think you have enough evidence from all this that I have already sent to you for advancing the proceedings or to begin the trial. As for the printer I cannot yet send to you a definite indication that these are Balthasar Arnoullet and Guillaume Guérout his brother-in-law who are involved, but we are quite sure that they cannot deny it. It is quite possible that he printed the book at his own expense and that he printed the copies himself, but you will find that the printing was done in the printing office I mentioned ....<sup>14</sup>

The role of Calvin and de Trie is especially contemptible since they were themselves "heretics" by Catholic standards, yet they helped the Catholic church to persecute a fellow Christian. That the accusatory letters signed by de Trie were dictated by Calvin was also the view of the judges who condemned Servetus at Vienne. For a long time Calvin preserved the secret of Servetus but at the first opportunity Calvin did not hesitate to attack him and reveal his identity to the Inquisition by which Calvin himself would be burned at the stake at the first occasion. Calvin strongly supported capital punishment for those who deviated from imposed doctrines -- his own doctrines in the region under his control. He later defended the punishment of Servetus in his *Defensio orthodoxae fidei* (Geneva 1554).<sup>15</sup> He does not deny the charge made against him of betraying Servetus to the Catholics, but he is evasive and only claims that he had not done anything directly with the inquisitors at Vienne.<sup>16</sup>

The original letters of de Trie were published only in 1749 by a canon from Vienne, Antoine Gachet d'Artigny (1706-1778)<sup>17</sup> and after a few centuries of inquiry into the role played by Calvin and de Trie, all the facts indicate that Calvin was directly involved in their writing and furnished the material. Calvin certainly supplied de Trie with the first sheet of the *Christianismi restitutio*, with Calvin's book *Institutio* bearing the annotations made by Servetus, and a dozen Servetus manuscripts which were sent to Calvin in confidence. He did all this knowing full well that he was putting into the hands of the inquisitors evidence by which Servetus was to be put to death. Servetus denounced Calvin at the trial at Vienne as the instigator<sup>18</sup> and later during the trial at Geneva reproached Calvin with treachery.<sup>19</sup>

On April 4, 1553, Ory supplied de Tournon with his new material and evidence against Servetus and organized another meeting at the cardinal's palace at Rossillon with the cardinal, Palmier, their vicars, other ecclesiastics and theologians. They decided that the evidence was sufficient to imprison Servetus and Arnoullet. Palmier was charged with arranging their arrest at Vienne. So immediately upon the return of Palmier to Vienne the grand vicar sent a message to the printer, Arnoullet, to bring to the palace one copy of the New Testament which he recently printed. When Arnoullet showed up with the copy he was immediately taken away to the archbishop's prison. To lure Servetus to the prison, he was asked to come to the palace to attend some sick prisoners. Servetus, as usual, agreed to perform his professional duty and when he arrived they communicated to him that they had new evidence and charges against him and on this basis he was imprisoned until he responded to them. The jailor, Antoine Bouin, received the order to treat the prisoner honorably according to his status. Servetus's servant, Benoit Perrin, a youth of fifteen years, was permitted to continue to assist Servetus and his friends allowed to visit him.<sup>20</sup>

The next day, the trial of Servetus started. The transcription of the text of those proceedings was published by d'Artigny in 1749, before they were burned during the French Revolution on November 21, 1793.<sup>21</sup>

On the 5 of April, 1553, we Friar Matthieu Ory, Doctor of Theology, President of the Ecclesiastical Court of the Holy Apostolic See, Inquisitor General of the Faith in the Kingdom of France and for all Gaul; Louis Arzellier, Doctor of Law, Vicar General of the Most Reverend Seigneur Monseigneur Pierre Palmier, Archbishop of Vienne; Antoine de la Court, Seigneur de la Tour de Buys, Doctor of Law, Vicebailiff and Lieutenant General for the district of Vienne: we have moved to the prison of the Delphinal Palace at Vienne and in the cell of this prison we have called before us Monsieur Michel de Villeneuve, the sworn physician, who was imprisoned by our ordinance in the prison of the Delphinal Palace. We have interrogated him as follows: ....

At the first interrogation Servetus gave a brief account of his life omitting all

references to his interactions with the Protestants. When he was shown the printed pages of Calvin's *Institutio* with hand-written annotations, he admitted that it might be his handwriting. Asked how he interpreted this text he answered in a way that was satisfactory to the church. At the second interrogation on April 6, 1553, Servetus was shown some of his letters to Calvin. To explain how they were written he gave an evasive answer saying that he wrote them in Germany with the intention of asking Calvin for his opinion. For this purpose he assumed the identity of Servetus.

It now became clear to Servetus that he was in real danger. Taking advantage of some laxity in the procedures of the Inquisition and special treatment for himself, he sent his servant to the monastery of Saint Peter to collect 300 gold *écus* that were owed to him. He did it at the last moment since one hour later he was forbidden any contact with the outside world. Since Servetus was a prisoner of status he was allowed some freedom of movement in the prison and was not chained in the cell as was customary. In the garden of the prison there was a terrace looking out on the courtyard of the palace. Beneath this terrace was a roof from which one could reach the wall and jump over to the courtyard. So Servetus on the morning of April 7 was up early and asked the unsuspecting jailor for the key to the garden pretending he wanted to take a walk. The jailor seeing Servetus dressed in a bathrobe did not suspect him to be fully dressed underneath and gave him the key. He himself went to tend his vines. Servetus quickly escaped jumping the wall and reached the Rhône outside the city gate. He was seen by a peasant woman who was interrogated several hours later. According to Servetus's own testimony he was outside Vienne about 9 a.m. Months later in Geneva Servetus exonerated the jailor of being guilty for helping him to escape.

In May the Inquisition found two printing presses in a country house and three young men, Jean du Bois, Claude Papillon and Thomas de Straton. Under pressure and threats de Straton confessed that they were printing a book from last Saint Michael's day until January 3, but they did not know the contents as it was written in Latin, and remained silent "for fear of being burned." Also, they revealed the details of shipping the book to Lyon to Pierre Marrin the caster of type. On hearing this information the vicar and the inquisitor went the next day to Lyon to interrogate Merrin. He admitted receiving the bales by barge from Vienne four months ago. He stated that the same day a priest, Jacques Charmier of Lyon, came forward with the information that he received a message from Villeneuve to keep the bales of paper until the next disposition, and said that they were bales of blank paper. Since nobody came with any message he did not know what to do with them and he never opened the bales to see whether they contained blank paper or books.

The bales were transported to the episcopal palace in Vienne. Jacques Charmier was interrogated next but the examination did not reveal that he knew the contents of the bales. However, he was imprisoned and put under trial for his close contacts with Servetus. The printer Arnoullet spent four months in prison and convinced the judges

that he did not know the character of the Servetus book, was released and returned to Lyon. He wrote from prison on July 14 to his agent Berthet in Châtillon to destroy secretly the last leaf of the books consigned to him and deposited in Frankfurt. He accused Guérout of deceiving him about the content of Servetus's book.<sup>22</sup> It is estimated that only some thirty copies of the book were sold in Frankfurt and Geneva. A few copies were also retained by the authorities.<sup>23</sup>

The trial of Servetus continued *in absentia* for ten more weeks and the sentence of the civil court was pronounced on June 17. The vice-bailiff and the Delphinian royal judge began by listing the charges against Servetus. He did not limit himself only to the facts, but also presented the consequences which they might produce, thus trying to aggravate to the maximum the responsibility of the condemned. The list of charges was as follows: "the crime of scandalous heresy, dogmatization; elaboration of new doctrines, publication of heretical books; sedition; schism and disturbance of unity and tranquility by public rebellion; disobedience against the decree concerning heresies; breaking out and escape from the royal prison." The sentence continues:

After having examined all the evidence of the listed heresies, letters and writings issued from the hand of the said Villeneuve, addressed to Monsieur Jehan Calvin, preacher in Geneva, and recognized by the said Villeneuve, his responses, confessions and negations; responses and other materials concerning Balthazard Arnoullet, the printer; certain bales of paper with printed book entitled *Christianismi restitutio*; the testimony of the witnesses who stated that the said Villeneuve had the book printed at his own expense; reports of the doctors in theology and other notable persons on the errors contained in the book and the letters, which heresies and errors are manifest by reading the texts; documents concerning the escape from prison and efforts to apprehend the said Villeneuve; hearings obtained during the three days of imprisonment; depositions of witnesses, conclusions of the royal Prosecutor, and all other material deposited before us: We have declared and declare that all the evidence was duly and properly obtained. On the basis of it we have rejected all defenses and mitigations of the said de Villeneuve, and we have pronounced him guilty of the crimes he was accused of. For reparation of them we condemn him to a pecuniary fine of 1000 *livres tournois*, paid to the royal caisse, and if caught he is to be taken together with his books in a *charrette* on a market day from the gate of the Delphinal palace, through the streets to the market place of this city named Charnève and burned alive in a slow fire until his body is turned into ashes. In the meantime this sentence is to be executed on his effigy together with which will be burned his books. His property and possessions are confiscated to pay for the legal costs.

Servetus was already earlier excommunicated as was indicated in the sentence

pronounced later by the ecclesiastical tribunal. The clerk of the court Chasalis duly recorded that the same day the effigy of Servetus made by François Berodi, the executioner, was placed on a dump cart together with the five bales of printed book recovered from Lyon. The cart was conducted by the executioner to the market place Charnève, the effigy was affixed to the post especially erected and burned with the books in the presence of the authorities and other onlookers.<sup>24</sup>

As for the others: Merrin was condemned to three years in prison for hiding the bales; the workers were not excused for not knowing Latin, as they should have suspected something and reported it to the authorities, so were also sentenced to prison; Jacques Charmier and Arnoullet were condemned to three years in prison; Guillaume Guérout escaped from Vienne to Geneva where he was temporarily imprisoned during the Servetus trial. The ecclesiastical judges of the ecclesiastical tribunal in Vienne continued the debate declaring Servetus on the 23 of December, guilty of a very great "heresy" (... *dictum Villanovanum maximum fuisse hereticum*) and after listing all of his deviations from orthodoxy, declaring all his writings "erroneous, wicked, impious, sacrilegious, and more than heretical," they ordered all the seized copies of his work to be burned, eight weeks after Servetus himself was already burned at the stake in Geneva.<sup>25</sup>

## Notes and Bibliography

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  3. Cameron, Euan, *The Reformation of the Heretics. The Waldenses of the Alps 1480-1580* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984). pp. 152-154.
  4. Weiss, N., *op. cit.*, p. 306.
  5. Quoted by Bainton, R.H., *op. cit.*, p. 80.
  6. *De Scandalis quibus hodie plerique obsterrentur nonnulli etiam alientur apura Evangelii doctrine. Ioannis Calvinii libellum apprime utilis. Ad Laurentium Norandium. Genevae apud Ioannem Crispinum M.D.L.* in Calvinii, J., *Opera, op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, p. 44.
  7. Calvinii, J., *Opera, op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, p. 835-838. The documents of the Vienne trial were discovered and published by d'Artigny, A.G., *op. cit.* t. II and

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are transcribed with much of the narrative in Calvin, J., *Opera, op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, pp. 833-856. The documents were destroyed during the French Revolution.

8. Doumergue as a Calvinist is an ardent defender of Calvin arguing, often in demagogic way, that the letter was written independently of Calvin. However, the internal evidence and the following letters and materials supplied point to a conspiracy or at least an intention to hurt Servetus. Doumergue, É., *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, pp. 277 &ff.
9. Calvin, J., *Opera, op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, pp. 838-839.
10. *Ibidem*, pp. 839-840.
11. *Ibidem*, p. 749.
12. Fernández, J.B., *op. cit.*, p. 316. De Maugiron also wrote on August 19, 1553, to the Council in Geneva expressing his satisfaction that Servetus was detained there, Doumergue, É., *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 304.
13. Calvin, J., *Opera, op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, pp. 840-842.
14. *Ibidem*, pp. 843-844.
15. Calvin, J., *Defensio orthodoxae fidei* in Calvin, J. *Opera, op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, p. 480-481.
16. *Defensio orthodoxae fidei*, in Calvin, J. *Opera, op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, p. 479. It is indeed a poor excuse that it was de Trie who wrote the letter. The point was noticed by Michel de la Roche who wrote: "The problem was not the answer to accusations that were intended against Calvin but to know if in the last analysis he denounced Servetus in Vienne or not." *Bibliothèque anglaise. Histoire de la Grande Bretagne*, Amsterdam 1717. T. II, I. p. 192, quoted by Doumergue, É., *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 278.
17. D'Artigny, A. G., *op. cit.*, 1749. The first mention about these letters comes from Castellio in his *Historia de morte Serveti* and from Bolsec in his *Vie de Calvin*. Both ascribed them to Calvin.
18. Calvin, J., *Opera, op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, pp. 732, 789.
19. *Ibidem*, pp. 732, 738, 789, 805.
20. *Ibidem*, pp. 844-845.
21. D'Artigny, A. G. *op. cit.*, T. II, pp. 55-154. The narrative of d'Artigny is also summarized in the edition of Calvin's works, Calvin, J., *Opera, op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, pp. 833-872.
22. Calvin, J., *Opera, op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, p. 752.
23. *Ibidem*, pp. 844-853. Doumergue, É., *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 265.



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24. Calvini, J., *Opera, op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, pp. 784-787.
  25. *Ibidem*, pp. 851-856.

## CHAPTER 5

### The Trial in Geneva

#### Calvin's Geneva

The Reformation in Geneva<sup>1</sup> was initially a political matter which threw off the yoke of the Duke of Savoy in 1530 and that of his vassal, Bishop Pierre de La Baume, in 1533. The bishop ran away from the city leaving it prey to the revolutionary preacher and fanatic zealot-reformer, Guillaume Farel (1489-1565),<sup>2</sup> who was characterized by Erasmus in these words: "Never in my life had I seen so presumptuous and shameless a creature." Farel was able to mobilize the lowest instincts of the mob to raid the churches, remove the images of the saints, disrupt the Catholic services, even to incite children to perform acts of desecration. On May 11, 1536, he formally summoned the Genevese to the city square and formally declared by referendum that from now on they would live "*selon l'évangile et la parole de Dieu.*" From now on only the reformed religion would be permitted. Farel, however, being a revolutionary destructive spirit only, was not able to continue the Reformation in a constructive way.

He took advantage of the coincidence when Calvin, his younger friend by twenty-years whom he knew in Paris and who was passing through Geneva to convince Calvin to take over the reign of the Reformation there. Calvin first refused, yet he yielded to Farel's insistence: "You plead the importance of your studies. In the name of Almighty God I declare upon you that his curse will light on you if you refuse your help in the Lord's work, and seek anything else in the world than Christ."<sup>3</sup>

Calvin, who was first educated for the priesthood and later switched to the legal profession, fully realized the importance of the changes that were brought by the Reformation. In order to give the Protestant movement a universal, doctrinal character, he wrote in 1535 his famous *Institutio religionis Christianae*. His followers of the reformed church in France and elsewhere were called first "Lutherans" and later Huguenots. The etymology of the latter word is not very clear, but it seems to be derived from the German term Eidgenossen (confederated, confederate) from which the inhabitants of Geneva made "eiguenots" or "ayguenos" and through the form of "hanguenots" the word became finally "huguenots".<sup>4</sup> Just as Luther by his translation of the Bible and posting his theses on the door of the cathedral initiated the Reformation, so did Calvin by his book organize the Reformation into a universal and dogmatic movement: "arbitrariness became dogma, freedom became dictatorship, and spiritual order became shackles." His book was burned publicly on the square before the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris on July 1, 1542, in the presence of the bookseller, Antoine Lenoir, who had the courage to introduce it to France. It was burned again together with other books considered heretical on February 14, 1543. These books were ordered to be burned by the *Parlement* as containing "pernicious and heretical doctrines:" the *New Testament*, printed by Étienne Dolet in French, *Loci*, by Philip

Melanchthon, *The Geneva Bible*, and above all, the book, *Institution de la religion chrétienne*, by Calvin.

On September 5, 1536, Calvin was nominated preacher by the Town Council. The event was not considered significant enough, as the scribe did not even mention Calvin's name in the official records saying only, "This Frenchman was to continue his activity as a preacher." However, the Town Council gave him unlimited powers in ecclesiastical matters which Calvin later skillfully manipulated and which allowed him to become the Master (Maître) of the city and state:

Here may be specified the powers with which the preachers of the Church are to be equipped. Since they are appointed as administrators and proclaimers of the divine word, they must venture all things, and must be ready to compel the great and the mighty of this world to bow before the majesty of God and to serve Him. They have to hold sway over the highest and the lowest; they have to enforce God's will on earth and to destroy the realm of Satan, to safeguard the lambs and to destroy the wolves; they have to exhort and to instruct the obedient, to accuse and to annihilate the refractory. They can bind and they can loose; they can wield lightnings and scatter thunders, but all in accordance with Holy Writ.<sup>5</sup>

Many remained Catholics at heart and sought in the Reformation a guarantee of personal freedoms. But pastors took their traditional role seriously and enforced ordinances controlling the social and private lives of the citizens in accordance with the traditional practice. Within three months Calvin submitted to the Town Council a catechism of twenty one articles containing the principles of the new evangelical doctrine. He insisted on strict obedience, allowed no freedom with respect to doctrine, daily life, or individual convictions. The new church had not only the right but also the duty to impose absolute obedience on all men by force and to punish any resistance severely. This catechism formulated the laws of the state just like the religious doctrines earlier became legal clauses in the Theodosian and Justinian Codes. Moreover, the burghers were compelled to acknowledge the acceptance of the new faith by a public oath before the secretary of state under pain of banishment. But Calvin himself did not have any power to exile the burghers for ecclesiastical offenses, so he invented an ingenious device for this purpose making out of the Council an executive organ of his commands and ordinances.

He converted the Lord's Supper into a means to promote his power and into an institution by which he controlled civil life in Geneva. The Consistory of Pastors, of which Calvin was president had the power to deny the admission to the Lord's Supper, which was offered quarterly, to anyone who did not conform to their doctrines or behavioral rules. Refusal automatically meant excommunication and exclusion from civil life and banishment from the city. In this way Calvin could control any opposition and any free thought. When citizens voted for the new religion they did not foresee the

terror and new shackles: "They did not approve a rigid moral reform in order that they might find themselves threatened with exile merely for having uplifted their hearts in song when made merry by a glass of wine, or because they had worn clothes which seemed too bright of hue too sumptuous to Master Calvin or to Master Farel."<sup>6</sup> This caused some resistance on the part of the more liberal pastors, the Patriots, who gained control of the Town Great Council in 1538 and voted to oust both Farel and Calvin on April 11. The Catholic church, however, by shrewd manipulations attempted to regain power in the city. The disoriented and leaderless citizens decided to recall Calvin from Strassburg to again take control of Geneva. Calvin agreed under the condition that the councilmen swear to accept his confession and establish discipline in accordance with his will. He returned on September 13, 1541, was received with great honors and became now the absolute Master of the city.

Calvin in fact established a dictatorship, becoming a civil and religious dictator. Geneva was nicknamed Protestant Rome and Calvin himself -- the Pope of the Reformation. Thus, in fact he broke with the intentions of the Reformation instituting a Protestant theocracy. His church was the depository of the only truth; the Bible as interpreted by Calvin was the supreme wisdom, justice and the truth. He claimed that God revealed to him what is good and evil: "I have from God what I teach, and herein my conscience fortifies me."<sup>7</sup> Calvin could never consider any opposing or different view, any dissent in doctrinal or political matters declaring them to be a crime against the state and church, and as such deserving to be punished by the civil authority with the utmost severity and cruelty. Only the interpretations and judgments passed by the Consistory were valid and constituted the basis for legislative decrees issued by the Town Council. There was no limit to Calvin's power. He exercised his authority and hegemony and any heterodox or opponent had to die at the stake in order for him to maintain his theocracy.

As is typical for such people, Calvin himself had a fear of blood and never attended any of the numerous bloody executions or burnings he had ordered. But he would send hundreds to death as long as he felt justification in performing his duty imposed on him by God! Any dissent brought on him a nervous paroxysm. He called his opponents "hissing serpents," "barking dogs," "beasts," "rascals," "Satan's spawns," or simply "Satans."

Calvin introduced an absolute control of the the private life of every citizen. In his doctrine every man was a wretched being not worthy of existence, a sinner and evil doer, "trash" (*une ordure*). He instituted a "spiritual police" to supervise constantly all Genevese and they were subject to periodical inspections in their households by the "*police des moeurs*." Anything that smacked of pleasure -- music, song, laughter, theater, amusement, dancing, playing cards, even skating -- was declared "*paillardise*" and severely punished. Calvin managed to destroy the normal bonds between people and simple decency inducing them to spy upon each other. His method of intimidation

and terror was so refined that it involved control of every petty activity:

One burgher smiled while attending a baptism: three days' imprisonment. Another tired out on a hot summer day, went to sleep during the sermon: prison. Some working men ate pastry at breakfast: three days on bread and water. Two burghers played scuttles: prison .... A blind fiddler played a dance: expelled from the city. Another praised Castellio's translation of the Bible: expelled from Geneva. A girl was caught skating, a widow threw herself on the grave of her husband, a burgher offered his neighbor a pinch of snuff during divine service: they were summoned before the Consistory, exhorted and ordered to do penance .... A burgher said "Monsieur" Calvin instead of "Maître" Calvin; a couple of peasants following their ancient custom, talked about business matters coming out of church: prison, prison, prison .... Two boatmen had a brawl, in which no one was hurt: executed. Two boys who behaved indelicately were sentenced first of all to burning at the stake; then the sentence was commuted to compelling them to watch the blaze of the wooden sticks. Most savagely of all were punished any offenders whose behavior challenged Calvin's political and spiritual infallibility. A man who publicly protested against the reformer's doctrine of predestination was mercilessly flogged at all the crossways of the city and then expelled. A bookprinter who, when drunk, had railed at Calvin, was sentenced to have his tongue perforated with a red-hot iron before being expelled from the city. Jacques Gruet was racked and then executed for merely having called Calvin a hypocrite.<sup>8</sup>

Calvin's philosophy was that it was better to punish too harshly than too gently where "God's honor" was concerned. In this New Jerusalem during the first five years of his dictatorship thirteen people were hanged, ten were decapitated, thirty five were burned and seventy six were expelled from the city.<sup>9</sup> Later, during the time of the Servetus trial, he found opposition from the so-called Libertines who tried to oppose Calvin's domination in spite of the threat of banishment, executions, imprisonment and fines. The case of Servetus, in addition to counteracting a specific "heresy" that was spreading in northern Italy, was an additional element in his struggle against the Libertines. At the beginning of his own career when he was persecuted himself, Calvin, in theory supported toleration, advocated clemency against vengeance, and opposed any violence such as "prison, exile, proscription and fire." In the first edition of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* published in 1536 he talked about kindness and persuasion against the excommunicated and in the dedicatory epistle to the king of Denmark, Christian III, in his *Commentary on Acts*, he wrote: "Wisdom is driven from among us, and the holy harmony of Christ's kingdom is compromised, when violence is pressed into the service of religion." Luther, too, at the beginning of his career as a

reformer wrote: "The burning of heretics is contrary to the will of the Holy Spirit." These phrases, however, turned out to be only empty words.

### **The Trial**

According to Servetus's own testimony at the trial in Geneva, after escaping from Vienne, Servetus decided to go to the Kingdom of Naples to practice medicine among the Spaniards who chose to live there.<sup>10</sup> He selected a route through Geneva, Zürich and the Grisons to northern Italy. He arrived on foot in Geneva one night before his detention and stayed at the Hotel Rose d'Or at the corner of the Place la Tour du Molard and the rue du Rhône. He did not want to stay in Geneva but wanted to get a boat up the Lake of Lemman to Zürich. On Sunday August 13, 1553, he attended church in order not to attract attention but was recognized, probably by someone he attended in Vienne, and who reported it to Calvin. The record of the Genevan Consistory of Pastors simply indicates that Servetus was "recognized by certain brothers" and it was deemed right to imprison him so that he could not "infect the world with his blasphemies and heresies, especially that he was known to be incorrigible and hopeless."<sup>11</sup> Calvin seized the moment to realize his promise of February 13, 1546, and judged the accusation against Servetus grave enough to justify violating the law prohibiting arrest during a holiday. The arrest was made at the explicit demand of Calvin who admitted it in many documents.<sup>12</sup> He used a secretary of Pastor Falais, Nicolas de la Fontaine, who was a French cook and religious refugee, as the nominal accuser in order to put Servetus in prison at the rue de l'Évêché, but the accusation was prepared by Calvin himself. The legal code ruling at that time in Geneva was based on the Carolinian Law promulgated in Germany during the reign of Emperor Charles V. De la Fontaine had to become a prisoner in order to answer to the truthfulness of his accusation. Should Servetus be declared innocent, he would have to suffer the punishment prescribed by the law. For that reason only did Calvin choose not to make the denunciation himself. Servetus stayed in this prison (a former palace of the bishop converted into prison after the Reformation took over) and left it only when he was led to the stake. Persuaded that he had done God a service, Calvin admitted responsibility for arresting Servetus at Geneva.

Calvin drafted the accusation against Servetus presented by de la Fontaine based on the extracts from the *Restitutio* in 39 articles including Servetus's denial of the Trinity, the eternal divinity of Christ, infant baptism and the defamation of Calvin and his doctrine.<sup>13</sup> The next day, August 14, Calvin presented to the Little Council a copy of Ptolemy's *Geography* of 1535, the Bible of Pagnini in Servetus's version and the copy of *Christianismi restitutio* sent to him by Servetus. After Servetus's reply to the accusations, Lieutenant General Pierre Tissot decided to present the case to the Council for the trial. Both the accuser and the accused were committed to the jailor and the valuables were taken away from Servetus. De la Fontaine requested release

since the charges were substantiated against Servetus whose responses were nothing but "frivolous songs."<sup>14</sup>

The first interrogation of Servetus before the Council being already the second examination, took place on August 15. As a result of this examination de la Fontaine was substituted by the brother of Calvin, Antoine Calvin.<sup>15</sup> The second interrogation started the next day. Germain Colladon, a close friend of Calvin was appointed the advocate of de la Fontaine and acted on instructions from Calvin. The attorney for the state was Philip Berthelier, one of the opponents of Calvin who was excommunicated and awaited now the verdict that would reverse this excommunication.<sup>16</sup> The Libertines, opponents of Calvin, never had any interest in Servetus or his doctrines. They were interested only in the case of Berthelier.<sup>17</sup> Even Professor É. Doumergue, the strongest supporter of Calvin, admits that despite all the differences between the Libertines and Calvin, they agreed on the right of the civil and religious authorities to punish "heretics" by death.<sup>18</sup>

Calvin presented all the details of his accusation using materials from Servetus's writings and notes. The major accusations concerned his earlier life in Germany and publications, his doctrine that the Trinity is a philosophical notion, his Christology, his alleged pantheism, his views on immortality and baptism, and disrespect for Calvin and his doctrines.

