

A brief account of Calvin's burning of Servetus for an heretic : formerly published in four of the papers called, The old Whig, or, Consistent Protestant / by George Benson.

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A B R I E F

ACCOUNT

O F

CALVIN'S

Burning *Servetus* for an Heretic,

Formerly published in four of the Papers, called
The Old Whig, or Consistent Protestant.

The SECOND EDITION corrected and
somewhat enlarged.

By G E O R G E B E N S O N.

L O N D O N:

Printed for J. NOON, at the *White Hart* in *Cheapside*;
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CONCERNING

THIS SECOND EDITION.



HIS Account of Calvin's burning Servetus for an Heretic was published, some Years ago, in the weekly Paper, called The old Whig, or consistent Protestant. But, as the four Papers, which relate to this particular Subject, are not in that Collection of the old Whig, which has been since printed in two Volumes, octavo, The Author hath been desired

*to publish this second Edition,
with some few Additions and
Corrections.*

*This small Pamphlet will be
a proper Appendix to a Sermon,
published, last Year, by the same
Author, in Defence of univer-
sal Liberty and free Inquiry.*



T H E



THE
OLD WHIG,
OR THE
CONSISTENT PROTESTANT.

N^o 152. *Thursday, February 2, 1737-8.*

To the Author of the OLD WHIG,

Nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri.

HOR. Ep. I.

S I R,



HOUGH you are a professed *Protestant*, yet I am fully persuaded that you will readily condemn *Persecution*, which is the worst Part of *Popery*, where-ever it is found: For this Reason I here send you a brief Account of *Michael Servetus*, and of the Treatment which he met with, from several of the renowned *Reformers*, and particularly from *John Calvin*.*

MICHAEL

* *This Account is mostly an Abridgment of what was published in the Memoirs of Literature for the Year 1711.*

MICHAEL SERVETUS was born in the Year 1509] at *Villaneueva* in *Arragon*, in the Kingdom of *Spain*: His Father, who was a Notary, sent him to the University of *Thoulouse*, in *France*, to study the *Civil Law*. *Servetus* began to read the *Bible* then, which he had never done before. It does not appear that there were any Antitrinitarians in *France*, or any where else, at that time; and therefore it is not improbable that he himself broached the new Doctrine, for which he was afterwards put to Death. Perhaps he applied himself to read the Holy Scriptures, because the *Reformation* did then make a great Noise in *France*; and, being sensible that the Church wanted to be reformed, it is not unlikely that he went so far of his own Head, as to suppose that the *Trinity* was one of those Doctrines which were to be rejected. However that be, he grew very fond of his Opinion; and after he had been two or three Years at *Thoulouse*, he resolved to retire into *Germany*, and to set up for a Reformer. He went to *Basil* by way of *Lions* and *Geneva*; and, having had some Conference at *Basil* with *Oecolampadius*, he set out for *Strasburg*; being extremely desirous to converse with *Bucer* and *Capito*, two celebrated Reformers of that City. At his Departure from *Basil* he left a Manuscript, which he had wrote against the *Trinity*, in the Hands of *Conrad Roufs*, a Bookseller; who sent it afterwards to *Haguenau*. *Servetus* went thither from *Strasburg* to get it printed in the Year 1531. That Piece was published at *Strasburg* and *Francfort* before the Month of *August*; and when the Author was not above twenty one Years of Age. When it was brought into *Switzerland*, several Protestant Divines were very much displeased at it; as appears from a Letter of *Oecolampadius* to *Bucer*:
 “ I saw this Week (says he) our Friends at *Berne*,
 “ who sent their kind Salutations to you and
 “ *Capito*.

“ *Capito*. They are very much offended with a
 “ Book entitled, *De Trinitatis Erroribus*, which
 “ some of them have seen. I desire you would
 “ acquaint *Luther* that this Book was printed out
 “ of this Country and without our Knowledge:
 “ For (to mention but one Article) it is an im-
 “ pudent Thing to affirm, as the Author does,
 “ That the *Lutherans* do not understand the Doc-
 “ trine of *Justification*. But that Man, whether
 “ he be a *Photinian*, or of any other Sect, thinks
 “ he knows more than every body else. Our
 “ Churches will be very ill spoken of, unlesse our
 “ Divines make it their Business to cry him
 “ down. I beseech you, in particular, to keep
 “ a watchful Eye over it, and to make an Apo-
 “ logy for our Churches, at least in your Confu-
 “ tation inscribed to the *Emperor*. We know
 “ not how *that Beast* came to creep in among us;
 “ he wrests all Passages of Scripture to prove,
 “ That the Son is not coeternal and consubstan-
 “ tial with the Father, and, That the Man Christ
 “ is the Son of God.” This Letter is dated
 August 5, 1531.*

THE Magistrates of *Basil* desiring to know *Oeco-*
lampadius's Opinion concerning the Book of *Serve-*
tus, that Reformer made a short Discourse † in
 their Presence, in order to shew that it was a per-
 nicious Book; but he expressed himself with great
Moderation; which was certainly very commenda-
 ble, and becoming a *Divine*. *Oecolampadius* wrote
 also two Letters to *Servetus* about his Book; where-
 in he endeavored to confute him in a very civil
 Manner, and intreated him to renounce his Errors.
 The next Year (1532) *Servetus* published another
 Book against the *Trinity*, at *Haguenau*. After he
 had

