

CHAPTER 2

Early Journey

2.1 *Early Life*¹²

The data relating to the early life of Servetus is scanty and contradictory. The data is drawn mainly from the testimonies elicited at his two trials before the Roman Catholic Church at Vienne in April of 1553 and before the Council of Geneva in August of the same year. We know nothing of his life except through his testimonies, and it “appears quite certain that many of these declarations were more or less deliberately untrue” (Emerton 1909:141). The contradiction in his testimony makes it hard for us to believe much about personal history: “Almost all that we know of Servetus we have from his own lips. He tells us so many contradictory things about himself that it is hard to know what to believe” (Lingle 1900: 5). These descriptions are meagre and inconsistent and lack candour because he not only disguised his real name but occasionally changed his testimonies even though he swore to tell the truth on the Gospels (Wilbur 1972:51). Thus, the reconstructed early life of Michael Servetus is primarily based on assumptions.

2.1.1 His Birth and Early Education

Michael Servetus¹³ was originally called Miguel Serveto Conesa alias Revés. He was born in either 1509 or 1511 at Tudéla in Navarre or at Villeneuve in Aragón. In early infancy he went to Villeneuve de Sijena in Aragón.¹⁴ At the trial of Vienne he confessed that he was forty-two years old and was born at Tudéla in the Spanish kingdom of Navarre. If we accepted this description of his early life, his birth date would be September 29, 1511, as recorded on the front side of Servetus’ monument erected at Champel. But his tombstone has a different testimony.¹⁵ On the other hand, at the trial in Geneva he testified that he was

¹² It is easier to understand his life when divided into three periods: (1) his early life, first in Spain and later in Basel and Strassburg until 1532 under his real name, Serveto or Revés - which are inter-exchangeable; (2) his disguising life in France until 1553 under the name Villeneuve; (3) his miserable life at the trial of Vienne and Geneva. See Henry (1849:165).

¹³ His French name is Michel Servet, in *Opera*, 766. ; The affair between Calvin and Servetus, his correspondence, the records of the trials of both Vienne and Geneva, Calvin’s defence, are contained in Calvin’s *Opera*, 458-871. This is an indispensable primary source on the case of Servetus. It is presumed that Servetus’ first name was Michael because he was born on September 29, the day of St. Michael. See Drummond (1848:2). He argues in his book that Calvin entrapped, imprisoned, and burned Servetus.

¹⁴ At the trial of Geneva he declared that he was forty-four years old and was born in Villeneuve de Sijena in Aragón, and at Vienne he said the small town of Tudéla in southern Navarre of Spain. It is clearly recognized that his hometown was Villeneuve de Sijena. For the trial of Geneva see *Opera* (737, 766, 780) and for that of Vienne see *ibid* (845). Aragón was free spirited. See Ford (1860:12-3).

¹⁵ According to his tombstone, Michael Servetus died at the stake at Champel on October 27, 1553, and came from Villaneuva in Aragón and was born on September 29, 1511. See Emerton (1909: 139).

forty-four years of age and that he came from Villeneuve in Aragón, Spain. Accepting this testimony, we would conclude that he was born in 1509.¹⁶

There is no certainty to either the dates, and no parish records are available to verify his testimonies. If we accepted his confession at Geneva, it would be historically ironic that Calvin was born in the same year as Servetus. Contrasts and comparisons are inevitable: Both opposed the Roman Catholic Church, both were writers and both went to law school.¹⁷ It is imaginable that the information given on his age and place of origin were given in his attempt to defend himself. In line with this argument, Willis (1877:3-4) says:

When he spoke of himself as a Navarrese at Vienne, it may have been done to conciliate his French judges, Navarre having once been a province of France, and the natives of the two countries having still much in common. It was at a moment, too, when he had paramount motives for seeking to conceal his identity. When he said at Geneva that he was ‘Espagnol Arragonois de Villeneuve’ and forty-four, he was face to face with one who knew him well, and when he had neither motive nor opportunity for concealment.¹⁸

Most scholars accept that his birth place was Villeneuve based on the initials, M. S. V., printed on the cover of his last book *Christianismi Restitutio* and which stands for Michael Servetus Villanovanus. For the purposes of this study, his birth date will be assumed to be 1509 and his birth place Villeneuve.

His father, a notary, was Hernando Villeneuve. Little is known about his mother.¹⁹ According to his own testimony, his father was a royal Spanish descendant from an old Catholic family (*Opera*, 731). His mother might also have been from a noble family. He was the eldest and had two brothers, Petro and Juan. Petro was a notary like his father and

¹⁶ Osler (1909:4) prefers Servetus’ birth date in 1509 to 1511. Also in *The Johns Hopkins Hospital Bulletin* 11, no. 226 (January 1910). He addressed the same topic twice at the Johns Hopkins Hospital Historical Club and Extension lecture in the Summer School in Oxford 1910.

¹⁷ Allwoerden (1727:4-5) says that Servetus’ age was exactly the same as Calvin. He considers that the date of his birth was 1509. Most of those who are in favour of Servetus follow this date. Allwoerden’s book was the first attempt to describe Servetus’ life and “was written under superintendent of Dr. Mosheim. Every reader of Maclaïne’s had learned to be on his guard against this learned man, whenever the question lies between the Lutherans and the Reformers” (Beza 1836:170). For detail see Drummond (1848:6-7), Schaff (1994:687-9) & Porter (1854:1-3). Henry (1849:163-4) contrasts the two persons in light of inner character: “The reformer [Calvin] was distinguished by his clear and logical intelligence. Servetus was no less so for his fantastic imaginativeness, and for his defective argumentation. With Calvin there was the profound religious feeling, which proves true faith; with Servetus, on the contrary, there was no acknowledgement of sin, but a mere philosophical element, altogether deficient in clearness.”

¹⁸ As a medical doctor he wrote a biography on Michael Servetus in favour of him and against Calvin, who describes him as ugly. This portrait of drawing Servetus apparently refers to the original sources such as Mosheim’s *Ketzergische* and Allwoerden’s *Historia*, which Willis translated into English.

Juan was rector of the church of Poleñino.²⁰ Although nothing is known with certainty about his early education and training (Gordon 1910:8-9 & Killen, M'Comb 1854:5),²¹ he might have been sent to one of the convents of Aragón by his father, who intended for his son to become a priest. It was a custom in Spain “to devote children who were weak in intellect or feeble in health to the church” (Robbins 1846:51). In fact, according to his Genevan testimony, he was physically unfit to marry.²² It is said that Servetus could read Greek, Hebrew, and Latin fluently at the age of fourteen, as well as being schooled in philosophy and mathematics (Wright 1806:90).

2.1.2 Spanish context

Servetus grew up in difficult circumstances. The political and religious situation he experienced as a youth must somehow have influenced his later life and mentality (Harnack 1899:128):

“It is a paradox of history that Spain, the country that was least affected in the sixteenth century by the ideas of the newer age, and in which at the earliest date Catholicism was restored, produced this unique man [Michael Servetus].”²³

Three religions were predominant in Spain: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Judaism and Islam “most plainly simply teach the unity of God, and are utterly irreconcilable with the popular notions he opposed” (Wright 1806: 96). There was general religious tolerance until the Crusades, after which Spain decreed Christianity as the national religion. Christian Spain began to persecute and oppress both Moors and Jews. As a matter of survival many Jews converted to Christianity and were baptised. These so-called *conversos*, converted to Christianity, outwardly lived as Christians and “took their children to church to be baptised, though they hastened to wash off the traces of the ceremony as soon as they

¹⁹ Gordon (1910:7-8), principal of the Unitarian Home Missionary College, Manchester, investigates the track of the Serveto family in his article, “His mother looked like a French Revés”. In contrast, Wilbur (1972:51-2) shows that his mother’s name was Catalina Conesa.

²⁰ See Hillar (1997:188). This book is the newest book on Servetus’ theology, life, background, trials, and influence. It is based consistently on Calvin’s *Opera* and other contemporary sources.

²¹ Killen (1843) professor of Church History at the Assembly’s College, debated with Porter, who was in favour of Servetus. In the article he tries to defend Calvin, accused by Porter. It is assumed that he received his first rudimentary education in a Dominican convent. See Dyer (1850:297).

²² The Attorney General of Geneva, Claude Rigot asked Servetus, “Had he ever been married and, if not, how could he refrain for so long?” *Opera*, 765. In answer, “Servetus replied that he was physically unfit because of an *Operation* and a rupture” in his childhood (ibid:769).

²³ Wright (1806:95-7) also says, “Conversation with Jews or Mahommedans might convince him more fully of the divine unity, and an attention to the scriptures mature his judgement and establish him in his opinions.”

returned home” (Roth 1959:19, 20-8 passim).²⁴ Spain suffered from problems related to the religious situation (Edwards 1884:149-50):

The new problem of false converts, which was thus created, was supposedly solved by the Inquisition ... The Inquisition was efficient in its own terms, and the expulsion of unbaptised Jews undoubtedly assisted the assimilation of the converses, but, in the last analysis, the Holy Office was trying to solve a social problem by theological means, and was thus *Operating* in the wrong set of categories. This contradiction was highlighted by the confrontation with the Muslim populations of Granada and Valencia.

It was suspected that they would revert back to their religions. The way to solve the problem was to banish all non-converted Catholics or non-Christians from Spain. The same solution was applied to the Moors after the fall of Granada in 1492 (Roth 1959:52-3).²⁵ This circumstance led to 800,000 Jews being expelled from Spain, seeking their refuges in Navarre. Thousands of Islamic followers were burnt at the stake (Wilbur 1972:53; Howlett 1947:n.p.). It is considered that the Spaniards were influenced by the Moors and the Jews, gaining a reputation for ruthlessness and injustice. They eliminated those who followed the heresy regarding the Trinity or the Deity of Christ. Martin Luther (Lehmann 1971:128) says, “the Inquisition had been employed to ferret out those of dubious faith among the Marranos, the Spanish Jews who had been forcibly converted.”

2.1.3 Influence of Islam and Judaism on teachings

It is not hard to see how these circumstances affected Servetus’ father and Servetus. It is possible that he went to Africa to learn Arabic so that he could read the Koran. We know he did not hesitate to call Christ one of the prophets, as the Moors did (Allwoerden 1727:17-22).²⁶ It is true that some of his writings were breathing Moorish and Jewish elements (Friedman 1978:18; also 1973:88 & Potter & Greengrass 1983:102). When expounding the term “the Trinity”, he is apt to mention Mohammed and Jews on a regular basis (ET 42b-43a):

“Furthermore, and worse than all this, how much this tradition of the Trinity has, alas! been a laughing-stock to the Mohammedans, only God knows. The Jews also shrink from giving adherence to this fancy of ours, and laugh at our foolishness about the Trinity.”²⁷

²⁴ See Braudel (1992:570-1). On the banishment of *Conversos* [converted from Judaism] and *Marranos* [converted from Islam], see Friedman (1984:139-40) & Edwards (1984:139-51).

²⁵ On March 30, 1492, the Spanish decreed the expulsion of the Jews who had all departed by July 31, 1492.

²⁶ The fact that he calls Christ a prophet in his book, establishes that Servetus was affected by Judaism and Islam, even though he denied belonging to them, insisting on having read the Fathers of Church and the Bible. See Servetus (ET 43a. 67). See also Wallace (1850:421).

²⁷ See also ET (56b.89): “I can not here refrain from sighing, when I see the replies that Rabbi Kimchi made against the Christians on this point.” Servetus also insisted that one should return to the rabbis to understand what “the first Christians believed”, naming them first Christian in *CR*, (108, 399-400).

Servetus reacted against the accusations that the Jews and Moors influenced him (ET 57b. 90):

“Some are scandalized that I call Christ a prophet, for inasmuch as they have not this custom themselves, it seems to them to be Judaism or Mohammedanism of Christ is called a prophet. Nor do they care whether Scripture and the earlier writers call him a prophet.”