On August 17, for the third interrogation, Calvin was brought to the court for a debate on matters of the Bible. Calvin opposed the description of Palestine in the sixteenth century in the Ptolemy's *Geography* edited by Servetus as a land little cultivated and sterile. Servetus replied that this description was not his, nevertheless there was nothing wrong with it and that it did not apply to the time of Moses but to the present time. Of course, Servetus was right. Calvin gave a transcript of the discussion in his *Defensio orthodoxae fidei*.<sup>19</sup>

During the fourth interrogation on August 21 and a debate on the church Fathers, Calvin even accused Servetus of not knowing Greek, since he asked for the Latin translation of Justin.<sup>20</sup> Servetus knew Greek perfectly and Calvin knew it. The problem was that Servetus knew Justin from the fragment in the Latin translation by Irenaeus and from quotations by an early author Servetus took for Justin. Servetus did not know about the publication in Paris in 1551 of the Greek text of Justin together with the spurious Justin when Calvin presented him with the spurious one to prove that Justin used the term Trinity before the Nicaean Council. The text read: "The One is perceived in the Triad and the Triad is known in One."<sup>21</sup> Calvin could not bear the profound knowledge of the texts shown by Servetus in the circumstances of a public debate. His own prestige and authority as the chief of the church of Geneva were at stake. On August 20, Calvin wrote to Farel in Neuchâtel that he hoped for a sentence of death though he wished to spare Servetus needless cruelty.<sup>22</sup>

On August 22, the court in Geneva requested cooperation from the court at Vienne

by asking for a copy of the evidence and documentation. Servetus was confident of a favorable outcome of the trial and in a letter dated August 22, accused the court of instituting "a new invention unknown to the apostles, to their disciples, and the ancient church of initiating criminal procedure for the doctrines of the Scripture or for the theological themes derived from it." First, as usual, he gave ample documentation for his point indicating, for example, that the Arians in the time of Constantine the Great were not handed over to civilian tribunals, but questions were decided by the church alone and the only possible punishment for "heresy" was banishment. On the basis of these precedents and the doctrine of the apostles and the ancient church, he demanded to be set free from the criminal accusations. Second, he stated that he did not commit any sedition or disturbance on the territory of Geneva. The theological questions he raised in Germany with Oecolampadius, Bucer, or Capito concerned only the scholars. He never talked about them in France, either. As to the question of the seditious Anabaptists, he had always disapproved of them. Thus he concluded that for having questioned, without sedition, certain doctrines of the ancient doctors of the church, he should under no circumstances be detained and put under criminal accusations. Third, he demanded legal counsel since he was a foreigner in this country and did not know its customs or the law, but was refused.<sup>23</sup>

In the next phase of the trial, Claude Rigot was appointed prosecutor general and Calvin did not take active part. Servetus' request of August 22 was presented to the Council only on September 24 and had no effect since the new prosecutor general had already drafted a new list of accusations. It was treated only as a means of defense and was inserted into the acts of the trial.<sup>24</sup> Already on August 21, the thirty new charges were drafted by the new prosecutor, probably written by Calvin, some doctrinal in speculative theology, some more practical such as the dangerous effects of "heresies," and used as a basis for the fifth interrogation on August 24.<sup>25</sup> Now the strategy of the court was shifted from the theological debates of little importance to its lay members to the private life of the accused and to the repercussion of his ideas so as to imply a charge of sedition and subversion of the social order: "These are the questions and articles on which the prosecutor general of this city of Geneva requests to interrogate Michael Servetus, the criminal prisoner accused of blasphemies, heresies and perturbation of Christianity."<sup>26</sup>

An attempt was made by Rigot to connect Servetus with the Jews and Turks. It would be an important argument, since their toleration according to the current views, would cause Europe to become dominated by the Turks and Islam. Servetus was asked whether he had any contact with the Jews, discussed with them religious matters and whether he was of Jewish extraction.

Servetus replied that he did not have contacts with the Jews and that his ancestors were Christian nobles.

As to the Turks, Servetus was asked if he knew that his doctrine was pernicious



because it spoke favorably of Jews and Turks producing excuses for them. He was also asked whether he read the Koran and other profane books in order to harm and argue against the Christian churches. Servetus replied that he did not consider his doctrine as pernicious nor favoring either the Turks or the Jews. He read the Koran which was printed in Basel and allowed to be read. His intention in reading the Koran was to help the Christian faith. He agreed that the Koran was an evil book full of blasphemies.

A series of questions, not unlike those asked in Vienne, was designed to prove that Servetus had a bad character and led a dissolute life. Servetus was asked whether he was ever accused of any crime or any infraction and whether he was imprisoned. The judges in Geneva must have also known something about Servetus's life in Charlieu because they asked whether he was ever involved in a brawl and whether he ever wounded anyone or was wounded himself. Servetus in his reply related the incident when he was attacked by relatives of his rival physician.

He was then asked whether he was ever married and if not, why he had remained a bachelor for so long. Servetus replied that he had never been married because he did not feel he had been fit for marriage since he had once been operated on for a rupture. The question was pressed further that in view of having led a dissolute life and having neither the zeal nor grace to live chastely as a true Christian, what was it that led him and incited him to have written on the principal and fundamental questions of the Christian religion? Servetus answered that he had studied the Holy Scripture with a desire for the truth and that he had thought he had lived as a Christian.

Servetus was again interrogated on August 28, on the same charge as during the sixth interrogation.<sup>27</sup>

"What was his age when Servetus was operated and had a rupture?" Servetus said that he could not remember but he was probably five.

"While at Charlieu had he contemplated a marriage with a young woman there?" Servetus replied that he had thought about it but had decided against it because of his impotence.

"Had he not remarked when asked about marriage that there were enough women without marrying?" Servetus replied that he did not remember having said this or he might have said this in jest to have it understood that he was impotent and at the same time to conceal this fact.

Then Servetus was bluntly asked whether he had led a dissolute life at Charlieu or elsewhere.

The same accusations are found also in Calvin's *Defensio*: "*Vita autem Serveti magis fuit dissoluta quam ut suspicari liceat, errore ad turbendam ecclesiam fuisse impulsam.*"<sup>28</sup> Calvin wanted to discredit the impeccable moral life of Servetus and chose to ignore the fact that already in 1546 Servetus asked him if, according to the Gospel, one would not receive a special reward for preserving virginity, adding: "I do

not disdain the celibate life, but long before, I have chosen it for myself."<sup>29</sup>

Other questions concerned his native town, his family and his life in various countries and cities, his medical practice, etc. There were many questions about his work, *On the Errors of the Trinity*, his relations with the reformers Bucer, Capito, and Oecolampadius, and on the writing and printing of the *Christianismi restitutio*.

Between August 24 and August 27, the prosecutor general submitted another set of thirty-eight accusations, undoubtedly prepared by Calvin and repeating all the previous accusations. They were the basis for the seventh interrogation held on August 28.<sup>30</sup> In the introduction to these accusations, the prosecutor also replied to the letter of Servetus of August 22. It is evident, he writes, that Servetus had not responded to the questions but has lied and avoided the truth. Servetus mocks God and God's word by corrupting and twisting the passages of the Scripture in order to cover the blasphemies and avoid punishment.

The prosecutor claimed that Servetus was wrong about the early church since from the time of Constantine the Great emperors were executing heretics for dogmatic and doctrinal deviations. It was only the pagan judges and officials who did not care about Jews and their religion and the questions of heresies and blasphemies as they were interested only in preventing defamation of their idols. The prosecutor next cited a long list of "heresies" that were condemned and punished by death.

The prosecutor presented Servetus's plea for religious liberty as a political threat and subversion of justice:

It is quite manifest that Servetus is one of the most audacious, presumptuous, and pernicious heretics that had ever lived. Moreover, not being content with the evil he has wrought, he wants to subvert every order and justice and to deprive the magistrate of the right to punish by the sword, the right given to him by God. But one should not be mistaken for his conscience condemns him and argues for death. And in order to avoid this punishment he wanted to propound such a false doctrine that the criminals should not be punished by death.<sup>31</sup>

As to Servetus's request for an advocate, the prosecutor had a strange sense of the legal process when he wrote:

In view that he [Servetus] knows so well how to lie, there is no need for him to ask for an advocate. For who is the one who could or would like to assist him in such impudent lies and horrible assertions? Moreover, he is defended by the law and it never had happened that such a corruptor spoke through the counsel and intervention of the advocate. And more, there is not a shred of appearance of innocence that would warrant an advocate. For this reason his request, so improper and impertinent, must be rejected right away.

On August 31, a delegation arrived from Vienne with the reply from the tribunal

there. The delegation included a courier, the jailor and the captain. They brought only the copy of the sentence and not the acts of the trial, as was requested. Moreover, they requested the extradition of Servetus.<sup>32</sup> The Council played a cruel joke on Servetus offering him *pro forma* to choose extradition to France for sure death at the stake in Vienne or to continue the trial in Geneva. Servetus considered the trial in Geneva to be more generous than that in Vienne, but was mistaken in his evaluation.<sup>33</sup> During the seventh interrogation in the presence of the emissaries from Vienne, Servetus was asked whether he would prefer to remain in Geneva or to be sent back to Vienne. He fell on the ground in tears and begged to be judged in Geneva.<sup>34</sup> The offer was only a pretense anyway since the court in Geneva considered its right to judge anyone detained on its territory. The jailor of Vienne requested testimony to his innocence in the escape of Servetus, which Servetus granted thus exonerating the jailor.

On August 29, de Maugiron, the lieutenant general of the king of France and Dauphiné sent a letter to the Council in Geneva informing them that the assets of Servetus (about 3000 to 4000 *écus*) were awarded by the king to his son and asked the Council to ask Servetus about any debts owed to him and by whom in order to establish the exact assets.<sup>35</sup> The Council responded to Maugiron on the first of September indicating that Servetus refused to give any answer to the inquiry about his debtors.<sup>36</sup> During the eighth interrogation Servetus refused to give any information "For he was afraid he could do harm to many people who owed him money and who would be molested by those to whom belonged his confiscated assets."<sup>37</sup> Trial records indicate that Calvin was present during the eighth interrogation and asked Servetus some questions. But because the answers would take too much time and the discussion would be too confusing for the judges, it was decided to give Servetus some paper and ink in order that he could respond in writing and in Latin. Calvin was also obliged to give his replies in writing and in Latin. Moreover Calvin was requested to answer the main articles propounded in Servetus's book.<sup>38</sup>

Now the third phase of the trial began. It was a discussion between Servetus and Calvin over doctrine with their statements submitted in Latin. The request for written statements by the court suggested that the court had decided to submit them to the judgment of other churches in Switzerland which were already informed on August 21. It is unlikely that Servetus suggested this arbitrament, though he certainly agreed to it. Calvin wrote in his *Defensio* that he gladly agreed with this idea, but in a letter to Bullinger of Zürich he was less than glad -- claiming that he objected to the Council's questioning his opinions.<sup>39</sup>

On September 2, Calvin presented again thirty eight propositions<sup>40</sup> extracted from Servetus's writings to which Servetus gave a speedy response,<sup>41</sup> firm in his convictions as they were based entirely on the scripture. The discussion was conducted with bad temper on both sides. The key issue in the debate was the doctrine of the Trinity and the views of the church Fathers, especially those of Tertullian and Irenaeus. Moreover,

Servetus imputed to Calvin that he followed Simon Magus whom he believed to be the father of the doctrine of predestination which was the center of Calvin's doctrine.<sup>42</sup> Servetus did not admit that Jesus Christ was the Son of God from eternity, but only from his appearance on the earth. Calvin attributed Jesus's deity to the Word before its incarnation in Jesus Christ. Servetus emphasized his strict adherence to the scripture:

My only purpose was so that this name the Son may be applied in religious writings to the human son as it is always properly applied to the name Jesus and to the name Christ. And to prove this I collected all the places in the Scripture in which occurs the word the Son is always used to describe the human son. No place can be found in the gospels in which this word the Son would not be used for the human son. Thus therefore if the scripture always accepts this usage so we should accept it too.<sup>43</sup>

Calvin maintained that Tertullian believed in the existence of a real distinction between the persons of the Trinity. Servetus responded that Tertullian never expressed any such view, only talked about disposition. Servetus in his detailed referenced answers showed incredible erudition and unmatched sophistication. Other discussed questions concerned the nature of God and man. In Servetus's opinion Calvin's doctrine of original sin, total depravity and determinism reduced man to a "log" and a "stone."<sup>44</sup> Calvin in turn was convinced that the Servetus doctrine of elevation of humanity degraded God and made him subject to vices. The deification of humanity meant for Calvin the extinction of all Christian doctrines.<sup>45</sup> He could not accept Servetus' belief that children could not commit any mortal sin.<sup>46</sup>

The final reply from Calvin that was presented to Servetus bore the signatures of fourteen pastors of churches in Geneva. The pastors were fundamentally lofty, ignorant, shameless and intellectually inferior to Servetus. They did not want to refute Servetus' assertions one by one, but classified them summarily as false and a "labyrinth of errors."<sup>47</sup> All these materials were submitted to the court on September 5, after which the proceedings were suspended. The court decided to submit the documents to the Swiss cities and pending their reply to let the case rest.<sup>48</sup>

In the meantime Calvin was busy writing letters to other Swiss churches suggesting how they should reply to the request of the Council. He also asked the Frankfurt pastors to destroy the copies of the *Restitutio*.<sup>49</sup>

On September 15, Servetus writes again to the Little Council:

Most honorable Seigneurs. I humbly ask you that you shorten these long delays or acquit me from the criminal accusation. You see that Calvin is at the dead end, not knowing what to say and for his pleasure wishes to make me rot here in prison. The lice eat me alive, my clothes are torn and I have nothing for a change, neither a jacket nor a shirt, but a bad one. I have sent another request to you which was according to God, but in order to impede it Calvin cited you Justinian. Certainly it is malicious to allege

against me what he himself does not believe. For he himself does not believe what Justinian has said about the Holy Church, about bishops, about clergy, and other matters of religion and knows well that the Church was already degenerated. It is a great shame on his part, the more so that already for five weeks he keeps me locked up here and he has not alleged against me a single passage.

My lords, I have also asked you for a procurator or an advocate who would speak on my part, as you permitted him to my opponent who was not in the same situation as I. For being a stranger ignorant of the customs of this country I cannot defend myself. You permitted an advocate to him and not to me and you have released him from prison. I request that my case be presented before the Council of Two Hundred with my requests and if I may appeal I do so ready to assume all expenses, loss and interest, and the "*poena talionis*," both against my first accuser and against Calvin, his master, who has taken the case himself. In prison of Geneva, September 15, 1553. Michael Servetus in his own cause.<sup>50</sup>

In response, the Council voted to "have made for him necessary clothes at his own expense."<sup>51</sup> However, even this was not done as is indicated in another letter of Servetus of October 10,<sup>52</sup> almost a month later.

Servetus submitted his notes on the reply redacted by Calvin and signed by thirteen other pastors of Geneva.<sup>53</sup> Servetus terminated them with a statement that he had not been refuted from the scripture: "*Hoc docebat tantos eloquii divini ministros, qui et ubique iactant, se nihil velle docere, quod non sit solidis scripturae locis demonstratum. At nulli tales loci nunc inveniuntur. Improbata est igitur doctrina mea solis clamoribus, ratione vero nulla, autoritate nulla.*" He also included there a short letter to Calvin trying to explain Calvin's major errors.<sup>54</sup> The fourth and the last phase of the trial started on September 21, when the Council requested the opinion of church ministers and the city Councils in other cities -- Zürich, Basel, Berne, Schaffhausen -- on the Servetus' trial:

Respectable Lords. Sure and certain that you always persist in that good and holy will to advance and maintain the word of God we thought that we should share with you the recent events: We have a man named Michael Servetus in our prison, who had the audacity to compose, write and publish books on the Holy Scripture containing long passages which are not in accordance with God's teaching and holy evangelic doctrine. Herein there are statements by our ministers together with the articles to which he responded and reply to those responses. And again when all this was prepared he replied to it in writing. We beg you to look at this and return through our messenger with your good advise. We ask you also to look at one of the books which we have sent to you so that you might learn that for

a good cause we would like to repress these bad assertions. We would be grateful for your written opinion though we have no lack of confidence in our own ministers .... Geneva, 21 of September 1553. Syndics and Council of Geneva, your good neighbors and great friends.<sup>55</sup>

A similar letter was addressed to the councils of the Swiss cities.<sup>56</sup>

Calvin intended in this way to broaden the responsibility and make the condemnation more serious. Shrewdly he instructed and prepared the ministers how to respond by writing earlier letters to them and preparing the background. Already on September 9, he wrote to Bullinger in Zürich explaining that it was his duty to order the arrest of Servetus. He invoked then the statement of Bucer ("who was such a soft spirit") about Servetus "who deserved to have his entrails torn out;" and by describing the stakes of papists at Lyon, he suggested in a camouflaged way to do the same with Servetus. Bullinger had no doubt what should be the punishment for Servetus: "The affair of Servetus fills me with unrest .... If the Genevese do their duty they will treat him according to what he deserves, this blasphemer. For he is not only guilty of heresy, but of the last blasphemies against God. I consider that it is by the grace of Providence that he fled to Geneva so that this city inflicting on him punishment that he deserves, could wash itself from many crimes of blasphemy and heresy."<sup>57</sup> His opinion influenced ministers from all other cities since they formulated their own only after reading the memoir of the pastors from Zürich.

Servetus addressed another letter to the Council on September 22,<sup>58</sup> in which he continued to accuse Calvin of false accusations against him and pointed out to Calvin his heretic views demanding Calvin's punishment by the *poena talionis*.

Honorable Seigneurs. I am detained for the criminal charges made by Jehan Calvin who falsely accuses me saying that I have written: 1. that the souls are mortal 2. that Jesus Christ took from the Virgin Mary only the fourth part of his body. These are horrible and execrable things. Among all heresies and all crimes there is none so great as to make the soul mortal. For in all other there is a hope of salvation, whereas there is none in such a heresy. Whoever says so does not believe that there is a God, nor justice, nor resurrection, nor Jesus Christ, nor Holy Scripture, nor anything else. He believes only that everything dies and that the man and the beast are the same. If I had said or written this, for offending the world I should condemn myself to death. Therefore, messeigneurs, I ask that my accuser be punished according to the law of *poena talionis* and detained as prisoner with me, until the matter is settled by his death or mine or any other punishment. And for this I submit myself to the mentioned *poena talionis*. I am content to die if he is not convicted both of this and other things which I list below. I demand from you, messeigneurs, justice, justice, justice.

Written in prison of Geneva, 22 of September 1553.  
Michel Servetus in his own cause.

To his letter Servetus appended the six questions concerning the conspiracy of Calvin in initiating the trial at Vienne on which Calvin should be interrogated:

1. Whether in the month of March he had not written through Guillaume de Trie to Lyons disclosing information about Michel Villanovanus, called Servetus. What was the content of this letter and why was it written?
2. Whether with this letter he had not sent half of the first quire of the book of the said Servetus -- which contained the title, the index, the table and the beginning of the said book entitled *Christianismi restitutio*.
3. Whether he had not sent all this to the officials at Lyons in order to accuse Servetus as the results have shown.
4. Whether about 15 days later after the said letter he had not sent by the same Guillaume de Trie more than twenty letters in Latin which the said Servetus had sent to him and whether he did it in order to secure the accusation and conviction of the said Servetus.
5. Whether he was aware that as a consequence of this accusation Servetus had been burned in effigy, his possessions had been confiscated, and he had been ordered to be burned in person had he not escaped from the prison.
6. Whether he did not know well that it is not the office of the minister of the gospel to make criminal accusation or to judicially pursue a man to be put to death.

The following is the indictment against Calvin:

Messieurs, there are four great and infallible reasons why Calvin should be condemned:

1. The first is that doctrinal matter should not be subject to criminal accusation as I have demonstrated in my requests and I can amply show from the ancient doctors of the church. For that reason he has greatly abused the power of the state as a minister of the gospel.
2. The second is that he is a false accuser which is easily demonstrated by reading my book.
3. The third is because by frivolous and calumnious accusations he intends to suppress the truth of Jesus Christ what is manifested in my writings.
4. The fourth is that in a great part he follows the doctrine of Simon Magus, against all the doctors of the Church. As a magician he should be not only condemned, but also exterminated and expelled from the city. His possessions should be awarded to me in recompense for mine that he deprived me of.

This letter shows the extreme strength of the Servetus's convictions who was for

forty days without an attorney, without contact with the outside world, without a change of clothes, without a friend. A resolution of the matter was in making peace with Calvin and rectification of his theological thinking. For Servetus the important thing was the defense of his doctrine and defense of the truth more than his life. However, Servetus's stress and desperation are shown in the contradiction: while opposing any condemnation for the doctrinal opinions, he demands condemnation of Calvin for his.

There is nothing in the records of the trial until October 10, when we find another letter from Servetus who is now suffering greatly from the cold and from having no change of clothes:

Magnificent Seigneurs. It is now three weeks as I have sought and asked for an audience and I have been unable to obtain one. I beg you for the love of Jesus Christ not to refuse me what you would not refuse a Turk, who would seek justice from your hands. I have some important and necessary matters to communicate.

As for what you commanded that something be done to keep me clean, nothing had been done and I am in a worse condition than before. Moreover, the cold distresses me greatly, because of my colic and rupture, causing me other complaints which I should be ashamed to describe. It is a great cruelty that I do not have permission to speak if only to remedy my necessities. For the love of God, my lords, give your order for pity or for duty. Written in the prison of Geneva, October 10, 1553.

Michel Servetus.<sup>59</sup>

Now the resolution of the trial depended on the perception of this trial by the ministers of the Swiss churches. Calvin, in the meantime, was preparing for the delegation of his mission to another person should the trial turn tragic for Servetus. On October 14, Calvin wrote a letter to Farel urging him to meet with him in Geneva regarding the Council's decision about Servetus.<sup>60</sup> However, already on October 19, the messenger of the Council returned carrying a reply not only from the ministers of the churches, but also from the civil magistrates of the Swiss cities. On October 23, the Council read the replies and issued a resolution:

Having read the opinions and recommendations of churches from Berne, Zürich, Basel, and Schaffhausen given because of the false error [sic] and articles expressed by Michael Servetus against the Trinity and the sacred unity of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit and other errors which are found false by the above advise, and which are spreading the false and very dangerous doctrine so that they might trouble the church of our Lord and reformation of the Gospel. It is ordered by this resolution to put to him questions so he can answer orthodoxally .... after which the Council will convene on the Thursday [October 26] to pass a judgment under the



oath.<sup>61</sup>

The Reformers from Zürich, Basel, Berne, and Schaffhausen supported the accusation of the Geneva Council. They were unanimous since they exchanged opinions earlier. Except for the church in Berne, they did not mention the accusation of Anabaptism against Servetus.

The Ministers in Zürich emphasized that the Trinity existed before the creation and considered Servetus a blasphemer to call the Trinity a three-headed monster. They confirmed Calvin in his proceedings and advised diligence, especially so that "our churches, described among the ignorant that they were heretical and favored the heretics, presented by the Providence of God with a good opportunity can demonstrate that it is wrong to blame us for this, and could purify ourselves from such suspicions." They expressed confidence a proper sentence would be passed so that the "contagion of this venom" could not spread further, but left the final judgment and sentence on Servetus to the Geneva tribunal. It was clear that death was the only possible punishment for Servetus as was stated by Pietro Vergerio, once a papal nuncio, now a minister at the church in Chur in the Grisons, in a letter to Bullinger (on October 8, 1553): "I read your letters to the Council of Geneva and found them pleasing to me. You do not say explicitly that this heretic should be deprived of his life, but you insist in such a way that one who reads them can easily understand this: your opinion is that he should be punished by death."<sup>62</sup> Though Vergerio detested "such monsters as Servetus," he himself did not think that "fire and sword should be used against them."<sup>63</sup>

The ministers of Berne described Servetus as an immodest man who put on trial the fundamental principles of Christianity. They listed all the old "heresies" that Servetus was supposed to have revived. They were of the opinion that these "heresies" should be treated with appropriate severity to prevent spreading them among the faithful. They added: "We pray the Lord that he give you the spirit of prudence, good advice and courage to destroy this plague of the churches, and at the same time that you do everything that befits the Christian magistrate." A moderate minister of Berne, Haller, wrote to Bullinger on September 26: "This man is an absolute heretic who should be eliminated from the church."<sup>64</sup> Five days before the sentence he wrote: "On hearing the errors of Servetus the members of the Council were so horrified that if he were in their prison they certainly would have condemned him to burning at the stake."<sup>65</sup>

The ministers of Schaffhausen approved the opinion of Calvin and Bullinger, rejected Servetus' book that they considered blasphemous against the Trinity and had confidence that the Genevese would, in their prudence, repress not only the heretical intentions of Servetus, but also the fear that his "blasphemies, like a cancer, could spread among the members of Christ's Church."

The church in Basel celebrated the capture of Servetus in Geneva and declared that the Servetus' "heresy" was not a simple one but that he professed a "hydra" concocted from many impieties of "heretics." Like an excited serpent, he emitted malicious and

insulting hisses against Calvin, the faithful servant of God, and always blasphemed against God. They exhorted the Genevese to do everything to cure Servetus. But if he persisted in perversity, "he should be punished in accordance to their duty and authority given to them by God so he could be prevented by force from doing any harm again to the Church of Christ."

None of the consulted churches recommended explicitly the death penalty for Servetus and they left the sentence to the judgment of the Geneva church. However, it was fully understood that this was the only possible punishment worthy of a pious Christian church. Thus Calvin was reassured in his Christian thinking. The supporters of Calvin take this fact as an excuse for his action. They say Calvin was doing only what the whole of Christianity approved: "Unanimously, all the churches of Switzerland replied: 'Servetus ought to be condemned to death.'"<sup>66</sup> Another factor that sealed the fate of Servetus was the consolidation of the power of Calvin; the sentence passed on Servetus strengthened Calvin's position. So the case of Servetus was a happy coincidence for Calvin in his power struggle. But history proved the truth was on Servetus' side.

The few supporters of Servetus or of his right to the freedom of conscience hid their opinions for reasons of fear of repression. Pietro Vergerio reported to Bullinger on October 14, 1553, that there were supporters of Servetus in Basel.<sup>67</sup> Gallicius, from Basel, reported that a distinguished scholar from Italy espoused the cause of Servetus.<sup>68</sup> There was only one written protest based on the principle that nobody should be deprived of life for doctrinal reasons. It was an isolated reaction coming from Johan van Brugge, pseudonym of David Joris -- the famous Anabaptist who fled from Münster and found refuge in Basel and had addressed the Council of Geneva. The document was not effective, but one of the first openly expressing the fundamental moral truth:

Most noble, honorable, distinguished, pious, learned, and prudent Lords of the evangelical cities of Switzerland: I have learned how the pious and good Michael Servetus was put into your hands and power not by love and benevolence, rather by envy and hate, as it will be demonstrated in the final judgment to those whose view is now obscured by low machinations and ignorance of truth.

May God help you understand, because the repercussions of your action have spread far away -- they reached even my ears -- that the pastors have written to recommend the death penalty, what shook me so strongly that I cannot find peace until my voice rose as the part of the Christ's body and I did not let my heart speak briefly before your Eminences to discharge my conscience. I have hope that the counsel satiated with the blood of the erudites will not fall on your ears, but that you will consider rather the precepts of Christ, our Lord who has taught us not only in the Scriptures,

in a human and literary way, but also in the divine form by his word and his example that it would be better if we ourselves were crucified and killed before we crucify or kill anybody. He taught that no one should be crucified or put to death for reason of his teaching. He himself was crucified and put to death. Yes, not only that, but he has severely forbidden persecution. Will it not then be a great perversion, blindness, evil, and darkness to indulge in impudent disobedience through hate and envy? They must first themselves have been deranged before they could bring a life to death, damn a soul forever, and hasten it to hell. Is that a Christian procedure or a true spirit? I say eternally no, however plausible it may appear. If the preachers are not of this mind and wish to avoid the sin against the Holy Ghost, let them be wary of seizing and killing men for their good intentions and belief according to their understanding, especially when these ministers stand so badly in other people's books that they dare not go out of their own city and land .... The magistrate is to punish the bad and protect the good, lest they be dispossessed and killed by the evil. But, as Dr. Martin Luther says, the servants of the temple have incited the magistrate to dispossess and kill good, upright folk who were not subservient to the clergy .... Noble, wise, and prudent Lords, consider what would happen if free rein were given to our opponents to kill heretics. How many men would be left on earth if each had this power over the other, inasmuch as each considers the other a heretic? The Jews so regard the Christians, so do the Saracens and the Turks, and the Christians reciprocate. The Papists and the Lutherans, the Zwinglians and the Anabaptists, the Calvinists and the Adiaphorists, mutually ban each other. Because of these differences of opinion should men hate and kill each other? .... And if the aforesaid Servetus is a heretic or a sectary before God ... we should inflict on him no harm in any of his members, but admonish him in a friendly way and at most banish him from the city, if he will not give up his obstinacy and stop disturbing the peace by his teaching .... Condemn no man that ye be not condemned. Shed no blood and do no violence, my dear Lords ....<sup>69</sup>

Joris wrote his protest originally in Dutch somewhere at the end of September or October of 1553. A year later his secretary, Van Schor, translated it into Latin and distributed it anonymously. The principle expressed here was further developed by Sebastian Castellio and eventually found its expression in the practice and writings of the Socinians.