* Vide *Oecolampad. & Zuingli. Epistol. Lib. IV. Pag. 801. Basil. 1592. Quarto.*

† Vide ut supra, *Lib. I. Pag. 83.*

had published these two Books, he resolved to return to *France*; because he was poor, and did not understand the *German Language*. He himself alleged these two Reasons for it at his Trial. While he was there, *Melanchton* (who read *Servetus's* Books very much) wrote a Letter to *Joachim Camerarius*; wherein he told him what he thought of *Servetus* and his Books: He declared, That *Servetus* appeared to him to be a subtile and cunning Man, but that he wanted Gravity; That his Thoughts were confused; That he had not sufficiently meditated upon the Things he treated of; and, That his Notion of Justification was very extravagant. *Melanchton* adds, That he “ was always afraid that “ Disputes about the *Trinity* would break out some “ time or other.” But, as that is a very curious Passage, and looks almost like a *Prophecy*, which has been most remarkably accomplished since 1533, I will put down his Words in the Margin. || *Servetus*, having been two or three Years at *Lions*, went to *Paris*, where he studied *Physic*. He took his Degree of *Master of Arts*, and was admitted *Doctor of Physic*, in that University; and he afterwards practised *Physic*, and wrote some Books in that

|| Περὶ τῆς τετάρτης, scis me semper veritum esse fore, ut hæc aliquando erumperent. Bone Deus! quales tragædias excitabit hæc questio ad posteros, εἰ ἔσιν ὑπόστασις ὁ λόγος; εἰ ἔσιν ὑπόστασις τὸ πνεῦμα; Ego me refero ad illas scripturæ voces, quæ jubent invocare Christum, quod est ei honorem divinitatis tribuere, & plenum consolationis est. Τὰς δὲ ἰδέας τῶν ὑποστάσεων καὶ διαφορὰς ἀκριβῶς ζητῶν καὶ πάντῃ συμφέρει. i. e. “ You know that I was “ always afraid these Disputes about the *Trinity* would break “ out, some time or other. Good God! what Tragedies will “ this Question raise among Posterity, Whether the *Logos* be a “ Subsistence, or Person? Whether the *Spirit* be a Subsistence, “ or Person? I have recourse to those Words of Scripture, “ which command me to worship Christ, i. e. to ascribe the “ Honor of Divinity to him, which is full of Consolation. But “ it is by no means expedient accurately to examine into the “ Ideas of the Subsistences, or Persons, and of their Difference.

that Science. He was likewise for some time Corrector of the Presse at *Lions*. *Beza* * informs us, that *Calvin* knew *Servetus* at *Paris*, and opposed his Doctrine. The same Author adds, That *Servetus*, having agreed to ingage in a Dispute with *Calvin*, upon a certain Day and a certain Hour, dared not appear in that Conference.

WHILE *Servetus* was at *Paris*, his Book *De Trinitatis Erroribus* was dispersed in *Italy*; and very much approved by many *Italians*, who designed to forsake the Church of *Rome*. *Melanchton* being informed of it, wrote a Letter † to the Senate of *Venice* in the Year 1539, importing, That a Book of *Servetus*, who had revived the Error of *Paulus Samosatenus*, was handed about in their Country: He besought them to use their utmost Indeavors, that the impious Errors of that Man might be avoided, rejected, and abhorred. It is not improbable that *Lælius Socinus*, *Faustus's* Uncle, and several other *Italians*, took their Antitrinitarian Notions from *Servetus's* Book. That Physician, having finished his Studies at *Paris*, left that City, to go and practise Physic in some other Places; which he did two or three Years in a Town about twelve Leagues Distance from *Lions*; and then at *Vienne* in *Dauphine* for the Space of ten or twelve Years. I find very few Particulars relating to him, during that Time; though he then wrote several Letters to his Friends and Acquaintance. He was at *Lions* in the Year 1544, before he settled at *Vienne*. And in *Lions* he corrected the Proofs of a new Edition of *Pagnin's Latin Bible*, and added a Preface to it, under the Name of *Villa-novanus*, from the Name of the Town where he was born; for in *France* he went under the

B

Name

* *History of the Reformed Church of France*, Vol. I. Pag. 14. Antwerp. 1580.

† *Melancht. Epist. Lib. I. Ep. III.*

Name of *Villaneuve*. *Servetus* also added some marginal Notes to that Bible; of which we shall have Occasion to speak hereafter. *Calvin** calls them impertinent and impious Notes; and says, That *Servetus* got 500 Livres from the Bookseller for his Pains. That Reformer kept a long Correspondence with *Servetus*, by way of Letters. He informs us, † That he endeavored, by the Space of sixteen Years, to reclaim that Physician from his Errors. *Servetus* wrote several Letters to *Calvin* at Geneva, from *Lions* and *Dauphine*, and consulted him about several Points. *Calvin* says, That *Servetus* sent him the three following Questions from *Lions*, and desired him to answer them. I. *Whether the Man Jesus, that was crucified, was the Son of God; and, What was the Reason of his Filiation?* II. *Whether the Kingdom of Christ is in Men? When may a Man enter into it; and, When is he regenerated?* III. *Whether Christian Baptism ought to be performed in Faith, like the Lord's Supper? and, To what End these Things were instituted in the New Covenant?* *Calvin* answered these Queries: But *Servetus*, far from being satisfied with his Explications, wrote him a second Letter, containing a Confutation of his Answers. *Calvin*, being very much displeased at that Letter, made a sharp Reply, as he himself § owns. Whereupon *Servetus*, who was no lesse fiery than his Antagonist, grew very angry with him. *Calvin* says, That this Dispute occasioned the Hatred which *Servetus* conceived for him; and complains, || That *that Heretic* did not cease from that Time to make Imprecations against him. But the Account of that bitter Revenge,

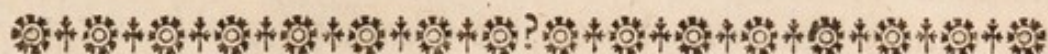
* *Fidelis Exposit. Errorum Michaelis Serveti, &c. among Calvin's Theological Tracts, Pag. 830. Geneva, 1576.*

† *Ibid. Pag. 817.*

§ *Fidelis Exposit. Errorum Michaelis Serveti, &c. Pag. 827.*

|| *Ibid. Pag. 835.*

venge, which *Calvin* took upon *Servetus* for his Hatred and Imprecations, must be deferred to another Paper.