The major difference between Christianity, Judaism, and Islam is the doctrine of the Trinity (Bainton 1953:30). The latter two religions do not adhere to the doctrine of the Trinity but believe in Monotheism.

2.1.4 Affinity to Erasmus

Servetus was also brought up in the climate of nondogmatic piety associated with Erasmus (Hillar 1997:190-2),²⁸ who lived in Spain from 1522 to 1532. Erasmus, whose writings influenced the Spanish of his age, applied the term of God exclusively to the Father in the New Testament and wanted to return Christianity to its origins. Later, Servetus tried to send his book *De Trinitatis Erroribus* to Erasmus, but he took no interest in it (Bainton 1953:224). The following expression used in the letter of Erasmus sent to Jean de Carondelet on January 5, 1523 might have influenced Servetus in his eagerness to refute the traditional Christian doctrine of the Trinity (Mynors 1989:250-57):

The ancient authors philosophized very rarely about theological questions, and they did not dare to make any pronouncement about such matters which was not clearly set forth in those writings whose authority is inviolable to us...

...Later the elaborate subtlety of the Arians drove the orthodox to a greater necessary—namely, to discuss with great controversy the question of the extension of the divine nature, of the creation of the Son, of the adoption into the name of God, and then the matter of *ὁμοούσιον* and *ὁμοιούσιον*, and finally to formulate definitions about these matters ...

... But may the ancient gain the pardon besought by those whom necessity has driven to this pass. On what pretext will we ask pardon for ourselves, we raise so many meddlesome, not to say irreverent, questions concerning matters very

²⁸ Hillar (1997) observes that Servetus' intention to return to the primitive Christianity came from Erasmus' antidogmatism: "The young Servetus was brought up in a climate of intellectual ferment of Erasmian humanism. The vogue of Desiderius Erasmus Reterodamus in Spain lasted from 1522-1532. He 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. Luther even called Erasmus a 'snake.' To explain the sudden vogue of Erasmianism in Spain one has to understand the larger movement on the Spanish scene, which was labelled by the Inquisition as the movement of the *alumbados* or illuminism. The Spanish illuminism started before the reform initiated by Luther in 1517 and represented a distinct movement different from Protestantism ... Servetus certainly grew up in the atmosphere of the antidogmatism of Erasmus.... See Durant (1957:479).

far removed from our nature, and who ignored without loss of salvation or left in doubt? Or is he not destined to have fellowship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who cannot disentangle according to the method of philosophy what distinguishes the Father from the Son or the Holy Spirit from both or what the difference is between the generation of the Son from the Father and the procession of the Spirit? If I believe, as has been handed down, that the three are of one nature, what is the need of laboured disputation? If I do not believe, no human reasons will convince me. And such a dangerous inquisitiveness has generally arises in us from the study of philosophy, a fact which the illustrious Tertullian, the most learned by far of all the Latin theologians, has asserted in several places, although he himself was a philosopher of the first rank ... Therefore with all my energy I must aim, must practise, I must strive to cleanse my soul of malice, envy, hatred, pride, avarice, and lust. You will not be damned if you do not know whether the Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son has a single or a double principle, but you will not escape perdition unless you see to it in the mean time that you have the fruits of the Spirit, which are charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, forbearance, gentleness, faith, moderation, self-control, and chastity. Toward this end the chief concern of our study therefore must be focused and directed ...

... The sum and substance of our religion is peace and concord. This can hardly remain the case unless we define as few matters as possible and leave each individual's judgement free on many questions. This is because there is great uncertainty about very many issues, and the mind of man suffers from this deeply ingrained weakness, that it does not know how to give way when a question has been made a subject of contention. And after the debate has warmed up each one thinks that the side he has undertaken rashly to defend is absolute truth ...

... Many puzzling questions are now referred to an ecumenical council. It would be much more fitting to defer such questions to that time when we shall see God face to face without the mirror and without the mystery ...

... This kind of profession would not be sufficient in this age because the needful diligence of the ancient Fathers has been very instructive for us, but we are carried far beyond what is needful. Once faith was more a matter of a way of life than of a profession of articles. Soon necessity inspired the imposition of articles, but these were few, and apostolic in their moderation. Then the wickedness of the heretics made for a more precise examination of the sacred books, and intransigence necessitated the definition of certain matters by the authority of synods. Finally faith began to reside in the written word rather than in the soul, and there were almost as many faiths as men. Articles increased, but sincerity decreased: contention boiled over, charity grew cold. The teachings of Christ, which in former times were not touched by the clash of words, began to depend on the support of philosophy: this was the first step of the church on the downward path. There was an increase of wealth and an accretion of power. Furthermore, the intervention of imperial authority in this situation did not improve much the purity of faith. At length the consequence of all this was sophistical controversy and the eruption of thousands of articles. And then it became a matter of intimidation and threats. Although life may abandon us, although faith may be more on our lips than in our hearts, although

that genuine understanding of Holy Scripture may fail us, yet we force men by intimidation to believe what they do not believe, to love what they do not love, and to understand what they do not understand. Compulsion is incompatible with sincerity, and nothing is pleasing to Christ unless it is involuntary.²⁹

2.1.5 Further influences

Servetus was initially taught liberal arts at a Dominican convent and at the University of Saragossa when he was thirteen years old (Drummond 1848:3 & Henry 1849:166). The aged Peter Martyr De Angleria, a distinguished scholar who had a liberal mind, influenced him here (Willis 1877:8). The foundations for his future interests in the classics, scholastic philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, and geography were established.

Servetus confessed at the trial of Geneva that when he was seventeen when his father sent him to the University of Toulouse, a strictly orthodox school. Here he was to study jurisprudence for two or three years, because the city was extremely pious and famous for its law school (*Opera*, 780). Toulouse had been exposed to the new currents of reform, despite the measures taken to prevent any recurrence of the Albigensian heresy,³⁰. The Franciscans in particular were rallying for the purification of the Church and the conversion of the new world (Bainton 1953b:13). Servetus came in formal contact with the Codex of Justinian, the great textbook of the Roman law, in which he learned that “for the repetition of baptism and for a denial of the doctrine of the Trinity, the penalty was death” (Bainton 1953b:13).

His interests were closer to theology than to law. At the trial of Geneva he testified that he had never read more than the Codex of Justinian at college (*Opera*, 780). While he went to Toulouse to study law, he became acquainted with the Bible and “a scientific or rationalistic” theology (Naturæ 1923:894).³¹ It was also at Toulouse that he probably first saw a complete copy of the Bible. He had heard of the Reformation, which led him to study the Bible (Wallace, d.a.:420). He could not have read any part of the Bible until 1528, because of the prohibitions on reading the Bible at Toulouse (Wilbur 1972:53; *Opera*, 780). He might secretly have read a copy of the Complutensian Polyglot, in which the Vulgate version is flanked by Hebrew and Greek texts, which had reached Toulouse.

²⁹ See also Gauss (1965:410-59).

³⁰ Ford (1860:17) says his father was influenced by the Waldenses and Albigenses, especially by the former who emphasised the Bible. Servetus was also under its influence for a while.

³¹ Naturæ (1923:10) says that Servetus was influenced by ‘Rational Theology’ under Raymond de Sabundi. He was not merely a rationalist but also a pantheist and literalist. See Larson (1923:894). Larson compares Milton to Servetus on four points: Creation, Incarnation, Redemption, and the Trinity.

This was *la sainte escripture et evangile* of which he speaks (Gordon 1910:11; Hillar 1997:193).

Servetus studied theology eagerly and acquired more familiarity with the doctrines of the Reformation. His reading the Bible led him to accepting the supreme and sufficient authority, in opposition to Catholic tradition. In his first book he states that the Bible was the source of all his philosophy and science and he urged that it be read a thousand times over in order to seek the truth of Christianity, especially of Christ.³² During his new enlightening experience with the Bible, Servetus was amazed that he could find nothing about the term 'Trinity' (ET 32a. 50). He says (ET 27b. 43):

“But to me not merely the syllables, but all the letters, and the mouths of babes and sucklings, nay the very stones, cry out, One God the Father, and his CHRIST the Lord JESUS; *for there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man CHRIST JESUS; and, To us there is one God, who is the Father, ... and one Lord, JESUS CHRIST.*”

He attaching undue value to the Bible, leading him to ignore “the authority of the ancient creeds and the forms of medieval theology” (Wilbur 1972:49), and focus on his own style. Yet, it is likely that he esteemed the pre-Nicene Fathers next to the Bible. He quoted partially from both Tertullian and Irenæus in his first book. He thought that they established the true doctrine of Christianity. He not only read the books of Luther and the other Reformers – Oecolampadius, Zwingli, Bucer, and Capito – but he also acquainted himself with the Roman Catholic writers of the Middle Ages.³³ As result of this, he “was seized with the desire of distinguishing himself as a Reformer” (Dyer 1850:298) It is amazing that a young teenager would consider himself a reformer and try contacting the Reformers.

2.1.6 Service under Quintana

In 1525 or 1526 he served as a student secretary to Juan de Quintana, a Franciscan friar. Quintana guided him to study law at Toulouse (*Opera*, 845-6).³⁴ We do not know any

³² He confesses that the Bible is a gift of God from heaven. He says: “in the Bible I find all philosophy and wisdom.” He rejects the philosophy of Aristotle, preferring platonic philosophy. (ET, 107b. 166 & 78b-79a. 122 passim). See Henry (1849:246) & Dyer (1850:297).

³³ He mentions several medieval scholars in his books. For William Occam see ET 42a-b. 65-6 and CR, 42, 45; for Robert Holcot see ET 32a-b. 50 and CR, 29; for Pierre D'Ailly see ET 32b. 50 and CR, 29; for Duns Scotus, see CR, 45; for Richard of St. Victor see ET 31b. 49; for John Major see ET 21a-22a. 34-5 and CR, 29.

³⁴ Servetus says that he entered the service of Quintana at the age of 14 or 15. Juan de Quintana was a professor at the University of Paris and member of Cortes of Aragón. In 1529 he became court preacher of Emperor Charles V. He followed an Erasmian type of humanism concerning the Bible.

specific details about his service under Quintana, but that he “influenced Servetus most at this early stage” (Hillar 1997:192). Emerton suggests that Quintana may have chosen Servetus “due to the boy’s proficiency in languages; for he seems already to have had a practical command of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin”(Emerton 1909:142). With Quintana’s permission and his father’s consent, Servetus went to study law at the University of Toulouse for two more years.

When Quintana recalled Servetus back to his service, Servetus stopped further study of the problems in Christian doctrine. He was to experience something new. Quintana took him to the coronation of Emperor Charles V at Bologna in the summer of 1530.³⁵ Servetus saw the arrogant extravagance of the coronation procedure, and it reminded him of the words of the medieval sectaries used by the Reformers. He saw Pope Clement VII being adored almost like a god by nobles, legates, bishops, and the general public. And he saw those in the Church’s high stations, filled with worldliness, scepticism, and immorality. After this bad experience he felt more strongly than ever for the necessity to restore ‘pure Christianity’.³⁶ Twenty-three years after the experience he describes the scene vividly in his last book, *Christianismi Restitutio* (462, 670):

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; [the most shameless of the prostitutes] ...

... 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.

This opulent scene was in stark contrast to the humble life of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. It is not difficult to see how Servetus experienced the spectacle. The historical Christ was not as

³⁵ The Emperor attended the Diet of Augsburg to reconcile the religious splits, and to gain support against the Turks. The Prince succeeded in getting Protestantism recognized politically. He “had already received the silver crown as Emperor of Germany at Aix-la-Chapelle ten years before, and now at Bologna he received the iron crown as King of Lombardy, and two days later, on February 24, the Pope placed on his head the golden crown as Roman Emperor” (Wilbur 1972:54). On Charles V, see Reeves (1969:358-74).