## Notes and Bibliography

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  11. *Ibidem*, p. 725.
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  13. *Ibidem*, p. 727-731.
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  19. *Defensio orthodoxae fidei* in Calvin, J., *Opera, op. cit.*, Vol., VIII, p. 496-497; p. 745.
  20. Calvin, J., *Opera, op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, p. 498.

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21. *Ibidem*, p. 759.
  22. "*Spero capitale saltem fore iudicium, poenae vero atrocitatem remitti cupio.*" Calvini, J., *Opera, op. cit.*, Vol. XIV, p. 590.
  23. Calvini, J., *Opera, op. cit.* Vol., VIII, p. 762-763.
  24. *Ibidem*, p. 771.
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  36. *Ibidem*, p. 794.
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  43. *Ibidem*, p. 507.
  44. "Maxime verum est: et tu miser a Simone Mago illusus, id ignoras, ut servum arbitrium statuens, nos facias truncos et saxa." *Michaelis Serveti responsio ad articulos Ioannis Calvinii*, in *Ibidem*, p. 518.
  45. "Nihilo excusabilius est, quod postquam in Dei solium Servetus pios spiritus evexit, in extinctionem mox et interitum praecipitat. Coelestem et increatum spiritum, Deo consubstantialem, et qui nos deificat, aperte exstingui." *Calumniarum refutatio, Ibidem*, 606.

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  54. *Ibidem*, pp. 799, 799-800.
  55. *Ibidem*, pp. 802-803.
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## CHAPTER 6

### Sentence and Martyrdom

Before sentence was pronounced on Servetus, Calvin already publicized his own. He wrote to Bullinger in a letter of October 25, one day before the sentence: "What will happen to this man, it is not known yet .... As far as it can be conjectured the sentence will be pronounced tomorrow and after tomorrow he will be led to his torment."<sup>1</sup> On October 26, Calvin wrote to Farel informing him that Servetus was unanimously condemned by all the churches in Switzerland and without any dissent by the Council of Two Hundred in spite of the last attempt by Perrin to save Servetus. "Tomorrow he will be led to execution. We tried to change the mode of his death but in vain."<sup>2</sup> But there is no record of this attempt by anybody, though it seems plausible because there is an indication in a letter to Farel of August 20, that Calvin might have preferred a more humanitarian death for Servetus.<sup>3</sup>

On October 26, 1553, the Council met and condemned Servetus "to be led to Champel and burned there alive on the next day together with his books."<sup>4</sup> On October 27, around midday, Servetus was taken from his prison cell to the gates of the Town Hall and here the full text of the sentence was read to him by the Syndic Darlod. Servetus was sentenced on only two accounts -- Antitrinitarianism and antipedobaptism:

The trial initiated and conducted before our formidable Syndics, judges of the criminal cases of this city at the request of the Lord Lieutenant  
against

Michael Servetus of Villeneuve of the Kingdom of Aragón in Spain, Who is first accused to have printed about 23 to 24 years ago a book in Hagenau in Germany against the Holy and indivisible Trinity, containing several and great blasphemies against it in the churches of Germany. He spontaneously confessed to have printed this book not without the admonishments and corrections expressed to him by the learned evangelical doctors of Germany.

Moreover, this book was reproved by the doctors of the churches of Germany as full of heresies and the mentioned Servetus became a refugee from Germany because of this book.

Moreover, and notwithstanding this the said Servetus has persevered in his false errors [sic!] corrupting with them as many as possible.

Moreover, and not content with this in order to divulge and spread better his venom and heresy, not long time ago he has printed secretly another book in Vienne in Dauphiné replete with heresies, horrible and execrable blasphemies against the Holy Trinity, against the Son of God, against the baptism of infants and many other holy passages of the Bible



and foundations of the Christian religion.

Moreover, he has confessed spontaneously that he calls in this book those who believe in the Trinity trinitarians and atheists.

Moreover, he calls the Trinity a devil and a three-headed monster.

Moreover, against the true foundation of the Christian religion and blaspheming detestably against the Son of God, he said that Jesus Christ is not the son of God from all eternity, but only since his incarnation.

Moreover, against what the Scripture says that Jesus Christ is the son of David according to the flesh, he unfortunately denies it saying that Jesus Christ is created from the substance of God the Father, having received the three elements from Him and only one from the Virgin: by this he attempts to abolish the true and complete humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ, the supreme consolation of the poor mankind.

Moreover, he maintains that baptism of infants is only a diabolic invention and superstition ....

Moreover, the said Servetus, full of malice, entitled his book addressed against God and his Holy evangelical doctrine, *Christianismi restitutio*, that is, the Restitution of Christianity, and that in order to seduce and deceive more effectively the poor and ignorant and to infect the readers with his miserable and malicious venom of this book under the disguise of a good doctrine.

Moreover, besides the mentioned book, assailing through letters even our faith and submitting it to the corruption of his poison, he voluntarily confessed and admitted to have written a letter to one of the ministers of this city in which, among other horrible and enormous blasphemies against our Holy Evangelic religion, he declares that our Gospel lacks faith and is without God, and that instead of God we have a three-headed Cerber.

Moreover, he also voluntarily confessed that in the place mentioned above, Vienne, because of this malicious and abominable book and his opinions, he was put in prison, from which he perfidly broke out and escaped.

Moreover, the said Servetus not only attacked in his doctrine the true Christian religion, but also was an arrogant innovator of heresies against the papists and others, so that in the same Vienne he was burned in effigy together with five bales of the mentioned book.

Moreover, and notwithstanding all of this, being detained in the prison of this city, he does not cease to persist maliciously in the above mentioned evil and detestable errors, maintaining them with injuries

and calumnies against all true Christians and faithful followers of the pure immaculate Christian religion, by calling them trinitarians, atheists, and sorcerers, notwithstanding the admonishments addressed to him a long time ago in Germany, and disregarding the reprehensions, imprisonments and corrections here and elsewhere, as it is amply evidenced during this trial.

The tribunal issued next the sentence of death stating:

We the Syndics, the judges of the criminal cases of this city, having witnessed the trial conducted before us, and acting in the name of the Lieutenant against you, Michael Servetus of Villeneuve of the Kingdom of Aragón in Spain, through this trial and your voluntary confessions made here and many times reiterated, and by your books produced before us, it is clear that you, Servetus, have for a long time propagated a false and plainly heretical doctrine, rejecting all admonishments and corrections, and which you have persistently sowed and divulged with a malicious and perverse obstinacy, even to the point of printing public books against God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, briefly -- against the true foundation of the Christian religion and by doing this you have tried to introduce a schism and disturbance in the church of God. By this many souls can be ruined and lost: the horrible and terrifying thing scandalous and corruptive, and without any shame and horror of rising totally against the divine majesty and the Holy Trinity, you have tried hard and obstinately to infect the world with your heresies and your stinking heretical poison. The case and crime of grave and detestable heresies merits a grave corporal punishment.

Moved by these and other just causes, desiring to purge the church of God of such a corruption and to cut off from her such a putrefied member, after having consulted our citizens and having invoked the name of God, in order to make right judgment, and constituted in the Tribunal in lieu of our magistrates, having God and his holy sacred Scriptures before our eyes, and speaking in the name of Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, by this our definitive sentence, which we give to you in writing, we condemn you Michael Servetus to be tied and conducted to the place of Champel and there to be attached to a post and burned alive together with your book written by your hands, as well as printed, until your body will be reduced to ashes. This way you will finish your days in order to give example to others who would like to commit similar deeds. And we request that you our Lieutenant execute the present

sentence.<sup>5</sup>

Servetus must have received the sentence with horror and astonishment, he certainly did not expect the death sentence. It was the most conspicuous injustice on the part of the Geneva Council and Calvin. He was informed about it first in the morning of October 27, in his cell before the formal reading. We only have the testimony of Calvin on the reaction of Servetus:

When the news about the death sentence was communicated to him, he remained for a while as if withdrawn; afterwards he breathed heavily so that he could be heard in the entire room; at times he sounded like a man who lost his senses. Shortly, he bellowed like a demon. In the end his cry reached such a height that, incessantly beating his chest, he cried in Spanish 'Misericordia, Misericordia.'<sup>6</sup>

The first thing Servetus did was to request an audience with Calvin. The Council authorized Calvin to see Servetus accompanied by two members, Corna and Bonna.<sup>7</sup> Again we have only Calvin's report about their meeting and conversation:

I shall describe briefly what he himself confessed about two hours before his death, in the presence of several witnesses. Since he requested that he could talk to me, the Council sent two members to accompany me. When one of them asked what he wanted to tell me, he responded that he wanted to ask my forgiveness. Then I simply stated as it was the truth, that I have never persecuted him for any personal offense, I reminded him gently that for more than 16 years I did not spare anything in order to gain him for our Lord, even to the point of risking my own life and if he would agree with reason, I would faithfully dedicate myself to reconcile him with all good servants of God. Even though he abandoned the struggle I have not ceased to exhort him benignly by letters; in short I have used till the end all human means until having become irritated against my good and saintly admonishings, he burst against me in I do not know what type of rage or anger. Afterwards saying that I disregarded all that concerning my person I begged him rather to think and ask God's mercy, whom he vilely blasphemed by wanting to abolish the three Persons that are in his essence and stating that those who recognize in one God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit with the real distinction, are fabricating an infernal dog with three heads. I begged him to ask with all his heart forgiveness of the Son of God whom he had disfigured by his derangement negating that he assumed our body and that he resembled us in his human nature, and doing this he refused to recognize him as our savior. Seeing that I do not accomplish anything by exhortations, I

did not want to be wiser than my Master would permit me. Therefore following the rule of Saint Paul I separated myself from the heretic who had condemned himself, carrying in his heart the sign of his condemnation. I have reported this in order that everyone could know that I was directed during the life of Servetus by modesty rather than by fear, and did not invent any dispute against him, hoping even for a favorable outcome of the case.<sup>8</sup>

This interview as reported by Calvin is a touchstone allowing us to evaluate the moral profile of each of them. The attempt of Calvin in writing it was to deceive the reader that he used "all human means" and exhorted Servetus "benignly." The whole trial, its procedure, the conspiracy organized by Calvin to entrap Servetus -- all this belies his explanations. Moreover, Calvin wanted to present Servetus as a demoniacal being: *"il n'y avait non plus de contenance qu'en un demoniacle."* Servetus began the interview by asking with Christian humility for forgiveness and ended by rejecting any retraction. The image of his moral quality increases as the interview progresses and that of Calvin is reduced. Servetus, by his moral superiority, firmness in his convictions in face of death, and willingness to sacrifice his own life in their defense, became a precursor of and a symbol and stimulus for the struggle for the freedom of conscience. Being afraid that his strength might yield, he asked for execution by sword rather than by fire.<sup>9</sup> His petition was rejected. All this to no avail, his lips did not express words of retraction.<sup>10</sup> Calvin disclosed himself as the typical figure of the Middle Ages, a follower of the rigid hypocritical religious views of Catholic and Protestant Christianity. The law under which Servetus was condemned was the Codex of Justinian that prescribed the death penalty for the denial of the Trinity and the repetition of baptism. This law was instituted by the ecclesiastical state, the first totalitarian state in human history, whose morality was defined by the interests of the ecclesiastical party. The sentence was carried out immediately on October 27, 1553. The cortège leading Servetus to the place of his martyrdom was composed of a commanding officer and a group of archers on horses. The circumstances of the last road of Servetus were described by Farel in a letter to Blaurer, a pastor of Berne:

While the condemned walked to the place of his ordeal, some friars exhorted him to confess frankly his faults and repudiate errors, he responded that he would suffer death unjustly and prayed God to be merciful towards his accusers. Then I said to him: 'Having committed the most grave sin you still want to justify yourself? If you continue this way I shall abandon you and God's judgment and shall not make one pace more. I had intended not to leave you until you expire your last breath.' Then he fell silent and did not say anything. It is true, he

asked for forgiveness for his errors, and his faults, and ignorance, but he never wanted to make any authentic confession. Several times he recited prayers and asked the accompanying persons to pray for him. But we never could obtain from him open recognition of his errors and of Christ as the eternal Son of God.<sup>11</sup>

Farel who came to Geneva from Neuchâtel, until the last moment urged Servetus to acknowledge errors and confess. Servetus answered him by asking for a single biblical passage showing the eternal sonship of Christ! For Calvin and Farel, Servetus was a martyr of error, whereas the Protestants burned in France by the Inquisition were martyrs of the truth. Servetus, according to them, deserved the fate which he met, the others were innocent, persecuted. With the rare exception of the radical reformers, all the religious chiefs of all Christian denominations shared this view.

There are two reports preserved describing the last moments of Servetus. One is the report published by Benedict Wiszowaty, Polish Socinian leader in exile.<sup>12</sup> It was based on the manuscript written by Peter Hyperphragen of Gand which has not been preserved. The picture presented is with a vivid detail that it makes us believe the writer was an eyewitness. The second description was published by Sebastian Castellio in his book *Contra libellum Calvini*. Both texts coincide thus they confirm each other.<sup>13</sup> Servetus was led to the stake saying "O God, save my soul; O Jesus Son of the eternal God, have mercy on me."

No cruelty was spared on Servetus as his stake was made of bundles of the fresh wood of live oak still green, mixed with the branches still bearing leaves. On his head a straw crown was placed sprayed with sulfur. He was seated on a log, with his body chained to a post with an iron chain, his neck was bound with four or five turns of a thick rope. This way Servetus was being fried at a slow fire for about a half hour before he died. To his side were attached copies of his book which he sent "confidentially" to Calvin for "his fraternal opinion." A legend has it that when a strong wind blew and separated the flames, Servetus exclaimed: "Poor me who cannot finish my life in this fire! The two hundred crowns and the golden necklace that they took from me should suffice to buy sufficient wood to burn me miserably." His last words were "O Jesus, Son of the eternal God, have mercy on me." Servetus died remaining true to his conviction and the truth. He was a deeply religious man, strongly believing in pre-Nicaean Christianity based only on the Bible.

## Notes and Bibliography

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  3. *Ibidem*, p. 590: "Spero capitale saltem fore iudicium: peonae vero atrocitatem remitti cupio."
  4. *Ibidem*, Vol. VIII, p. 825.
  5. *Ibidem*, pp. 827-830.
  6. *Defensio*, in Calvini, J., *Opera, op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, p. 498; French translation *ibidem*, p. 826.
  7. Calvini, J., *Opera, op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, p. 826.
  8. *Defensio*, Calvini, J., *Opera, op. cit.*, Vol. VIII, p. 460; A French translation *ibidem* p. 826.
  9. Calvini, J., *Opera, op. cit.*, Vol. XIV, p. 694.
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  13. Castellio, Sebastian, *Contra libellum Calvini in quo ostendere conatur haereticos jure gladii coercendos esse*. Anno Domini M.D.I.CXII., pp. 191-196. The text is also reproduced by Doumergue, É., *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 361 &ff.



## Chapter 7

### Calvin and Religious Persecution

The trial of Servetus, even from a purely formal legal point of view, offers many irregularities. To review these, first, the accused was refused the advice of an attorney which the Council should have appointed automatically. This was not an omission because Servetus asked for one twice: on September 25, and on October 22. The only answer he got was silence. Second, the tribunal was obviously partial since it did assign an advocate, Germain Colladon, to Nicolas de la Fontaine. In the second letter Servetus asked that the case be transferred to the Council of Two Hundred and for the implementation of the Carolingian law of the talion (requit). The Council did not consider it for Servetus though it implemented it in the case of de la Fontaine by taking into custody the brother of Calvin for de la Fontaine. Third, the accusation relative to *De Trinitatis erroribus* made Servetus responsible for a work published 23-24 years earlier. Fourth, the accusation that by writing the *Christianismi restitutio* Servetus had corrupted Christians and spread heresy had no basis since the book was not sold. Fifth, Servetus should not have been tried in Geneva since he did not publish or dogmatize there. This last point was noticed by Voltaire when he wrote, "This barbarous act which was perpetrated under the name of justice can be regarded as an insult to the rights of nations: a Spaniard who was passing through a foreign city, was he subject to the laws of that city for not having published his opinions nor having dogmatized either in this city or in any other place in its jurisdiction?"

The tribunal showed no humanitarian concern for Servetus. He was not provided, in spite of several requests, with any change of clothes for forty days. Nevertheless the Council's conscience was tranquil as it had "... invoked the name of God in order to make justice." Servetus was charged with only two accusations: Antitrinitarianism and antipedobaptism. There is no mention of any association of Servetus with the Libertines, or any accusation of pantheism, or of disbelief in the immortality of the soul. There is no recrimination concerning his private life, though the tribunal attempted very hard to discredit Servetus.

The highest flaw in the judgment of the tribunal and Calvin himself was that they arrogated to themselves the right to burn the "heretics." It cannot be justified by the "error of the time" since it can never be justified on any moral ground -- in any epoch, by any institution or in any culture. The personal conduct of Calvin was most condemnable. Though he was, as chief of the Geneva church, under stress and struggling for power with the opposition, this could not justify his collaboration with the Catholic Inquisition and later elaboration of the whole conspiracy in Geneva against Servetus. Calvin was planning this since 1546. Already in 1550 in his publication, *De Scandalis*, Calvin summarized the theological views of Servetus, revealing that Servetus was Villanovanus, and that he practiced medicine. It was only by an



oversight on the part of the Inquisition that Servetus was not investigated earlier.

### **Reaction to Servetus' Execution**

The execution of Servetus brought to light the issue of religious liberty in the Christian world in a most conspicuous manner. Though, as we have seen in the previous chapter, all leaders of the Protestant community in Switzerland, with the exception of the evangelical radical reformers, supported Calvin in his decision, some people started asking questions about the legitimacy of capital punishment for heresy.<sup>1</sup>

On November 16, 1553, Gulielmus Gratarolus (died in Basel in 1568), a physician from Bergamo who was a religious refugee in Basel since 1549, wrote to Bullinger that many people, even those who in other respects were not supporters of Servetus' ideas, blamed Calvin for the death of Servetus and asserted that the Christian magistrate was not justified in exacting this punishment.<sup>2</sup> He previously reported that he heard in Basel many prominent and learned people who in discussing the case of Servetus considered Calvin a "butcher" (*carnifex*).<sup>3</sup> He himself took the side of Calvin and defended him.

From Chur (Coire) in the Grisons, Pietro Vergerio, a former Catholic prelate, wrote to Bullinger that the drama of Servetus horrified him. Though he hated such disturbers of the church, he opposed the death penalty.<sup>4</sup> On February 10, 1554, Zurkinden, a future secretary of state in Berne, wrote to Calvin himself protesting the sentence.<sup>5</sup> André Zébedée, the pastor of Nyon, wrote to Calvin denouncing the sentence. He declared that while the fires of the Spanish Inquisition were outdone by those in France, those at Geneva outdid them both: "*Ignis Gallicus vicit ignem Hispanicum, sed ignis Dei vicit ignem Gallicum.*"<sup>6</sup> Basel was a special city where many supporters of Servetus and of liberal thought resided: Sébastien Castellion, Coelius Secundus Curione, Martinus Cellarius called Borrhäus (professor of theology), Bernardino Ochino, Laelius Socinus, David Joris, and later Acontius. They were strong opponents of the death penalty for heretics as was reported to Bullinger by Vergerio.<sup>7</sup> The other centers were Chur and northern Italy with Matteo Gribaldi. These attitudes were reported to Bullinger and Calvin.<sup>8</sup>

Laelius Socinus, an Italian reformer whose nephew later became a leader among the antitrinitarian Socinians, was in Geneva at the time of Servetus' martyrdom and expressed his regrets at the hasty execution:

I do not know whether I gave any occasion for regarding me as a follower of Servetus or as an Anabaptist, unless that when I was at Geneva I expressed regret at the hasty execution of Servetus. And this I said not because I utterly disapprove of the coercion of heretics and blasphemers nor because I favor the doctrine of Servetus, which I should like to see extinct, but precisely because I reject his depraved teaching I should have preferred to see him freed from it than to see it

burned in him.<sup>9</sup>

The death of Servetus united also all those who supported the antitrinitarian ideas: Gianpaolo Alciati, Matteo Gribaldi, Giorgio Biandrata, and Valentino Gentile (later decapitated in Berne). In 1554, a Sicilian poet Camillo Renato wrote to Calvin:

Your cruelty, Calvin, is not worthy of the ferocious beasts. Don't you realize that the error subsists and spreads when one exterminates a heretic? Neither God nor his spirit have counselled such an action. Christ did not treat those who negated him that way. Was it not he who burst into anger against his disciples who wanted to set Samaria afire?<sup>10</sup>

### **Calvin's Rationale**

Jean Calvin was the first author of a major treatise of systematic Protestant theology. Before him there were declarations and minor treatises by Martin Luther, Philip Melancthon, Ulrich Zwingli, and Guillaume Farel. Calvin's work, *Institutio religionis christianae*, was first published in Latin on August 23, 1535. The first French edition, *Institution de la religion chrétienne*, appeared in 1541. The work was dedicated to the king of France, François I: "To the most Christian King of France, Jean Calvin, for peace and salvation in our Lord Jesus Christ." The prefatory dedication<sup>11</sup> is remarkable in that it contains a strong, passionate appeal for tolerance and religious freedom at a time when all religious dissenters were brutally persecuted. Calvin pleads with the king to read his book and learn about the doctrine "against which are furiously enraged those who by fire and sword trouble today your kingdom." He says further that all by common accord condemn the new doctrine and all those who confess it. Those who are constituted to make a judgment are so enraged that they consider it their duty to condemn to death those who confess it. "But," -- asks Calvin -- "for what crime? For professing that condemned doctrine, they say. But for what reason is it condemned?" Now, the central point in the prohibition is that the doctrine is held to be the true one. And Calvin continues: "It is true that our adversaries reproach us that we pretend to preach the word of God, of which, they say, we are perverse corruptors." To this charge Calvin gives the same answer as Augustine gave to the Donatists -- by invoking the Lord who would overcome the false prophets (Matt. 24: 24) who, even by miracles, are able to deceive the chosen ones. He complains that they are falsely accused of moral evils whereas they live a peaceful and virtuous life. Calvin ends his dedication asking the king for his ear in hearing the complaint, they have nobody else to defend them against the cruelty of persecution -- "They remain like a lamb destined to be butchered."

Calvin and the rest of the religious leaders of the Reformation, by persecuting Servetus, betrayed the spirit of the Reformation and demonstrated that as soon as they gained power and independence their behavior was no different from that of the church

they condemned. Facing the rising critique and disapproval, Calvin felt a need to justify his position and his action against such attacks expressed by the "fantasts" (*esprits fantastiques*) and the "rebellious" or those who are "simple and of good nature." In a letter to Bullinger of November 22, 1553, Calvin indicated that he would show in a short book what a monster Servetus was "in order to prevent the wicked (who I hear are in Basel) to spread the insults and the ignorant to spread rumors."<sup>12</sup> In reply, Bullinger encouraged Calvin to continue his God's work and to publish his proposed book. In a *post scriptum* he added: "When you begin to write about the case of Servetus, please do not forget to demonstrate that it is legal (*iure*) to punish by the ultimate measure blasphemers and all who resemble Servetus."<sup>13</sup> He advised Calvin not to mention the supporters of Servetus in Basel in order not to make them "immortal." And later, on December 13, Bullinger encouraged Calvin still more to "describe diligently and piously for all pious people the case of Servetus and his end in order that all could turn away from this monster."<sup>14</sup>

On December 11, 1553, Calvin addressed the Council asking for authorization to publish a book that would impugn the opinions of Servetus. He declared that he would not write anything that would not be in accordance with the law of God and honor of the city. His manuscript was already prepared since he submitted it to the Council some fifteen days later. On December 31, Calvin informed Bullinger that the work would be published in Frankfurt.<sup>15</sup> It was published in February of 1554, first in Latin under the title:

*Defensio orthodoxae fidei de sacra Trinitate, contra prodigiosos errores Michaelis Serveti Hispani: ubi ostenditur haereticos jure gladii coercendos esse, et nominatim de homine hoc tam impio juste et merito sumptum Genevae fuisse supplicium. Per Iohannem Calvinum. Oliva Stephani M.D.LIV.*<sup>16</sup> The Latin text was followed immediately by a somewhat different French version entitled: *Déclaration pour maintenir la vraye foy que tiennent tous Chrestiens de la Trinité des personnes en un seul Dieu, par Iean Calvin. Contre les erreurs détestables de Michel Seruet Espagnol. Où il est aussi monstré, qu'il est licite de punir les hérétiques: & qu'à bon droict ce meschant a esté executé par iustice en la ville de Geneve. Chez Iean Crespin. A Geneve M.D.LIIII.*

It is worth mentioning that the same publisher of the French version of Calvin's book, authored also a famous book, *Martyrologie*, in which he collected documents on the fate of pious Protestant martyrs.

Calvin's book was written hastily and is somewhat chaotic and repetitious. It contains long documents from the trial. Bullinger expressed a fear that simple minds might find it not very agreeable because of its brevity and difficult argumentation. Nevertheless, he said that all good people and especially those who are educated, owe Calvin a debt of gratitude for the work.<sup>17</sup> Melancthon, in a letter of October 14, 1554, congratulated Calvin for the refutation of Servetus' blasphemies in his book and for

putting him to death: "The church owes you now and in posterity a gratitude. Moreover I absolutely approve of your judgment. I also affirm that your magistrate did right putting to death this blasphemer through the regular judicial process."<sup>18</sup> Calvin seems not to be angry with his critics -- he states that his only goal in writing the book was to make the detestable errors of Servetus manifest to everybody, so that they could be certain that Calvin defended only the true doctrine with sincere faith and just zeal and that he does not regret the job he has done.<sup>19</sup>

In his book, a posthumous insult to Servetus, Calvin defends the rightfulness of putting heretics to death by arguing that heresy is worse than murder or poisoning, as it is treason against God. Such punishment is, according to him, divinely sanctioned and the blasphemous attempt to overthrow religious foundations deserves the extreme penalty. The irony is that at that time in France Protestants were being burned by the thousands and in England the Catholic reaction under "bloody Mary" was just beginning.<sup>20</sup>

Calvin evidently felt a need to excuse himself and his actions, and to clear his name. First he presents a theological rebuttal of the assertions of Servetus. He starts with presenting Servetus as an agent of the devil:

The devil in order to obscure the clarity excited many fantastic spirits who have sowed various forms of errors as they were propagated by the Anabaptists, Libertines and others. But among the others there is a certain Spaniard named Miguel Servet who made so many people confused by his enormous derangements that his impiety surpasses all the evil that the others have conspired to do...<sup>21</sup>

And later he adds:

I have heard, as some people told me, that I have abused my power in this case .... Now, after M. Servetus is already dead, and has left moral corruption by his errors, nobody should feel offended if I remedied the similar evil, preventing it from spreading more than this vicious and cruel monster .... Because what justice was done by the Council was attributed to me by many ignorants as if I were the author. I am not going to deny that he was imprisoned by my persecution ... but afterwards I did not interfere in the condemnation to death.<sup>22</sup>

The imprisonment itself was not a factor in the condemnation, but providing the evidence was. Thus Calvin and only Calvin is directly responsible for Servetus' death. Nevertheless, the moral guilt for the persecution of Servetus and "heretics" in general, falls equally on the Catholic and Protestant leaders and their doctrines.

Calvin next attacks freedom of conscience and justifies the right to condemn to death the so-called heretic by developing his doctrine of persecution: "Thus I believe it is worthwhile to give a general treatment whether it is lawful to the Princes to judge Christians and punish the heretics."<sup>23</sup> And he concludes his deliberations:

Thus, there is no doubt that by the mandate of God, it is the duty of the pious and holy magistrates to defend the kingdom of Christ .... Therefore [Paul] teaches that they are appointed not only for the duty of protecting piety by law, but also to promote it. Hence the sword is placed in their hands in order that they can defend the true doctrine. And by performing their duties they should not allow under threat of punishment the existence of impiety and corruption of the doctrine. May the ignorant and thoughtless men cease to negate that punishment should be exacted on the corruptors of the true doctrine if they do not want openly to oppose the will of God.<sup>24</sup>

Calvin's doctrine is representative not only of his own views, he is a spokesman for the entire Protestant Christianity as well. His arguments to justify this conclusion were exactly the same as those used by the church Fathers and Thomas Aquinas and which were applied to the "heresy" of Calvin himself. They derive from the specific interpretation of the Old Testament (e.g., Exod. 32:7-14; 32:27-29; Deut. 13:6-11; 13:12-16; Psa. 2:8-9; 2:10-12; Isa. 49:23; Dan. 3:29) and New Testament quotes (e.g., Matt. 13:24-30; 21:12; John 8:44; Acts 13:7-12; Rom. 13:1-5; 1 Cor. 3:16-18; 1 Tim. 1:18-20; 2:1-2).

