

**THE LIFE OF MICHAEL SERVETUS, THE
SPANISH PHYSICIAN, WHO WAS
ENTRAPPED, IMPRISONED, AND BURNED,
BY JOHN CALVIN THE REFORMER, IN THE
CITY OF GENEVA, OCTOBER 27, 1553**

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WILLIAM HAMILTON DRUMMOND

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OF
MICHAEL SERVETUS,
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BY WILLIAM HAMILTON DRUMMOND, D.D.

"Quia orthodoxorum dicat ministrum Ecclesie accusatorem criminalem, et homicidam!"
M. Servetus.

"Hinc non addere quod mihi cum mortuis libeat luctari, sed quia video de plerisque
evadere, ut quicquid mortis impelleret a se quoniam mihi summi magistrum."—GREGORIUS.

LONDON:
JOHN CHAPMAN, 142, STRAND.
MDCCCLVIII.

"There is ONE God; and there is none other but he."—*Matt* xii. 32.

"The doctrine of the Trinity appears to me so obviously unscriptural, that I am pretty sure, from my own experience and that of others, that no one possessed of merely common sense will fail to find its unscripturality after a methodical study of the Old and New Testaments, unless previously impressed in the early part of his life with creeds and forms of speech preparing the way to that doctrine."—*Remondet's Key's Final Appeal*, p. 354.

"If, by reason of the variety of tempers, abilities, educations, and unavoidable prejudices, whereby men's understandings are variously formed and fashioned, they do embrace several opinions, whereof some must be erroneous; to say that God will damn them for such errors, who are lovers of Him and lovers of Truth, is to rob man of his comfort, and God of his goodness;—it is to make man desperate, and God a tyrant."—*Callicott's*.

TO
ANDREW CARMICHAEL, ESQ.,
A CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHER,
WHO TO
REFINEMENT OF MANNERS AND ELEGANCE OF TASTE,
UNITED A LOVE FOR THE
LOFTIEST SPECULATIONS OF SCIENCE, AND INTREPIDITY
IN THE QUEST OF TRUTH;

AND TO
RICHARD CARMICHAEL, ESQ.,
FELLOW, AND LATE PRESIDENT,
OF THE
ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS IN IRELAND,
WHOSE EMINENT SUCCESS IN THE
NOBLE PROFESSION WHICH HE IMPROVES AND ADORNS,
HAS BEEN MERITED AND ATTAINED
BY THE EXERCISE OF
SPLENDID TALENTS AND PHILANTHROPIC VIRTUES;
THIS LITTLE VOLUME,
AS A MARK OF GRATEFUL AND AFFECTIONATE REGARD
AND ESTEEM,
IS INSCRIBED BY

THE AUTHOR.

May 26, 1848.

P R E F A C E.

THE name of Michael Servetus, the celebrated Spanish Physician, whose researches into the structure of the human frame led to a full discovery of the circulation of the blood, will always hold an honoured place in the annals of Medicine. It will also hold a place in Ecclesiastical history as affording a memorable example of Calvinistic bigotry by which "a wise and holy man"* was brought to a premature and unhappy end, for holding opinions deemed heterodox and heretical. While Calvin is remembered Servetus cannot be forgotten.

Should any gentle reader ask for what purpose is a new Life of Servetus offered to the public, the answer is simple, and, it is hoped, satisfactory. The words of the motto from Grotius in the title page† afford a good reason for letting the world know something of the man whom the Calvinistic churches have for their master and guide. We are admonished in Holy Writ to beware of

* Servetus is so denominated by the pious and good Rev. John Wesley.