The OLD WHIG, &c.

N^o 153. *Thursday, February 9, 1737-8.*

S I R,

IN my Account of *Servetus*, I have intimated that *Calvin* and he first quarrelled in an Epistolary Correspondence. *Servetus* sent a MS. to *Calvin* to have his Judgment about it, six Years before he was apprehended at *Geneva*; and, tho' that Piece was never printed, it was produced against him at his Trial. Such unfair Methods do *Persecutors* and *Inquisitors* commonly take! *Calvin* was so incensed against *Servetus*, that he could not forbear reviling him in his Commentaries on the Bible; * for he calls him a *profligate Fellow, full of Pride, the proudest Knave of the Spanish Nation, and a Dog*. These Things he wrote, before *Servetus* came to *Geneva*. It is said, that there is at *Paris* an original Letter of *Calvin's* to *Farrel*, wrote 1546, which was never printed; and that he there intimates, *Servetus* had wrote such intolerable Things, that if he came to *Geneva* (as he, in his Letters, had proposed to do) he would use his Power with the Magistrates, that he should not escape without losing his Life. †

B 2

SER-

* See *Calvin on John i. 1.* 1563, and in other Editions.

† See *Varilla's Histoire de l' Heresie, ad Ann. 1553, p. 350, &c. Paris. 4to. & Soberiana, p. 48, 49. of the Dutch Edition, 1694.*

SERVETUS (notwithstanding the bad Treatment he had met with) continued in his own Opinions, and boldly resolved to publish a third Book against the *Trinity*, and some other Doctrines. That Book, for which he was burnt at *Geneva*, came out at *Vienne* in *Dauphine*, the beginning of the Year 1553, with the Title of *Christianismi Restitutio*, &c. Or *the Revival of Christianity*, &c. That is the famous Book, in which he, the first of all the Physicians, mentioned the Circulation of the Blood.* He printed one thousand Copies, but most of them were burned, either at *Vienne* with the Author's Effigy, or at *Francfort*; which is the Reason why that Book is so very scarce.† *Servetus* was neither an *Arian*, nor a *Photinian*; for he asserted not only the Pre-existence of *Christ*, but also that *Christ* is not a Creature, nor a Being of a finite Power, but true *God*, and that he ought to be worshiped as such; however, he is reckoned to have expressed himself so confusedly, that it is not easy to have a clear Notion of his Doctrine. He calls it a *Mystery, unknown to the World*; but at the same time owns, that such as acknowledge *Christ* to be the *Messiah* and the *Son of God*, only as he is a *Man*, may attain to Salvation. He expresses himself, on all Occasions, with great Indignation against the *Church of Rome*, and takes it to be the *Beast* mentioned in the *Revelation*. I forbear to quote particular Passages, because I would not be tedious; but there is such an Acrimony in them as would have incited the *Roman Catholics* to put him to Death, if he had not denied the *Trinity*.

Tho' the *Christianismi Restitutio* was printed very privately, and without *Servetus's* Name, *Calvin* was informed

* See Dr. Wotton concerning Antient and Modern Learning. p. 229. Anno 1697.

† There was a Copy of that Book 1613, in the Library of the Landgrave of Hesse Cassel.

informed that *Servetus* was the Author of it, and had a Copy sent him. Whereupon he desired one *William Trie* to write a Letter to *Lions*, in *March* 1553, wherein *Servetus* was represented as a very pernicious Man. That Letter was accompanied with the Title Page, the Index, and the first Leaves of the Book. *Servetus* complained of it, upon his Trial, at *Geneva*; and said, “ That *Calvin* had sent those Sheets to *Lions*, to have him arrested and prosecuted as an *Heretic*.” About a Fortnight after, *Calvin* sent, by the same Man, above twenty *Latin* Letters, which he had received from *Servetus*, that he might be the better convicted of his *Herefy*. These Letters were mentioned in the Sentence pronounced against him, at *Vienne*. *Calvin* succeeded in his Design, *Servetus* was apprehended at *Vienne*, in the Beginning of *June*, by virtue of *William Trie*’s Letters, and Imprisoned; but used very well in his Confinement, which was of but very short Continuance; for two Days after, upon a *Friday*, about nine o’Clock in the Morning, *Servetus* asked the Jaylor for the Key of the House of Office, and made his Escape thro’ it. The Magistrates being informed that he had run away, met *June* 17, and condemned him to be burned alive with a slow Fire, if he could be apprehended; and in the mean time to be burned in Effigy, with his Books. Accordingly, on the same Day, his Effigy being laid in a dung Cart, by the Hands of the common Hangman, was carried to the Place of Execution, fastened to a Gibbet, and burned, with five Bales of his Books, by the said Executioner.

I THOUGHT to have proceeded to what happened to him at *Geneva*, where he suffered in Person, and not in Effigy; but I find I cannot give you a particular Relation of his remarkable Trial, if I should comprize it within the Compasse
of

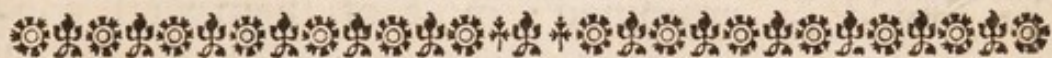
of this Paper. I would therefore conclude with such Reflections as these. “ When *Servetus* was
 “ thus treated, it was a common Thing to burn
 “ the *Protestants* in *France*. That very Year many
 “ of them suffered Death, that the *Popish Religion*
 “ might be defended against the Progresse of the
 “ Reformed.