Calvin then develops his principle from the assumption that, as in the Hebrew society, the first duty of the magistrate is to establish religion and laws which serve society's preservation and integrity. Moreover, one should forget about all humaneness and should not spare blood or anything else in defending God's honor and glory:<sup>25</sup>

For is it not more absurd that the judge should punish theft severely and should allow sacrilege? That by protecting the right of someone he would expose God's glory to be insulted by the impious? Indeed, nobody would dare to question that breaking of an oath should be punished more severely. Is it not because those who oppose punishment of the heretics that the human society is injured by the breaking of an oath? Thus God's glory will be asserted for the benefit of men: since whoever complains about his loss will he forgo frivolously the unpunished crime? It would be superfluous to continue this argument. For the purpose of the right polity is to conserve the legitimate order among men. And let us watch so that when the goal is ignored the order of piety would not be dissipated as well and that the life of men itself would not become senseless. For imperfect is the form of the government in which religion is neglected and magistrates are only miserable shadows if when occupied with their civil business they do not take care of maintaining the service of God.<sup>26</sup>

In developing his principle of persecution, Calvin had to answer several objections. One obvious one, and very embarrassing to him, was that if it is permitted to punish

heretics, why object to the Catholic Inquisition? Calvin explains that many simple and good people see how under the papacy religion is mutilated and plagued by numerous corruptions and that this "diabolic confusion" is supported by "naked terror" so that even to mutter one syllable against the papacy is punishable by capital punishment. The believers are so scandalized that they hate and are in horror of all punishment without discerning a just and unjust one. According to Calvin, they are justly outraged since the Catholic church suppresses by fire and sword any attempt at finding God's truth and does not allow any freedom of inquiry. Indeed, he argues, Protestants are moaning and crying under this terror. It is not acceptable that a legitimate inquiry into the facts of religion is not allowed by those who claim to be the prelates. This is why one can say that it is an exorbitant barbarousness to support by the sword doctrines not based on reason and without inquiry into their foundations. Calvin condemns the cruelty and barbarousness of the Catholic procedures presenting them as "an illustration of a bestial insanity combined with brutal savageness."<sup>27</sup> But then he adds a specific twist to his deliberations: "Yet, if the papists are so excessive in the implementation of tyranny, this does not mean that all severity should be condemned,"<sup>28</sup> and he adds that "nothing prevents the swords of the persecutors to be employed by the pious magistrates as the rod of justice in the defense of the Church which once was unjustly afflicted, and the torments once suffered by the martyrs should not prevent the faithful to be protected by the just laws and to worship God in peace."<sup>29</sup> To justify this position, Calvin indicates that similar iniquity was experienced by the holy prophets of God and the apostles. Yet, they, too, did not deny that the veneration of God and His celestial doctrine should be defended by legitimate power. The impious destroyers of the doctrine should be submitted to the punishment prescribed by God's commandment. Though Christ did not defend Himself due to His virtue, faith depends on earthly decisions and ought to be protected by the king if someone tries to diminish the certitude of the gospels.<sup>30</sup>

Needless to say, Calvin considered the Catholic doctrine false and at the same time he granted to those who seek true religion based on the word of God, the right to defend what they believe. If someone forms for himself a system of belief according to his whim or accepts what others recklessly contrived, the more he adheres to it, the greater will be his guilt. Thus, the true and legitimate worshipper of God, inasmuch as he goes along with his vocation, will fight to defend his faith. Therefore, Protestants condemn papists in their foolish and devoid of understanding zeal as well as their insane superstition, fascinated with which, they trample disdainfully on God's word.<sup>31</sup>

Next Calvin differentiates between two types of victims of religious persecution: those who are martyrs and those who are blasphemers. Though both meet similar punishment, they differ in their offense: the just and righteous zealot follows knowledge, but the perverse and unconscionable one follows temerity and blind impulse. Thus, if they should torment someone who would maintain that all that is

taught by the sacred scripture is nothing but a fiction, who would have enough courage to attribute to such a monster the honorific title of a martyr? For Calvin agrees with Augustine: "*Martyrem facit causa non poena.*"<sup>32</sup>

Another objection addressed by Calvin is that it seems to be absurd that the spiritual kingdom of Christ should be backed up by the "power of flesh." But, to be sure, Calvin's argument goes, it is absurd also to base faith on human eloquence. However, should someone silence those who are skilled in speaking, prevent all learned and refined in liberal arts from expressing their ideas, or exclude everyone endowed with talent from the office of teaching out of fear that eloquence and dexterity in debating might weaken faith, would he not insult openly God and His gifts? Or if there is no reason why the preaching of the gospel should not be less effective in order to allow its effect to be produced only through the secret power of the spirit, and if there is no objection that it could have human arts as servants, so there is no reason why religion, even though it is sustained only by God's hand and is triumphant under adversity, that it could not be aided by men and their authority when such is God's design.<sup>33</sup>

Still another objection, continues Calvin, is that nothing is less befitting faith than to compel people to believe, since faith depends on voluntary obedience. He agrees with Augustine, that in defending the status of the church, there is a different use for the sword than when one is compelled to believe. He argues further that it is not in the power of the princes to enter the human hearts by their edicts, to compel them to obediently embrace the doctrine of salvation and to submit themselves to God. However, the vocation of the princes demands that they not permit the sacred name of God to be vituperated by insolent tongues and not allow God's veneration to be ruined.<sup>34</sup>

In one more objection, he claims that the disciples of Christ should be tolerant and practice clemency as did their master, nor did He force with arms the stubborn into the fold of his followers. This doctrine was seductive (Isa, 42:3). But, explains Calvin, as we do not have a ready statement to the contrary, we should take an example from Christ himself when he took up the whip and cleaned the temple of God from profane trafficking (Matt. 21:12). If the Son of God chased out by force those who under the pretext of worship were selling sacrifices in the temple, why could not the pious magistrates draw the sword, which was given to them by the divine power, to coerce the perfidious apostates who openly profane the entire temple of God?<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, among the gifts of the Holy Spirit, Calvin lists the power to strike the scorners of the true faith (1 Cor. 12:10). Thus ministers of God's word may use corporeal punishment in order to compel the impious, and the princes may use the sword. According to Calvin, far more cruel than the corporeal punishment is what they call clemency, because, in order that the wolf may be spared, the sheep are exposed as prey. Should the heretics be allowed to murder the souls by poisoning with their false dogmas and should the legitimate power of the sword be prevented from touching their bodies?

Should they be allowed to tear the body of Christ in order to preserve intact the stench of one rotten member? I confess, continues Calvin, that pious doctors should remind and incite the princes to act with moderation and follow the example of a physician applying the extreme remedy only in a desperate disease. But there is much difference between dissolute leniency, which is nothing more than a ferment of evil, and the gentle human manner of medicine.<sup>36</sup>

So far Calvin did not say anything new concerning the persecution of heretics, apostates and nonbelievers. He strictly followed the established Christian, post-Nicaean doctrines. But now, in order to defend his own right to dissent and that of his colleague reformers, Calvin assumes a more moderate tone advising practical restraint. Moreover, he says, before we move further, two things are worth to be noted. For God established His religion of whatever sort by His word and He did not proclaim punishment of lapidation for the people outside the faith but only against those who, having openly professed the doctrine of the law, may have perfidiously withdrawn from it. Thus there is no offense if someone ignorant is led into error. But if God revealed to His people a certain rule of piety and then punished the apostates, who among the mortals would dare to take onto himself the authority to sanction by sword and punishment the type of doctrine devised by his or someone else's opinions? Thus we do not provide the magistrates with vague and blind power so that under their protection any religion whatever without distinction may remain accepted, but we hold that one has to maintain the law imposed by the divine command and that the sanction of punishment may follow only after establishing the truth. This was the error, he claims, made by the papists who indulge their foolish zeal and ignorance by shedding innocent blood or by threatening the Inquisition against others. Using these premises they forced Turks, Jews and others to submit to the faith of Christ. But Calvin maintains God did not indiscriminately decree the use of the sword against all, but only against the apostates who might alienate themselves from the true worship and against others who may have been led to similar treason and subjects them to just punishment. Moreover, whoever will claim that heretics and blasphemers are unjustly subjected to punishment, he willingly and knowingly will become guilty of blasphemy. Thus the authority of man is not thrust upon us, but we listen to God's word and we clearly recognize what He permanently entrusts to His church. Not without reason, continues Calvin, does God discard all human affections by which hearts are usually softened: paternal love, love between brothers, friends, and relatives; all this lest their holy zeal would be restrained by such obstacles. Why is such a severity exacted? Is it not so that we may know not to place our honor above that of God's honor? Is it not that to God is due the piety expressed in all human activities and, whenever his glory is asserted, our mutual humanity is virtually deleted from our memory?<sup>37</sup>

Finally Calvin designs his own practical rules and criteria for persecution. He designates the magistrates as protectors of the religion that has to be defended and



equips them with sharp swords. But in order that they do not administer bloody punishment hastily for any error whatsoever, Calvin formulates his own theory of repression to be distinguished from the repression practiced by Rome. It is based on the punishment exacted according to the degree of errors:

Thus there are to be differentiated three degrees of errors, those we admit, that are to be tolerated, and others that are to be punished by moderate means so that only the obvious impiety may be punished by a capital penalty. Paul, time and again, encourages the believers to tolerate each other however much would they disagree among themselves. Certainly, this means that if there is a certain small superstition or ignorance occupying the minds of the simple people, one should be patient in trying to correct them rather than too hastily seek violent retribution. Thus people should be punished according to their errors. Even the moderate type of errors call for severity. However, though the errors producing damage to the Church and resulting from negligence and ambition deserve a punishment -- nevertheless, when there is no contempt of God and rebellion combined with mutiny, the severity should not be excessive so that the indulgence may not nourish the audacity and defiance of those who would desire to tear apart the unity of faith. But since there are those who attempt to undermine religion at its foundations, and who profess execrable blasphemies against God and by impious and poisonous dogmas they drag the soul to ruin, in sum -- those who attempt to revolt the public from the unique God and his doctrine, it is necessary to have a recourse to the extreme measure in order to prevent further spreading of the mortal poison. Such a rule which Moses received from the mouth of God he himself had followed faithfully.<sup>38</sup>

Among the first who responded to Calvin's *Defensio* was Nicolaus Zurkinden (Zerkintes in Latin) a respected citizen of Berne and friend of Calvin and Castellio. He is quoted by Buisson as a witness of the negative reaction among lay people to the sacrifice of Servetus.<sup>39</sup> His testimony is important for the evaluation of post-Nicaean Christianity because he does not speak in anger against Calvin; on the contrary, he is a loyal, true, and often servile supporter. He expressed his own opinion as a neutral person though he disagreed with Calvin on the issue of predestination. In a letter to Calvin dated February 10, 1554, he writes:

I admit that I belong to those who, either by too much inexperience or by timidity, desire that the sword be used possibly the most rarely in order to repress the opponents of the faith who err either deliberately or by ignorance ... I would rather prefer to see the magistrate and myself to sin by excess of indulgence and timidity than to be inclined to use

vigorously the sword.... Wherever I turn it seems to me that the swords of the magistrates should be blunted rather than sharpened.... I would prefer to shed my blood rather than to become stained by the blood of a man who would not merit the torment absolutely.... I add that we cannot provide more pleasure to the Papists, we who have reprovved their cruelties, by reinstalling among ourselves a new office of the executioner. I describe to you odious things and communicate them in a special letter because I do not want to conceal from you my reflexions. I would not write to express my thought if I were not forced by my conscience. I would rather remain mute ... than to provoke quarrels and offend anybody.<sup>40</sup>

In the *post scriptum* he adds that he would have preferred if the first part of Calvin's book on the justification of the sword appeared under the name of the Geneva Senate which then could defend itself well for what it had done. Then he states that he approved Calvin's position that only the most nefarious errors should be submitted to extreme punishment. But, he adds, he does not speak here on behalf of Servetus, an impious and cursed man who was justly punished; but Zurkinden would prefer to see another form of death for Servetus out of fear that it might be abused.

We do not know what Calvin's reply was but we may assume that Calvin insisted on the cruel punishment since in a subsequent reply dated April 7, 1554, Zurkinden claimed again that he did not think the axe of the magistrate was the best way to restrain heresy. Examples from antiquity teach us, he wrote, that these faults are spread by human blood and cruelty rather than erased. But he hastened to explain that Servetus was excluded from those who might benefit from such an attitude. And again he expressed his deepest veneration for Calvin and the firmest belief that neither Calvin nor the Senate needed to apologize for the affair of Servetus.<sup>41</sup>

Such was the opinion of the most cultivated citizen of Berne in the sixteenth century who became in 1561 the secretary of state in Berne. He was a very pious person inspired by the Bible. His "tolerance" is considered an exception in his epoch which he himself described to Calvin as originating from a personal experience he witnessed in 1536 or 1537: "... what struck me were not the passages from the Bible, but the stupefying examples of our times in the punishment of Anabaptists. I have witnessed how an old octogenarian woman was led to her torment with her daughter, a mother of six small children. The only reason for their torment was that in accordance with the plausible and popular doctrine of the Anabaptists they did not admit the baptism of infants. And it was only to their own risk and peril, because there was no fear that these poor women with their false doctrine could corrupt mankind. This single example among many left such an impression on me that it suffices ...."<sup>42</sup> However, he did not see anything morally wrong with the execution or torture of the so-called heretics or sorcerers, he wanted only to avoid "excesses" as those described in the case of the

Anabaptists women.<sup>43</sup> On this point he was in agreement with Castellio and maintained with him a vivid correspondence.<sup>44</sup> Since he ascribed only a secondary role to the dogmas, he could also be a friend to other enemies of Calvin like Bolsec, Curione, Biandrata, Gribaldi, and Schwenckfeld.

Zurkinden was great friend of Calvin in spite of differences concerning the doctrine of predestination. He wished that Calvin did not leave his followers in the "labyrinth" of his speculations and that he did not torment the Scripture.<sup>45</sup> He was always careful enough to emphasize in all his letters his respect and servility to Calvin and apologized in case he might have offended him.<sup>46</sup> In a letter of June 15, 1558, Zurkinden, in order to avoid any rupture with Calvin, explained his contacts with Gribaldi, Biandrata and the correspondence with Castellio: "... But in all these letters which I offer to show to you, there is nothing against you, even against your name ...."<sup>47</sup>

### **Summary Evaluation of Religious Persecutions**

The logic of Calvin's theory of religious repression has unsurmountable contradictions: 1. between the critique of the unjust torment inflicted by the Catholic church and the praise of the just torment inflicted by the Protestants for exactly the same reasons; 2. between the principle of merciless rigor of repression deduced from the scripture by both sides, the Catholic and the Protestant, and the appeal to the use of mild measures and forgiveness (obviously in defense of his own "heresy" and that of the reformers). Trying to resolve these contradictions, Calvin creates new ones: he attempts to demonstrate that it is right to punish a heretic but not as a heretic, but only for the "execrable blasphemies against God by professing the impious and poisonous dogmas." So the heretic should be punished for something else than heresy -- according to Calvin for "blasphemy" and at the same time for "poisonous dogmas." Calvin uses the loose term "blasphemy" fashionable in his time and makes a failed attempt of differentiating it from the "heresy."<sup>48</sup>

Blasphemy was a favorite catch term used by Bullinger in describing the "heresy" of Servetus.<sup>49</sup> In another letter he reminded Calvin "not to forget to demonstrate that it is legitimate to punish by capital punishment the blasphemers like Servetus."<sup>50</sup> This idea of punishing the blasphemers seemed to be widespread and accepted among the reformers. Wolfgang Musculus, a minister at Berne, wrote in a letter to Ambrosius Blaurer on December 22, 1553, a poem on the sentence of Servetus in which he justified his death as caused by blasphemy and not by his heresy.<sup>51</sup> Bullinger, in a letter to another minister, Mattheus Erbius, boasted about the verdict against Servetus passed by Geneva and all other churches in Switzerland: "The monster resisted disdainfully and tenaciously .... We have condemned Servetus' blasphemies. The same did other churches of Berne, Schaffhausen, Basel, etc. Though he persisted in blasphemies he was burned in Geneva at the end of October. This wretch filled his book with horrendous blasphemies."<sup>52</sup>

This presumed differentiation between "heresy" and "blasphemy" in the *Defensio* was a demagogic twist important for Calvin to distance himself from the Roman Inquisition and at the same time to justify his own persecutorial procedures. Now, turning to the specific case of Servetus, he declares that in case there is anyone who does not think that such a pernicious man, who had to be eliminated from the scene for his error, did not exist, he will explain clearly and aptly the case. All right thinking people, according to Calvin, agree that there are two causes why the authors of false dogmas should be punished with great severity: 1. if their audacity were unrestrained so that they would continue to corrupt (though they themselves were rejected and condemned by God) 2. if the detestable and intolerable were the impiety of their errors. Next, Calvin promises the reader to present the case of Servetus and to consider whether the punishment for either of these crimes for which he was condemned may be legally applicable to him. He states that he will not waste many words to show how stubborn and intractable Servetus was, but will give evidence against him so that the reader might make his own judgment of the Servetus disposition. He adds further, that Servetus ignored the teaching of Calvin and criticized Calvin's books, reporting that Servetus "filled the margins [of Calvin's book] with insults as if a dog would have bitten and gnawed at some stone."<sup>53</sup> Calvin insists that Servetus was persecuted for unrestrained audacity (*indomita contumacia*) and Calvin further sinks into contradictions declaring at one point that he would spare Servetus' life if he had shown "some sign of modesty." This point was criticized by Castellio: "So it was not because of his heresy but because of his immodesty that Servetus has been killed."<sup>54</sup>

Supporters of Calvin even in modern times made futile attempts to justify and excuse Calvin by claiming that this "immodesty was something else [than heresy] that had to be combined with heresy in order that the heresy could be punished by death: immodesty, obstinacy -- in one word blasphemy against God."<sup>55</sup> Heretics as such, according to Calvin, should not be punished [Calvin himself was a heretic]. Castellio criticized the demagoguery of Calvin: "He [Calvin] said he would show how the heretics should be coerced by the sword and he nowhere defined who is a heretic .... But did a great malice. For if he defined the heretic, he would not find anywhere a law ordering to kill a heretic. So he maliciously confused the matter by mixing together heretics with blasphemers, idolaters, and apostates ... in order that he might put them to death together."<sup>56</sup> Castellio also explained that since Calvin could not find in the scripture any passage ordering heretics to be put to death, he combine them maliciously with blasphemers so any attempt to save them would be considered suspect to the society as an attempt to patronize blasphemy.<sup>57</sup>

Another of Calvin's contradiction was his distinction between fundamental truth and secondary truth. In a confession of May 18, 1558, he declared *à propos* Valentino Gentile that, "the symbol of the apostles should be sufficient for the faith of all modest Christians." Out of curiosity they search beyond it and the church is then forced to

promulgate a more explicit confession.<sup>58</sup>

This was a political position that allowed Calvin some toleration of ceremonies and doctrines of other reformers. Even though the ultra-Lutherans were fanatically intolerant of Calvinists, the Calvinist synod at Charenton of 1631 issued a "decree in favor of our brothers Lutherans" in which, in the spirit of peace and friendship, Lutherans were admitted to the ritual of the communion without any abjuration. But the fact remains that among the Protestants, the Calvinists were the most numerous victims of persecutions.<sup>59</sup> They were among the most tolerant reformers and in Calvinist Holland all persecuted for the religious cause found a refuge. Jews were hospitably received, Lutherans were honored, Mennonites could flourish and even Arminians and Catholics remained free to practice their religion. This happened also in other countries where Calvinism had influence -- Switzerland, England, Scotland, North America. However, in countries, that were dominated by the Roman Catholic church, the papal church was identified with the only true church and still remains the state church. In the countries that were dominated by the Lutheran church, due to the principle *cujus regio ejus religio* this confession was imposed on the people. Calvinist toleration was very limited and Calvin was ready to ally himself with other Christian churches against a common enemy -- the atheists. This affirmation, nevertheless, rejected in principle the visible unity and exclusivity of the church. "With Rome the system of persecution resulted from the identification of the visible Church and the invisible Church, precisely this identification was rejected by Calvin."<sup>60</sup>

Professor Émile Doumergue, initiator of the expiatory monument to Servetus which was erected in 1903 in Geneva, devoted an entire chapter of his book *Jean Calvin. Les hommes et les choses de son temps*, trying to justify the act of Calvin by the "error of the time."<sup>61</sup> Professor Doumergue should be commended for the noble attempt at finding attenuating circumstances and excuses for Calvin's action. However, this does not diminish Calvin's personal responsibility. The term "error of the time" was coined by historian A. Rilliet who recognized that in our consciences enlightened by the errors of the past, the condemnation of Servetus was an heinous act, but that it was just before the law. "Passing the verdict the judges thought to fulfill their duty, thus one should not keep them responsible for this lamentable error, but their century."<sup>62</sup> Similarly Amédée Roget excuses Calvin as performing his role as defender of the Reformation in accordance with the spirit of his time.<sup>63</sup> He considers it to be an incontestable fact that the overwhelming majority of his contemporaries approved his position.<sup>64</sup> An ardent defender of Servetus, Protestant pastor, Henri Tollin, wrote: "It is not exactly Calvin who is guilty of this action, it is the Protestantism of his time."<sup>65</sup> A former Catholic priest Hyacinthe Loyson regarded the verdict on Servetus an horrible and formidable error, but that it was not Calvin's error, but the error of the epoch and even of all the centuries.<sup>66</sup>

They are right to claim that Calvin's action was approved by all leading theologians

of the epoch. For the people who were in power and had authority in the state and in the church, who were able to impose and protect by force their views, professed the old Catholic doctrine which was adopted by the Protestants. It does not mean that there was not any opposition or that there were no opposing views.<sup>67</sup> The martyrdom of Servetus, however, was the triggering factor that caused general indignation.<sup>68</sup> The Protestant world was shaken by this event. This time it was not the case of a Protestant condemned to death by the Catholic Inquisition or a revolutionary Anabaptist put to death by a tribunal of a prince. This time the victim, an honest, scholarly man whose only wrong was that he differed in opinion from the reformed orthodoxy, was murdered by Protestants themselves. Though there were many who criticized Calvin, only Castellio had enough courage to oppose him in writing and become the spokesman of the movement opposing punishment for "heresy."<sup>69</sup> Thus Calvin's action was "The fatal consequence of an ancient system that Calvinism found in operation and amidst which it grew and was not capable of liberating itself from it entirely."<sup>70</sup> The term then, "the error of the time," is misleading and we prefer to name the evil, evil.

Calvin obviously did not invent repression of thought, he inherited the system and doctrine from the Catholic church which practiced it since the time of Constantine the Great. This mutual persecution among the Christians is the greatest tragedy in the history of mankind and a paradox of the system established by post-Nicaean Christianity that demanded doctrinal monopoly and exclusivity. When combined with the political power and legislated into laws, it had to lead to the stake no matter who was in power -- the Catholic or the Protestant church. And this unique stake of Servetus remains a most glaring and sad testimony to the amoral and nonsensical claims of post-Nicaean Christian churches.

The Catholic side flatly denied any guilt on the side of the Catholic church. The German Jesuit N. Paulus claimed that it was a false explanation ascribing the attitude of Calvin vis-à-vis "heretics" to the "influence of the Roman practice in the Middle Ages and making Rome responsible for it." Instead he put the blame on the Bible: "What explains Calvin's action is not the epoch, nor the human traditions, but the complete dependence on the Scripture."<sup>71</sup> He ignores the fact that the Catholic church equally condemned and burned Servetus, though by historical accident only, in effigy. The Catholic side was absolutely clear and sure of its moral claim. The priest Pierre de Saint-Gallein wrote in 1589 that the laws of safe conduct for travelers do not apply to those who commit a crime of lese majesty human or divine or those who are condemned to death. Such was the case of Servetus, "horrible blasphemer" against the Holy Trinity. Ironically, de Saint-Gallein glorifies the "heretics" in Geneva who defended "God's honor" as those who "love God," those who "are virtuous by honoring and worshipping Him" are justly "persecutors of the wicked" and those who are righteous will not let the crimes go unpunished.

Indeed, this characterizes the essence of the post-Nicaean morality which is based on

professing certain doctrines, ideas, suppositions and speculations. Jérôme Bolsec, who was an opponent of Calvin on theological grounds by opposing Calvin's doctrine of predestination, and later, after being banished from Geneva, became a Catholic in the service of Cardinal de Tournon, approved Calvin's action only once -- i.e. in the condemnation of Servetus.<sup>72</sup> Even the Catholic historian and strong defender of the Catholic church, Professor Jean Guiraud of the University of Besançon, after having collected official church documents of the Middle Ages on the subject, stated that one cannot deny that the Catholic church arrogated to itself the right to punish "heretics." Professor Guiraud wrote:

Having read these documents it is impossible to deny that the Church wanted to eliminate heresy by force and being far from always enduring the impulse of the civil authority, it often imposed it. The Inquisition did not act as an expert or a jury giving its opinion at the request of a prince or a magistrate; on the contrary it functioned as a sovereign and deciding judge in the cause that fell into its jurisdiction in accordance with the strict canon law legislation that imposed on the civil authority, under the threat of the most severe punishment, the obligation to execute the sentence, without any discussion or any delay, like a gendarme or an executioner who blindly obeys the order of the tribunal.<sup>73</sup>

Still Professor Guiraud, blinded probably by false piety, wants to excuse the Inquisition by saying that sometimes it followed the proper legal procedure and offered a jury and defense to the accused. Professor Guiraud does not say that the laws that were imposed by the ideology of the church, under threat of moral, legal, and psychological sanctions were absolutely immoral and against the spirit and letter of the Gospel or any human moral decency, that were once taken for granted in the ancient times. Moreover, Professor Guiraud attempts to excuse the church by claiming that the "Inquisition was a human institution and as everything else that is human it has evolved."<sup>74</sup> He himself states that the Inquisition was instituted by the pope, it acted in his name and it remained a papal institution under the pope's direct control. He conveniently forgets that the church and the popes have claimed (as they do even today) their supernatural origin, sacred character, their absolute moral and doctrinal infallibility, their absolute moral superiority, and above all, that the persecution of the "heretics" and all those who disagreed with the church's ideas were to be justly exterminated as demanded by the divine will, law, and authority, and that everything the church and pope did, even do today, has the absolute sanction of God. Martin Luther in a letter to the nobility of Germany commented that the canon law stated that even if the pope were so scandalously bad as to lead souls in crowds to the hell, yet he could not be deposed.<sup>75</sup>

In another argument advanced by Professor Guiraud to defend the Inquisition he

emphasizes that often the Inquisition became a political tool in the hands of the rulers to pursue their own political goals. But here Professor Guiraud defeats himself stating immediately that even then the rulers were not free to act on their own -- they were obliged to act under the orders of the popes and were threatened by severe sanctions. An excessive zeal of the rulers was rarely moderated by ecclesiastical authority.