³⁶ Ford (1860:16-17) also observes that Servetus’ anxiety of restoring Christianity resulted from the circumstance of the Navarre and Biscay where he had spent his boyhood, especially during the hardy Pyreneans.

rich as the worldly pope was. Christ had lived a humble life with the poor. He thought that even the Reformers did not discover who Christ was, and that he, personally, had to restore Christianity. The experience reminded him that the metaphysical doctrine of Christ, taught after the Council of Nicea was to be restored by himself. He would show how to complete it (Mackinnon 1962:125). Servetus thought that the Reformers fell short in reforming the true doctrine of Christianity. He made his own position clear, that he did not belong to either the Roman Catholics nor the Reformers in the *Dialogorum de Trinitate libri Duo* (“On the Righteousness of Christ’s Kingdom” F8a. 264):

These are the things that occur to Me with regard to the Present article, in which I do not in all points agree, nor disagree, with either the one party or the other. All seem to me to have some truth and some error, and every one perceives the other’s error and no one sees his own. May God in his mercy cause us to realize our mistakes, and that without clinging to them. Yet it would be easy to decide all points if all were permitted to speak quietly in the church, so that all might be eager to prophesy, and (because the spirits of the former prophets were made subject to the prophets that followed) that when they spoke, if anything were revealed to them, the former ones might keep silence in accordance with the command of Paul. But our party are now struggling for honor. May the Lord destroy all tyrants of the Church. Amen.

The ‘one party or the other’ means the Roman Catholics and the Reformers respectively. ‘The former prophets’ probably refers to the Fathers of Church (Henry 1849:167-8). Later he prophesies that both the Roman Catholics and the Reformers were so corrupted that their error would become clearly visible. He claims that he would fight like the angel Michael to restore true Christianity. In his twentieth letter to Calvin he describes it as follows (CR, 628):

I labour incessantly for the requickening of the church, and you are indignant with me because I take a part in this conflict of Michael, and wish all pious men to follow my example. Consider well this passage, and you will see that there are men thus struggling who are ready to sacrifice their lives, in the blood and in the testimony of Christ. That they are called angels in according to the usage of Scripture. The new-birth from above makes us like the angels. See you not, that the subject here spoken of is the reviving of the ruined church.

Servetus left Quintana. Quintana went to Ratisbon and Nürnberg, where he would see Servetus’ first heretical book. After the Servetus’ affair had settled, Quintana returned to Spain, where he served as Prior of the Church of Monte Aragón and was a member of the Cortes of Spain until 1534. There he was to hear the terrible news that Servetus had published the heretical book, *De Trinitatis Erroribus*.

2.2 Contact with Reformers and his writings

2.2.1 Reformers

Servetus was an attendant traveller of the emperor, and accompanied Quintana throughout Italy. They travelled between Bologna to Basel,³⁷ from 1529 to the spring of 1530. We know nothing of when and why Servetus left Quintana or how long he stayed with him at Bologna.

After leaving the imperial service during the autumn of 1530, Servetus visited Johannes Oecolampadius³⁸ in Basel. This happened on October 30 1530. It is not clear whether Servetus was familiar with Erasmus' New Testament, nor if they had made contact while in Basel (1953b).³⁹ By the age of nineteen or twenty one, Servetus had discussed the negative development of his thoughts on the Trinity with Oecolampadius, then about a forty eight-year old professor at the University.

Servetus made vigorous attempts in his disputes with Oecolampadius to make him understand the purity of Christianity and the need for restoring the simplicity of the original doctrines (Schaff 1994: 715). The doctrine of God was one of his main topics. Servetus tried repeatedly not only to air his ideas on the Trinity and the divinity of Christ but he also tried persuading him to believe that the Reformers were in error on these doctrines, especially regarding the doctrine of the Trinity. He was anxious to air his views before Oecolampadius and the other Reformers. He corresponded through mail and private dialog,⁴⁰ but never was never involved in a public debate.

Oecolampadius was startled and in horror, finding that Servetus had a clearly blasphemous view of Christ, where Servetus maintained that Jesus was neither the consubstantial Son of God nor pre-existent.⁴¹ He tried to correct Servetus, but his attempts were in vain. Servetus'

³⁷ After leaving Bologna, and the Diet of Augusburg, he travelled to Lyon, Geneva, and then to Basel. See Bainton (1953b: 32). Servetus confesses this journey at both the trials of Vienne, on April 5, 1553, and Geneva on August 23. See Calvin (*Opera*, 767, 846).

³⁸ His original name was Johann Hausschein (1482-1531), and he was a distinguished reformer. He was trained at Heidelberg and Bologna consolidated the Reformation at Basel, and assisted Erasmus with his edition of the Greek New Testament (1516). He provided Servetus with accommodation for ten months. See Calvin (*Opera*, 767).

³⁹ Erasmus was staying at Basel until 1529.

⁴⁰ The letters between Servetus and Oecolampadius are in Calvin (*Opera*, 857-65) and Allwoerden (1772:12-7).

⁴¹ See Servetus (ET 111a.172). John Knox also criticises his heresy, stating that Servetus' death resulted from "the execution of God's judgement" and he was "an abominable blasphemer against God" (Laing 1966:224).

heretical view on the Trinity that upset Oecolampadius is clear in the following extract (ET 81b-82a. 126):

Again, CHRIST's kingdom is called eternal a thousand times, yet at the end deliver it up to God the Father; not that anything will be detracted from CHRIST's glory, indeed it will be his supreme glory to have ruled all things well even to the end, and to have made them subject to the Father as he intended. And this will be to deliver up the kingdom to God the Father, just as the general of the whole army offers the Emperor the palm of victory. Again, inasmuch as then all manner of ruling will cease, all authority and power will be abolished, all ministry of the Holy Spirit will cease, we shall need no advocate nor reconciler, but God will be all in all. And thus the dispensation of the Trinity will then cease. Tertullian also says⁴² that the Trinity will cease, which note, just as even now the Trinity is otherwise that it once was, as I shall show in what follows.

Servetus' impudent and ambitious manner, as well as the heretical content of his views, soon brought him into conflict with Oecolampadius who was a gentle and amiable character. In the conference of Reformers in 1530, Oecolampadius notified Ulrich Zwingli, the Swiss reformer, and other reformers of Servetus' Arian views (Emerton 1909:144; Levy 1993:63; Ruter 1814:10 & Beisner 1978:17-8).⁴³ They decided to prevent his heretical views from spreading. Zwingli advised Oecolampadius on Servetus' error on how to win him back to the truth:

“there did seem good ground for them to be on their guard; for the false and wicked doctrine of the troublesome Spaniard goes far to do away with the whole of our Christian religion ... God preserve us from the coming in among us of any such wickedness. Do what you can, then, to quit the man of his errors, and with good and wholesome argument win him to the truth.”

Oecolampadius replied (Willis 1877:33-4):

“that have I already done, but so haughty, daring and contentious is he, that all I say goes for nothing against him ... This is indeed a thing insufferable in the Church of God.”

In particular, he explains the blasphemous view on Godhead: “For what is more blasphemous, then to affirm that such as believe in the Godhead three distinct Persons, have no true God, but the illusion of the Devils: That Christ Jesus is not the Eternal Son of the Eternal Father: That there is no distinction betwixt the Father and the Sonne, but in imagination only: That Christ hath no participation of man's nature, but that this flesh is from heaven; yea, that it is the flesh of the Godhead: That in stocks, stones, and all creatures, is the substantial Godhead?” (ibid:1966:228).

⁴² Servetus probably quotes Tertullian (“Against Praxeas” IV, 599-600): “Look to it then, that it be not *you* rather who are destroying the Monarchy [or *sole empire*], when you overthrow the arrangement and dispensation of it, which has been constituted in just as many names as it has pleased God to *employ*.”

⁴³ Servetus himself admits that he was suspected of being an Arian. “The Father is greater than I; am I therefore an Arian? For when Arius held the very foolish view that the Son was of different Substance from the Father, having also no appreciation at all of the glory of CHRIST, he introduced a new creature, more exalted than man; although he might nevertheless have excluded this and every other distinction, and have admitted, The Father is greater than I.” See ET (12b-13a. 21-2). Brown (1998:331-2) does not agree that Servetus was an Arian observing that he regards Servetus as one among Socinians.

Zwingli then suggested to Oecolampadius that he should prevent the publication of Servetus' blasphemous book (Henry 1849:171). Zwingli then also informed Martin Bucer and Bullinger that Servetus denied the divine Trinity, the eternal divinity of Christ and the union of two natures in Christ.

In the meantime, Servetus continued to correspond with Oecolampadius. Responding to Servetus' second letter, Oecolampadius replies (*Opera*, 857-8; Allwoerden, 1772:12-3; Bainton 1953b:52 & Willis 1877:34-5):

You obtrude yourself on me as if I had nothing else ado than to answer you; asking me questions about all the foolish things the Sorbonne has said of the Trinity, and even taking it amiss that I do not criticise and in your way oppose myself to those distinguished theologians, Athanasius and Nazaianenus. You contend that the Church has been displayed from its true foundation of faith in Christ, [You accord more honor to Tertullian than to the whole Church. You deny the one person on two natures] and feign that we speak of his filiation in a sense which detracts from the honour that is due to him as the Son of God. But it is you who speak blasphemously; for I now understand the diabolical subterfuges you use. Forbearing enough in other respects, I own that I am not possessed of that extreme amount of patience which would keep me silent when I see Christ [Jesum Christum filium Dei]dishonoured ...

... You do not admit that it was the Son of God who was to come as man; but that it was the Son of God who came that was the Son of God; language which leads to the conclusion that the Son of God existed not eternally before the incarnation.

In his second or third letter to Oecolampadius, Servetus insults Luther's system of Justification as follows (*Opera*, 861-2 & Willis 1877:51-4):

Somewhat fearful of writing to you again, lest I should molest you still more than I have already done, I yet venture to ask of you not to interfere with my sending the books to France which I have with me here, the book-fair of Lyons drawing near; for you of all men are better entitled than any one else to pronounce an opinion upon things unheard of until now. If you think it better that I should not remain here, I shall certainly take my leave; only, you are not to think that I go as a fugitive. God knows I have been sincere in all I have written, although my crude style perchance displeased you. I did not imagine you would take offence at what I say of the Lutherans; especially when from your own mouth I heard you declare you were of opinion that Luther had treated Charity in too off-hand a style; adding, as you did, that folks were charitable mostly when they had nothing else to think of. Melanchthon, too, as you know, affirms that God has no regard for charity. Such sayings, believe me, are more hurtful to the soul than anything I have ever written. And this all the more as I see that you are not agreed among yourselves on the subject of faith; for with my own ears I have heard you say one thing, which is otherwise declared by doctor Paulus, otherwise by Luther, and yet otherwise by

b 153365
i 157847

Melanchthon; and of this I admonished you in your own house; but you would not hear me. ‘Your rule for proving the Spirit, I think, deceives you; for, if in your own mind there be any fear, or doubt, or confusion, you cannot judge truly of me; and this the more because, although you know me in error in one thing, you ought not, therefore, to condemn me in others, else there were none who should escape burning a thousand times over. This truth is forced on us on all hands, most especially perhaps by the example of the Apostles, who sometimes erred. And then, you do not condemn Luther in every particular, although you are well aware that he is mistaken in some things. I have myself entreated you to instruct me, which, however, you have not done. It is surely an infirmity of our human nature that none of us see our own faults, and so commonly look on those who differ from us as impious persons or impostors. I entreat you, for God’s sake, to spare my name and reputation. I say nothing of others who are not interested in the questions between us. You say that I would have no one punished or put to death, though all were thieves alike; but I call the omnipotent God to witness that this is not my opinion; nay, I scout any such conclusion. If I have spoken at any time on the subject (the punishment proper for heresy), it was because I saw it as a most serious matter to put men to death on the ground of mistake in interpreting the Scriptures; for do we not read that even the elect may err? You know full well that I have not treated my subject in so indifferent or indiscreet a manner as to deserve entire rejection at your hands. You make little yourself of speaking of the Holy Spirit as an angel, but think it a great crime in me when I say that the Son of God was a man.

Farewell.

Michael Servetus.