Tantum Relligio potuit suadere malorum ?

“ An historical Commentary on these *Latin*
 “ Words would be a very curious Work, and an
 “ admirable Antidote against *Persecution*. Cruelty
 “ is the distinguishing Character of the *Church of*
 “ *Rome*! Surely *Protestants*, who have so often and
 “ so severely felt the dreadful Effects of that vio-
 “ lent Spirit, and bitter Zeal for Religion ;—those,
 “ who have themselves come out of *that great*
 “ *Tribulation*, should think themselves in a more pe-
 “ culiar Manner, obliged to expresse their Abhor-
 “ rence of *Persecution*, upon all Occasions, and in
 “ every Kind and Degree. But it must be
 “ owned, in behalf of *those persecuting Protestants*,
 “ about the Time of the *Reformation*, that their
 “ *Spirit of Persecution* was a Remainder of *Popery*,—
 “ a pernicious Error, which they had imbibed in
 “ the *Church of Rome*! She is, in a great Mea-
 “ sure, answerable for the Execution of *Servetus*.
 “ If the *Roman Catholicks* had never put any Body
 “ to Death, on account of *Religion*, I am apt to
 “ believe *Servetus* would not then have been tried,
 “ in a *Protestant City*. *Calvin*, and all the Ma-
 “ gistrates of *Geneva*, in the 1553, were born and
 “ bred up in the *Church of Rome*. This is the
 “ best Apology that can be made for them :
 “ For the Thing itself is, by no Means, to be vin-
 “ dicated ;—tho’ most Parties, when in Power,
 “ have shewn too much Inclination to *persecute*, in
 “ some

“ some Degree, those who could not think just as
 “ they did.

“ WHEN will this Unchristian Spirit intirely cease!
 “ And Persons in Power acknowlege *Liberty* to be
 “ the *Natural Right* of those who differ from them,
 “ and of all Mankind!—As freely and as heartily
 “ as they would claim it for *themselves*, were they
 “ the Minority, and wanted that Indulgence,
 “ which they are commonly so loth to grant to
 “ others?”



The OLD WHIG, &c.

N^o 154. *Thursday, February 16, 1737-8.*

Tantæne animis cælestibus iræ?

VIRG.

S I R,

I NOW send you the remaining Part of the History of Doctor *Servetus*. After he had made his Escape from *Vienne*, he resolved to retire into *Naples*, and to practise Physic among his Countrymen, who were settled in that City. He set out to go by way of *Geneva*, where he arrived on Foot, having left off riding at the Place where he lay the Night before. He lodged at the *Rose-Inn*, designing to hire a Boat the next Day, in order to go *Zurich*; and probably he went to *Italy*, by way of *Geneva*, rather than by that of *Piedmont*, in hopes that, if he was discovered, the *Protestants* would have been more merciful to him than the *Papists*. But he was very much mistaken, if he expected such Favor; for

Calvin

Calvin, being informed he was in Town, got on of the Magistrates to apprehend him and put him in Prison : He had about him 97 Pieces of Gold, a Gold Chain weighing about twenty Crowns, and six Gold Rings ; all which he delivered to the Jailor, as I supposed he was obliged to do. When *Calvin* had got him fast, he imployed one *Nicholas de la Fontaine*, his own Servant, some say his Cool to commence a Persecution against *Servetus*, in order to bring him to a Trial. He exhibited thirty eight Articles against him ; on which he desired he should be examined ; most of them were concerning his Opinions. *Servetus* readily confessed himself *Author* of the *Books* ascribed to him, whether printed or MS. They kept him in Prison in all, about five Months ; but his Trial began *August* 14 ; after which he was frequently called to the Bar, before the Judges of that City sometimes Day after Day, for several Days together. They raked into his whole Life and Actions, that they might multiply their Accusations ; and every time he appeared they commonly laid new Things to his Charge ; but abusing *Calvin* was almost always one of the Articles against him. *La Fontaine* at first made himself a Prisoner, to more effectually to convince the Judges that he was able to prove his Charge ; but he was released the second Day of his Trial, upon engaging to go on with the Prosecution, *Calvin's* Brother being Security for him ; after which one *Cladon* also joined in the Accusation. The Articles exhibited against him, ran upon several Particulars. They charged him with saying that *Judea* was so fruitful as it had been represented ; as if he had thereby reflected on the Account which *Moses* gives of its great Fruitfulness : Whereas most Travellers intimate, that it is now a barren Land, tho' it was formerly exceeding fruitful. The charge

charged him with applying the 53d Chapter of *Isaiah* to *Cyrus*, tho' he acknowledged the mystical Sense concerned *Christ*, who is principally meant in that Chapter. But the chief Accusation against him was his Notions of the *Trinity* (for he held that *Christ* in Scripture is never called the *Son of God*, but only *as he is a Man*; or that he was not the Son of God *from Eternity*, but only from the Time of his Incarnation) and his denying *Infant-Baptism*.