Another Catholic defender of the persecution, Abbé Claude Bouvier, at the beginning of the twentieth century, did not contest Calvin's right to punish the "heretics." The right was as obvious to him as to Bishop Jacques Bénigne Bossuet (1627-1704)<sup>76</sup>, author of French absolutism: "The right is certain, but moderation is necessary." Abbé Bouvier wrote: "Catholics together with Bossuet do not negate the right, and practically that which they call moderation means, in the world where the unity of faith has disappeared, the nonusage of the right of physical compulsion .... There exist true crimes of ideas ... crimes which can be committed sometimes with an ardent conviction, but against which one has to protect the religious society as a civil society. The Catholics are inclined to support the sad necessity of punishment and the law of expiation."<sup>77</sup> More recently, a Benedictine, Colman J. Barry introducing the topic of *Heresy and Inquisition* in his selection of texts on the history of the church tries in this way to excuse the church :

No contemporary Church historian would unqualifiedly defend the ferreting out and punishing of heretics whether by Church or state, or a legitimate expression in any way of Christian ideals. The inquisitorial method went against the earlier Christian tradition which disassociated the use of violence from religious procedures. It was, as the Jesuit James Broderick has said, "a horrible and hateful thing, a grave backsliding, not of the Church, but of churchmen, which no Catholic ought now to lift a finger to defend, except from exaggeration or the too obvious effort ... to turn it to controversial advantage."<sup>78</sup>

Again, it is a question, according to the pious Benedictine, of the method and procedure and not of a principle. Likewise, the pious Jesuit denies that it was the church as an institution, infallible and of an alleged supernatural origin that promulgated such evil doctrines and committed such evil acts. His excuse is indeed an Orwellian one.

Thus nothing is changed in the twentieth century, even the Vatican II Council formulated exactly the same idea in the official church document. The church today does not practice the sanguine methods of compulsion as it does not have enough power, but the amoral and totalitarian right and principle remain.

Some argue that Calvin's action was an expression of his vindictive temperament -- but it would be strange that he could not forget the promise he made seven years earlier. Others might argue that he was under the effect of a passionate impulse -- but again, Calvin had enough time to think through the whole affair during the trial. His



decision was a cold-blooded one, as evidenced by his letters. Moreover, usually people at his age become more tolerant and compassionate. Calvin was genuinely convinced of the righteousness of his action based on the mentality and moral outlook he inherited from the previous centuries of Catholic domination and he never regretted it or had second thoughts. In a letter to the Marquis de Toët written on September 30, 1561, he said: "Honor, glory and riches shall be the reward for your troubles; especially do not stop in ridding the country of those zealous good-for-nothings who excite the peoples to rebel against us. Similar monsters are to be stifled as I did with Michael Servetus the Spaniard."<sup>79</sup> In his testament<sup>80</sup> Calvin did not mention Servetus, which is an evidence that he was not preoccupied with Servetus' death.

Martin Luther himself originally expressed ideas that: "Faith does not force anybody to accept the Gospel. It leaves everyone free to make a choice,"<sup>81</sup> and that heretics should be won by writings and not by fire, "otherwise the executioners would be the most learned doctors on earth."<sup>82</sup> Luther wrote: "Everybody should be left to believe what he wants; he is already enough punished by the eternal fire in hell;"<sup>83</sup> and, "Heresy is a spiritual thing, it cannot be broken with any piece of iron, burned with any fire or drowned in any water."<sup>84</sup> But these were only early and empty declarations for his own protection. He freely claimed the right to destroy Anabaptists by sword and all those who blaspheme or insult the honor of Christ and produce divisions among people.<sup>85</sup> Philip Melanchthon, Luther's successor, characterized as having a mild and soft nature, wrote to Calvin on October 14, 1554: "The church now and in posterity owes you the debt of gratitude. I absolutely affirm that your magistrates acted justly putting to death this blasphemer [Servetus] as a result of a regular trial."<sup>86</sup>

The famous Lutheran theologian, Abraham Calov (1612-1686), distinguished between a violent compulsion of conscience and the public exercise of religion, between the compulsion to the faith (*ad fidem*) and compulsion to the means of the faith (*ad media fidei*) e.g., attendance at religious services. And by virtue of this distinction he could condemn equally the papists and the Calvinists.<sup>87</sup> Another Lutheran theologian, Benedict Carpzov (1595-1666), considered it good policy not to tolerate several religions in one country. However, in case one cannot obtain a monopoly on religion it is better to tolerate diversity than to trouble the constitution of the state. So he admitted in such a case toleration of Catholics by Lutherans and that Calvinists could be tolerated only under certain conditions: they could not spread their error, should remain quiet and submissive and should admit their error and accept the true and orthodox Lutheran religion. But, should they persist in their error, they should be banished. The theologian Martin Chemnitz (1522-1586) advised the authorities to banish Zwinglians. The peace of Augsburg of 1555, included Catholics and Lutherans but not Calvinists,<sup>88</sup> and in 1601 in Dresden, a Calvinist city chancellor, Nikolaus Krell, was decapitated after spending ten years in prison.

Ulrich Zwingli, too, was initially in 1522 against the use of force "It is a question of

using the words not the whip .... one should not use any violence against the body unless it is necessary."<sup>89</sup> But he admits, as do all other Protestant theologians, the principle of intolerance and persecution. In Zürich he had to deal especially with the Anabaptists who were considered not only as "heretics" but also as revolutionaries, and were massacred by Protestants and Catholics alike. Zwingli wrote hypocritically in 1527: "I have decided to combat relentlessly these kinds of men because they not only harm piety but also ruin public morals and introduce licentious life."<sup>90</sup> In 1527 the first to be executed was Felix Manz -- he was drowned in the lake with his legs and hands tied up. Zwingli's successor, Heinrich Bullinger, supported Calvin and it was he who advised all churches in Switzerland to vote for Servetus' death. As was already noted, it was he who urged Calvin to write in his book that it is legitimate to punish by death blasphemers like Servetus.<sup>91</sup>

In Berne, too, bloody terror reigned, among the victims was Giovanni Velentino Gentile, an antitrinitarian, decapitated on September 10, 1566. In Berne, men were routinely decapitated and women were drowned.

The situation was not much better in England.<sup>92</sup> Here, too, either Protestants were burning Catholics or Catholics were burning Protestants. "Logic is one thing, history is something else. And the history of Protestantism one century after Calvin was a history full of stakes and gallows for the Catholics and the heretics, executed by the hundreds."<sup>93</sup>

But the death of Servetus who was condemned by both branches of Christianity, was a crucial moment that caused at least some religious leaders and scholars to pause and start reflecting on the madness. There were thousands of burnings at the stake before, but they served no useful purpose. Burning at the stake was a logical act among the Catholics; though twisted and amoral; among the Protestants, it did not even have any logic. This unique stake at Geneva was the beginning of a long process of dissipating the darkness among the members of post-Nicaean Christianity imposed during centuries of its domination. A. Chantre, professor of church history, summed up this thought in 1914:

This was Catholicism, still immanent in all these people, which produced the mentality of all these men sincerely religious, that provoked, voted and approved the condemnation of Michael Servetus.... Who then bears the burden of responsibility? It is Calvin, the magistrates of Geneva, the Swiss churches, the XVI<sup>th</sup> century, all taken together, certainly, but first of all and above all it is the Roman Catholic Church. The guilt of Calvin is incontestable ... but the ease with which he shares his sentiment with the magistrates and Swiss churches indicates only that this monstrous error was indeed shared by the great majority of people of his century.<sup>94</sup>

One had to wait for the philosophy of the Socinians, who implemented the true spirit

of Christianity in their moral conduct, and for the philosophy of the Enlightenment that as Voltaire wrote "finally has blunted the sword." He continues, "It seems that today the '*amende honorable*' is done for the ashes of Servetus: learned pastors of the Protestant Churches and even the greatest philosophers embraced the views of Servetus and those of Socinus."<sup>95</sup>

## Notes and Bibliography

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"Servetus ex Hispania,  
 Qui tamdiu non debuit  
 Christi Redemptoris fidem  
 Lingua scelestas polluens  
 Inter fideles vivere:  
 His triplicem nos bestiam  
 Et Satanae phantasmata,  
 Illusiones Daemonum  
 Deumque imaginarium  
 Habere dixit pro Deo.  
 Et propter hanc blasphemiam  
 Linguamque detestabilem  
 Non propter errores graves,  
 Quibus scatebat plurimis,  
 Flammis Genevae absumptus est.  
 Octobris is vicissimus  
 Erat dies et Septimus.  
 Annus: novus quo concidit  
 Elector et Dux Saxonum

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Quum Marchionis copias  
Acri intermisisset manu."

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## CHAPTER 8

### Sebastian Castellio and Aftermath of Servetus's Death

#### **Castellio versus Calvin**

Opposition to the death of Servetus was extended from Switzerland to Lithuania and from Germany to Italy. Of all the men who took the side of Servetus, not with his doctrine but with the concept of freedom of religion and conscience and with the idea that it was not right to kill people because they err in doctrinal interpretation, nobody was more influential and effective than Sebastian Castellio. Perhaps some of Castellio's opposition was due to his personal experience with Calvin's autocratic methods. Nevertheless Castellio's influence continued even after he himself was forgotten.

The idea of punishing "heretics" was so pervasive in the society that it did not occur even to most thinking Protestants that the whole concept of repression of thought was evil and against the spirit, and the letter, of the Gospels. No Protestant religious leader was against the punishment of heretics in general. Very few people among the clergy or laymen opposed the death penalty for heretics and the opponents were mostly against the abuse and indiscriminate use of such a punishment. They fell into the same trap of contradictions that Calvin did. Even Sebastian Castellio, recognized champion of rational tolerance and a precursor of the French Revolution and the *Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme*, could not avoid these contradictions. Only later did he develop, through the experience of the fraternal religious war in France, the concept of mutual toleration and freedom of conscience based on a rational, humanistic and natural moral principle. The trap of contradictions and theocratic mentality were so pervading that even in the eighteenth century Jean Jacques Rousseau wrote in 1762 in his *Contrat social*, that in the future ideal state, one who did not believe in the religious truths decreed by the legislator should be banished from the state or even, one who, after having recognized them, would cease to believe should be punished by death.<sup>1</sup>

A month after the publication of Calvin's *Defensio* there appeared in Basel an anonymous, eloquent pamphlet against intolerance entitled *De haereticis, an sint persequendi, & omnium quomodo sit cum eis agendum, doctorum vivorum tum veterum, tum recentiorum sententiae. Liber hoc tam turbulento tempore pernecessarius, & cum omnibus, tum potissimum principibus & magistratibus ultissimus, ad discendum, quod nam sit eorum in re tam controversa, tamque periculosa, officium.* (Gregorium Rausche, Magdeburg, 1554, mense Martio).<sup>2</sup> A few weeks later there appeared a French translation of this treatise entitled *Tracté des hérétiques, a savoir, si on les doit persecuter, etc.* This treatise was later translated into German and Dutch (1620, 1663). The publisher of the work was a wealthy Italian refugee, Bernardino Bonifazio, the Marquis d'Oria; Johannes Oporinus was the printer,

well known in Basel.<sup>3</sup> The book contained extracts promoting toleration taken from the writings of some twenty five Christian writers, ancient and modern, including Luther and Calvin himself. The preface was signed by a Martinus Bellius. An important part was the dedication of the work to Duke Christoph of Württemberg, also by Martinus Bellius, and a refutation by a Basil Monfort of the reasons usually given for the persecution. De Bčze, who was teaching at Lausanne, recognized Basel under the Magdeburg cover and suspected it was Castellio writing under the alias of Bellius, and Laelius Socinus and Celio Secondo Curione (Latinized name Coelius Secundus Curio) as the authors of the book.<sup>4</sup> They may in some way have collaborated in the work, but it was demonstrated that Castellio, disguised as "Bellius," "Monfort," and as "Georg Kleinberg" was the responsible author of the work.

### **Castellio, Scholar and Thinker**

Among the early Antitrinitarians, Castellio occupies a very special place. He was born in 1515 at Saint-Martin-du-Fresne, (or Châtillon-les-Dombes) the village of Bresse in Dauphiné, 35 miles from Geneva. His native French name was Châteillon, Châtillon, or Châtaillon, and under the Savoy rule Castelione or Castiglione, but because of his often-forced change of residence and polemics with foreigners, his name was written in various forms: Castalión, Castellón, Castellión. The most frequently used name, however, is the Latinized version, Castellio. His name was almost forgotten during the following centuries and his work that could have greatly influenced the movement for religious freedom remained silenced. Only in the nineteenth century his figure was brought out from oblivion by a monograph published by Ferdinand Buisson.<sup>5</sup> Castellio's enemies took care to prevent the spread of his ideas and his sympathizers were paralyzed by fear and persecution.

He was educated at the University of Lyon where he learned Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. At home he learned Italian and later also German. His education was indeed very vast so that he was recognized by the humanists and theologians as the most learned man of his epoch. After establishing himself as a classical scholar he found interest in the disputes and problems of the day. After all, in everyday life there were more disputes about the church and religious ideals than about Aristotle or Plato. Moreover, these problems had their immediate repercussions on the social and political life which were structured on religious doctrines. Like many before and after him, young Castellio watched with horror, the burning of the "heretics" at Lyon. He was deeply shaken by the immorality and cruelty of the Catholic Inquisition and by the supreme courage and conviction of the victims. New ideas of the Reformation spreading since 1517 offered a glimpse of hope for change so he decided to fight for the new doctrine of liberty. In a society where religious doctrines are used by the state to actively repress freedom of thought, he had three options: he could become a martyr by openly resisting the reign of terror; he could hide behind the pretense of scholarship concealing or disguising his private opinions; or he could seek refuge in a country

where freedom would be permitted, at least to a degree, and he could write and continue to fight for his cause.

Castellio left Lyon in 1540 and went to Strassburg where he adopted the reformed religion. The force attracting him to Strassburg was the growing reputation of Calvin as a reformer and champion of freedom, who was exiled there at this time. Calvin was the famed author of the *Institutio christianae religionis* in which he challenged King François I to introduce religious toleration and freedom of belief. Castellio remained in Strassburg for a week in a student hostel organized by Calvin's wife and made a great impression on Calvin. After Calvin was recalled to Geneva in 1541, he offered Castellio the position of teacher and rector at the newly organized academy of Geneva. He was also commissioned as a preacher at a church in Vandoeuvres, a suburb of Geneva.

As an exercise for teaching Latin, Castellio reworked the Old and New Testament into a dialogue in Latin and French. This small book was widely read throughout Europe and had about forty seven editions.<sup>6</sup> At the same time Castellio undertook the more ambitious task of translating the entire Bible into French and Latin. He found, however, resistance among the bookprinters in Geneva to print the first part of his Latin translation. No printer would do it in Geneva without express approval of Calvin. Calvin's reaction when Castellio called on him was negative. He already authorized another French translation for which he wrote a preface and felt threatened by the independent mind of Castellio. In a letter to Viret, he wrote: "Just listen to Sebastian's preposterous scheme, which makes me smile and at the same time angers me. Three days ago he called on me, to ask permission for the publication of his translation of the New Testament."<sup>7</sup> Calvin refused permission unless he reviewed the translation and made corrections he deemed appropriate. In the Geneva theocracy Calvin's opinions were infallible and final. Castellio, though independently minded, never claimed infallibility. He wrote in the preface to his later published translation that his translation is not without flaws as he himself could not understand many passages in the scripture and that the reader should use his own judgment.<sup>8</sup> He was, however, ready to profit from Calvin's advice and offered to read his manuscript to and discuss it with Calvin. Calvin sensed in Castellio an independent spirit who would not bend to his commands and decided to drive Castellio away from Geneva. He did not have to wait long for the occasion.

Finding his salary insufficient to support his family, Castellio sought a position of pastor, the experience for which he already had at Vandoeuvres. He made a formal application and was unanimously accepted by the Council on December 15, 1543. Calvin, as could be expected, entered a protest without reason. He wrote later to Farel: "There are important reasons against this appointment. To the Council I merely hinted of these reasons, without expressing them openly. At the same time to avert erroneous suspicion, I was careful to make no attack on his reputation, being desirous to protect

him." Calvin intended to create an atmosphere of ambiguity and suspicion around Castellio. He never confronted his opponent in the open or on an equal footing.

The reason Calvin stated for his treatment of Castellio was ostensibly a difference in the interpretations of two passages from the scripture: Castellio could not accept the Song of Solomon as a sacred text, but only as a profane poem, a sort of love poem, devoid of a metaphorical allusion to the church; and Castellio had a different explanation of Christ's descent into hell. For Calvin there was no room for any interpretative deviation, independent thought or refusal of his supremacy. However, Castellio treasured freedom of conscience for which he was ready to pay any price so that in the end he was not admitted to the ministry. He was called before the Council and charged by Calvin with "undermining the prestige of the clergy."

The Council was highly reluctant and unwilling to charge one of its most respected and valued citizens so Castellio was only censored and his duties as a preacher were suspended until a further decision could be made. Castellio in turn asked the Council to be dismissed from his duties and left Geneva for Basel disappointed and resentful against Calvin and his clergy. Before he left, however, in order to avoid any misunderstanding that he lost his office for misconduct he asked for a written statement about the affair, which Calvin reluctantly signed:

That no one may form a false idea of the reasons for the departure of Sebastian Castellio, we all declare that he has voluntarily resigned his position as rector of the college, and until now performed his duties in such a way that we regarded him worthy to become one of our preachers. If in the end, the affair was not thus arranged, this is not because any fault has been found in Castellio's conduct, but merely for the reasons previously indicated.<sup>9</sup>

These reasons were, as mentioned before a minor difference in interpretation of the scripture.

Calvin initially pretended to take a patronizing attitude toward Castellio, but when Castellio continued speaking out about Calvin's totalitarianism, Calvin changed his tone. The man once worthy of the office of pastor became a "beast." Castellio had to endure hardship and extreme poverty because he was ostracized as someone who opposed the most powerful reformer. He spent about eight years trying to support his family as a proof-reader at the printing houses of Oporin in Basel, a translator and manual laborer. Finally he became a lecturer of Greek at the University.

From a historical perspective of Servetus' sacrifice ten years later, the flight of Castellio from Geneva is completely justified. All his free time he devoted to his *opus magnum* -- the translation of the Bible from the original languages into Latin and French. He hoped to make it accessible to educated people by rendering the Bible into Latin and to the common people by translating it into the French vernacular. His contribution to France was similar to that of Luther to Germany. In 1553 he became

professor of Greek at the University of Basel and was popular among the students. De Bčze and Calvin, however, pressed the University authorities to regard him as a dangerous enemy of religion. In 1561 they almost succeeded and he contemplated seeking refuge in Poland. The persecution he suffered affected his health and he died in 1563 at the age of 48. He was buried in the tomb of the illustrious Grynaeus family of Münster. His enemies filled with hate and fanaticism exhumed his body and dispersed the ashes. Three young Polish noblemen, his students, erected a commemorative monument in the Münster cathedral. The monument was later damaged accidentally. Only the epitaph is preserved today.

In the National Library in Paris there are two volumes preserved of Castellio's manuscripts. Volume 1 contains: *Veritatis impedimentis; De Praedestinatione; De Justificatione; De Haereticis*. The second volume contains a work entitled *Michael Servetus* whose first chapter is an extract from *De Trinitatis erroribus*, and two folios on the baptism of infants.

### **The Struggle for Religious Tolerance and Freedom**

The Reformation which brought new ideas and independent thinking was met with furious repression from the church. Physical force was used to suppress it through the instrument of the civil authority. The Counter-Reformation, guided by the Inquisition, committed atrocities in Spain and France, massacres in the Vaudois valleys, and mass executions in the Low Countries. The early reformers suffered too much to be willing to approve these methods, so even Luther and Calvin at first condemned them. The Anabaptists represented a special target for persecution by both Catholics and Protestants since they were a political threat. The case of Servetus became, however, a test of their sincerity which they failed by approving of his death.

There was, however, a small minority of thinking people that stood on the principle that no one should be persecuted for his religious conviction and that conscience should not be subject to force. Before publication of Castellio's *De Haereticis an sint persequendi* (1554) and of Calvin's *Defensio*, Castellio attached to his Latin translation of the Bible of 1551 a preface with a dedication to Edward VI, the young Protestant king of England. It is considered the first manifesto in favor of toleration. Castellio wrote in his preface that religions make slow progress -- people engage in endless disputes, condemn those who differ and pretend to do it in the name of Christ. Yet Christians are inclined to tolerate the Turks and the Jews. This was in contrast to what Calvin wrote in 1548 urging the Duke of Somerset to an opposite policy against the enemies of the Reformation: that those who contribute to the confusion or those who remain obstinately attached to the superstitions of the Antichrist of Rome deserve to be repressed by the sword.

Castellio's French translation of the Bible was published in Basel in 1555 and was dedicated to King Henri de Valois II of France. The dedication is dated January 1, 1555, but the preface was written in 1553, and was circulated in manuscript form.<sup>10</sup>

Castellio indicates to the king that the world is troubled by great disturbances in the question of religion. There are so many contrary judgments and good and evil are so confused in the matter of religion that to disentangle the differences "there is danger lest the wheat be rooted out with the tares." He writes that the world made so many mistakes putting the prophets, the apostles, thousands of martyrs and even the Son of God to death under the banner of religion, and he urges: "An account must be given for all this blood by those who have been striking at random in the night of darkness .... Believe me, your Majesty, the world today is neither better nor wiser not more enlightened than formerly."

The dedication in *De Haereticis* addressed to the Duke Christoph of Württemberg is in itself a short treatise in defense of toleration.<sup>11</sup> Castellio begins with a story which is modeled on the situation of the biblical Jesus: Suppose that the Duke announced a visit to his subjects at an unspecified time and ordered them to put on a white garment, whenever he should arrive. Upon arrival of the Duke, the subjects ignored donning the white garment, but instead started quarrelling about the person of the Duke: some would say he is in Spain, some in France; some would say he would arrive on a horse, others in a chariot, etc. But the controversy would go so far that they would stab and kill each other, all in the name of the Duke. Then Castellio asks the Duke whether or not he would consider this conduct, which describes the actual situation in the Christian world, as deserving punishment.

After such an introduction Castellio proceeds to describe the world in which people spend their lives "in every manner of sin" and dispute not about the manner by which they may achieve their heavenly reward, but about the "state and office of Christ" -- the theoretical, theological issues (e.g., the Trinity, predestination, free will, the nature of God, of angels, the state of souls after life, etc.) which are absolutely not necessary for salvation. All this knowledge and false knowledge, he says, leads only to pride, cruelty, persecution, imprisonment, stakes and gallows, because no one wants to tolerate a differing opinion. All sects condemn each other and claim the truth for themselves only. If someone, however, tries to prepare "the white robe" by living justly, all others who differ with him in any opinion decry him as a heretic and ascribe to him unheard of crimes. But they commit a still higher offense when they justify their conduct according to the wish and in the name of Christ. At the same time they have no scruples against all moral offenses -- so they have everything *à rebours*: "they hate good and love evil." These differences in opinion concerning articles of religion such as the question of baptism or any other have no relevance to moral conduct. Castellio admonishes Christians to look into their own souls and examine themselves, to search their own conscience and restrain themselves from the condemnation of others. But on the contrary, says Castellio, we see reigning a license of judgment and wrongful shedding of blood: "I mean the blood of those who are called heretics, which name has become today so infamous, detestable, and horrible that there is no quicker

way to dispose of an enemy than to accuse him of heresy. The mere word stimulates such horror that when it is pronounced men shut their ears to the victim's defense, and furiously persecute not merely the man himself, but also those who dare to open their mouth on his behalf; by which rage it has come to pass that many have been destroyed before their cause was really understood."

Castellio, though a Renaissance man, was not yet a man of the Enlightenment who would return to the humanistic, natural moral ancient principles. He still admits that he "hated heretics." His quarrel is with the method of punishment and the arbitrary designation of who is the "heretic." He sees two dangers associated with designating someone a heretic: 1. a wrong man may be accused as happened with Jesus and is still worse in the situation today; 2. the other is that the heretic may be punished "more severely or in a manner other than required by Christian discipline." He mentions that in the ancient times Christians wrote against the pagans. Since he does not say anything about their persecution by Christians we have to assume that Castellio approved the persecution of pagans as just. But Christians started persecuting Christians once they themselves were no longer threatened and if someone's "conduct were irreproachable they would cavil at his doctrine of which the common man could not judge so easily as of conduct." So the work of Castellio is a collection of opinions of various people, especially contemporary, about persecution. He warns that many have changed their views: "for often it happens that when men first embrace the Gospel they think and judge well of religion so long as they are poor and afflicted, because poverty and affliction are peculiarly capable of the truth of Christ, who was himself poor and afflicted. But these same men, when elevated to riches and power, degenerate, and those who before defended Christ, now defend Mars and convert true religion into force and violence."

Castellio next praises the Duke and his advisor John Brenz. The Duke took a tolerant position with respect to heretics and even submitted to the Council of Trent on January 24, 1552, his own confession which was written by John Brenz. If others would have done as the Duke, says Castellio, "we should not have seen so many fires, so many swords dripping with the blood of the innocent .... O princes, open your eyes and make not so cheap the blood of men that you shed it thus lightly, especially for the sake of religion."

Castellio thinks it is necessary to explain who the heretics are in accordance with the word of God, in order to better understand how they should be treated. In the time of Paul this term did not have such a connotation as it has today. Only today they are considered worse than the avaricious or hypocrites, or the scurrilous or flatterers. But, he says, "Today no one is put to death for avarice, hypocrisy, scurrility, or flattery, of which it is often easy to judge, but for heresy, which it is not so simple to judge, yet so many are executed." After a careful examination Castellio discovers that "we regard those as heretics with whom we disagree." And this is evidenced by the fact that there



are many sects and each of them considers the others heretics. One can be orthodox in one city or region and held as heretic in another.

Next Castellio looks to the Bible for the definition of who the "heretic" is and finds the term used once in the Epistle of Paul to Titus (3:10, 11) in the form of  $\alpha_{\rho}\epsilon\tau\iota\kappa\acute{o}\varsigma_{\nu}\theta\rho\omega\pi\omicron\varsigma$  (hereticos anthropos = a divisive man) who discusses and "fights about the law" [obviously Mosaic]. Paul advises to have nothing to do with such people after two admonitions, as they are sinful and self-condemned. The same, according to Castellio, is the advice given by Christ in Matt. 18:15-17. (However, this last passage talks about the sinning of one church member against another and not about the theological disputes.) Nevertheless, if the one who was the offender does not listen to the whole congregation then he should be shunned. Castellio concludes that "The heretic is an obstinate man who does not obey after due admonition." Thus heretic = obstinate man and Castellio uses these terms interchangeably.

He then differentiates between two kinds of heretics: those who are obstinate in their moral conduct and the other, properly called heretics, who are "obstinate in spiritual matters and in doctrine." There is no controversy about the judgment of moral matters because the Christians and the infidels agree on them -- we all "have the law written in our hearts" (Rom. 2:15 with slight modification). In matters of religion, he writes, all agree only that there is one God, those who deny him are infidels and atheists and are deservedly to be abhorred. "And just as the Turks disagree with the Christians as to the person of Christ, and the Jews with both the Turks and the Christians, and the one condemns the other and holds him for a heretic, so Christians disagree with Christians on many points with regard to the teaching of Christ, and condemn one another and hold each other for heretics." The reason for these dissensions is ignorance of the truth.

So what is the solution? Castellio advises mutual toleration and persuasion and not condemnation as a method of convincing others about our truth: "Let us who are Christians not condemn one another, but, if we are wiser than they are, let us also be better and more merciful." Castellio's principle of toleration is based on being merciful toward those who do not know the truth. In this respect he deviates from the doctrine of Thomas Aquinas. He advises further mutual love and peace in disagreement with one another on matters of faith. But when Christians strive to hate and persecute each other they inspire the heathen with detestation for the Gospel:

We degenerate into Turks and Jews rather than convert them into Christians. Who would wish to be a Christian, when he sees that those who confessed the name of Christ were destroyed by Christians themselves with fire, water and the sword without mercy and were more cruelly treated than brigands and murderers? Who would not think Christ a Moloch, or some such god, if he wished that men should be immolated to him and burned alive? Who would wish to serve Christ on condition that a difference of opinion on a controversial point

with those in authority be punished by burning alive at the command of Christ himself more cruelly than in the bull of Phalaris, even though from the midst of the flames he should call with a loud voice upon Christ, and should cry out that he believed in Him? Imagine Christ, the judge of all, present. Imagine Him pronouncing the sentence and applying the torch. Who would not hold Christ for Satan? What more could Satan do than burn those who call upon the name of Christ? O Creator and King of the world, dost Thou see these things? Art Thou become so changed, so cruel, so contrary to Thyself? When Thou wast on earth none was more mild, more clement, more patient of injury. As a sheep before the shearer Thou wast dumb. When scourged, spat upon, mocked, crowned with thorns, and crucified shamefully among thieves, Thou didst pray for them who did thee this wrong. Art Thou now so changed? I beg Thee in the name of Thy Father, dost Thou now command that those who do not understand Thy precepts as the mighty demand, be drowned in water, cut with lashes to the entrails, sprinkled with salt, dismembered by the sword, burned at a slow fire, and otherwise tortured in every manner and as long as possible? Dost Thou, O Christ, command and approve of these things? Are they Thy vicars who make these sacrifices? Art Thou present when they summon Thee and dost Thou eat human flesh? If Thou, Christ, dost these things or if Thou commandest that they be done, what has Thou left for the devil? Dost Thou the very same things as Satan? O blasphemies and shameful audacity of men, who dare to attribute to Christ that which they do by the command and at the instigation of Satan!