Servetus sent the confession of faith to Oecolampadius. In the same letter he complimented Oecolampadius, saying “I exhort that you confess that the Son of God is consubstantial and coeternal, because of the unity of the Word, in which case we shall be able to acknowledge you for a Christian.”⁴⁴ The controversial correspondence was closed in the beginning of 1531. It is likely that Servetus obtained his negative view on Christianity at Toulouse, and his positive view he developed while reconstructing Christianity at Basel (Bainton 1953b:41).

After failing to persuade Oecolampadius, Servetus chose to go to Strassburg, which had broken with Rome. Strassburg was considered among the more tolerant cities of the time, though a decree had been issued against the Anabaptists there. Martin Bucer, who was a professor of Greek at the University - founded by himself, led Strassburg. He was twice as

⁴⁴ “... hortor ut fatearis filium Dei consubstantialem et coaeternum, propter unionem verbi, ut pro Christiano te habere possimus” (*Opera* 861 & Allwoerden, 1772:17). Oecolampadius had already criticised Servetus in his second letter, giving advice to believe that Christ is “consubstantial and coeternal with the Father.” See Drummond (1848:5-6) and ET (93a.143).

old as Servetus, thus referring to him as ‘my dear son’.⁴⁵ Their association was soon over, like with Oecolampadius.

Wolfgang Fabricius Capito, another leader at Strassburg, was also a reformer. Capito might have shared Servetus’ beliefs, but at once found him impious and blasphemous. Capito and Bucer, who had already been warned about him by Oecolampadius, received him with kindness, at first apparently gave him sympathy, and laboured with him to correct him, but it was in vain (Kittelson 1975:189-90).⁴⁶ Bucer preached against Servetus and in a letter said “a man like Servetus deserved to have his bowels plucked out and his body torn to pieces” (D’Aubigne 1876:102).⁴⁷

Oecolampadius, in conversation with Zwingli and Bullinger, showed clearly that he understood his wily antagonist, and perceived the dangerous nature of his doctrines (Henry 1849:211, 215).

2.2.2 *De Trinitatis Erroribus*

Soon after he failed to propagate his views, Servetus decided to follow another way to spread it at Basel. He published his views in a book, *The Errors of the Trinity* [*De Trinitatis Erroribus*], which was published in Hagenau in the beginning of 1531. It consists of seven books. In this radical book, he attacks the traditional doctrine of the Trinity (Beza 1836:159; see *Opera*, 773-4.). The incomprehensibility of God was revealed in the world through two forms, he claimed, the Son and the Spirit after His first revelation in the creation by the Word. He understood the concept of Persons of the Trinity in light of disposition (ET 85a. 131-2):

God, in assuming a person in time past, showed us that the Trinity was to be manifold ... And God, when he began to employ in himself those dispositions which he was afterwards to manifest to us in various ways, ... Yet they all then existed only by a disposition.

They are only variant forms of the one self-revealing God as to economy or disposition, as derived from his readings of neoplatonic philosophy (Hirsch 1980:561-75 passim). He contends that there are not three eternal and consubstantial persons in the Godhead (Knox

⁴⁵ “filius meus dilectus” (Willis 1877:1877:39). Melancthon called him “a fanatic” (Henry 1849:170).

⁴⁶ When Kittelson wrote his commentary on Genesis, he rebuked Servetus’ anti-trinitarianism.

⁴⁷ “Bucerus, cum alioqui mansuetus esset ingenio, pro suggestu pronuntiavit, dignum esse, qui avulsis visceribus discerpatur”. See Beza (1836:159) and Wright (1806a:98). He also warned the magistrates of Strassburg not to tolerate him any more. “Haud enim feret te magistratus si de te rescierit, ut equidem arbitror.” See Calvin (*Opera*, 868).

1966:228). He has no scruples in calling the Trinitarians atheists (ET, 21b. 34 and CR, 31).⁴⁸ He also criticises the Reformers' doctrine of Justification. Especially the Lutheran view on the doctrine of Justification by faith alone, Servetus insults, rejects, and underestimates (ET, 82b.127 & 99a-b. 153; see 96a.147 and *Opera*, 866-8 passim):

The Lutheran, departing from this foundation of faith, have never been able to understand what justifications is... .

... This righteousness is not according to the Lutheran faith, but is for those that believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. For though we were dead through sins, he made us alive and made us heavenly. It is not needful that we seek righteousness and the friendship of God through works of the law; indeed, this would be to distrust Christ, as though he had not sufficiently and freely justified us once and for all. They sought this in the law, although they were unable to obtain it; but we have been justified, purified, and sanctified by Christ.

It was not easy for Servetus to find a publisher and a printer for his heretical book, because his views were being suspected. However, he did secure a publisher, Conrad Koenig,⁴⁹ who sent the manuscripts to John Setzer, an active printer, because it was dangerous to print it.⁵⁰ But Setzer was not willing to print it, because he was following the Lutheran view on the sacraments rather than the Swiss one (Bainton 1953b:56). To publish this book, Servetus moved to Strassburg near Alsace, right where the printer was located, and made him print it.

In July 1531, Servetus' first book was printed and then distributed in Strassburg, Frankfurt, Basel and Italy, but nobody knew where and by whom it was published until the trial of Geneva in 1553. The Anabaptists and other radical reformers at Strassburg were interested in the book for its views on the Sacrament.⁵¹ The Reformers – Oecolampadius and Zwingli – themselves were displeased to see his publication at Strassburg. Bucer soon forbade Servetus from preaching on the pulpit and destroyed a copy of the book (Dyer 1850:299 & Beza 1836:159). It was banned in Strassburg and in Basel. On July 18, 1531, immediately after the publication of *De Trinitatis Erroribus*, Oecolampadius informed Bucer (*Opera*, 866 & Willis 1877:48):

⁴⁸ "Athei vere sunt trinitarii omnes."; de la Fontaine accused Servetus of calling Trinitarian atheists on the fifteenth article at the trial of Geneva (*Opera*, 729).

⁴⁹ He had shops in Basel, Strassburg and Paris.

⁵⁰ Johannes Setzer printed his books at Hagenau in Alsace. He also printed the second book.

⁵¹ "...the most agitated doctrine among the reformers was that of the Lord's Supper ... Even more Servetus essaying the role of mediator between the sectaries and the established Church. His views in many respects resemble those of Casper Schwenckfeld and Melchoir Hofmann" (Bainton 1953b:64-50).

Read the book, and tell me what you think of it. Were I not busy with my Job, I should be disposed to answer it myself; but I must leave this duty to another with more leisure at command. Our Senate has forbidden the Spaniard's book to be sold here. They have asked my opinion of its merits, and I have said that as the writer does not acknowledge the coeternity of the Son, I can in no wise approve of it as a whole, although it contains much else that is good—*Etiamsi multa alia bona scribat*.

Oecolampadius also wrote another letter to Bucer on August 5, 1531 (*Opera*, 867, Willis 1877:42-3; see Wallace, d.a.:424):

Several of their friends had seen Servetus book [*De Trinitatis Erroribus*] and were beyond measure offended with it. I wish you would write to Luther and tell him it was printed elsewhere than at Basle, and without any privity of ours. It is surely a piece of consummate imprudence in the winter to say that the Libertines are ignorant of what Justification really means. Passing many things by, I fancy he must belong to the sect of the Photinians, or to some other I know not what. Unless he be put down by the doctors of our church, it will be the worse for us. I pray you of all others to keep watch; and if you find no better or earlier opportunity, be particular in your report to the Emperor in excusing us and our churches from the breaking in among us of this wild beast. He indeed abuses everything in his way of viewing it; and to such lengths does he go that he disputes the coeternity and consubstantiality of the Father and the Son he would even have the man Christ to be the Son of God in the usual natural way.

Willis (1877:44) contends that Luther must have read *De Trinitatis Erroribus*:

“When an exceedingly virulent book was published in 1532 against the [doctrine of the] Trinity, he [Martin Luther] said, ‘These people do not realize that other, 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.’⁵²

Since the publication “throughout the Protestant world Servetus from this hour was considered to be nothing more nor less than an emissary of Satan” who adhered to the Arian heresy (Zweig 1936:98-9 & Breuer 1999). This publication was the beginning of a chain of events that led to his persecution (Macdonell 1927:131).

2.2.3 *Dialogorum de Trinitate libri Duo*

The following year, 1532, Setzer printed the second of his books at Hagenau. It consists of two volumes (19 pages and 25 pages), and is called *Two Dialogues on the Trinity* [*Dialogorum de Trinitate libri Duo*]. It contains six short chapters (two dialogues and four chapters on the Righteousness of Christ's Kingdom),⁵³ and a treatise on Justification

⁵² See Luther, vol. LIV, 32 in Lehmann (1971).

⁵³ They are on Justification, Christ' kingdom, a Comparison of the Law and the Gospel, and Love.

(Drummond 1848:15-6). In the preface of *Dialogorum de Trinitate libri Duo* (DT Alb.188), he states that all he had said in his former book was not false but childish and imperfect: “All that I have lately written, in seven Books, against the received view as to the Trinity, honest reader, I now retract; not because it is untrue, but because it is incomplete, and written as though by a child for children” He supplies and defends the last system of his doctrine. There are a couple of differences between these two books. For example, in the first book he claims that Christ “is God not in Nature but in appearance, not by nature but by grace”(ET, 12b.21) but now by nature Christ has all things (DT, C3b. 217-8):

Pet. You had said elsewhere that Christ was God through grace, not through nature; but do you now ascribe all things to him by nature?

Mich. As I gave the first elements to babes, so I also said, in *accordance with his* nature, and, by nature, in the manner of this philosophical age, which has nothing in common with the Scriptures; for the philosophers will have nothing exist through grace, nor do they say that the will of God is the cause of the generation of the Son, but that it merely happened by nature that one of the beings then produced the other, and now produces it daily. Wishing to oppose this dream, I have maintained by all the Scriptures that his exaltation and glorification are the free and voluntary gift of the Father, denying their magical Natures and Generations. Nor do I now retract what I said of grace, but add to it, since it belongs to the glory of Christ that all things should be meet for him by nature, by reason of his filiation. Nor, according to the truth of Scripture, is it a contradiction to say that he was begotten and chosen by the grace and will of God, and along with this that by nature all the inheritance and glory of the Father is due to him. For it is a rule of nature: if son, then heir. And he is Son by nature, as I have said, because he was ineffably begotten of the Substance of the Father. Not born of another, and afterwards adopted, but born of God, and born a Son by an original begetting. If you also knew that the word nature is to be taken for the natural property itself of a being, just as whatever belongs to it from birth is called natural, you will easily distinguish and discern two Natures in Christ, and all his properties. For Christ received his Substance from God and man, and whatever is appropriate to him in accordance with the nature of the flesh, that is, in accordance with his partaking of man, and in accordance with that property which he received from the seed of man; even as Paul says, that he was born *of the seed of David according to the flesh*. For although the flesh of Christ is derived from the seed of God and of man, yet by the word *flesh* in this passage we signify his partaking of man. Since therefore Christ by his nature is partaker of God and man, he must needs have double properties, and divers considerations, and some stated as of God, and others of the flesh.

Another example can also be considered. In the first book he denies that the Holy Spirit is a ‘Person’ of God, but in the second book he says that the Holy Spirit is a Person. We can discern between the differences as follows (ET, 28b. 44):

And in the Scriptures there is frequent mention of the existence of God the Father, and of the Son, and of seeing and praying to them; but of the Holy

Spirit no mention is made, except where it speaks about doing something, as by a sort of casual statement; which is noteworthy, as though the Holy Spirit denoted not a separate being, but an activity of God, a kind of in-working or in-breathing of the power of God.

Compared to (DT, C5a. 219-20):

And, to speak more clearly, I say that Holy Spirit is now a Person, while in the law it was not thus a Person. I call it a Person because it is a divine *hypostasis*, or Substance, breathed by nature into Christ alone, and thence flowering out Christ into us. Properly speaking, then we do not say that there is a Person, or a face, in the Spirit, although in that breathing there was always a divine Substance, according to the dispensation of the God who breathed it.