August 21. *Calvin* came into Court, attended with all the Ministers of *Geneva*. That Reformer and the Prisoner had a long Dispute about the true Sense of the Words *Person* and *Hypostasis*. After the Dispute was over, *Calvin* and his Attendants went away; and the Judges allowed him to buy, at his own Charge, such Books as he wanted, if they could be had at *Geneva*, or *Lions*; he had likewise three or four Books, which *Calvin* had brought and left with him; and finally they allowed him Pen and Ink to write a Petition, as he desired; after which he wrote several Petitions to his Judges. In the first of them he shews, "that no Man ought
"to be prosecuted, before the Civil Magistrate, for
"his *Religious Opinions*, unless he was guilty of
"Sedition, or disturbing the Public Peace;"—and he begged of them very earnestly to allow him an *Attorney* to plead his Cause, because he was a Foreigner, and unacquainted with their Customs; but that was too great a Favor to be granted to an *Heretic*!

August 31. there came the Captain of the Royal Palace at *Vienne*, with a Letter from some of the Magistrates there, to the Magistrates of *Geneva*, in which they thanked them for informing them that *Servetus* had been apprehended in that City; and they desired them to send him back to *Vienne*, that their Sentence might be executed upon him.

When *Servetus* was at the Bar, and the Captain came in, the Judges asked the Prisoner, “ Whether he would stay at *Geneva*, or go back “ to *Vienne*, with the Jaylor that was come to fetch “ him ? ” Upon which he threw himself on the Ground, and melting into Tears, he most earnestly begged of his Judges, that they would not send him back, but try him at *Geneva*, and deal with him as they should see fit.—“ Here was a “ Scene that would have moved the Heart of “ almost any Man but an *Inquisitor* ! a poor friend- “ less, destitute *Foreigner*, taken up as he was passing thro’ their City, where he had done them “ no Injury ;—and imprisoned, because he was not “ of the same Opinion with them,—*with them* (I say) “ who differed from the Majority, and had lately “ broke off from the *Church of Rome* ; and, when “ he was upon the Ground, at their Feet, all in “ Tears, begging earnestly for Protection and “ Mercy ; their *Zeal* had no Ears, their Hearts “ no Sympathy and Relenting ; they only kept “ him from returning to *Vienne* ; that they might “ have *the Glory* of burning him in *Geneva*. Can “ mortal Men treat one another thus, and yet “ hope for Mercy from God ? ”—But I refrain ! tho’ surely it is impossible to read such Passages without weeping Eyes and a bleeding Heart !

THE Jaylor returned to *Vienne*, and left *Servetus* behind him, after he had got an Attestation from that miserable Wretch, that he had escaped without his Assistance.

September 1. *SERVETUS* refused, out of Generosity, to name those who were in his Debt in *France*, though he was much pressed to it ; as thinking very probably that the Government would seize on his Effects. On that Day *Calvin* appeared in Court again, and afterwards they had

had another Dispute in Writing, which was to as little Purpose as all the rest.

September 15. SERVETUS presented a Petition to his Judges, begging they would make an End of the Affair, and intimated, “ that he was eat
“ up with *Lice*, that his Breeches were torn in
“ Pieces, and that he had no other Pair, nor any
“ other Doublet or Shirt, but a very sorry one ; ”
and, in the Conclusion of that Petition, he desired *Calvin* might be prosecuted, as being *an unjust Accuser*, and the Author of all his Miseries. In another Petition, he concludes thus, “ I beg of
“ you, my Lords, to do me *Justice* ; *Justice*,
“ my Lords, *Justice*. From your Prisoner at *Geneva*,
“ *September 22, 1553. Michael Servetus* plead-
“ ing his own Cause.” All the Petitions were wrote in *French*. I will give you the last of them intire, which runs thus :

Magnificent Lords,

“ IT is now three Weeks since I desired to
“ have an Hearing, but could not obtain it. I be-
“ seech you, for *Christ*’s Sake, not to deny me
“ what you would not deny a *Turk*, when I desire
“ you to do me *Justice*. I have several Things
“ to tell you that are very important and neces-
“ sary. As for the Orders you gave, that some-
“ thing should be done to keep me clean, they
“ have not been performed, and I am more mi-
“ serable than ever. Besides, I am very much
“ troubled with *Cold*, by reason of my *Cholick* and
“ *Rupture*, which occasion some other Miseries that
“ I am ashamed to write. It is a great Piece of
“ Cruelty, that I should not be allowed to speak,
“ in order to supply my Wants ; for God’s Sake,
“ my Lords, give some Orders about it, either out

“ of Compassion, or out of Duty. From your
 “ Prison at Geneva, October 10, 1553.

Michael Servetus,

THE Magistrates of Geneva (who were chiefly directed and managed by *Calvin*, in the whole Affair) got Letters from the Magistrates or Ministers of *Zurich*, *Schaffhausen*, *Basil* and *Berne*, to authorize and vindicate their Proceedings. When *Calvin* had almost accomplished his Design, he wrote a Letter to *Farrel*, in which he says, “ I hope
 “ *Servetus* will be condemned to Death ; but I
 “ wish the Severity of the Punishment may be
 “ softened.”—The common *Cant* of all *Persecutors* and *Inquisitors* ! who first bring innocent Persons into Distresse, and when they have accomplished their Ruine, and deliver up an *Heretic Convict*, to the civil Magistrates, to be burnt alive,—desire
 “ they would have Mercy upon him ! ” However, *Farrel* in his Answer is for shewing no Favor ; but says, that *Servetus* deserved to die Ten thousand Deaths ; and intimates that the Judges would be very cruel, and Enemies to *Christ* and his Church, if they did not procede, and make an Example of him. *Calvin* glories in it, that *Bucer* (tho’ otherwise a moderate Man) had said in his Pulpit, concerning *Servetus*, “ that he deserved to have his
 “ Entrails plucked out, and to be torn in Pieces.” *Bulinger* intimated, that the Magistrates acted bravely, and that punishing such obstinate Heretics was for the *Glory of God*.