These words do not need a commentary. They are the most passionate, the truest and the most bitter accusations of the whole post-Nicaean Christianity as could ever have been written.

The significance of the challenge by Castellio did not go unnoticed. Castellio together with other liberal Christians differentiated among the postulates of the faith certain fundamentals, essential beliefs and other matters that could be interpreted in different ways allowing certain flexibility. The goal was to eliminate as many as possible of these religious assertions from the sphere of controversy and constraint. Théodore de Bèze was outraged at the list of non-essentials suggested by Castellio and complained that if one allows freedom of religious thought, nothing would be left of the Christian doctrine. What was left of the Christian religion -- the doctrines of the role of Christ, the Trinity, the Lord's Supper, baptism, justification, free will, the state of souls after death -- were either useless or at least not necessary for salvation. Moreover, no one would be condemned as a heretic. He decided to defend Calvin in a work *De*

*haereticis a civili magistratu puniendis libellus, adversus Martini Belli farraginem, & novorum Academicorum sectam* (Geneva 1554). The book was later translated into French by Nicolas Colladon. De B ze felt that Servetus was "of all men that have ever lived the most wicked and blasphemous," and those who condemned his death were "emissaries of Satan." The burning of a heretic he compared to the killing of a wolf. He condemned liberty of conscience for which Castellio was pleading, as a "diabolical doctrine," arguing that, on historical and scriptural grounds, heretics are to be punished by the civil magistrate and in extreme cases to be put to death. The chief aim of society, according to him, is to maintain religion. Belief is central to salvation and society must defend itself from blasphemy which leads souls to eternal death. Thus de B ze only supported those Catholics who in their policy of exterminating the Protestants reached a culminating point in the St. Bartholomew's day massacre in France.<sup>12</sup>

Only a small minority opposed these views. Among them were those who escaped persecution in Italy and France and now were disillusioned that a Protestant Inquisition was threatening to replace the Catholic one. Calvin saw in Castellio a beast as poisonous as he was wild and stubborn. In turn Castellio responded to Calvin's *Defensio* with *Contra libellum Calvini in quo ostendere conatur haereticos jure gladii coercendos esse*. Appended to this was a brief *Historia de morte Serveti*.<sup>13</sup> The book was circulated in anonymous manuscripts, but the authorship was established by the discovery of the last sheet of the unpublished original manuscript in Castellio's hand in the Library at the University of Basel. Calvin suspected Martin Cellarius, professor of the Old Testament at the University of Basel as the author of the book.<sup>14</sup> All three pamphlets are recognized by scholars as written by Castellio.<sup>15</sup> The book was first published in 1612 in Holland as part of the struggle for toleration by the Arminians or Remonstrants (from the name of its leader Dutch theologian, Jacobus Arminius, 1560-1609) against the Calvinists in Holland. It had on its front page a typographical error suggesting the date as either 1562 or 1612, though it was actually written in 1554. This publication appeared in 1612 apparently to counteract the Dutch translation of de B ze's *De Haereticis* published in 1601. The author states that he is not a disciple of Servetus and does not defend the doctrine of Servetus, but attacks Calvinists and Calvin, describing him as bloodthirsty. The book was written in the form of a dialogue/commentary between a Calvinus and Vaticanus. Vaticanus speaks:

To kill a man is not to protect a doctrine, but it is to kill a man. When the Genevans killed Servetus, they did not defend a doctrine, they killed a man. To protect a doctrine is not the magistrate's affair (what has the sword to do with doctrine?) but the teacher's. But it is the magistrate's affair to protect the teacher, as it is to protect the farmer and the smith, and the physician and others against injury. Thus if Servetus had wished to kill Calvin, the magistrate would properly have

defended Calvin. But when Servetus fought with reasons and writings, he should have been repulsed by reasons and writings.<sup>16</sup>

Castellio replies to Calvin's assumption that God put the sword in the hand of the magistrate to defend the doctrine:

Paul calls sound doctrine that which renders men sound, i.e., endowed with charity, unfeigned faith and a good conscience; but unsound, that which renders them meddlesome, quarrelsome, insolent, ungodly, unholy, profane, murderers of fathers, etc. (1 Tim. 1:5,9), and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine. But they observe the law, for they take for sound those who agree with them about Baptism, about the Supper, about Predestination, etc. Such men, though they be covetous, envious, slanderers, hypocrites, liars, buffoons, usurers, and whatever else opposed to sound doctrine, are easily endured, nor is anyone killed for men's vices, unless one has committed murder or theft or some atrocious crime of this sort, or has displeased the preachers, for this with them is just like a sin against the Holy Spirit, as is now said in a proverb everywhere common. But if one disagrees with them about Baptism, or the Supper, Justification, faith, etc., he is a Heretic, he is a Devil, he must be opposed by all men on land and sea, as an eternal enemy of the Church, and a wicked destroyer of sound doctrine, even though his life be otherwise blameless, yea gentle, patient, kind, merciful, generous, and indeed religious and god-fearing, so that in his conduct neither friends nor enemies have anything to complain of. All these virtues and this innocence of life (which Paul did not think it unseemly to approve in himself) cannot with them protect a man from being regarded as wicked and blasphemous, if he disagrees with them in any point of religion.<sup>17</sup>

Castellio, because of his position of toleration, was justly heralded by his supporters in modern times as the precursor of Pierre Bayle and Voltaire who would reclaim "this toleration or rather this freedom of conscience" later.<sup>18</sup> It was emphasized that he used modern arguments and was the first "who established the true principles of religious tolerance and freedom of conscience."<sup>19</sup> But he was not completely free of the intolerance that marked the Christianity of his era. He based his scepticism on the obscurity of the Bible: "One has to understand that there are many difficulties in the Bible, some are related to the words, some to the sense and still others to both."<sup>20</sup> And further he adds: "When I write that I do not understand a certain passage or other, I do not want, however, to give the impression that I understand well all the others ...."<sup>21</sup> Castellio continues stating that all sects base their doctrines on the word of God and declare that their religion is the only true one. So did Calvin who declared that others were in error. Calvin wanted to be the judge as do the leaders of other sects. Castellio

believed that the intention and secret counsel of God are revealed only to "the believers, humble, devout, believing in God and illuminated by the Holy Spirit."<sup>22</sup> Castellio relied on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit for revelation of the profound sense of the scripture and this inspiration is for him fused with the conscience.<sup>23</sup> But he admits two fundamental and obligatory confessions of belief: belief in God and in Jesus Christ, the Savior. He is indifferent to other religious doctrines and consequently tolerant with respect to the doctrines he does not admit as necessary for salvation. Thus he does not reject the concept of the "heretic." Castellio makes a digression in the text of his *Contra libellum* after paragraph 129 entitled "Who is a heretic and how should he be treated." He differentiates here, as did Calvin, three types of sects: pious, impious and middle. The class of the impious is not different from the same class differentiated by Calvin: "The impious are the contemptors of God, blasphemers, enemies and mockers of all religion, who do not believe the Holy Scripture any more than the profane writings; they are avaricious men, licentious, and great sectarians of voluptuosity. The majority of them are apostates who at first believed the Gospel and then became atheists." For comparison this was the description of the third class of heretics by Calvin: "But since there are those who attempt to undermine religion at its foundations, and who profess execrable blasphemies against God and by impious and poisonous dogmas they drag the soul to ruin, in sum -- those who attempt to revolt the public from the unique God and his doctrine, it is necessary to have a recourse to the extreme measure in order to prevent further spreading of the mortal poison. Such a rule which Moses received from the mouth of God he himself had followed faithfully."<sup>24</sup>

Now, in an attempt to deal with heretics Castellio falls into the same trap of contradictions as Calvin did: "It is easy to judge which sect is the best from its fruits: it is the one whose members believe in Christ, obey him and imitate his life, regardless of their name - Papists, Lutherans, Zwinglians, Anabaptists or any other. For the truth is not founded in the name but in the acts." So far so good -- one has to judge people by their action. However, having said this Castellio continues: "But if they deny God, if they blaspheme, if they overtly speak ill of the holy doctrine of the Christians, if they detest the holy life of the pious, I abandon them to the magistrates for punishment not because of their religion, which they do not have, but because of their irreligion." This is exactly the same position as Calvin's. The difference between Calvin and Castellio, however, is in the definition of the true religion, hence; those who for Calvin are "heretics", are not "heretics" for Castellio. For Castellio wrote: "Calvin described for us such a monster [i.e., Calvin's definition of a "heretic"] which I would be far from willing to defend and agree that they should rightly perish who openly teach abandonment of the unique God. But I do not believe that such are those who dissent with Calvin and whom Calvin holds as heretics. For instance, there are many Zwinglians, Lutherans, Anabaptists, and Papists who differ in most important matters, but who venerate one God and teach that He should be venerated. Moreover, I do not

believe that even Servetus himself (whom Calvin has wanted to describe here as such) belonged to them."<sup>25</sup> Thus in principle Castellio agrees with Calvin that if the heretic acts as described by Calvin, he should be punished by death.

Though Castellio's book, *Contra libellum Calvini* was published only in 1612 in Holland as a reply to the Dutch translation of de Bčze's *De haereticis* it was generally assumed until 1938 that Castellio was refuted by de Bčze without reply. In 1938 a Dutch professor Bruno Becker discovered in the library of the Remonstrant community in Rotterdam two manuscripts -- one in Latin and one in French.<sup>26</sup> The title in Latin corresponded to that of the title of the treatise by de Bčze: *De haereticis a civili magistratu non puniendis, pro Martini Bellii farragine, adversus Theodori Bezae libellus. Authore Basilio Montfortio.*<sup>27</sup> It was written by Castellio (finished in March 11, 1555) under the pseudonym of Basilius Montfortius -- thus de Bčze was indeed refuted by Castellio. The book repeats most of the previous arguments and its principal thesis is that the magistrate has no right to punish heretics.

Castellio, however, is more explicit on the limitations of toleration. The magistrate can punish transgressions against the natural religion which is imprinted in all men. For the first time Castellio uses here the term "natural religion." "If someone denies the existence of God, his power and his goodness, as well as the obligation to adore him, if someone blasphemes God openly, we are far from preventing the magistrate to punish such a man. For he sins against the natural law (*la loi de nature*) which by the visible things teaches all peoples about the eternal power and divinity of God. Such people should then be punished not because of their religion, for they do not have any, but because of their irreligion." The same attitude takes Castellio against the apostates: "If a Christian would renounce the confession of faith, if he would reject entirely the Bible and teach his error to others -- I would not protest should the magistrate punish such a man." The treatise ends with a conclusion in which Castellio prophetically warns the Calvinists and the Swiss churches, because they are the authors of the Servetus sentence:

You see clearly what is the mood in the present times. Princes are eager to shed blood under any pretext more than you would wish for them to do. In Italy, in France, in Germany, in Spain, and in England blood of God-fearing people is diligently shed under the name of 'heretics.' Those in Locarno, your brothers and neighbors are banished against your wish. Among you (and here I take as witness your own conscience) reigns enmity, hatred and dissension secret as well as manifest. Between you and the Lutherans there is major discord. Among yourselves, charity is decreased which you do not deny. You see with your own eyes how from one day to another your religion and your work is crumbling. Your magistrates do not love you any more, and among themselves they complain because of your audacity and

malice which you use against your adversaries. People hate you too. You set yourselves one against the other. All the time you are in quarrel and debate. You are more eager to harm each other than to offer help and support. Briefly, your entire edifice is in ruin. And you have the audacity in these times to publish your law ordering to put to death the heretics? Oh people deprived of any sense, consider a little the prudence of a physician and learn from it your lesson.

How prophetic were these words when during the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 the Catholic church used the arguments of de Bčze and Calvin against the Calvinists in France.<sup>28</sup>

There is also another refutation of the de Bčze treatise written in 1590 independently of Castellio's response. It was written in Holland by a Dutch Catholic, Thierry Coornhert "*Procčs contre le supplice des hérétiques et contre la contrainte de la conscience.*"<sup>29</sup> Coornhert knew very well the works of Castellio -- he translated three of them into Dutch. Like Castellio he believed in "the truth all-powerful and always triumphant." And Castellio did not doubt in the victory of the truth: "And you want to subdue the truth by your eloquence? Don't you know that God himself surpasses the sages in their wisdom? Don't you know that the cunning of those who used it before you is now by the light of God put into the open? Climb to the tops of mountains and try to prevent the day from breaking out -- it will break out anyway. Your finesse will be uncovered by the light of the truth .... No calumny, no eloquence, no prudence, shortly no power or force will protect you from being exposed as you have exposed others."

In October of 1562 Castellio wrote another book, *Conseil à la France désolée. Auquel est montré la cause de la guerre présente, et le remède qui y pourrait estre mis; et principalement est avisé si on doit forcer les consciences*,<sup>30</sup> in defense of tolerance and freedom of conscience. After the death of Henri II in 1559, the government of France showed some tendency toward reconciliation, but from the time of the regency of Catherine de Médécis who was influenced by the chancellor, Michel de l'Hopital, France entered a period of a fraternal religious war. Castellio addressed all warring parties, Catholics on the one side and Evangelicals on the other, in order to bring them to peace. *Conseil* is his most mature and personal work in which he develops the principle of tolerance and freedom of conscience based on a rational, humanistic and naturalistic principle of morals.

In *Conseil* at first Castellio deplors the current state of France torn by fraternal religious war and describes as the general cause of this "disease" the constraint of conscience. The conflict was triggered by three important historical events listed by Castellio: the conspiracy of Amboise, the Edict of January 1562, and the Massacre of Wassy.

The conspiracy of Amboise was a reaction of Protestant nobility to the bloody

persecution during the reign of Henri II. It was an attempt to prevent the new king, François II, who was influenced by the Catholic side, from repeating the same atrocities. The attempt failed and almost all of the conspirators were massacred by hanging from the balconies of the château in Amboise.

The Edict of January 1562 allowed a small measure of tolerance by allowing some religious Protestant services outside the towns and private practice in the families. These concessions were not recognized by the Catholic party which unleashed an armed reaction forcing the Protestants to arm themselves.

An incident occurring in Wassy is considered the trigger for starting the fraternal war. On March 1, 1562, Duke François de Guise, accompanied by an armed escort traveled through the small village of Wassy in Champagne and spotted a small Protestant group attending a service in a barn led by their pastor. The soldiers of the duke broke into the barn and massacred all of the of men and women. As a reaction to this event hostilities erupted in several places in France. Atrocities were committed by both parties, Catholic and Protestant. Protestants suffered for a long time at the hands of Catholics and Catholics were exasperated by the growth in number of and the vandalism committed by the iconoclastic Protestants.

Castellio's book was a passionate and personal reponse to this madness, a pacifist manifesto. Castellio tries to be objective and, in order not to insult any party, avoids terms like Papists or Huguenots. Next he indicates to both parties the false remedy to the problem they are using in the form of war. Addressing each of the parties Castellio reminds the Catholics how they treated the Evangelicals: "You have pursued and imprisoned them and left them to be consumed by lice and to rot in foul dungeons in hideous darkness and the shadow of death, and then you have roasted them alive at a slow fire to prolong their torture." Their "crime" was that they did not believe in the pope, Mass, purgatory and other things which are not found in the scripture. Castellio appeals to their rational and humanistic moral sense asking, "Would you wish this be done unto you?" and indicates to them that they will have to answer for their cruelty on the judgment day. Addressing the Evangelicals, Castellio points out how they changed -- after suffering persecution and enduring it with patience they became aggressive and took to arms. They even "force brothers to take arms against brothers and those of their own religion contrary to conscience." They employ the same means as their enemies: they shed blood, they force conscience and they condemn as infidels those who do not agree with their doctrine. Thus they do to others what they would not have done unto themselves.

Next, Castellio exhorts both sides putting forward his arguments for freedom of conscience based on reason and humanistic moral principles. To be sure, he quotes the scripture, especially the natural, humanistic moral rule of Tobit (4:15). To support his thesis Castellio presents an analysis of the scripture and finds no indication there for the constraint of conscience, except for the Law of Moses which had no application to



Christians and which was applied under very restricted conditions. Constraint of conscience produces many abominable results: by killing others, Christians become murderers; they make their souls perish: "*De telle mesure que vous mesuré, il vous sera remesuré;*" they scandalize all true Christians; they discredit in the eyes of the Turks and Jews the name of Jesus and his doctrine -- the Jews and Turks see only carnage, blood and war; they produce only enmity, rancor and violence among Christians; being a Christian should be a voluntary act -- forced Christians are not good Christians. As an example of an erroneous use of force Castellio cites the fate of Zwingli, who was successful in evangelizing as long as he used words, when he took up arms he lost the central cantons in Switzerland to the Catholics and he himself fell at the battle of Kappel with Emperor Charles V on October 11, 1531.

As the only solution to the problem and as a prevention of perpetual wars, fraternal extermination and the destruction of France, Castellio proposes that both religions be free and be allowed to flourish. He makes reference to a little book *Exhortation aux princes et seigneurs du conseil privé du Roy* which was published anonymously, but was authored by Estienne Pasquier, a Catholic partisan of moderation. Pasquier gave the same advice: permit both churches to function in France. Castellio then discusses the meaning of the term "heretic." This term, he says, is not used in its etymological meaning as a "sect," a philosophical or religious group, or a group of monks -- it means now "a bad sect." He reminds both parties that the laws concerning the killing of "heretics" were derived from the wrong interpretation of the Old Testament to which they both adhere and which was abolished by Christ. Moreover, the Mosaic law was applicable only to those who were considered "false prophets" and "blasphemers" who consciously reviled God. Moreover, certain conditions applied to them: they had to predict a sign or a miracle; the sign or miracle had to come to be; they must have taught people to adore strange gods. These laws cannot be, without committing a sin, extended to cover those who err in their opinions. In the Gospel there is nothing against heretics except advice to avoid them. Castellio advises only excommunication as the only weapon used against "heretics," and this should be used only after several admonitions, never killing. Moreover, excommunication is the prerogative of the church and not of the magistrate. The magistrate should leave the heretics alone and should ask the theologians: "Show us the law by which God would command and we will follow it."

Castellio follows this advice now and dispells the arguments against toleration from possible inconveniences which could be produced: troubles and sedition, and spreading of false doctrines. Sedition he claims does not come from heresy but from tyranny and persecution. Tyranny is a greater evil than a heresy since it kills the soul and the body of the tyrant, and it creates a reaction of "force by force." The remedy to the spreading of the heresy should not be a worse evil and more damaging than the evil is to the remedy. One should resist heretics by good and proper methods. One should combat

them by truth which is always more powerful than lies. Castellio admits that people should be forbidden to listen to the heretics. Those listening should be admonished and held for disobeying. Even Anabaptists who, according to Castellio, are in the greatest error, should be allowed to maintain their own church. If they are able to maintain their church against all the words of the learned theologians, how much more should the true doctors be able to maintain the true church?

The book ends with special personal appeals. To the preachers Castellio quotes the Old Testament (Lamentations, 4:12) that preachers who incite killing are murderers. To the princes he advises them to be wise and to follow the pacifist doctrine so that they should not fall into the "pit of perdition." Finally in an appeal to the private citizens he advises:

Do not be so ready to follow those who push you to take arms and kill your brothers and to gain nothing else except God's condemnation. For certainly those who lead you beguile you and make you do things for which they truly will have to answer for you, but for which you yourselves will not be exhonored. For both the one who gives bad advice and the one who follows it, will be punished. May the Lord give you the grace to come to your good senses later rather than never, and should this happen I would praise the Lord. Should it not, at least I would have done my duty and hope that someone will learn something and recognize that I said the truth. Should it be only one person, my trouble would not have been lost in vain.

In 1563 *Conseil* found its way to Geneva where the members of the Geneva Consistory of Pastors found the book "full of error" and ordered it to be destroyed.<sup>31</sup> Today there are only four copies of the original edition preserved. Thus Castellio overcame his earlier reservations and recognized the right of almost everyone to have a free conscience and not to be bound by a dogmatic religious principle -- because such a principle sooner or later must lead to intolerance and persecution. But, he would not agree yet to award the same right to the atheists, apostates and nonbelievers nor would he separate church and state. One had to wait for such ideas for Pierre Bayle (1647-1704) and for the Socinians a century later. But then these ideas were not founded either on the scripture or any religion but on the principles of reason and a religion truly concerned with morals has to accept them.

In 1555 there appeared in Basel another eloquent defense of Servetus entitled *Apology for Servetus* under the name of Alphonso Lincurius of Tarragona.<sup>32</sup> It was later appended to *Libri quinque Declarationis Iesu Christi filii Dei, sive de unico Deo et unico filio eius* published in the collection *Bibliotheca Anti-Trinitariorum* by Sandius in Amsterdam in 1685. There is a manuscript of the *Apologia* in the library of Basel corrected by the handwriting of Curione. It is generally accepted now that the text of the apology was written by Celio Secondo Curione, an Italian refugee and

professor of classic at the University of Basel. The treatise *Liber quinque Declarationis* is the work of Servetus and is preceded by a preface also written by Curione.<sup>33</sup>

Coelius Secundus Curione (b. in Moncaglieri in the province of Turin in 1503 - d. in Basel in 1569), the youngest of twenty three children, entered the monastery where he read the Bible he inherited from his father and decided against being a monk. After several narrow escapes from the Inquisition in Italy, he fled to Switzerland via the Grisons where he met with Camillo Renato, an Antitrinitarian, and became rector of the newly founded University of Lausanne in 1542. In 1546 he went to Basel where he taught ancient classics at the University until his death. He gained a wide reputation, attracted many students coming from foreign countries including Poland. He declined invitations by the Pope to Rome, by the Duke of Savoy to Turin, from the Emperor to the University in Vienna, and from the prince of Transylvania to the new college established at Alba Julia. He was not a confessed theologian, nevertheless he wrote a treatise *Christianae religionis institutio*, published in 1549, from which he omitted any mention of the Trinity or the deity of Christ as a doctrine necessary for salvation. In 1550, he attended the Anabaptist Council at Venice and in 1554 wrote a work dedicated to the Polish king, Sigismundus Augustus, *De amplitudine beati regni Dei*, in which he opposed Calvin's doctrine of predestination. He was accused by Vergerio of Strassburg in 1559 of heresy, but was exonerated by the University of Basel. Curione was very careful not to commit himself to any compromising doctrinal position, nevertheless his writings and his association with Castellio, Ochino and Laelius Socinus make him one of the precursors of the Unitarian-Socinian movement. The views of Castellio gradually spread. In 1557 or 1558, an Italian scholar, Acontius (Aconzio Contio), no longer safe in Italy crossed the Alps and appeared in Basel where he published his first work. He was acquainted with Castellio's writings and upon returning to Basel from England in 1564, published a fresh manifesto, *Satanae stratagemata*, in favor of liberty of conscience and tolerance in the spirit of Castellio's work. The French translation appeared in 1565 and an English translation in 1940 by Charles D. O'Malley. The struggle for freedom of conscience reached a culmination in the Grisons at Chur in 1571 in the form of a debate between Egli and Gantner, two ministers. The issue involved the question of punishing "heretics." They drew their materials from the works of Castellio and de B ze's *De Haereticis*.

Another Italian refugee scholar, Mino Celsio of Siena, appeared in the Grisons in 1569. He was perhaps converted to Protestantism by Bernardino Ochino and had to flee the Inquisition under Pope Paul IV. He was disappointed by the quarrels and the defense of persecution among the Protestants and the controversy between Egli and Gantner disturbed him. He wrote a book on the subject, first in Italian, and moved to Basel. Here he was engaged in literary work and edited Castellio's Latin and French New Testament. He translated his own work into Latin (*In haereticis coercendis*

*quatenus progredi liceat: Mini Celsi Senensis disputatio. Ubi nominatum eos ultimo supplicio affici non debere aperte demonstratur.* Christlingae, 1577). Christlingen was a fictitious location and the unsold sheets of the book were published later under the title, *Mini Celsi Senensis de haereticis capitali supplicio non afficiendis* (1584). This work used as a basis the French edition of Castellio's *Traité des hérétiques...* Later, all the material was compiled together: the scriptural testimony in favor of toleration, testimonies of various writers, answers to all arguments against toleration, and the duty of the magistrate not to use force in opposing religious error. It became a practical manual for the defense of freedom of conscience. The condensation of Celsio's work was published in 1661 in Dutch in Amsterdam by Daniel Zwicker, a Socinian writer, entitled *Vereenings Schrift der Christenen*, followed by the Latin edition in 1662, *Henoticum Christianum, seu disputationis Mini Celsi Senensis, Quatenus in haereticis coercendi progredi liceat? Lemmata patissima.*

Faustus Socinus, later associated with the anti-Trinitarian Socinians, while sojourning in Basel between 1574 and 1577, became acquainted with Castellio's writings and contributed a preface to Castellio's posthumous *Dialogi quatuor*, under the pseudonym of Felix Turpio. It was published in 1578. In his early works he was considerably influenced by Castellio's thought that had a special influence in Holland. Here the struggle against the Catholics was won and the Republic was proclaimed in 1578. But a form of Calvinism more strict than that in Geneva emerged, and a new battle for religious freedom had to be fought. The pioneer of this struggle was Dirk Valkertsz Coornhert (1522-1590) who opposed the obligatory confession of faith. The chief stumbling block was the theory of predestination. He translated two of Castellio's tracts (1581, 1582) and became an advanced herald of the liberalizing movement known in the next generation as Arminianism. Reaction followed in the form of de Bčze's work (1601) and opposed by the publication of Castellio's *Contra libellum Calvinii* (1612 and in Dutch, 1613). Remonstrants (or Arminians) were influenced by Castellio's conclusions in his *Dialogues* and took his four arguments and the fifth from another tract in their five-point rebuttal of Calvin. The Unitarian movement eventually recognized in its theology that the principles of freedom, reason and tolerance were a necessary condition for the fullest development of religious thought and life.

The figure of Servetus stands out at the beginning of the movement. In the later phase Castellio deserves more ample recognition than he received. He is entitled even more than Servetus to be considered the real founder of liberal Christianity. He was unequalled in his thought and the first and the most important is the principle of absolute tolerance of differing views. This is an outgrowth of an entirely new concept of religion as centered not in dogma but in life and character. It is the very essence of this kind of religion to regard freedom and reason not as incidental but as fundamental conditions of a thoroughly wholesome existence of religion. At a time of extreme dogmatism, Castellio was the first to emphasize and place a firm and enduring

foundation for the principle of tolerance.

The movement for tolerance grew out of the influence of Castellio and his associates in Basel. Many who disapproved of Servetus' doctrine, disapproved of his being put to death. His execution stood as a symbol of religious persecution, his name became a symbol for martyrdom for freedom of conscience. Servetus gave an indirect stimulus to the rise of religious toleration as a general policy, as a moral principle. It took a long time before the idea was gradually and slowly accepted in various parts of the world. Heresy was punished as capital crime in England until 1612, in Geneva until 1687, in Scotland until 1697, in Poland until 1776 with an interval between 1552 and 1660 when some freedom was allowed. Only the Anabaptists and Socinians defended toleration on the basis of principle and without any restrictions.

After a delay of four centuries, Castellio's ideas of religious freedom and tolerance were grudgingly adopted by the Catholic church at the Vatican II Council.