Even though Servetus differentiated between the incarnate Son and the pre-existent Word, in the second book he admits that the Word is Christ, though the Word did not have any substance until Christ was revealed (ET, 79b-80a. 123-4):

Another question: whether we admit that the Word was ever the Son ...

... Again, do you think that John, speaking in a human sense, said Word rather than Son? And you can not produce one iota in which Scripture called this Word the Son. Again, John says of the Word, both in his Gospel and in his Epistle, that it was in the past; but it never says of it, *It is*, which difference and way of speaking you do not notice. But later on I shall make this beyond doubt to you if you attentively note the scripture ways of speaking; but meanwhile I shall here inquire into the eternity and beginning of the Word.

Compared to (DT, A5b. 194-5):

It was manifested through angels in a figure, and it was the shadow of the true manifestation to come. For the light and the Word had a Substance of their own, never known to the world until Christ was revealed and his Substance was touched and felt with the hands. No human reason can attribute to God any name of Substance or Nature, for he exists outside of all Substance and Nature; but, when about to create the world, he created in himself a Substance in the Likeness of the things of this world, and this was the Word, and the light, and the cause of all nature. Indeed, some have called this Substance the body of the Word; and of this Substance of the Word without a body we shall speak below.

Regarding the heated debates the reformers held on the Lord's Supper, Servetus sided with the Anabaptist, Melchoir Hofmann (Bainton 1953b, 65-6), saying (DT, C2a. 215):

Again, he enters into us when he truly offers his body to us to be eaten in the holy supper. Nor does he afterwards depart from us in a local sense, nor is there in this any movement from place to place; but only, through a certain dispensation, a jointing of him to us, which is in the spirit alone; and the body of Christ is mystically eaten in the mystical bread. But since the true use of the Lord's Supper has been buried in oblivion, and Christ is not yet known, the taste of this eating seems insipid ... But what we have to say here is in opposition, they understand him in a physical sense. This, at least, I would that they might know: that Christ distinctly said, and that without regard to the

giving of the Holy Spirit, that he was to come, and to make his abode among us.

In April of 1532, Johannes Cochlaeus, a liberal Catholic and chief opponent of the Reformers, found one of Servetus' printed books in a shop at Ratisbon, where Quintana was serving Charles V. He hastened to give Servetus' *De Trinitatis Erroribus* to his former employer, Quintana, who was then the head of the counsel of censors at Augsburg. Quintana was so annoyed with it that he expressed extreme disgust that a fellow countryman and a person he knew “– *quem de facie Servetus nōsse dicebat* – should have fallen so far into the slough of heresy as to write on the mystery of the Trinity in the style of Michael Servetus, alias Revés” (Willis 1877:30). He ordered for it to be banned in Augsburg. Jerome Aleander,⁵⁴ alarmed at the heresy in Ratisbon, wrote to Rome in April of 1532, criticising the book with these words (Laemmer 1861:109-10, Bainton 1953b:69-70):

I well believe that we are near the end of the world. There has been sent to the Diet a work in seven books, composed by an Aragonese Spaniard called Mihel Serveto, alias Dereves, entitled *On the Errors of the Trinity*. I should have sent the book by this post except that I have to return it. I will try to get you another. There will be plenty about ... I never saw or read anything more nauseating, though the man is very keen. The confessor of the Emperor [Quintana] says that he knows him, a man of twenty-six years [he was actually twenty-one], and of brilliant parts, but a great sophist. Since the work shows a wide reading in Scripture and a polish of style of which he is not capable, the confessor thinks that he may well have conceived the plan, but that for the style and wealth of material he must have received help in Germany, in which parts he has been now for over a year, in Strassburg and Bale, where he helped Oecolampadius for some months. Erasmus wrote the other day in a letter that this Spaniard tried to send the work to him, but he would not lend an ear. Now he has sent a copy to the Bishop of Saragossa. I will see what the princes will do about such a book, of which they all complain. And if nothing else, I will get together a committee of theologians, especially Spaniards—there are about six—that, when the book has been censored and condemned by the authority of the Holy See, they may write to Spain to make proclamation to burn the book and the effigy of the heretic *al modo di Spagna*, because they say he may have left behind some impression of his heresy and he has already sent the hook. The Most Reverend Legate will write to his vicar at Huesca in Spain to make such an execution, since the heretic is of his diocese. That is all that can be done for the present. These heretics of Germany, Lutheran or Zwinglian, 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.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ He was an Italian papal nuncio and soon became a Cardinal and an adversary of Luther at the Diet of Worms.

⁵⁵ See Gordon 1910:14-5; Bainton (1953a:224-5) says that Servetus probably sent his book to Spain.

Johannes Cochlaeus also read Servetus' second book, *Dialogorum de Trinitate libri Duo*, which was causing much uneasiness at the Diet at Ratison. On June 17, 1532, Aleander was forced to put Servetus – 'Michel de Serveto alias Revés' – on the list of writers who were to be arrested by the Spanish Inquisition, and condemn him to be burnt (Wilbur 1972:72). The national reputation of the inquisitors was at stake, so they began to develop a protest (Bainton 1953b, 71). On May 24, 1532 the Supreme Council of Inquisitors at Medina del Campo had already sent a letter to the Inquisitor of Saragossa to enquire where the books and their author came from (Fernández 1970:310-2 & Hillar 1997:207):

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.⁵⁶

Although Servetus' brother, Juan, a priest of Santiago de Compostela, was designated to issue the order to persuade Servetus, he could not carry out the order because Servetus was not in Germany at that time (Hillar 1997:208).

By this time, Servetus had not found any adherents to his ideas, and he realised that he not only could not hope to influence the Reformers at Basel and Strassburg but that he was in danger being summoned by the inquisition in Toulouse and Spain. Servetus,

⁵⁶ See Bainton, (1953a 225-8) for an introduction on Campo's letters.

notwithstanding the opposition he met from Oecolampadius and others, and regardless of the inquisition, openly gave his name as author of the book. The printer and publisher, Setzer and Koenig, were more wary, however, and did not add their names or place of publication to the title page.⁵⁷ Servetus had no alternative but to flee to Lyon in France. His German was poor and he could not make a living there.⁵⁸ Furthermore, he had rendered himself odious to all good men by living in the very cities where he had been banished from, Zürich and Constanz.

2.2.4 Other Writings under the alias Michel de Villeneuve

From this time on, Servetus travelled around under the alias of Michel de Villeneuve⁵⁹ – his family name – because rumours were being spread about his fate, and he was being threatened. His real name and his books disappeared from the visible world, until the books were reissued twenty years later in Vienne and in Geneva. He lived in France during the second phase of his life. He had an unsettled career because of his pseudonym name (Henry 1849:165). He wandered around and tried to hide himself from those who knew his real name for about 20 years (1532-1553). There is some conjecture that he considered fleeing to America.⁶⁰

He spent some time in Paris before going to Lyon. During this time in Paris, he preoccupied himself by studying mathematics, geography, and astronomy at Collège de Calvi and then at Collège de Lombards.⁶¹ He became interested in medicine while reading the medical works written by Symphorien Champier,⁶² the founder of the Medical School Faculty at Lyon. Champier published more than a hundred books on several topics.

⁵⁷ The cover of *De Trinitatis Erroribus* was inscribed: 'Seven Books by Michael Serveto, alias Reves A Spaniard of Aragon MDXXXI'. Under it, and on the cover of *Dialogorum de Trinitate libri Duo* was written: 'Two Books on the Righteousness of Christ's Kingdom Four Chapters by Michael Serveto, alias Reves, A Spaniard of Aragon MDXXXII.'

⁵⁸ He might have spoken German but was not fluent, as he confessed on August 23 at the trial of Geneva (*Opera*, 767 & see Beza 1836:160; Wright 1806a:106-7; Dyer, 1850:300; & Wilbur 1972:75).

⁵⁹ First he appeared in Paris under the pseudonym name of Michel de Villeneuve of diocese of Saragossa. His Latin name is Michael Servetus Villanovanus and his French name is Michel de Villeneuve, which is rarely written as Villeneufve in old French orthography.

⁶⁰ Servetus mentions "new islands (in insulis novos)" twice in his last book. See Servetus, *Christinismi Restitutio*, 333, 603-4. On the term 'new islands' referring to 'South America', see Wright (1989:279-80); & Gordon (1925: 360).

⁶¹ We do not know the next city of his refuge. At the trial of Geneva he testified that he went to Lyon and then Paris but at Vienne that he went to Paris to study at the college of Calvi and read mathematics at the college and afterwards went to Lyon; "et de là s'en vint à Paris et demeura au College de Calvi quelque temps, et puis après s'en alla lire les Mathmatiques au College des Lombards" (*Opera*, 846).

⁶² He was known also in the latinized form as Campegius, (ca. 1471-1537) as a herbalist, an illustrious physician, Platonist, botanist, astronomer, and a typical man of the renaissance at Lyons. Servetus is influenced by platonic philosophy, Cabbalistic mysticism, and Hermes Tresmegistus in the last book. See Gordon (1910:20-1); Osler (1909:9-10); Friedman (1982:19-20); Hirsch (1980 561-2).

Servetus probably developed the neoplatonic and Jewish aspects of his theology through the influence of Champier. He studied medicine in Paris (Friedman 1982:137-9). Champier tended to combine diverse cultures and religious beliefs into a new form of Christianity. Servetus confessed in the *Leonhardum Fuchsium in defensio apologetica pro Symphoriano Campeggio*,⁶³ published in 1536, that he considered himself a student or disciple of Symphorien Champier. He says, “I am unable to restrain myself from writing something in defence of the church, as a son for his mother, and in defence of Symphorien Champier to whom I, as a pupil, owe much” (“The Apology Against Fuchs,” 38, 44).⁶⁴ Another teacher was Gonzalvez of Toledo through whom Servetus became acquainted with astrology.⁶⁵

Meanwhile, John Calvin⁶⁶ had been studying in Paris under Professor Mathurin Cordier, a known Latinist since 1523. Calvin wanted to convince Servetus of his errors and arranged for a meeting between them in 1534. Servetus was resolved to impart his convictions to him. At the appointed time, Calvin left de la Forge’s house and waited for him. However, Servetus failed to appear at the appointed house in the suburb of St. Antoine. Beza (1836:7-8⁶⁷) states about the failed meeting as follows:

Not long after Calvin returned to Paris, as if called there by the hand of God himself; for the impious Servetus was even then disseminating his heretical poison against the sacred Trinity in that city. He professed to desire nothing more earnestly than to have an opportunity for entering into discussion with Calvin, who waited long for Servetus, the place and time for an interview having been appointed, with great danger to his own life, since he was at that time under the necessity of being concealed on account of the incensed rage of his adversaries. Calvin was disappointed in his expectations of meeting Servetus, who wanted courage to endure even the sight of his opponent.

No one knows why Servetus failed to attend the meeting, but it can be ascertained that he chose Calvin from among all the Reformers, to persuade him of his theological systems. This was possibly because of a feeling of competitiveness he had against him (Bungener 1863:34):

Servetus, it was never known why, did not appear. No matter; we shall not forget, when the time comes, the position into which the Spanish theologian had just thrust the leaders of the Reformation, and Calvin in particular. By

⁶³ Leonard Fuchsius (1501-1566) was a German anatomist, critic, physician, distinguished Professor of Medicine of Tübingen, and biologist. He adopted Protestantism but held common opinions with Champier and Servetus on human culture, classical knowledge, and propagation of Galenism. The treatise was a pamphlet of defending Champier against Fuchsius. See Bayon (1939:75).

⁶⁴ He was also influenced by Sebastian Montuus.

⁶⁵ He edited *Amicus medicorum*, the work of a Franciscan, Jean Ganivet at Trechseis. He was not only friend of Champier but a famous physician-astrologer.

⁶⁶ Calvin was in Paris during 1534, between April and October, while Servetus was still there.