October 26. the Judges condemned the unhappy *Servetus* to be burnt alive, the next Day, together with all his Books, both printed and MS. and *Beza* doth not scruple say, That it was according to the Opinion of all the *Helvetian Churches*. Their Sentence (after reckoning up the several Things alleged against him) concludes thus,—“ For this Cause, and
 “ others,

“ others, moving us thereto, desiring to clear the
 “ *Church* of such an Infection, and to cut off such
 “ a rotten Member ; having consulted our Citizens,
 “ and *invoked the Name of God*, to give a right
 “ Judgment, sitting in the Place of our Ancestors ;
 “ having *God* and the *Holy Scriptures* before our
 “ Eyes, saying, *in the Name of the Father, and of*
 “ *the Son, and of the Holy Ghost* ; by this our defi-
 “ nitive Sentence, which we give in Writing, we
 “ condemn thee, *Michael Servetus*, to be bound
 “ and carried to the Place called *Champel*, and
 “ there to be fastened to a Stake, and burnt alive,
 “ with thy Books, both written with thine own
 “ Hand, and printed, till thy Body be reduced
 “ to Ashes. And thus thou shalt end thy Days,
 “ to give an Example to others who would do
 “ the like.”

“ We command you, *our Lieutenant*, to cause
 “ our present Sentence to be put in Execution.”

Servetus had attempted several Times, during
 his Trial, to have appealed to the Counsel of
Two Hundred ; who would, perhaps, have acquitted
 him ; and one of the Judges proposed *that*, but
 he was abused by *Calvin*, who influenced most of
 the Judges, and carried Things very much as
 he pleased.

October 27. being the Day appointed for his Ex-
 ecution, he desired to see *Calvin* two Hours before
 he was burnt. *Calvin* went to him, accompanied with
 two of the Magistrates. *Servetus* begged his Pardon
 for all the abusive Language he had used towards
 him ; but I do not find that *Calvin* begged his
 Pardon ; tho' he had used as scurrilous Language
 to *Servetus*, and basely and treacherously procured
 against him the *Sentence of Death*. He did, in-
 deed, say (when *Servetus* begged his Pardon) that he
 never thought of Revenging himself for the hard
 Words *Servetus* had given him ; and intimated,
 that

that he had used all gentle Methods to convince him of his Errors, till he saw they were in vain. *Calvin* likewise exhorted him to pray to God that he would forgive him, for *having attempted to pluck three Hypostases out of his Substance, &c.* but *Servetus* continued steady in his Opinion; and was not moved by any Thing *Calvin* could say.

AFTER he was condemned to die, *Calvin* says, he sometimes appeared speechless, and without any Motion, sometimes he fetched deep Sighs, and at other Times again made great Lamentations, like a Madman; crying out *Mercy, Mercy*, after the Spanish Way. When he came to the Stake, he made no Speech to the People, nor shewed any Sign of relenting. It is very likely his Enemies would not suffer him to speak to the People. *Champel*, or *Champey*, a small rising Ground about a Musket-Shot from *Geneva*, was then the common Place of Execution, and the unfortunate *Servetus* expired in the Flames, a Victim to the Resentment of *Calvin*, and the cruel Zeal of the Magistrates of *Geneva*, and a flagrant Instance of the dreadful Tendency and horrible Consequences of Persecution, whether found among *Papists* or *Protestants*!

I am, S I R,

Your affectionate, humble Servant,

CHARISTES.

The OLD WHIG, &c.

N^o 160. *Thursday, March 30, 1738.*

To the Author of the OLD WHIG,

S I R,

I SOME time ago gave you an Account of *Servetus*, and of the Treatment which he met with from several of the *Renowned Reformers*. I would now beg Leave to offer some *Remarks* on the Conduct of his Adversaries.

ONE of their Methods of hunting down *Servetus* and his Opinions, was by writing *Letters*, sounding an Alarm, and raising a Pannic, in various Countries, and among People that had never read his Books, to excite them to condemn him unheard.—They ascribed to him wicked and dangerous Designs, and represented him as *no Christian*; nay, as an *Atheist*, because he did not believe *Christianity*, according to *their Interpretation*: (tho' it must be owned that *Servetus* was as ready to call Names as any of his Adversaries:—So much did the Spirit of *Popery* and the Barbarity of the preceding Age remain, even in Men, who themselves stood in need of the Charity and Candor of others!) they seized by Violence upon *Servetus's* Books, and burned them as full of *Blasphemy*; whereas he and his Friends might, with as much Justice, have seized upon their Books, and burnt them.

THEY raked into his whole Life and Conversation, as if his Opinions would have been the less true and reasonable, if he had been found to be an immoral Man. But, tho' they could

not

not fix any great Immorality upon him, they nevertheleſſe condemned him; ſo that his *Vices* would have aggravated his *Hereſy*; but his *Virtue* could be of no Service to him.

ANOTHER moſt wicked Method of blaſting his Reputation was, *the miſrepreſenting* his Doctrine, expreſſing it in their *own Words*, and *fixing their odious Conſequences upon him*. I mention this the rather, becauſe *Bigots* of all Parties commonly take this Method, that they may repreſent their Adverſaries Opinions in the moſt odious Light. They ought to have taken *Servetus's* own Words, in order to expreſſe his Sentiments, and not have charged him with ſeveral Things, which he utterly diſowned. However, they found ſuch a Way of treating him to be *proper*, in order to blacken his Character, and incenſe the *People* againſt him. But the grand Source of their cruel Treatment of *Servetus* was a tacit claiming to themſelves (what the *Church of Rome* openly lays claim to, *that is*) *Infallibility*. If *Calvin* and his Friends had not ſet themſelves up *as Standards of Truth and Orthodoxy*, what Pretence could they have had of proſecuting *Servetus* for differing from them, and delivering him over to the Flames as a Blaſphemer and *Heretic Conviſt*? It is true, they did not openly declare for *Infallibility*. But it is evident, by their Conduct, they claimed as much Deference among the *Reformed Churches*, as the *Pope* claimed among the *Papiſts*. For, as the Latter declares, that *he is always right*, the Former were very poſitive *they were never wrong*; and he muſt be very ſharpſighted, that can find out the Difference. The Truth is, *Calvin* had no more Dominion over *Servetus's* Faith, than *Servetus* over his; and therefore he ſet out upon a wrong Suppoſition. However, as *Calvin* was almoſt adored by the People that were *Proteſtants*, as he had moſt of the