During the trial of Servetus, Matteo Gribaldi, a jurist from Padua, happened to come to Geneva. When he was told about Servetus he expressed his opinion that one should not die for one's ideas however heretical. Laelius Socinus, in reaction to the sacrifice of Servetus wrote to a friend in Geneva that the blood of Abel was crying out to God. Ochino returned from England and reached Geneva the day after the execution.

Guillaume Postel, without ever having heard of Servetus until his death, saw in Italy a manuscript of what may have been the first draft of *Christianismi restitutio*. He found in it a resemblance to his own theological views on the world-soul and the Trinity and regarded Servetus' ideas as his own. On Servetus' behalf, he wrote *Apologia Serveto Villanovano, de anima mundi...* (Venice 1555). He pleaded for freedom of conscience and speech in religion.

Castellio, like Servetus, was a precursor of rationalism that was first propounded by Montaigne (1533-1592) and later by René Descartes (1596-1650). One has to look for the principles that inspired Castellio to Greek stoicism and to Ramón de Sabunde's (d. 1436) work *Theologia naturalis* (1431). Castellio emphasized that reason is the fundamental faculty of the human being. Man and human reason are what counted for him i.e. humanism and rationalism. Man, according to Castellio, will follow his nature the "effects of which are corrected by the culture that follows the natural way." Castellio rose in defense of Servetus by his work, though anonymously, but even this required courage. His work, *De haereticis...*, was translated into Dutch in 1620 and again in 1663. To the fact that Castellio was read in Holland, R.H. Bainton attributes the establishment there of religious freedom.<sup>34</sup> But this was not done without struggle.

Six years after the publication of Castellio's work, a synod at Delft sanctioned a priest, Dirk Boon, for having translated the work.<sup>35</sup> In 1954 a facsimile edition of the original publication from Basel was published in 176 pages. The work was translated into English by Bainton in 1935 and the French translation was edited in 1913.<sup>36</sup> The ideas of Castellio were introduced to England through the labor of pastor Haemstede who

was in charge of the Dutch colony in London and eventually was expelled from England. The most conspicuous and developed expression of the ideas originally postulated by Castellio was formulated by the Socinians a century later in their treatises.

In the eighteenth century a movement in the defense of Servetus rose again with the plea made by Voltaire against Calvin by publishing a detailed exposition of the trial. The French Revolution brought a new vigor to the ideas of religious freedom and a number of writers condemned Calvin and wrote panegyrics on Servetus. Protestant pastor Henri Tollin was especially active publishing some 76 works on Servetus.

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## CHAPTER 9

### Epilogue

Servetus was considered a blasphemous heretic by historians until 1730, when Jean Gautier, then secretary of state in Geneva, was the first to examine the records of the trial at Geneva while editing a book on the history of Geneva and, in a footnote, he ventured to correct the unfavorable view of Servetus.<sup>1</sup> Earlier an English *littérateur*, Michel de la Roche, visited Geneva and was permitted to see the records. He published copious extracts and a commentary favorable to Servetus.<sup>2</sup> The first study of the life of Servetus was published by Johann Lorenz Mosheim in 1748<sup>3</sup> and the records of the trial at Vienne were published by abbé d'Artigny in 1749. The reversal in opinion reached a climax when Voltaire, indefatigable defender of human rights, published in Geneva in 1756, *Essai sur les moeurs*, in which he defended the right to free thought and conscience. He defended Servetus as a victim of ecclesiastical totalitarianism, and attacked Calvin as the person directly responsible for Servetus's martyrdom: "[Calvin] avait une âme atroce, aussi bien qu'un esprit éclairé."<sup>4</sup> This caused a sensation in Europe and Voltaire was refused access to the records of the trial. The city Council wanted to bury the affair in oblivion. Only in the nineteenth century were the documents made public. Similarly Servetus's first defender and propagator of tolerance of religion, Sebastian Castellio, was left in oblivion until the end of the nineteenth century when he was rediscovered by Ferdinand Buisson.

Attempts to diminish Servetus's significance and to discredit him as a person, regrettably, exist even today. As an example we may quote the work of Francisco Vega Díaz who, through Freudian analysis and often silly conjectures, tries to explain the peculiarities of Servetus's personality and his enormous motivation and drive for his doctrine and interpretation of Christianity.<sup>5</sup> He, however, indicates correctly that Servetus observed all abuses and moral degeneracy of the clergy already in Spain and not only in Rome which he described in his *Christianismi restitutio*. It is interesting, however, that Díaz talks only about social disorders among clergy and "alteration of the execution of the Catholic dogma." He does not want to notice what was the Servetus's concern -- the perversion of the total Christian doctrine.

In the past, the only role of Servetus which was occasionally mentioned as important by the Spanish intellectuals was the description of pulmonary circulation. Ortega y Gasset, e.g., only mentions Servetus as one among others who was important in the "development of the stages in recovery of the sciences as such." Though the closest in temperament to Servetus seems to be Miguel Unamuno, who refers to Servetus only from his own megalomaniac perspective: comparing his personality to that of the great Spaniards who by accident were also named Miguel.

Francisco Vega Díaz motivated undoubtedly by his Catholic ideology and urge to discredit the Servetus doctrine, tends to claim that it was an expression of a rather

neurotic character, of a lonely, mentally unstable individual, which was conditioned by presumed defects in his childhood upbringing, his socio-cultural environment in Villaneuva de Sijena (even implying that his theological position was due to his possible Jewish background), his presumed syphilitic medical condition, and other Freudian conjectures. All these negative assumptions about Servetus have no basis either in known facts or in his writings. They are just invented by Díaz for the purpose of blunting the acuteness of Servetus's analysis.

The Spanish scholar proposes, after his analysis of Servetus's biography, to discard the old "myths" and replace them with a new understanding of Servetus. He has two points of contention. One is the exaggeration in Spanish scholarship of the importance for science of the discovery of pulmonary circulation. This discovery was unknown until Wotton brought it to light some one hundred forty eight years later and already after the discovery of William Harvey. Servetus's discovery was thus an initial step, and, in addition, not known. We may agree that some Spanish scholars were carried away by their national pride, but there is no myth in recognizing the fact that Servetus was the first who left in a published work a complete description of pulmonary circulation and implied knowledge of general circulation.

The second point of contention concerns the death of Servetus as a martyr suffering death in defense of his ideas and his faith. Vega Díaz on the one hand reluctantly recognizes Servetus's uniqueness in the history of Christianity, but on the other he questions his heterodoxy and implies that his intellectual state was conditioned by his presumed disease and mental imbalance. Such an attitude can be understood if we consider that Vega Díaz operates within the framework of traditional Christian doctrine. In general, Spanish scholars in history, philosophy, or in the history of ideas ignored the ideas and doctrines of Servetus. Professor Alcalá is very generous trying to explain this status by simple negligence, "descuido," or "olvido" on their part. But the reasons for this state are more profound. The research plan developed by Servetus was not acceptable either to the Catholics or to the Protestants, because it questioned the fundamental assumption of the traditional Christian faith. Both groups could eventually, most often with difficulty, discuss the theological questions as long as they stayed within the framework of accepted basic assumptions. Servetus's program was a revolutionary program which can be compared to a certain degree to that of Copernicus who abolished the entire religious world-view based on the Bible. Eventually Copernicus could be accepted because science emancipated itself from religion and became parallel to it. It was now a problem for religion to find accommodation to science. Servetus demanded a much more profound change in mentality, he demonstrated that the accepted fundamental Christian doctrine does not have any biblical basis. He abolished the basic myth of Christian doctrine and such a program could not find accommodation either within Catholic or Protestant Christianity. To evaluate his significance and recognize his role one has to look at the

issue from the a neutral perspective in an intellectual environment free from religious domination. Such an intellectual position was not possible for historical reasons until the nineteenth century. Needless to say, however, the ferment produced by Servetus and the reaction to his martyrdom initiated the necessary processes. Only now is it possible to fully evaluate and appreciate the genius of Servetus. Servetus does not need any myth; the testimonies of his life and of his achievements stand on their own.

Calvin is undoubtedly the immediate culprit of Servetus's martyrdom, but as emphasized by Professor Doumergue, he represented the broader ecclesiastical doctrine inherited from the Catholic church. Servetus was denounced by Calvin in Vienne resulting in his condemnation by the Catholic church. It was only by chance that Servetus was not burned alive there but in effigy. The second crime committed by Calvin was Servetus's condemnation and burning in person in Geneva. Calvin treated Servetus in prison cruelly, keeping him in inhumane conditions -- Servetus was chained in his cell with the windows boarded to prevent him from looking outside, refused a change of clothes and defense by an attorney in spite of his requests. Professor Édouard Herriot, mayor of Lyon described Servetus' reaction to his death sentence:

Servetus began to cry. Let's not blush for him; for it is his glory, amidst those delirious brutes, to have been only a sincere and true human. Until the end he believed in the possibility of the triumph of good faith; it was the duty of a reasonable man to cling to life. Christianity gave us idiotic ideas with respect to this point. Greek paganism, infinitely more enlightened, never committed a similar error. Servetus cried for a few moments as cries Alceste in the tragedy of Euripidus at the moment when he will never again see the light of the day. But if he admitted his suffering, he refused till the last hour to retract his views; he resisted the hypocritical prayer of Calvin, his executioner ....<sup>6</sup>

It was not enough for Calvin to murder his theological opponent, he had to calumniate Servetus in writing. He reproached Servetus's "stupidity" for not retracting; he accused him of being silent though, ironically adding, "Servetus's tongue was not cut off and he was not gagged." Servetus after three months of physical and psychological torture, could only oppose his silence to madness, stupidity and furor.

To atone for Calvin's role and at the suggestion of Professor Émile Doumergue his followers erected a monument in 1903 on the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Servetus's martyrdom. It was located as nearly as possible on the spot where he was martyred -- in a place adjacent to the hospital at the corner of the avenue de Beau Séjour and the avenue de la Roseraie. This monument was erected as a reaction to the earlier suggestions postulated by the free thinkers. The inscription on one side of the monument, a bloc of granite, reads:

On the 27 of October, 1553, died at the stake in Champel, Michael Servetus of Villeneuve of Aragón, born on the 29 of September, 1511.

On the other side we read:

Respectful and grateful sons of Calvin, our great reformer, but condemning the error of his century and firmly subscribing to the liberty of conscience according to the authentic principles of the Reformation and the Gospel, have erected this expiatory monument 27 of October, 1903.

During the unveiling of the monument Michael Servetus was only mentioned a few times, and the focus was centered on Calvin and his role in the Reformation. It was even mentioned by a theologian Théodore Pallard that "the monument was not erected to glorify a man." The guilt of Calvin was minimized in the inaugural speeches to such a degree that the same stone that testified to the crime glorified its perpetrator. This hypocrisy provoked free thinkers to form the International Committee for the monument through which the world could learn about the guilt of Calvin and glorify Servetus. At the head of this Committee was Auguste Dide, Senator of the French Republic and later author of a book on Servetus.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, in Champel, there is a street that was named after Servetus, the "Spanish physician."<sup>8</sup>

But Professor Doumergue and his colleagues who erected the expiatory monument missed the point. Calvin is as guilty as all the leaders and theologians of the Catholic and Protestant churches. And the persecution for ideas, for thought, for free inquiry was not the "error of the century," but testimony to the moral and intellectual degeneracy of the entire Christian movement after the fourth century. The defenders of Calvin claim that he was a great man who brought fame and reputation to Geneva and that his *Institution chrétienne* is a monument in theology and in the history of the French language.<sup>9</sup> Undoubtedly Calvin played a positive role initially in the Reformation. Calvin correctly fought some aspects of Catholic Christianity, but he did not combat its essence -- the totalitarianism of a politico-religious party. Moreover he accepted it for his own goal. The stake of Servetus dishonors forever not only Calvin as the immediate tool of the organization, but first of all the entire Christian church, its leaders and theoreticians, as an amoral and inhuman organization which perverted the natural, human, moral sensibility.

An artist from Geneva, Clotilde Roch, was commissioned by the International Committee for the Monument of Michael Servetus headed by the French Senator Auguste Dide, that was to be erected in Geneva by free thinkers. This statue was rejected by the City Council at the last moment on May 15, 1908, after first being accepted. The City Council claimed that "The place where the monument commemorating the thinker and scholar Michael Servetus could be erected is not necessarily Geneva, where he did not play any more considerable role than other

scholars."<sup>10</sup> The reason given for the rejection, as cited by some documents, was "insufficient emphasis on its expiatory character."<sup>11</sup>

However, Geneva already had one monument, though not a statue, the second might seem excessive. So it was erected in France in the border city of Annemasse in 1908 in the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville, some 5 km from the place where Servetus was burned.<sup>12</sup> Though the rejection by Geneva created some animosity between the two cities, the placing of the monument in Annemasse in no way was an act of hostility vis-à-vis Geneva: "In accepting the monument of Michael Servetus the Municipality of Annemasse never had any intention of committing an act of hostility against our neighbors in Geneva. Our duty is only to show a gesture of courtesy, I will say more, our duty is to conserve and tighten still more our ties of friendship which unite us with our neighbors from the canton of Geneva .... But our duty was equally to extend our hospitality to the statue of Servet" said the mayor of Annemasse, Joseph Cursat, in his commemorative speech.<sup>13</sup>

The following texts were placed on the sides of the socle of the monument:

#### I

To Michel Servet, apostle of free belief and martyr for free thought. Born in Villeneuve of Aragón 29 September 1511. On the denunciation by Calvin burned in effigy at Vienne by the Catholic Inquisition, 17 June 1553. And burned alive in Geneva, 27

#### II

The arrest of Servetus in Geneva, where he did neither publish nor dogmatize, hence he was not subject to its laws, has to be considered as a barbaric act and an insult to the Right of Nations.

Voltaire.

Imprisoned in a humid prison, ill and deprived of any help, Servetus wrote to his judges: "I beg you, shorten please these deliberations. It is clear that Calvin for his pleasure wants to make me rot in this prison. The lice devour me alive; my clothes are torn and I have no change, no shirt, only a worn out vest."

#### III

Michel Servet, hellenist, geographer, physician, physiologist, contributed to the welfare of humanity by his scientific discoveries, his devotion to the sick and the poor, and the indomitable independence of his intelligence and his conscience. In the extreme moment, as during the entire trial, there never came from the mouth of Servetus a word of retraction; his convictions were invincible. He made a sacrifice of his life for the cause of the truth.

Jules Barni, 1862.<sup>14</sup>

#### IV

After the Administrative Council of the City of Geneva refused the site

for this statue of Michael Servetus, sculpted through international subscription, the Committee offered it to the Municipality of Annemasse. It was dedicated on the 25 of October 1908 by Mr. Cursat, the Mayor and M. A. Pellet and M. E. Laurencin, the Councilmen.<sup>15</sup>

The *Département* of Haute-Savoie has long traditions of supporting free thought and the occasion was used by local politicians to exhalt freedom of thought as a right and tolerance as a duty.<sup>16</sup> The president of the International Committe for the monument, former senator Auguste Dide, said in his dedication speech: "Glorifying him [Servetus] we honor ... what is the most precious and the most noble in our human nature: a generosity of heart, independence of the spirit, heroism of convictions."<sup>17</sup> In his speech during the commemoration, the Prefect of the region, Pommeray, emphasized that the people of the region "want supremacy of the lay society and never again will they be dominated by religious sectarians who always had as a goal suppression of any appeal to the truth, to independence of spirit and reason."<sup>18</sup> Very meaningful was the speech delivered by the deputy of the *Département*, Fernand David:

Almost four centuries ago, on the 27 of October, 1553, an autumn day, cold and rainy as today, Michael Servetus walked to the site of his torment. He climbed slowly, resigned but without fear toward the plateau of Champel which was deserted at that time, accompanied by a timid and sorrowed crowd, to the place where the stake was rising piled up by the savages who titled themselves the Reformers. You know how frightful was his torture, you also know what was his crime: he thought differently from Calvin on some points of the new theology.

Some tried to dispute that a man who was to die in this way for not wanting to abandon his deep convictions was a martyr of free thought. I maintain that he belongs to us without any question.

Michael Servetus was born in a century that saw a magnificent rise of the Renaissance from under the rubble of the Middle Ages. The minds of this epoch directed their research toward metaphysical speculation and art rather than towards scientific discovery. The spirit of free inquiry was being born only with difficulty. The religious Reformation was not a movement of liberation of thought, but a narrow dogmatic affirmation by which it pretended to purify and strengthen the old creed.

We, the modern free thinkers, want to banish from us the thousand-year-old legends which were accumulated by the pagan religions and transmitted to the Catholic and Protestant religions. The sphere of our affirmations is limited only by the limits of reason imposed by the epoch.

But how many are those who, believing sincerely that they are liberated from all religious indoctrination, nevertheless, state that they are in some vague manner deists when they look into their own hearts! How many are those who in the secret of their conscience profess some vague pantheism! Are there many who are surely and completely atheists? Thus how can we be surprised that four centuries before us Michael Servetus was a free thinker making an appeal to traditional belief on the points which were not yet clarified by the enlightenment of Reason.

We, who live later, enjoy this wonderful privilege that we may approach the struggle of Ideas in a social milieu whose atmosphere, more clear and more serene, particularly facilitates our bold statements. We owe this advantage to our predecessors, those who, as Michael Servetus in those frightful times, gave their lives for audaciously negating a dogma; and one more reason why we should admire them still more is that we should show them a profound gratitude.

Michael Servetus separated himself from the Calvinist dogma as well as from the Catholic dogma. His religious conception was personal and reasoned. His research was not limited only to religious quarrels, he was also a scholar interested in positive affirmations, who discovered the pulmonary blood circulation and at the same time pursued the study of comparative geography. He was persecuted finally and he died by the hand of his executioner, Calvin, but he was condemned at the same time by the Calvinist theologian, Théodore de Bèze, who proclaimed ... that "The freedom of conscience is a diabolic dogma."

Prefect Pommeray did not hesitate to mention that though the error of Calvin was declared to be "the error of the epoch," the president of the International Committee to erect the statue also encountered in our modern epoch intolerance and hatred -- these are not characteristics specific to the sixteenth century.

The religious groups were represented at the ceremony only by a Presbyterian pastor and president of the Council of the Presbyterian church of Annemasse, André Boegner. He said that it was the wish of the Council to work together with people of good will regardless of the party or group they were associated with if they were inspired by the ideal of social peace, proclaim respect for the opinions of others, and believe in the inviolability of conscience and the right to free thought. He continued:

By condemning the intolerance of which Michael Servetus was a victim, you wanted to condemn the intolerance of all times and under all forms; you have disapproved, without any reservation, of men who could not respect the conscience of others, who opposed by coercion the new ideas and who wanted to impose their religion, their philosophy or their politics by violence and by force; and you wanted to affirm the modern ideal of

tolerance and respect for all convictions, philosophical, political and religious.

Why should we not meet on this terrain since the principle of free inquiry ... is one of the constitutive principles of the Protestant Church? .... We desire justice too much for us not to repudiate one more time the crime that burdens heavily the memory of Calvin,... and which burdens still more the history of the Church which is proud of its glorious martyrology and which was persecuted for three centuries to become one day a persecutor.

We do not continue its past by associating ourselves with its errors and its crimes, but claim that we are inspired by its work of truth, justice and liberation. We remain in the true tradition of our Church by joining you in the protest against intolerance, and we are happy that the statue of Michael Servetus was erected on the square of our town to remind religious as well as irreligious men that it is not sufficient to be irreligious to be tolerant, and that programmatic tolerance is not always the tolerance of morals, but that the ideal of a sincere tolerance should inspire our words and our acts.

By erecting this statue of Michael Servetus you not only have condemned intolerance, but you glorified freedom of thought -- we meet with you on this terrain, too. We want freedom of thought, but a true freedom, freedom without limit, freedom that allows everyone the right to be, as Michael Servetus was, a believer.

The pastor continued explaining that Servetus, that independent thinker and seeker of truth, was not an atheist or a materialist, he was an enthusiastic disciple of Jesus Christ, a Christian who even for a moment never denied his religious convictions, whose free thought led to faith, who died for his faith and in his faith, and whose cry amidst the flames was a prayer. By erecting the statue to a martyr the free thinkers recognize implicitly that free thought admits the freedom to believe as well as the freedom not to believe, the right to be religious and the right to be irreligious, and that as the method of free inquiry, free thought does not impose any obligation to be anti-religious because it does not recognize the right to limit the freedom of others. Servetus was one of those who opened the way to freedom. It is remarkable that the ideas expressed by pastor Boegner were those postulated for the first time by the school of Socinians, direct theological successors of Servetus. And Boegner ended his speech with these timely words:

I wish that the statue of Michael Servetus, the martyr, were for all a call to that absolute tolerance and complete freedom of thought which are not always those of today, but, and I have a profound conviction and premonition, those of tomorrow.<sup>19</sup>



From Tübingen Frederic de Thudichum, a former professor of jurisprudence wrote a letter to Auguste Dide in which he indicated:

These are the theologians who, like Calvin, Zwingli, Luther, Melanchthon, succeeded in pushing to second place the duty of love toward one's neighbor preached by Jesus, who drew from the obsolete parchments a commandment, so-called divine, not to let live any false prophet, that is, anyone who contested certain doctrines which they considered true in their haughtiness of infallibility.

For many years and in many places one can notice an excessive tendency to glorify the reformers of the XVIth century, to present them as models of wisdom and pious morals. Here is our reply: 'We know and appreciate the good sides of these historical personages, but due to the intellectual work done over the centuries, we arrived at learning about the dark sides of their individualities: the defects of their education, the crudity of their theology, the naïveté of their philosophy and their superstitions, and -- above all -- their cruelty.'<sup>20</sup>

The monument in Annemasse was removed by the French Vichy government in 1941 and was rebuilt again in 1960. This is how the Municipal Council of Annemasse of 1957 describes the removal of the monument: "The statue was offered to the Germans by the Municipal Council appointed by Vichy on 13 of September, 1941, while the prefectural ordinance prescribing the removal of metallic monuments not presenting any artistic character was dated of November 11, 1941. So already three months before the memorandum, the Municipal Council applied the spirit of the decision that produced this memorandum and on October 20, 1942 the statue was sent to the foundry in Hamburg."<sup>21</sup>

At the session of the Municipal Council of March 23, 1956, it was decided to rebuild the monument and a Committee was appointed with Professor Édouard Herriot, former mayor of Lyon and sponsor of the monument in 1908, as honorary president. In 1957 the Municipal Council of Annemasse requested permission from the Central Commission for Commemorative Monuments to rebuild the statue and reimbursed the Committee the sum of 11,250 F for the actual value of bronze that was given to the enemy. The newly erected monument is an exact copy of the original one since the original moulds were found. The quotes of Voltaire and Barni were removed from the inscriptions and inscription IV was changed to read:

Erected for the first time in 1908, given to the Germans in 1942, this statue was reinstalled by public subscription and dedicated again on the 4<sup>th</sup> of September, 1960.

In four other cities monuments commemorating Servetus were erected: In Madrid, in front of the Anthropological Museum in 1870 which was destroyed during the Spanish Civil War; in Paris, on the Place de Montrouge erected in 1908 and

sculpted by Jean Baffier, as a symbol of French nationalism and Catholicism with an anti-Calvinist inscription; in Vienne in the Jardin Publique, a statue by Joseph R. Bernard in 1911; at Zaragoza at the entrance to the Medical Faculty.

Iconography of Servetus is very rare too. The first image of Servetus was produced in 1553 by Francisco Berodi and was burned with his books in effigy at Vienne.<sup>22</sup> The first sketch was published in 1607 in Holland. It was made in copper by Christopher Sichem, Jr. Picasso made a drawing of Servetus commemorating his stay in prison. There are two other paintings representing the martyrdom of Servetus -- one is a mural by Diego Rivera for the Institute of Cardiology of the Medical Faculty in Mexico City, and the other is a painting made by G. Calvi di Bergola hanging in the International College of Surgeons in Chicago.

The burning of Servetus put to a test the entire Christian tradition, Catholic and Protestant, in a very pronounced and drastic way. Servetus had great hopes for the reform of post-Nicaean Christianity and its dogmatic system. Initially he was concerned with the main doctrine -- that of the Trinity. His system, however, perished too soon before it could be considered on its merits and did not produce a separate movement. His criticism of the doctrine of the Trinity, considered by Catholics and Protestants as the central one, led others to reconsider the foundations of this doctrine for themselves. But Servetus was not in any sense a Unitarian in the Socinian sense. He was a Unitarian, *sui generis*, and he started a path that was to lead to Socinianism and its Unitarianism. Chiefly the Italian humanists carried his line of thought first into northern Italy then to the Grisons and Geneva, and finally to Poland and Transylvania where he was read widely. Today modern biblical research acknowledges the correctness of Servetus's approach to the study of the Bible and confirms the Antitrinitarianism or Unitarianism of original Christianity.<sup>23</sup> It is not important whether Servetus was right or not, but that he had a natural right to conduct his investigation and had a natural right to freely talk and write about his results, which were denied him as well as to millions of others.

Another impact of Servetus's death was the impulse it gave to the growth of religious toleration. The principle of a justified bloody persecution of all who differed in their opinions from the ruling church, as codified by religious laws since the fourth century and by numerous theologians and church leaders, was a universally accepted rule by Protestant and Catholic churches. Melanchthon expressed this principle when he wrote to Calvin: "I maintain that your magistrate did right in putting a blasphemer to death by a regular judicial process." Calvin, though instrumental in Servetus's martyrdom, was thus only influencing their minds and providing the authorities with the arguments for a technical indictment.

The theocracy at Geneva thought that by condemning Servetus and his execution it was breaking heterodoxy among the faithful Christians. But contrary to their expectations, Servetus's martyrdom became the impetus for Unitarianism and his

sacrifice stimulated the recruitment of new members to the movement. Calvin himself gained some political strength by this act, but he lost his moral authority and was eventually condemned by history. By his sacrifice Servetus demonstrated firmness and faithfulness to his convictions. He became the apostle of Unitarianism, his sacrifice transcended the theological issues and the epoch constituting a ferment that opened the public debate on the whole issue of freedom of thought and inquiry. Servetus's death was the turning point in the ideology and mentality dominating since the fourth century, opening a debate and the eyes of thinking people to the absurdity and amorality of the old doctrines and laws. This is the debt that humanity owes to Servetus.