⁶⁷ See Wileman (s.a.:43) and D’Aubigne 1876:103).

selecting him for his adversary on the question of the Trinity, upon which no variance existed between Romanism and the Reformation, he, in a measure, considered him the guardian of that doctrine, and rendered him responsible for it before all Christendom. It was this responsibility which, nineteen years afterwards, kindled the piled of Servetus.

2.2.5 Ptolemy's Geography

In 1535 Servetus was living in Lyon, a city of culture that had a flourishing, extensive book trade (Henry 1849:174). He worked for a firm of scholar-printers, the Trechsels,⁶⁸ who had a branch in Vienne (Osler 1909:14). He needed finance to publish his book and pay the tuition for his doctoral degree (Collins 1968:171; Dyer 1850:302; and Willis 1877:104). Servetus published Claudius Ptolemy's⁶⁹ *Geography*⁷⁰ under a pseudonym, Michael Villanovanus'. He inserted his comments in the preface ("Ptolemy's Geography" 21). The edition consisted of eight books. He claimed that his reason for publishing the book was because the earlier edition of Ptolemy had a number of faults. As with most books of that time, the earlier edition was published in Latin rather than in the original language. The geography appeared in a Greek book by Giacomo d'Angelo. It was translated into Latin in about 1410, but still contained many translation faults. In 1525 Bilibald Pirckheimer, a German humanist, published a new translation in Strassburg. A Greek version was published with a preface, written by Erasmus in 1533. Servetus felt he was improving the edition as he states on the cover: "Now for the first time edited according to the translation of Bilibald Prickheimer, but compared to the Greek and early editions by Michael Villanovanus. Scholia have been added by the editor in which the obsolete names of cities have been given according to present usage" ("Ptolemy's Geography" 17). Servetus first gives a short account of who Ptolemy was ("Ptolemy's Geography" 18):

Ptolemy was a native of Alexandria, royal city of Egypt, and was well versed in Greek letters with which Egypt was then imbued, although he also spent some time at Rhodes. He was a philosopher and astrologer as well as a capable mathematicians as, indeed, his other writings attest. He flourished under the emperors Trajan, Hadrian and Antonius Pius. His skill in surveying so vast a

⁶⁸ This firm was managed by two brothers, Caspar and Mechior Trechsel, so that it was called the Trechsels. See Bayon (1939:74).

⁶⁹ Claudius Ptolemaeus - in Latin (AD 100?-165?) - was a second century Gnostic, an Alexandrian geographer and astronomer. His work was translated into Latin for the first time in 1409 at Florence, and was printed in 1473. He states in his *Mathematike Syntaxis* that the earth moves and is at the centre of universe. But Nicolaus Copernicus rejected his theory of a moving planet. The *Geography* contains many places, illustrated with longitudes, latitudes and colour maps.

⁷⁰ 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 fifty maps, prepared by an Alexanderian geographer, Agatodemon, and was dedicated to Servetus' protector and archbishop of Dauphine, Pierre Palmer. Servetus informs his readers in an eulogy that Archbishop Palmer was his auditor while lecturing at the University of Paris.

world was greater than the glory of Hercules, as invading the earth without war he compelled it to be assessed according to a kind of rule and delivered over to us with a description for our enjoyment. And not only did he do this, but he joined the heavens to the earth, combining the measures of them both into one. He was later than Strabo, Pliny and Pomponius Mela, but he easily surpassed them, and al earlier, in the profession of geography.

Thus he accounts for amending and enlarging the original text of Ptolemy "Ptolemy's Geography" 20-1:

We have added scholia by which reading may be made more clear, pleasant and full, and how much aid they may bring to the reader will be judged by those who try the experiment of reading. In the course of Greek and Latin poems, descriptions and other writings, when the discourse, as very often happens, turns upon regions, cities, mountains and rivers, if one then consults our Ptolemy the names of the cities joined to the ancient names of the poets and adjusted to the speech of our times will undoubtedly bring some pleasure to the reader, since formerly the reading of Ptolemy without annotations was not very pleasant. And that we might turn the minds of young men more to this reading we have explained most names of cities in the maternal tongue as easier to understand, so that we may seem to speak with the Germans in German, with the Italians in Italian, and with the Spaniards in Spanish; we have seen all these lands and we know the tongues of all of them. In rendering the names of the cities into the vernacular speech we have relied as much as possible on the authority of writers, on experience and on the most certain conjectures. In addition, we have passed over in silence many of those which have been described by Ptolemy, since they have been destroyed. But when other cities arose in the same or a nearby place to those destroyed, we have substituted the new one in place of that described as destroyed, but in the margin, for we wanted Ptolemy's text to remain inviolate. This work of ours will contribute greatly to the knowledge of the provinces of the earth and to the comparison of the present with the past, a pleasant exercise which, unless I am mistaken, will be denied by no one unless some shameless Zoilus [i.e., critic] who is unable to regard the labors of others without malice. Whoever you may be, gentle reader, I hope that you will suffer our efforts as acceptable and worthy. Farewell.

Servetus writes extensively about the countries of Europe: Scotland, England, Ireland, Spain, France, Germany, and Italy.⁷¹ His description of Palestine was made a basic motive for his indictment at the trial of Geneva in 1553. In the book he not merely defamed Moses, but apparently made a disparaging description of the Palestine of Moses, saying that the promised land 'flowing with milk and honey' was no longer the fertile promised land (Willis 1877:97):

The Israelites lived at length under laws received from Moses, although they had gone on piously and prosperously enough through countless ages, before his day, without any written law, having had regard to the oracles of divine or

⁷¹ For more detail see Gordon (1910:18-20).

natural truth alone, gifted as they were with aptitude and greatness of mind. Moses, however, that distinguished theologian, thinking that no state could exist without a written code of law and equity, gave them one reduced to ten principle heads, engraved on two tables of stone; with the addition of a great number of minor commandments for the regulation of their lives and dealings with one another. But any more particular notice of these, they being so numerous—great birds not sitting in little nests—must here be passed by. Know, however, most worthy reader, that it is mere boasting and untruth when so much of excellence is ascribed to this land; the experience of merchants and others, travellers who have visited it, proving it to be inhospitable, barren, and altogether without amenity. Wherefore you may say that the land was *promised*, indeed, but is of *little promise* when spoken of in everyday terms.

2.2.6 *Syroporum Universa Ratio* and *Apologetica Disceptatio*

2.2.6.1 *Pro Astrologia*

The next year, 1537, Servetus went back to Paris and stayed for about a year and a half. He continued studying geography and medicine, probably on the advice of Symphorien Champier. After obtaining the degree Doctor of Medicine – no record of this is extant – he lectured on mathematics and astronomy (*Opera*, 767, 776, 780, 845 & Wilbur 1972:119-20).⁷²

Servetus was not interested in medicine until he met Champier (Willis 1877:10).⁷³ There were two medical schools: the Galenists, followers of the Greeks, in the traditions of Hippocrates and Galen; and the Averrhoists, disciples of the Arabians, in the traditions of Averrhoes and Avicenna. As a pupil of Champier, an ardent admirer of the Greeks, Servetus seemed to favor the Greeks, and was opposed to the Arabians. The debate between two schools drew extensive attention. In order to defend himself against the Arabians (Ford 1860:27), he wrote a treatise on Syrups: *Syroporum Universa Ratio*. The treatise was influenced by *Medulla Philosophiæ* of Champier, and was published with a review of the two schools in 1537. The review favoured the Galentists (Wilbur 1972:118-9). Servetus expresses his intention in the preface (“The Syrups” 59):

A Complete Account of Syrups Carefully Refined
According to the Judgement of Galen

⁷² It seems that he studied medicine under the instruction of Sylvinus and Fernel, but “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” (Hillar 1997:226; Wright 1806a:110 & Audin 1850:430).

⁷³ Champier was a Galentist (Osler 1909:9). He wrote *CRIBRATIO MEDICAMENTORUM*, with the *MEDULLA PHILOSOPHIÆ* in 1533, *PENTAPHARCUM GALLICUM* at Lyon in 1534 and Champier’s fivefold French Pharmacopoea, which Servetus must have read and corrected for press while he was working at Trechsel press.

To which after a full discourse on concoction has been added the true method of purgation, as well as exposition on the aphorism: Medicate that which has been concocted

By Michael Vullanouvanus

To the Philatron

You who are going to concoct the crude humors and restore health to the human body. Observe the teachings of this book

Paris

From the shop of Simon Colines

1537

Servetus discovered the pulmonary circulation of blood and published his findings. But, he is not the author of some of the claims. Chéreau strongly attributes the authorship to Mathieu Realdo Colombo de Creamona, an Italian, rather than to Servetus: “Whether he had grasped the larger truth of the general circulation of the blood may be left in doubt, for while there are indications which fit in with this, they should not be pressed too far” (Chéreau 1879:58-9).⁷⁴ Beza also doubts that Servetus made the discoveries (Beza 1836:130). He took a different position to Galen’s description, accounting for the movement of blood in the heart. can Two major different accounts can be distinguished (CR, “The Description of the Lesser Circulation” 199):

First, Galen proclaimed the presence of blood in both veins and arteries; second, he announced that there is anastomosis between the minute branches of veins and arteries and that ‘they mutually receive blood and spirits from each other through invisible and extremely minute passages’. In respect to Servetus’ discovery this would have its most important application in the lungs where, however, the exchange of blood from the pulmonary artery to the pulmonary vein would be interrupted by expiration since the pulmonary would then be compressed.

He insists unreasonably that the lung not only gives life but also imparts spirit.⁷⁵ He even speculates that the spirit was made in the blood (“The Description of the Less Circulation” 203):

The vital spirit is that which is communicated through anastomoses from the arteries to the veins in which it is called the natural [spirit]. Therefore the first [i.e., natural spirit] is of the blood, and its seat is the liver and in the veins of the body. The second is the vital spirit of which the seat is on the heart and in the arteries of the body. The third is the animal spirit, a ray of light, as it were, of which the seat is in the brain and the nerves of the body. In all these there resides the energy of the one spirit and of the light of God. The formation of

⁷⁴ Chéreau, librarian of the Faculty of Medicine of University of Paris, is critical of Servetus. Gordon (1910) also doubts his authorship; Servetus’ theory of the circulation of the blood is given by Allwoerden (1727:232-4).

⁷⁵ “Nam afflante Deo, inspirate pe os et nares in cor et cerebrum ipsius Adæ, et natorum eius, illa cælestis spiritus aura, siue idealis scintilla, et spiratali illi sabguineæ materiæ intus essentialiter iuncta facta est eius visceribus anima. Gen. 2. Esa. 57. Ezech. 37. et Zacha. 12” (CR, 178 & see 258).

man from the uterus teaches that the vital spirit is communicated from the heart to the liver. For an artery joined to a vein is transmitted through the umbilicus of the foetus, and in like manner afterward the artery and vein are always joined in us. The divine spirit of Adam was inspired from God into the heart before [it was communicated into] the liver, and from there was communicated to the liver. The divine spirit was truly drawn into the mouth and nostrils, but the inspiration extended to the heart.⁷⁶

Servetus explains that the spirit was in the blood upon which the spirit depends. This implies that it is a consistent pantheist and that if the blood dies the spirit will die (Bayon 1939:93). This fanciful speculation on the spirit did not come from any scientific evidence but was based on his logic. Such expressions can be found in *Christianismi Restitutio* and became vital evidence at the trial of Geneva: “The air is the Spirit of God and that God is called Spirit, because He breathes life in all things by His spirit of air.”⁷⁷

Servetus lectured on various questions of science, enjoying much applause and a large audience in Paris. A young Pierre Palmier was among his listeners. He provided Servetus with accommodation at Vienne. He also became Archbishop of Vienne in Dauphiné. Servetus taught Ptolemy’s Geography and the science of Astrology, but was later forbidden to lecture in the faculty at the University of Paris, because of the arrogance, quarrelsome, and stiffness of his strong temper: “He publicly insulted the whole of the literi of the University of Paris” (Killen 1854:9; see Guizot 1868:297 & Robbins 1846:57). His prediction of coming wars and pestilence on February 12, 1538 annoyed the Church (Bayon 1939:76). Although the teaching of astrology was forbidden, he proceeded to write a small treatise on astrology. It was called *Apologetica Disceptatio pro Astrologia* and was published in 1538. The treatise was criticised by the dean of the medical faculty (Allen 1941:60-1). On February 25, 1538, the dean, Tagault, commented as follows in his yearly report (Bainton 1953a:233, Osler 1909:11):

A certain student of medicine, a Spaniard, or as he says, from Navarre, but with a Spanish father, and taught for some days in Paris in 1537 judicial astrology or divination. After having found out that this was condemned by the Doctors of the Faculty, he caused to be printed a certain apology in which he attacked the doctors, and moreover declared that war and pests and all the affairs of men depended on the heavens and on the stars, and he imposed on the public by confounding true and judicial astrology. The Dean goes on to state that, accompanied by two of his colleagues, he tried to prevent Villanovanus from publishing the apology, and met him leaving the school where he had been

⁷⁶ See CR, 169-70. Servetus continually observes more detail on the vital spirit in 170-1. See also Fulton (1989:36-46). Hirsch (1980:574-5) deals with spirit’s relation to blood. Hirsch.