Magiſ-

Magistrates of *Geneva* at his beck, and very great Influence in other Cities and States; *Servetus*, a poor Exile, could expect no Favor. The claiming *Infallibility*, without the Civil Power to back it, is a mere Farce. But, when the Sword of the Magistrate is at the Service of an *infallible Priest*, it exalts him into a God, that (like *Moloch*) must be appeased by the Blood of innocent Victims, and it is hard to satiate such a devouring Idol!

ANOTHER fundamental Mistake, in the Persecution of *Servetus*, was, “ that, in Consequence
 “ of their supposing they were certainly in the
 “ right themselves, they thought it their Duty to
 “ call in the Secular Arm; and that *Magistrates*,
 “ had a Power given them from God, to inter-
 “ meddle with Religious Affairs, and punish Men
 “ for differing in their *Opinions* from the *Great* or
 “ the *Many*.” They did not duly consider that, by this Argument the *Protestants*, who were many of them that very Year burned in *France*, suffered justly, and that they furnished the *Papists* with an invincible Argument against themselves, wherever the *Protestants* were in their Power. Nay, *Calvin* went further, when he incited the Magistrates of *Vienne* (who were *Papists*) to apprehend *Servetus*, and burn him, because of his *Opinions*; they would have done as much for *Calvin*, if they had caught him. And, according to his own Sentiments, he could have had nothing justly to have objected against them. But the Truth is, “ tho’ the Magistrate hath a Right to punish all such as disturb the Peace of Society, yet he hath no Right to punish peaceable Members of Society, whatever their *Religious Opinions* be.” Religion should ever be carefully separated from Civil Government; though ignorant, bigoted, and interested Men have generally been for mixing and confounding them, in order to support themselves in Wealth
 D and

and Power. *Religion* lies between God and a Man's own Conscience; and the Magistrate ought to protect every one, in his Right of choosing his own Religion, of professing it publicly, and worshipping in his own Way, without any Danger from his so doing. And it ought to be remembered, in Honor of *Servetus*, that he so well understood the *Rights of Conscience*, as to declare expressly, "That the Sword of the Magistrate ought not to be made use of, in Matters of *Religion*." —Which the celebrated Mr. *Locke*, and others, have, since that, abundantly shewn to be truly *Reasonable* and *Christian*.

It has been the common Method of *Persecutors* and *Inquisitors*, in such Cases, to devest themselves of all *Humanity*, and mix their own private Resentments with their *Zeal* for *Orthodoxy*. Had *Servetus* paid a profound Submission to *Calvin* and his Friends, as *Valentinus Gentilis* did, who was afterwards imprisoned at *Geneva*, for *Heresy*, he would have escaped with his Life, as well as the other. But to consult such great *Doctors* about their Opinions, and yet dare to differ from them, and to write against them, was not to be indured. Nay, *Calvin* intimates "that, if he had behaved with any Modesty, he should have been spared;" but *Servetus* would not acknowledge himself convinced, before he was really convinced, and therefore he fell a Sacrifice to the Resentments of his *Persecutors*; who, being resolved upon his Destruction, produced private Letters, betrayed the Secrets of Friendship, and scrupled no Method to bring him to Ruine; for *there is no Faith to be kept with Heretics*; and betraying Secrets, and violating Friendship, and a thousand other Things, which are wicked in themselves, immediately become *virtuous*, *pious*, *laudable*, and *excellent*, when *Zealots* are to contend for

for the Faith, and support their own *infallible Systems*.

HIS Prosecutor was allowed Counsel; but *Servetus*, tho' a *Foreigner*, and a Stranger to their Methods of Proceeding, was an *Heretic*; and therefore he must have no Favor shewn him, nor even *common Justice*. Malefactors can generally have in Prison what may render their Confinement more easy, as long as they themselves can pay for it; but *Servetus* must be starved, amidst Cold and Nastiness; and *their Christian Charity* denied him the common Favors which are due to all Mankind. What a savage thing is *Persecution*! that can transform Men into *Brutes*, or *Devils*, and make them deaf to the Cries of the Miserable, in the most exquisite Distresse? *St. Paul* says, that of *Faith*, *Hope*, and *Charity*, these three Christian Virtues, *the greatest of these is Charity*. But they were of a different Opinion from *St. Paul*; and therefore they exalted *Faith* above *Charity*, and broke the Christian Laws, to promote the Glory of God, and drive *Heresy* out of the Christian Church. They got a Number of Hands from the neighboring States, to support and vindicate the Sentence, which they were going to passe; but neither Power nor Multitudes can make *Wrong to be Right*; and a few may, in some Cases, hold the *Truth*, when *Error* prevails both among the *Great* and the *Many*.