† I publish these memoirs not from any desire to hold a controversy with the dead, but because I see, as generally happens, that every one imitates the manners, and follows the example of the master whom he selects for his guide.

false prophets, and assured that a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. Had the antichristian spirit of Calvin died with himself there would be little necessity now for drawing attention to the character, the principles, and the crimes of the homicide reformer. But while Calvinism exists it will be the duty of christian ministers to expose its false doctrines, its ignorance and perversion of evangelical truth, its demoralizing tendencies, and its intolerant and persecuting principles, as exemplified in the conduct of its founder—especially as attempts are frequently made to justify, to palliate, to excuse his murder of Servetus—to varnish the infernal deed, and make it appear as an act dictated by a warm and sublimated zeal for the glory of God, and carried into execution by the spirit of the age and the laws of Geneva!

If "he who allows oppression shares the crime," what shall we say of the men of God who dare to justify the burning of "a wise and holy man" for the pretended sin of heresy?

A writer (G. Emlyn) in the *Monthly Repository of Theology and General Literature* for September, 1806, says of Calvin that, the "undue attachment to that unfeeling demagogue, and a disposition and readiness to vindicate and extenuate his very worst actions, are still as visible as ever, and that instances frequently occur which but too plainly evince that modern Calvinism is by no means free from the antichristian spirit of its founder." What would that writer have said had he witnessed the recent persecutions carried on by Calvinists against Unitarians both in England and Ireland, and

for reasons similar to those which led Calvin to vilify, rob, incarcerate, and burn the Spanish physician?*

It might be hoped that in the lapse of three hundred years the principles of Calvinism had undergone some modification, and that now, in the nineteenth century, they were less intolerant than in the sixteenth. But the fact is, that while the standards of Calvinistic faith continue unchanged, no improvement can be expected. Its spirit is as acrid, as intolerant and vindictive now as ever, and as eager to tyrannize, and to encroach on the rights and liberties of christian men. It has long reigned predominant in "The General Assembly" of Ulster; mystifying the people, inculcating false doctrine, boasting of its orthodoxy, while acting in foul violation of the great commandments on which hang all the Law and the Prophets, and giving ample proof that, were it not chained by the Legislature, it would never cease to perpetrate such iniquities as put religion to shame, and crucify the Son of God afresh. It cannot, indeed, burn a Servetus, for the *statute de comburendo hæretico* has been absolutely annulled, but until very recently it enjoyed the felicity of harassing Christians by ruinous processes in law, of robbing ministers and congregations of their houses of worship, of destroying their charitable institutions, and of seizing on the portion of the widow and orphan. These are facts which can not

* " Rival hai, dont tout le crime etait
De raisonner mieuzque lui ne fesoit."

Ferocious Calvin, to decide the strife,
Resolved to take his hated rival's life,
Stained with no crime, but that the sturdy elf
Reasoned from Scripture better than himself.

and ought not to be concealed. Christian ministers, those especially of the Three Nonsubscribing bodies of Protestant Dissenters in Ireland, should know with what an evil spirit of bigotry and rapacity they have to contend, and, profiting by experience, guard against its machinations. Let them not forget that the warmth infused into the frozen viper imparts to it the power of stinging its benefactor to death. In what respects have the modern Calvins and Colladons—the all-work La Fontaines—the honourable and pious Antonies, and the other vagabonds, who planned and conducted the last conspiracy to destroy them, degenerated from their forefathers? Are they less acrimonious, less vindictive, less mendacious, or less prone, in contempt and defiance of Apostolic reprobation, to “go to law, to do wrong, and to defraud”?—1 Cor. vi. 7, 8.

So lately ago as 1846 was published in Edinburgh, a book bearing the following title: “CALVIN and SERVETUS. *The Reformer's share in the Trial of Michael Servetus, Historically ascertained. From the French, with Notes and Additions. By the Rev. W. K. Tweedie. Edinburgh.*”

The object of this work, particularly of the “Notes and Additions,” is to place the conduct of the Reformer in a new light, to palliate his conduct, and, in a word, to acquit him of the murder with which he stands charged—an object in which the reverend author has completely failed. The French part of the work which he has translated was published, as he informs us, in 1844, by M. A. Rilliet of Geneva, “in which he has with great painstaking and impartiality concentrated the light of history, made yet more clear by that of docu-