Modern defenders of the Christian post-Nicaean doctrines try to explain the immoral doctrine of persecution for religious ideas saying that "it was a mistake." Mistakes committed in any situation imply that the principle, law or the doctrine is correct and just, and that men only commit errors unwillingly, through wrong judgments or evaluations.<sup>24</sup> In the case of the religious persecutions, however, there was no mistake or error on the part of the persecutors. For them persecutions were justified by divine doctrine; by the existing moral system they were considered a virtue! What was truly wrong, was the whole moral system, the moral precepts and their justifications. Thus this clearly shows the moral bankruptcy of the whole post-Nicaean Christianity in its Catholic and Protestant versions. The role which was played by Servetus' martyrdom in overcoming of the legacy of post-Nicaean Christianity was probably best described by Professor Otto Karmin in his speech during the festivities in 1908 in Annemasse:

The work of the Committee for the Monument to Michael Servetus is accomplished. The bronze statue announces to the present generations and those of the future the role so fertile and noble which was played by the unfortunate Spanish savant. It celebrates the victim of intolerance perpetrated by the two great Christian Churches. It condemns the denunciator and the executioners of the victim. But this statue is something more: it glorifies the idea. For Servetus, indeed, is not only an illustrious man whose memory should be kept alive, Servetus is a symbol. He represents an intrepid and disinterested search for the truth; he represents fidelity to convictions, the courage of a right conscience, resistance to the torturers of the bodies and of the souls. Servetus' stake is also a symbol. Its flames are still burning and signal by their acrid smoke the base works of fanaticism. But above the inferno, indestructible as the Phoenix of the legend, hovers immortal Michael Servetus. Servetus will never die for his spirit lives among the free spirits of our times and of all the times to come.<sup>25</sup>

## Notes and Bibliography

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1. Spon, Jacques, *Histoire de Genève, rectifiée et augmentée par d'amples notes*. (Genève: Fabri et Barrillot, 1730). Tome I. Earlier English edition Spon, Jacob *The History of the City and State of Geneva, from Its First Foundation to This Present Time. Faithfully Collected from Several Manuscripts of Jacobus Gothfredus, Monsieur Chorier, and others*. (London: Printed for Bernard White, 1687).
  2. *Memoirs of Literature* Vol. IV in *Bibliothèque Anglaise*, Amsterdam 1717-1728, t. II, part I.
  3. Mosheim, Johann Lorenz, *Institutiones historiae christianae antiquioris* (Helmstadii: apud C. P. Weygand, 1748). English translation: *An ecclesiastical history, ancient and modern: from the birth of Christ, to the beginning of the present century: in which the rise, progress, and variations of church power are considered in their connexion with the state of learning and philosophy, and the political history of Europe during the period. By the late John Lawrence Mosheim, D.D. and chancellor of the University of Gottingen. Translated from the original Latin, and accompanied with notes and chronological tables, by Archibald Maclaine, D.D.; in six volumes. To the whole is added an accurate index; Volumes I - VI*. (Philadelphia: printed by Stephen C. Ustick, no. 79 North Street, 1797-1798).
  4. Voltaire, *De Calvin et de Servet*, letter to Thiriot of March 26, published in *Mercure de France*, Mai 1757, pp. 35-38. For other correspondence of Voltaire concerning Servetus see: Voltaire, *Correspondance choisie*. Présentation et notes de Jacqueline Hellegouarc'h. (Paris: Livre de Poche Classique, 1990).
  5. Francisco Vega Diaz, *Propuesta para una interpretación antropobiografica de Miguel Servet (mitificación, desmitificación y remitificación)* (Villanueva de Sijena: Instituto de Estudios Sijenenses, 1977).
  6. Quoted in *Progrès de la Haute-Savoie*, June 27, 1908.
  7. Karmin, Otto, in his inaugural speech on October 25, 1908, published in *Progrès de la Haute-Savoie*, October 31, 1908.
  8. Dreifuss, Jean, Jacques, *Le détour inspiré. Vie, mort et restitution de Michel Servet*. In *Revue Médicinale de la Suisse Romande*, 112, 53-90, 1992. p. 57.
  9. *Progrès de la Haute-Savoie*, October 24, 1908.  
Dide, Auguste, *Michel Servet et Calvin*. (Paris: Flammarion, 1907).
  10. Karmin, Otto, in inaugural speech, *Progrès de la Haute-Savoie*, October 31, 1908.
  11. *Acts of the Municipal Council of Annemasse, No. 141, 1957*, p. 2.
  12. The Municipal Council under the leadership of its mayor, Joseph Cursat, voted

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to erect and to subsidize the monument during a special session on July 20, 1908. The Council agreed to accept the offer from the International Committee for the Monument of Michael Servetus, but made an express statement that "This act in no way expresses any hostility against the City of Geneva, but only an homage rendered to the great scholar and martyr Michael Servetus." *Acts of the Municipal Council of Annemasse, No. 593, 1908*. The inauguration ceremony was described and speeches were published in *Progrès de la Haute-Savoie*, October 31, 1908.

13. Cursat, Joseph, inaugural speech, published in *Progrès de la Haute-Savoie*, October 31, 1908.
14. Professor of philosophy, Jules-Romain Barni, organized in Geneva in 1862 two conferences devoted to the memory of Michael Servetus. He was the first to propose erecting a monument to Servetus in Geneva. Nothing happened, however, partly due to the war of 1870. The idea was revived during the Tenth Congress of Free Thought in Geneva, which on September 14, 1902, organized a subscription for the plaque commemorating Servetus to be placed at the site of his torment. This idea was simultaneously picked up by Professor Émile Doumergue, professor of theology at the University of Montauban, who suggested to the Society of the Historical Museum of the Reformation in Geneva to "repudiate by an expiatory monument this error which was a mistake, and this mistake which was an error: the torment of Servetus." Otto Karmin, in *Progrès de la Haute-Savoie*, October 31, 1908.
15. Texts of the inscriptions as quoted by the newspaper *Progrès de la Haute-Savoie*, 31 Octobre, 1908.
16. After the statue was unveiled, the choir of students participating in the course of social morals, an activity of The Free Thought in Geneva, sang a Hymn to Michael Servetus composed by Ch. Fulpius:

"Michel Servet, douce et triste victime  
 D'un être dur, cruel, intolérant!  
 Croire autrement, ce fut là ton seul crime ...  
 Il t'en punit, Calvin, en te brûlant!  
 En t'entraînant à ton dernier supplice.  
 Il supposait pouvoir te supprimer ...,  
 Mais en mourant, suprême sacrifice,  
 Tu l'as vaincu, l'allumeur de bûchers!  
 Et maintenant si l'on te glorifie,  
 Si la jeunesse étend ses bras vers toi,  
 C'est qu'elle plaint ta douleur infinie :  
 La Raison pure a remplacé la Foi!  
 Et ta révolte enseignant le courage,  
 Nous sommes là pour te glorifier:

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- Salut, Servet, reçoit ici l'hommage  
D'enfants venus pour te voir et t'aimer."  
*Progrès de la Haute-Savoie*, November 14, 1908.
17. Dide, Auguste, inaugural speech published in *Progrès de la Haute-Savoie*, October 31, 1908.
  18. Speech of Prefect Pommeray published in *Progrès de la Haute-Savoie*, November 14, 1908.
  19. Inaugural speech, *Ibidem*.
  20. Letter published in *Progrès de la Haute-Savoie*, *Ibidem*.
  21. *Demande de nouvel examen par la Commission Centrale des monuments commémoratifs relative au projet de reconstruction du monument Michel Servet à Annemasse. Acts of the Municipal Council of Annemasse*, No. 141, June 29, 1957.
  22. D'Artigny, A., *Nouveaux mémoires*, *op. cit.*, t. II, pp. 122, Paris 1749.
  23. Buzzard, Anthony, F. and Hunting, Charles, F., *The Doctrine of the Trinity. Christianity's Self-Inflicted Wound*. (Morrow, GA: Atlanta Bible College and Restoration Fellowship, 1994).  
Buchanan, George, Wesley, *Jesus the King and His Kingdom*. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984).  
Robinson, John, A.T., *The Priority of John*. (London: SCM Press, 1985).  
Catholic theologian Karl-Josef Kuschel acknowledges that there is nothing in the New Testament writings that would warrant discussion about the divinity of Jesus or his pre-existence and the Trinity. "The New Testament does not know the pre-existence as a speculative theme. A pre-existence christology understood as isolated, independent, atomized reflection on a divine being of Jesus Christ 'in' or 'alongside' God before the world, a sonship understood in metaphysical terms, is not the concern of the New Testament." And he admits that the statement about pre-existence is not direct revelation, but a result of theological speculations. Kuschel, Karl-Josef, *Born Before All Time? The Dispute over Christ's Origin*. Translated by John Bowden. (New York: Crossroad, 1992). p. 491-492.
  24. This point was aptly discussed by Ludwig Wittgenstein who differentiated between a "mistake" and a "mental disturbance." Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*. Edited by G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright. Translated by Denis Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe. (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1972), pp.11c & ff.
  25. Karmin, Otto, in *Progrès de la Haute-Savoie*, October 31, 1908.







## LIST OF WORKS PUBLISHED BY SERVETUS AND THEIR TRANSLATIONS

1. *De Trinitatis erroribus, libri septem. Per Michaellem Serveto, alias Reves ab Aragonia Hispanum. Anno M.D. XXXI.* [Haguenau, 1531].  
Published by the press of Johann Setzer (Secerius). Several copies are preserved in various libraries. Reprinted in Regensburg in 1721.  
The book was translated in 1620 into Dutch by Reiner Talle (Regnerus Vitellius, 1558[9]-1619[20]). *Van de Dolinghen in de Drievuldigheid, Seven Boecken, Eertijds in Latijn beschreven Door Michiel Servetus, gheseyt Reves van Aragonien, Spaenjaerd ...*, Amsterdam, 1620. Into English in 1932 by Earl Morse Wilbur *On the Errors of the Trinity. Seven Books. By Michael Serveto, alias Reves, a Spaniard of Aragon MDXXXI.* In *The two treatises of Servetus on the Trinity ... Now first translated into English by Earl Morse Wilbur, D.D.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press; London: Humphrey Milford; Oxford University Press; Harvard Theological Studies, 1932).  
Spanish translation by Ana Gomez Rabal *De los errores sobre la Trinidad*, 1999.
2. *Dialogorum de Trinitate libri duo. De Iustitia regni Christi, capitula quatuor. Per Michaellem Serveto, alias Reves, ab Aragonia Hispanum Haguenau, 1532.* Published by Johann Setzer.  
A second pamphlet on the Trinity of 19 pages, to which he added a treatise of 25 pages, *De Iustitia regni Christi, capitula quatuor*. Several copies preserved in various libraries. Reprinted in Regensburg, 1721. Translated together with *De Trinitatis erroribus* by Earl Morse Wilbur (1932). All three works were reprinted:  
Servetus, M., *De Trinitatis erroribus libri septem*, 1531. *Dialogorum de Trinitate libri duo*, 1532. *De Iustitia regni Christi, capitula quatuor*, 1532. Minerva G.M.B.H., Frankfurt a.M. 1965.
3. *Claudii Ptolemaei Alexandrini Geographicae enarrationis libri octo.* **E**  
*Bilibaldi Pirckeymheri tralatione, sed ad graeca & prisca exemplaria r̄ Michaële Villanovano iam primum recogniti. Adiecta insuper ab eodem scholia, quibus exoleta urbium nomina ad nostri seculi more exponuntur .... Lugduni, ax Melchioris et Gasparis Trechsel fratrum, MDXXXV (1535).*  
Several copies preserved in various libraries.  
Humanist erudite, linguist, mathematician and geographer, Willibald Pirckheimer (1470-1530) published in Strassburg in 1525 Ptolemy's geography with new maps. The Greek original of the work was published in 1533 by Erasmus in Basel. Servetus reedited, corrected, and supplemented Pirckheimer's edition using also the Greek original and several previous editions.  
*Claudii Ptolemaei Alexandrini geographicae enarrationis libri octo.... r̄ Michaële Villanovano secondñ recogniti .... Prostat Lugduni apud Hugonem r̄ Porta, M.D.XLI.* Lyon 1541. Book is dedicated to Servetus's protector, Archbishop Palmier.

Fragments were translated into English by Charles David O'Malley, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-37.

Spanish translation: *Descripciones geograficas del estado moderno de las regiones, en la geografía de Claudio Ptolomeo Alejandrino por Miguel Villanovano (Miguel Servet) precedidas de una biografía del autor y traducidas del Latin por Dr. José Goyanes Capdevilla ....* Madrid, Imprenta y Encuadernación de Julio Cosano, 1932.

4. *In Leonardum Fuchsium apologia, autore Michaele Villanovano.* Lyon, 1536. There is a facsimile copy of the work done by Oxford University Press, 1909.

This is a response by Servetus to the work of Leonard Fuchs *Apologia*, in defense of his friend, Symphorien Champier, a known Galenist and antiarabist. Its English translation was published by Charles David O'Malley, *Michael Servetus. A Translation of his Geographical, Medical and Astrological Writings with Introductions and Notes*, (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1953), pp. 38-54.

Spanish translation by Ángel Alcalá, *Apología contra Fuchs. Disertación sobre la Astrología* (Madrid, 1981).

5. *Syruporum universa ratio, ad Galeni censuram diligenter expolita. Cui, post integra de concoctione disceptationem, praescripta est vera purgandi methodus, cum expositione aphorismi: Concocta medicari. Michaële Villanovano authore. Parisiis Ex officina Simonis Colinaei. 1537.* (Several editions of the work appeared, in Venice in 1545; in Lyon in 1546, 1547, 1548).

English translation of the work was published by O'Malley, Charles David, *op. cit.*, (1953), pp. 55-167.

Spanish translations: *Razón universal de los jarabes según inteligencia de Galeno por Miguel Villanovano (Miguel Serveto)*. Traducida al Español por el Dr. J. Goyanes Capdevila ... Madrid, Imp. de J. Cosano, 1943). And by Ana Gomez, *Tratado universal de jarabes*, Madrid, 1935.

6. *Michaelis Villanovani in quendam medicum apologetica disceptatio pro astrologia*, Paris 1538.

It was also reprinted by Henri Tollin in 1880. Its English translation was published by Charles David O'Malley, *op. cit.*, pp. 168-188.

Spanish translation by Ángel Alcalá, *Discurso en pro la Astrología*, Madrid, 1981.

7. In 1542 Servetus appears as the editor of the Bible of Santis Pagnini. The most important disciplines in this period were theology and medicine.

Theology was studied through the Bible in the Latin translation and the texts of Galen in the Arabic translation were the basis for medicine. There were several editions of Bible translations including the Complutensian Polyglot Bible, the publication of which was coordinated by Cardinal Francisco Ximénes de Cisneros in cooperation with the most distinguished scholars in Europe such as Nebrija, Vergara, Coronel y López de Zúñiga in Spain, Erasmus in Holland, Calvin in Geneva, Santes Pagnini in Lyon and Sébastien Castellion in Switzerland. Santis Pagnini (1470 -1541) was a Dominican monk from Lucca, a pupil of Savonarola (1452-1498, who was hanged and burned in Florence for heresy and critique of church practices), an erudite in Hebrew and classical languages. Pagnini became a professor of classical languages at the College of Oriental Languages, founded by Pope Leo X. He dedicated twenty-five years to the translation of his Bible from the original languages into Latin, which was first published at Lyon in 1527/1528. This edition is said to be the first to be divided into chapters. The next edition appeared in 1541 in Cologne edited by Melchior Novesianus and then was corrected by Servetus and published by Hugues de la Porte in 1542 as *Biblia Sacra ex Santis Pagnini tralatione, sed ad Hebraicae linguae amussim novissimē ita recognita, & scholiis illustrata, ut planē nova editio videri posit.* *Accessit praeterea liber interpretationum Hebraicorum, Arabicorum, Graecorumque nominum, quae in sacris literis reperiuntur, ordine alphabetico digestus, eodem autore. Lugduni, apud Hugonem & Porta. M.D. XLII. Cum privilegio ad annos sex.* Servetus added a preface and notes to the Pagnini Bible recommending in the prologue the study of the history of the Hebrews for a better understanding of the Bible. He accused biblical studies for not reaching for the literal and historical sense but searching in vain for the mystical meaning. There was another edition of the Bible of Pagnini *in octavo*, the same year, probably edited by Servetus, too. *Biblia sacra ex postremis doctorum omnium vigiliis, ad Hebraicam veritatem, & probatissimorum exemplarium fidem. Cum argumentis, indice, & Hebraicorum nominum interpretatione. Lugduni, Apud Hugonem & Porta. 1542.*

Servetus's reputation grew and he was contracted next by the Compagnie des Libraires at Lyon to correct and edit the Pagnini Bible in seven volumes which was published in 1545: *Biblia sacra cum glossis, interlineari & ordinaria, Nicolai Lyrani postilla & moralitatibus, Burgensis additionibus, & Thorungi replicis.... Omnia ad Hebraicorum & Graecorum fidem iam primum suonitori restituta, & variis scholiis illustrata. Lugduni anno M.D. XLV. Cum privilegio regis.* At the beginning of the seventh volume containing only the index, one finds the name of Michel Villeneuve as the sole corrector.

8. *Christianismi restitutio. Totius ecclesiae apostolicae est ad sua limina vocatio, in integrum restituta cognitione Dei, fidei Christi, iustificationis*

*nostrae, regenerationis baptismi, et coenae domini manducationis. Restitutio denique nobis regno coelesti, Babylonis impiae captivitate soluta, et*

*Antichristo cum suis penitus destructo. M.D. LIII. 734 pp. 8°.* It ends with the initials M.S.V.

There is also a reprint of the fragment of *Christianismi restitutio* by Giorgio Biandrata, an Italian physician who obtained his degree in Montpellier (here he was a fellow student with Rabelais), became a personal physician of the Italian-born wife of King Sigismund of Poland. Later he returned to Italy and was forced to leave Italy around 1553 for his religious convictions, he returned to Poland and Transylvania. *De Regno Christi Liber primus. De Regno Antichristi Liber secundus. Accessit tractatus de Paedobaptismo, et circumcissione. Rerum capita sequens pagella demonstrabit. Ioan. 15. ver 14. Vos amici mei estis, si feceris quaecunq̄ ego praecipio vobis. Albae Juliae. Anno Domini 1569.*

The first known translation of the *Restitutio* is that by a Pole, Gregorius Paulus (Grzegorz Paweł), who translated some chapters into Polish and published them in Pińczów already in 1568! *Okazanie Antychrysta y iego Krolestwa ze znaków iego w s\_owach w s\_owie bo\_ym opisanych, ktorych tu sze\_\_dziesi\_t.* [The advent of Antichrist and his kingdom, according to his own signs as described in the Word of God, of which there are sixty.]

The book was reprinted by Christoph Gottlieb von Murr (1733-1811) in Nürnberg in 1790 and this edition was reprinted again by Minerva G.M.B.H., Frankfurt a. Mein, 1966. Von Murr made a page-for-page reprint of the Vienna copy of the manuscript (now at the Harvard University Library).

The German translation by Bernhard Spiess, *Wiederherstellung des Christentums*, Wiesbaden. Verlag von Chr. Limbarth. 1892, 1895, 1896, 3 volumes.

The Spanish translation was done in two separate books, one containing only the *Christianismi restitutio*, the second, the rest of the Servetus's book. Miguel Servet, *Restitución del Cristianismo*. Primera traducción castellana de Ángel Alcalá y Luis Betés. Edición, introducción y notas de Ángel Alcalá (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 1980).

Miguel Servet, *Treinta cartas a Calvino. Sesenta signos del Antichristo. Apología de Melanchton*. Edición de Ángel Alcalá (Madrid: Editorial Castalia, 1981).

9. Among other works he published there may have been an edition of the *Summa* of Thomas Aquinas in Spanish, but no exemplar has been found and it is not known where it might have been published; also, there were various treatises on grammar translated from the Latin into Spanish. This information was given by Jean Frellon, a bookseller from Lyon, in his declaration of May 23, 1553.<sup>1</sup> It is interesting that he published a Hebrew lexicon and perhaps an edition of the Koran in Arabic.

## Note

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1. D'Artigny, A.G., *Nouveaux mémoires d'histoire, de critique et de littérature*, (Paris: 1749), t. II, p. 68.



## Appendix I

### Castellio's *Historia de morte Serveti* from *Contra libellum Calvini*, pp. 191-196.

Cum Michael Servetus curaret libros suos de Trinitate imprimi Viennae, fuit quidam Lugdunensis Genevae habitans, qui literas scripsit ad quendam Lugdunensem amicum suum Lugduni habitantem, in quibus literis inter caetera scribebat talia.

"Nos non fovemus haereticos cum vos patiamini apud vos Michaellem Servetum hominem maxime haereticum, qui facit imprimi libros plenos errorum, & is est nunc Viennae in tali domo, & c." Has literas qui viderunt putant scriptas fuisse a Calvino, ob stylum similem; nec tantam Lugdunensis illius eloquentiam, ut potuerit tam diserte scribere. Ipse quidem Lugdunensis dixit a se fuisse factas, fuerunt autem de industria ita missae (sicut nobis narrarunt qui ipsi has literas viderunt) ut venirent in manus Magistratus, atque adeo ipsius Cardinalis Turony. Sunt qui dicunt Calvinum ipsum scripsisse ipsi Cardinali in hanc sententiam. Si tam religionis studiosus eses, quam te esse simulas, non patereris Servetum qui est apud vos & c. utcunque se res habeat, iis literis lectis Servetus captus est, Viennae nec non impressor eius libri. Postea cum ex vinculis clam elapsus esset, venit Genevam, & eodem die videlicet Dominico, audivit concionem post prandium. Ibi cum ante in caeptam concionem sederet una cum aliis, agnitus est a quibusdam, qui id continuo Calvino nunciatum iverunt; Calvinus e vestigio ad Magistratum reum detulit, aut de ferendum, curavit, ut Servetum propter haeresim in vincula petant. Magistratus respondit non posse capi hominem in libera civitate, nisi aliquis esset accusator, qui una cum reose offerret ad vincula &c. Calvinus famulum suum submisit, qui se accusatorem daret. Is famulus fuit aliquando coquus, noblilis cuiusdam nomine Falesii, quem Falesium Calvinus aliquando canufecit ob religionem, ut eum in quadam epistola summopere laudaverit. Sed postea cum favere videbatur Falesius quidam medico nomine Hyeronimo (qui in vinculis tenebatur propter causam praedestinationis, quoniam de re dissentisset) in publica congregatione a Calvino iudicatus est haereticus. Ab eodem Calvino mittitur ibi famulus, qui sese accusatorem dedit: & Servetus e concione vocatus, & nomen suum confessus, coniectus est in carcerem, nec non ipse famulus Calvini, qui paulo post datis fide jussoribus liberatus est. Servetus in vinculis sic habitus est, ut eum convenire nemo (nisi magna autoritate praeditus) posset, nisi qui Calvini amicus esset. Capto Serveto missus est nuncius a Magistratu Viennam, qui referret sententiam ab ipsis Viennensibus contra Servetum latam, cui nuncio Viennenses eam dederunt, & illud adjecerunt, Servetum, iudicio summi Gaenevensium concionatoris venisse in manus Viennentium. Relata hac Sententia missus est nuncius ad Helveticas Ecclesias, Barnam, Tigurum, Schaffhuysiam, & Basileam, una cum libro Serveti, & accusatione concionatorum, & literis Magistratus Gaenevensis ad ministros illarum ecclesiarum, aut ad Magistratus ad corrogandas earum super Serveto sententias.

Interea missus est ad Francofordiam quidam Thomas, famulus Roberti Stephani qui

libros Serveti, qui illic ad nundinas prolati fuerunt combussit ne distraherentur. Nuncius ille a concionatoribus illarum Ecclesiarum retulit literas, in quibus damnabatur Servetus, tanquam haereticus. Itaque statim convocatus est Magistratus Genevensis super Serveti negotio. Amedeus Porrius militiae dux, & idem primus tum Consulurbis, cum videret animos Senatorum inclinatos in necem hominis, noluit adesse in iudicio, negavitque se participem fore eius sanguinis. Idem fecerunt quinam alii, reliqui alii aliter damnarunt, nonnulli ad exilium, alii ad perpetuos carceres, pars maior ad ignes nisi recantare vellet.

Cellarum etiam eius urbis summum Professore Theologiae, affirmant nunquam nec in Serveti, nec in ullius haeretici mortem consentisse: Idemque putant de quibusdam eius urbis Ministris inferioribus, qui ad dicendam de Serveto sententiam, propterea non fuerunt vocati. Ita dictus est ad tribunal, & ibi damnatus ut combureretur, & in cineres redigeretur. Hanc sententiam ubi audivit, postulat supplex a Magistratu ut liceret perire gladio, ne se ad desperationem magnitudine cruciatus adigerent, atque ita animam suam perderet: se si quid peccaverit peccasse ignorantia, animo quidem & voluntate ita constitutam fuisse, ut promovere gloriam dei voluerit, quas eius preces Farellus Magistratui apertius exposuit. Sed Magistratus a Serveto exoratus non est, ita ductus est Servetus subinde clamans. *O Deus serva animam meam; O Iesu fili Dei aeterni miserere mei.* Vi ventum est ad supplicii locum procubuit supplicabundus, jacuitque aliquandiu pronus, Farellus populum ita alloquente. Videtis quantas vires habeat Sathan, cum aliquem possidet, hic homo est doctus imprimis, & fortasse se recte facere putavit, sed nunc possidetur a Diabolo, quod idem vobis accidere posset. Interea ubi furixit Servetus, eum hortabatur Farellus ut diceret aliquid. Ille gemens & suspirans clamabat: *O Deus, O Deus:* cum Farellus an nihil aliud haberet quod diceret, respondit, quid aliud possum loqui quam de *Deo*? Farellus monente, ut si uxorem, aut liberos haberet, & testamentum condere vellet, adesse tum notarium publicum, ille nihil respondit. Ita ductus est ad struem lignorum, erant autem fasciculi querni virides, adhuc frondosi, admixtis lignis taleis. Impositus est Servetus trunco ad terram posito, pedibus ad terram perfingentibus. Capiti imposita est vel stramnea vel frondea, & ea sulphure conspersa: Corpus palo alligatum ferrea catena, collum autem fune crasso quatriplici aut quintriplici laxo, liber femori alligatus: Ipse carnificem oravit ne se diu torqueret. Interea carnifex ignem in ejus conspectum, & deinde orbem admovit, homo viso igne ita horrendum exclamavit, ut universum populum perterrefecerit. Cum diu langueret, fuerunt ex populo qui fasciculos confertim conjecerunt, ipsa horrida voce clamans: *Iesu fili Dei aeterni miserere mei;* post dimidia circiter horae cruciatum expiravit. Sunt qui affirmant Calvinum cum vidisset ad supplicium duci Servetum subrisisse, vultu sub sinu vestis leviter dejecto. Hac res multos pios turbavit, atque scandalum scandalorum peperit, quod vix nunquam obliterare videretur, multa enim in eo facto pii reprehendunt crimina.

Primum quod interfectus est Genevae homo propter religionem, negant enim



quenquam propter religionem debere interfici: & cum citatur vetus Testamentum de interficiendis falsis Prophetis, citant novum de non extirpandis zizany ante messem. Quod si Helveticas Ecclesias consentisse in mortem Serveti dici? Respondent eas non potuisse esse iudices cum essent reae. Nam eas, una cum Genevensi reprehendebat Servetus. Deinde mirantur Calvinum cum eis Ecclesiis in alterius mortem conspirasse, quarum doctrinam alias damnavit. Nam in Libello gallico de coena damnat aperte Zwinglium, Oecolampadium, una cum Luthero eosque errasse dicit. Quod si in Coena errarunt, possunt & in persecutione errare. Alterum est quod Calvini opera interfectus est nam hic ut inimicum suum posset opprimere, subornavit accusatorem ex culina sua, hominem Serveti, & Servetanarum quaestionum ignarissimum, hoc vero tam longe a Christi natura abesse ajunt, quam abest a coelo tellus, venit enim Christus non ut perderet, sed ut servaret. Tertium est quod tam crudeliter interfectus sit, cum tamen supplex gladium petierit, haec crudelitas inaudita suspicionem gignere posset, quasi Genevenses velint in gratia redire cum Papa, & facto ostendere, se ab ipso non abhorrere, quamvis verbis in eum debachentur. Quartum quod ad interficiendum eum conspirarunt Evangelici, cum Papistis, unde fuit qui putant sic inter eos coire amicitiam, quomodo inter Pilatum, & Herodem coit, in Christi supplicio. Quintum est quod Serveti libri cremati sint, id quod (sicut & caetera) videntur a Papa didicisse. Et quidem si vera est doctrina Calvini, de Praedestinatione, & Electione, non fuit quod metuerunt ne quam seduceret Servetus, si dem electi, seduci non possunt. At si peccata fiunt necessaria, & cogente *Deo*, non poterat Servetus non facere, quod fecit, nec poterant Calviniani non decipi, si futurum, ut decipiantur, nec decipi, si futurum est ut non decipiantur. Sextum crimen est, quod mortuus, Servetus insuper publice in concionibus damnatus est, ad aeternum supplicium, & ita damnatus, ut qui sententiam Farellum intonare audiverint, dicunt se toto corpore atque animo horruisse. Septimum crimen est, quod in eum jam extinctum, scribere videtur Calvinus, id quod simile videtur illius facti Iudaeorum, qui mortuo Christo, petierunt a Pilato, (Christum impostorem apellantes) ut ejus corpus custodidetur: Sic Calvinum formidare ajunt, ne Serveti corpus clam tollatur (id ne fieri possit Calvini diligentia prospectum est) sed ne cineres loquantur. Alias, si volebat in eum scribere debebat eo vivente scribere, ut ei respondendi esset potestas, quod etiam latroni permittitur.

Combustus est Servetus Anno 1553, die 27, 09.