It would have given me a most exquisite Pleasure, to have found the great Reformer, *Calvin*, instead of apprehending *Servetus* in *Geneva*, to have got him his Liberty, after he had been unjustly apprehended by others, and to have used him, in the same friendly and beneficent Manner, that he could have wished to have been treated himself, if he had fallen into the Hands of *Papists*, or other *Persecutors*. *Calvin*, being a Man

of great Parts, might have made as good a Discourse as he was able, before *Servetus* and all the Magistrates of *Geneva*, “ in order to have shewn
 “ how contrary *Servetus*’s Notions were to *Reason*
 “ and *Holy Scripture*; and ought to have exerted
 “ all his Eloquence, in pointing out the Absurdity of
 “ *Persecution*, for any Religious Opinion whatever.
 “ If he had treated that Physician with such Humanity, it would have been the most likely
 “ Way to have induced him to listen to what he
 “ had to offer; and, tho’ *Calvin* had not succeeded
 “ in bring over his Adversary, he might nevertheless have convinced him of his *Christian Charity* and sincere good Wishes; and shewn, that
 “ (tho’ *Servetus*’s Arguments were many of them
 “ obscure, and such as he could not see the Force
 “ of; yet) he retained a sincere Good-will to
 “ his Person, and would recommend it to him to
 “ examine his Opinions over again, to abstain
 “ from all unbecoming Expressions, and to take
 “ Care, lest he should be transported with a violent and indiscreet Zeal;—that Almighty God
 “ had been very propitious to him, in not permitting him to fall a Sacrifice into the Hands of
 “ *Papists*; who were then *drunk with the Blood of*
 “ *so many of the Saints and Martyrs of Jesus*:—That
 “ for his part he abhorred *Persecution*, in all the
 “ Kinds and Degrees of it;—and that he treated
 “ *Servetus* with Humanity, and preserved him
 “ out of *Christian Charity*; which was doing, as he,
 “ in a like Case, would have desired to be done
 “ to him;—that he was glad to see him in a *Protestant* City, where *Liberty of Conscience* was daily
 “ gaining Ground; and among true Christians,
 “ who *did not desire the Death of a Sinner, but rather*
 “ *that he should turn and live*: That, if he pleased to
 “ tarry with them, they would use him with Humanity, and endeavor to protect him from the
 Vio-

“ Violence of his and their common Enemies,
 “ the Votaries of the Church of *Rome* ;—but, if he
 “ pleased to go elsewhere, they would leave him
 “ intirely at his Liberty ; and would rejoice
 “ in his Welfare, as a Fellow-Creature and *Bro-*
 “ *ther Christian*, tho’ he differed in some of his
 “ Sentiments from them.” Instead of writing for
Persecution, and to prove that the *Magistrates ought*
to put Heretics to Death, (as *Calvin* has done) I
 should have been much pleased to find a Speech,
 like that above, among the Works of *that Great*
Man.

THE Execution of *Servetus* made a great Noise,
 not only among the moderate *Protestants*, but even
 among the *Roman Catholics*. The former ex-
 claimed against *Calvin*, as being the Author of *Serv-*
vetus’s Death ; and indeed every Body imputed to
 him what the Magistrates of *Geneva* had done in
 that Affair ;—his Influence was so great in that
 City, and his Enmity to *Servetus* so very flagrant !
 The Clamor, raised against him on that Occasion,
 forced him to write in Defence of *Persecution*.—
 However, all were not of his Mind ; and it is
 greatly to the Honor of the *Protestants*, that
 there were many, even at that Day, who so loudly
 condemned *Persecution*, and attacked even one of
Calvin’s great Character, for acting so contrary to
 the Rules of *right Reason* and of *Christianity*. This
 was a most cruel Act, and directly repugnant to
 the gentle, the humble, the charitable Spirit of
Christ ;—but perfectly agreeable to the Temper of
 some Men, whom I will not name, nor describe
 any further than to say, “ That they are for hunt-
 ing down all who dare to differ in Opinion from
 them.” The bigoted *Papists* would, no doubt,
 plead that Instance of *Servetus*, as a Defence of
 their burning the *Protestants* ; and what Reflections
 the more moderate *Roman Catholics* made upon it,
 may

may be seen in *Father Paul's History of the Council of Trent*, pag. 387. with whose Words I shall conclude.

“ ONE Hundred Seventy-six Persons of Quality
 “ were burned that Year for Religion, [*that is,*
 “ in England, under the Popish Queen Mary,] besides
 “ many of the common People.—Many were also
 “ at the same Time burned in *France*, for Religion;
 “ not without the Indignation of honest Men;
 “ who knew that the Diligence used against those
 “ poor People was not for Piety, or Religion, but
 “ to satisfy the Covetousnesse of *Diana Valentina*, the
 “ King's Mistressse, to whom he had given all the
 “ Confiscation of Goods, made in the Kingdom, for
 “ the Cause of *Heresy*. It was wondered also, that
 “ those of the *New Reformation* should meddle with
 “ Blood, for the Cause of Religion. For *Michael*
 “ *Servetus*, of *Terragona*, made a Divine of a Physi-
 “ cian, renewing the old Opinion of *Paulus Samo-*
 “ *satenus*, and *Marcellus Anciranus*, [that the Word
 “ of God was not a Thing subsisting, and therefore
 “ that *Christ* was a pure Man,] was put to Death
 “ for it in *Geneva*, by Counsel of the Ministers of
 “ *Zuric*, *Berne*, and *Schaffhaussen*: And *John Calvin*,
 “ who was blamed for it by many, wrote a Book,
 “ defending that the *Magistrate may punish Heretics*
 “ *with Losse of Life*: Which Doctrine, being drawn
 “ to divers Senses, as it is understood more strictly,
 “ or more largely, or as the Name of *Heretic* is
 “ taken diversly, may sometime do hurt to him,
 “ whom another Time it has helped.”

I am

Your affectionate, humble Servant,

CHARISTES.