⁷⁷ See Calvin (*Opera*, 730) on indictments de Fontaine submitted in the arraignment: “Item que l’air est le spirit de Dieu et que Dieu est nommé esprit pource qu’il vivifie toutes choses par son esprit d’air.”

making a dissection of the body with a surgeon, and in the presence of several of the scholars, and of two or three doctors, he not only refused to stop the publication, but he threatened the Dean with bitter words.⁷⁸

The faculty and the senate of the university petitioned the Parliament of Paris (a judicial body) to prohibit Servetus from publishing and lecturing.⁷⁹ According to the judges of the court, Servetus was to do as follows (Willis 1877:123-4; see Osler 1909:12):

Villanovanus ordered to call in his pamphlet and deposit the copies with the proper officer of the court; to pay all honour and respect to the Faculty of Physic in its collective and individual capacity, saying and writing nothing unbecoming of it, but conducting himself at all times peacefully and reverently towards its members; the doctors, on their part, being enjoined to treat Villanovanus gently and amiably, as parents treat their children. Villanovanus is then expressly inhibited and forbidden to appear in public, or in any other way, as a professor or practitioner of judicial astrology, otherwise called divination; he is to confine himself in his discussions of astrological subjects to the influence of the heavenly bodies on the course of the seasons and other natural phenomena, and not to meddle with questions or judgements of stellar influences on individuals or events, under pain of being deprived of the privileges he enjoys as a graduate of the University of Paris. Done this 18th of March, 1538.

He had already been apprehended in jail for two or three days once before for fighting with a colleague physician in Paris (Wilbur 1972:126).

2.2.7 Bible of Santes Pagnini

According to his testimony at Vienne, Servetus left Paris unsatisfied with the verdict of the Parliament of Paris, and first went to Avignon and then back to Lyon (*Opera*, 767, 769, 846). In the summer of 1538 Servetus went to Charlieu, a small town about forty miles northwest of Lyon, where he practised medicine for two or three years.⁸⁰ “On account of that which he there stupidly and insolently attempted,” his arrogance again disturbed his stillness (Henry 1849:175). He tried marrying a certain lady. He claimed to have failed because of his physical defect and rupture, obtained at the age of five. The judges at the trial of Geneva questioned this (*Opera*, 765, 767, 769, 781). The reason he failed was because “he could never have found a wife who could be trusted with his secrets” (Bainton

⁷⁸ It was written in his *History of the University of Paris*, vol. VI, in 1537. It was reprinted by Henri Tollin. Wilbur gives a more detail account on his troubled life of lecturing. See Wilbur (1972:121-6). Bainton contains the proposition accusing him. Judicial astrology was forbidden by the Church, but was still taught by some universities.

⁷⁹ Servetus wrote a tract to defend him before the trial of the Parliament in Paris in 1538. See Bainton (1953a:228-33).

⁸⁰ He confessed that he stayed there for two or three years during the trial of Geneva (*Opera*, 767) and three years at Vienne (*Opera*, 846).

1953b:128). He not only hid his real name but also wore a mask because of his heresy. If he married, his wife might have divulged him as a heretic.

In 1539, when Servetus turned thirty, some Anabaptist secretly rebaptized him. They denied that infant baptism was analogous to circumcision (*CR*, 412).⁸¹ He desired to follow Jesus' example, and proclaimed that Christians who followed the example of Christ ought to participate in this bath of Regeneration (*CR*, 412),⁸² and who ever submitted themselves to be baptised would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, promised through this means.⁸³ In the fifteenth letter to Calvin, he suggests that Calvin should follow the same procedure so that he may be fulfilled with the Holy Spirit and be born again (*Opera*, 678; *CR*, 615). In his last book, he insists not only that there is no covenant in infant baptism, and that no person baptised as an infant could become a Christian.⁸⁴

Servetus lived a dissolute life in Charlieu. He was employed as an editor to revise the Bible of Santes Pagnini.⁸⁵ Pagnini had published a Hebrew lexicon a Koran and has translated the Bible into Latin during 1528. The Roman Catholic Inquisition in Louvain and Spain soon banned the edition (Cuthbertson 1912:62).⁸⁶ Servetus wrote a preface and notes to the Pagnini Bible, in which he called for a better understanding of the Bible. Hugo De la Parte from Lyon published it in 1542 (Wallace, d.a.:428). He presented a new exegetical approach to reading the Bible.⁸⁷ He accuses biblical scholars for not reaching for the primary, literal and historical sense of the text, and instead searching in vain for mystical meanings. He addresses his new interpretation of the Bible in his preface to the Pagnini Bible (Willis 1877:140-1):

They who are ignorant of the Hebrew language and history are only too apt to overlook the historical and literal sense of the sacred Scriptures; the consequence of which is that they vainly and foolishly expend themselves in hunting after recondite and mystical meanings in the text where nothing of the kind exists. Before reading the prophets, in particular, he would therefore have

⁸¹ It is likely that he was involved in a secret sect, because on the matter of the Lord's Supper he differed from Protestants and the Roman Catholics (Dyer 1850:305; Levy 1993:64; and *CR*, 710).

⁸² See *CR*, 361, 364, 372, 384, 386, 434, 495, 545-6, 614, 619.

⁸³ "... vera Christi fide ad baptismum accede ut accipias donum spiritus sancti, tibi ita promissi" (*Ibid.*, 615).

⁸⁴ "In pædobaptismo vero non est foedus aliquod, nec efficiuntur Christiani" (*CR*, 440).

⁸⁵ 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 church practices. He was 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 was dedicated to the translation of the Bible into Latin, which was first published at Lyon in 1527-8. The Bible took thirty years to translate. See Wilbur (1972:128-9).

⁸⁶ Cuthbertson was a sub-librarian of Edinburgh Library and studied the history of keeping Servetus' books.

⁸⁷ Servetus insisted on the analysis of the historical meaning of the Bible and rejected the prophecies of the Old Testament already fulfilled in the New Testament with a certain interpretation of typology. For example, he rejected the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14. For detail see Bainton (1953b 98-9).

every one make himself acquainted not only with the Hebrew tongue, but with Hebrew History; for the prophets, without exception, followed history to the letter, although they also prefigured future events in their writings, led as they were by inspiration to conclusions having reference to the mystery of Christ. The power of the Scriptures, indeed, is of a fertilizing or prolific kind. Under a waning literal sense, they possess a vivifying spirit of renovation. It were, therefore, well that their meaning, apprehended as pointing in one direction, should not be overlooked as also pointing in another; and this the rather, seeing that the historical sense comes out ever the more clearly when the prospective bearing, which has Christ for its object, is kept in view—veiled under types and figures, indeed, and so not seen of the Jews, blinded by their prejudices, but now revealed to us in such wise that we see, to see the very face of our God.

It is apparent that Servetus maintains that he was working with the original historical meaning. He attempted to determine the original meaning so that the mystical or spiritual meaning could be applied to Christ: “For you must bear in mind that all things that are written of CHRIST took place in Judea, and in the Hebrew tongues; and in all other tongues but this there is a poverty of divine names” (ET 13b. 22-3). However, “in spite of his use of the historical principle in the interpretation of prophecy, it is going too far to herald him as in any serious sense a pioneer of the Higher Criticism two and a half centuries before Eichhorn” (Wilbur 1972:130).⁸⁸ He never mentions Moses as the author of the Pentateuch. He favoured the Psalms and Prophets of the Old Testament, which he believed should be interpreted in accordance with the messianic view (Wallace, d.a.:428). He explained that Psalm 2 should refer directly to David and Psalm 14 to Solomon. He applied Psalms 22:16 (they pierced my hands and my feet) to David, when, fleeing from his enemies, “scrambling like a four-footed beast over rugged and thorny places, his hands and feet were lacerated – *fugiente David per abrupta, instar quadrupedis, manus ejus et pedes lacerabantur*” (Willis 1877:147-8; Calvin, *Commentary on the Psalms*, 373-4):

The Jews prate much about the literal sense being purposely and deliberately overthrown, by our rendering the original word by they have pierced: but for this allegation there is no color of truth whatever. What need was there to trifle so presumptuously in a matter where it was altogether unnecessary? Very great suspicion of falsehood, however, attaches to them, seeing it is the uppermost desire of their hearts to despoil the crucified Jesus of his escutcheons, and to divest him of his character as the Messiah and Redeemer. If we receive this reading as they would have us to do, the sense will be enveloped in marvellous obscurity. In the first place, it will be a defective form of expression, and to complete it, they say it is necessary to supply the verb to surround or to beset. But what do they mean by besetting the hands and the feet? Besetting belongs no more to these parts of the human body than to the whole man. The absurdity

⁸⁸ Henry classifies two kinds of reformer: the one had the heart of Elijah who struggled “for the pure evangelical doctrine” and the other is “a would-be reformist” who has “a fantastical–philosophical Bible–system.” Servetus is categorized to the latter (Henry 1849:161).

of this argument being discovered, they have recourse to the most ridiculous old wives' fables, according to their usual way, saying, that the lion, when he meets any man in his road, makes a circle with his tail before rushing upon his prey: from which it is abundantly evident that they are at a loss for arguments to support their view.

The most significant verse indicating Messianic intent, Isaiah 7:14, (Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel - Isa 7:14 KJV) Servetus does not apply to Christ, but claims that “the Aramæans have come up in battle against Jerusalem, and the prophet speaks of a young woman who shall conceive and bear a son, the young woman being no other than Abijah, about to become the mother of Hezekiah – strength or fortitude of God – and Immanuel – God with us – before whose reign the two kings, the enemies of Judah, will have been discomfited” (CR, 69). For nearly ten years after publishing *De Trinitatis Erroribus*, Servetus seemed to forget his dream of correcting Christianity, as he worked on his editorial duties. In this work, the Pagnini Bible, his old antagonism was rekindled (Wilbur 1972:130-1). It was provocative enough for the Roman Catholic Church in Louvain and Spain to forbid it (Henry 1849:176-7).

His arrogance and disregard for his colleagues as well as his careless manner of speaking made him so unpopular that Servetus had to leave Charlieu, as also happened in Paris (Willis 1877:126; Robbins 1846:57).⁸⁹ The Archbishop of Vienne, Pierre Palmier,⁹⁰ heard that Servetus was in Charlieu, and invited him to Vienne. Servetus quietly lived as his personal physician from 1540 until the 1550s. Palmier helped him to settle in Vienne, providing him an apartment in his palace. Nobody suspected Servetus of heresy nor did they know that he was connected to the heretical work *De Trinitatis Erroribus*, because he lived with a prominent man. In fact, Servetus was so cunning that he attended mass regularly, in order to disarm suspicion. Even the archbishop did not recognise his physician as the author of the heretical book until much later. In order to hide his real identity, “Servetus was acting the part of a hypocrite; for he condemned alike the faith and the ritual of Popery” (Killen 1954:9 and Henry 1849:176).⁹¹ Later at the trial of Geneva he admitted

⁸⁹ Even Bolsec says of Servetus' arrogance on page 4 of his book, *Vie de Calvin*, “homme vrayment fort et insolent, comme testifient ceux qui l'ont cogneu à Charlieu, où il demenura chez la Rivoire, l'an 1540. Contrainct de Servetus partir de Charlieu pour les folies lesquelles il faisait, il Servetus retetira à Vienne en Dauphiné” (Quoted by Dyer 1850:305).

⁹⁰ He was one of his former listeners in Paris and received him into his palace.

⁹¹ “The reformers of that day could not conceive how a Catholic Archbishop and an Anabaptist doctor, could live in peace in different apartments in the same palace” (Benedict 1813:185).

that he had behaved so deceptively because he was threatened by death (*Opera*, 789).⁹² He secretly planned his last book, *Christianismi Restitutio*, while living there (Ford 1860:44).

He dedicated a book to Palmier. In the preface of the 1541 second edition of his Ptolemy's Geography he wrote: "Michael Villanouvanus to the most magnificent, illustrious and reverend master Pierre Palmier, distinguished Archbishop of Vienne" (PG 1541:192. Palmier pointed out a couple of errors in the book and Servetus tried to omit them from the publication (Wilbur 1972:128). He added new maps, used better paper and improved its accuracy and elegance. He was encouraged and assisted by several patrons to amend and produce a second edition (PG 1541:192-3):

For under what other leader would it have been fitting for Ptolemy to appear emended and printed in Vienne than under you, the very leader of the people of Vienne? and a student of Ptolemy? ... Above all he will rejoice when he perceives that so many who are learned in his Geography dwell in Vienne. Among those achieving such eminence are your kinsmen, Jean Palmier, prior of Santus Marcellus, and Claude de Rochefort, your vicar-general, both very accomplished men and deserving of commendation in many respects, to whom I owe as much as those who are students of geography owe to Ptolemy himself.

It is interesting that in the second edition of this new edition, Servetus wholly admitted to the improper and incorrect expressions opposed to the Bible's authority regarding the Holy Land. The main reason why he entirely changed them is to be found in his friends' warnings "on the presumption, probably, that he could hardly have been living on terms of intimacy with many persons of note, both lay and clerical, without betraying something of the sceptical element that distinguished him at the outset of his career, and that got the mastery of him with such disastrous consequences at last" (Willis 1877:136).

2.2.8 Correspondence with Calvin

Although Servetus did not discuss any religious issues in public, he nevertheless attempted to broaden his ideas on restoring pure Christianity. He thought that Calvin, the author of *Institutio Religionis Christianae* (1536), was among the great reformers of his age and was achieving the most radical reformation of Christian doctrines and was the most distinguished leader of the Reformation. Calvin was the greatest obstacle to his plans (Henry 1849:179). Thus, Servetus was eager to see if he himself could win Calvin over to a radical reformation of Christian doctrines. He started corresponding with Calvin, sending him copies of his own writings. Servetus eagerly read Calvin's writings and detected errors

⁹² Servetus tries to defend his situation like Paul in Acts 22-19 at trial of Geneva (see *CR*, 563-4).

in his point of view.⁹³ Servetus corresponded with Calvin through Jean Frellon, a printer, publisher, and bookseller at Lyon. Frellon was a Protestant and a friend of both Servetus and Calvin. He employed Servetus as a corrector, and to translate some treatises from Latin into Spanish (Dyer 1850:302-3).⁹⁴

Calvin answered Servetus' questions under the pseudonym of Charles D'Espeville (Dyer 1850:307; Wilbur 1972:133).⁹⁵ Servetus used the pseudonym of Michel de Villeneuve (Willis 1877:158). These letters would eventually be used as vital evidence revealing the identity of Servetus at his trial in Vienne.⁹⁶ Frellon had no idea of Villeneuve's real name, nor that he was the author of heretical books. What Frellon did realise was that Villeneuve was "full of unusual ideas on many of the accredited dogmas of the Christian faith; and, not indisposed, though indifferently prepared, to discuss these himself, he very probably suggested the great Reformer of Geneva as the man of all others the most likely to feel an interest in them, as well as the most competent to give an opinion on their merits" (Willis 1877:158).

The thirty letters or treatises on his favourite theological subjects he sent to Calvin are contained in his last book *Christianismi Restitutio* and also in Calvin's *Opera* (649-714). In his first letter to Calvin, Servetus requested answers to three questions: (1) Is the man Jesus, the Son of God, crucified and how did this filiation come to be? (2) Is the Kingdom of Christ in men? And how does one enter it and how is this regenerated? (3) Should the baptism of Christ be taken in faith like the Lord's Supper and to what end were both baptism and the Lord's Supper instituted?⁹⁷ Calvin wrote to Frellon (13 February 1546) that Servetus was stiff-necked in mind and lacked all theological principle (Calvin, *Letters*, vol. II, 30-1 & *Opera*, 833-4):

⁹³ "Ipse vero quasi hippomanes hausisset, quoscunque meos libros nancisci potuit, non destitit insulsis conviciis farcire" (*Opera*, 481).

⁹⁴ The letters to Frellon of Calvin and Servetus are in Calvin's *Opera* (833-5). Calvin signs the first letter to Frellon on February 13, 1546, "I am your servant and friend – Votre serviteur et entier amy." Servetus also begins and ends his letter to Frellon: "Dear Brother and Friend–Cher frère et amy" (see 834-5).

⁹⁵ The name is not unusual, Calvin had already used it previously and also to Louis du Tillet (January 31, 1538 and October 20, 1538), to Monsieur de Falas (October 14, 1543), the Family of Bude (1546, 1547), a French Seigneur (October 18, 1548), Madame de Cany (January 8 and April 29, 1548), and to Monsieur de Marolles (April 12, 1553) etc.

⁹⁶ During the second interrogation on April 6, 1553, the inquisitors of Vienne examined Servetus on some letters.

⁹⁷ "Prima quaestio. An homo Iesus crucifixus sit filius Dei: et quae sit huius filiationis ratio. Secunda. An regnum Christi sit in hominibus: quando quis ingreditur, et quando regeneretur. Tertia. An baptismus Christi debeat in fide fieri sicut coena: et quorsum haec instituta sint foedere novo" (*Opera*, 482). Calvin's replies are in 482-3. Servetus omitted them in CR.

SEIGNEUR JEHAN – By cause that your last letter was brought to me at my going away, I had not leisure to reply to what was enclosed therein. Since my return, at the first leisure that I have had, I have been quite willing to satisfy your desire; not that I have had great hope of late of being profitable to a certain person, judging from the disposition in which I see him to be; but in order to try once more if there shall be any means of bringing him back, which will be, when God shall have wrought in him so effectually, that he has become entirely another man. Since he has written to me in so proud a spirit, I would fain have beaten down his pride a little, speaking more harshly to him than is my wont; but I could scarcely do otherwise. For I do assure you that there is no lesson which is more necessary for him than to learn humility, which must come to him from the Spirit of God, not otherwise. But we must observe a measure here also. If God grants that favor to him and to us, that the present answer turns to his profit, I shall have whereof to rejoice. If he persists in the same style as he has now done, you will lose time in asking me to bestow labor upon him, for I have other affairs which press upon me more closely; and I would make a matter of conscience of it, not to busy myself further, having no doubt that it was a temptation of Satan to distract and withdraw me from other more useful reading. And therefore I beg you to content yourself with what I have done in the matter, unless you see some better order to be taken therein. Wherefore, after my commendation to you, I beseech our good Lord to have you in his keeping.

Your servant and hearty friend,

Charles d'Espeville.

Calvin thought that Servetus had become another man who had “no lesson which is more necessary for him than to learn humility, which must come to him from the Spirit of God, not otherwise.” Nevertheless, he did not attempt to speak of him harshly but prayed to God to save him from errors. Calvin did not have enough time to read Servetus’ manuscript, which had come to him via Frelon. He had busied himself with the Genevan Reformation since his return from Strassburg in 1541. He writes “I have other affairs which press upon me more closely; and I would make a matter of conscience of it, not to busy myself further, having no doubt that it was a temptation of Satan to distract and withdraw me from other more useful reading.” On receiving Calvin’s reply, Frelon sent a person to Calvin and also wrote a letter to Servetus to inform him on Calvin’s answer (Willis 1877:161):

Dear Brother and Friend! You will see by the enclosed why you had not sooner an answer to your letter. Had I had anything to communicate at an earlier date, I should not have failed to send to you immediately, as I promised. Be assured that I wrote the personage in question, and that there was no want of punctuality on my part. I think, however, that with what you have now, you will be as well content as if you had had or sooner. I send my own man express with this, having no other messenger at command. If I can be of use to you in anything else, I beg to assure you, you will always find me ready to serve you. Your good brother and friend, Jehan Frelon.

To my good brother and friend, master Michael Villanovanus, Doctor in medicine, Vienne.

After receiving the urgent message from Frellon, Calvin replied to Servetus through Frellon, saying that even though he was too busy to reply fully, he would answer Servetus' questions specifically and faithfully (*Opera*, 482-4; Schaff 1993:727):

1) that Christ is the Son of God both according to his divine nature eternally begotten, and according to his human nature as the Wisdom of God made flesh; 2) that the kingdom of God begins in man when he is born again, but that the process of regeneration is not completed in a moment, but goes on till death; 3) that faith is necessary for baptism, but not in the same personal way as in the Lord's Supper; for according to the type of circumcision the promise was given also to the children of the faithful.

Servetus, however, was not satisfied with Calvin's brief answers. He sent a second letter, forcing Calvin to read his fourth chapter (355-576), and some sections on baptism in his *Christianismi Restitutio*. He also criticised Calvin for making two or three Sons of God (*Opera*, 486).⁹⁸ Calvin informed Frellon that Servetus wanted to correspond with him. The following is a quotation from Calvin's second and last letter to Servetus via Frellon (*Opera*, 833, Willis 1877:159-60; Henry 1849:180-1):

Seigneur Jehan, Your last letter found me on the eve of my departure from home, and I had not time then to reply to the enclosure it contained. I take advantage of the first moment I have to spare since my return, to comply with your wishes; not indeed that I have any great hope of proving serviceable to such a man, seeing him disposed as I do. But I will try once more if there be any means left of bringing him to reason, and this will happen when God shall have so worked in him that he become altogether other than he is. I have been led to write to him more sharply than is my wont, being minded to take him down a little in his presumption; and I assure you there is no lesson he needs so much to learn as humility. This may perhaps come to him through the grace of God, not otherwise, as it seems. But we too ought to lend a helping hand. If God give him and us such grace as to have the letter I now forward turn to profit, I shall have cause to rejoice. If he goes on writing to me in the style he has hitherto seen fit to use, however, you will only lose your time in soliciting me farther in his behalf; for I have other business that concerns me more nearly, and I shall make it matter of conscience to devote myself to it, not doubting that he is a Satan who would divert me from studies more profitable. Let me beg of you therefore to be content with what I have already done, unless you see most pressing occasion for acting differently. Recommending myself to you and praying God to have you in his keeping, I am your servant and friend—

Charles Despeville⁹⁹

⁹⁸ The second letter is three times as long as the first. The first one is paged 482-3 but the second 487-95.

⁹⁹ It was dated February 13, 1546.

Calvin wrote in a friendly manner, but with clear rebukes for the unreasonable demands made upon him. He also rebuked Servetus for his erroneous views and recommended his *Institutio Religionis Christianae*, in which had already discussed all the questions.¹⁰⁰ Gradually, Servetus felt that he could not upset Calvin's serenity, as he had upset Oecolampadius and Bucer. He added about thirty letters to Calvin in his last book.. In the second letter,¹⁰¹ he scrupulously rebukes Calvin for his view as follows (*Opera*, 652-3 & *CR*, 580-1, Schaff 1993:731-2 & Willis 1877:173):

You make three Sons of God: the human nature is as a son to you, the divine nature is a son, and the whole Christ is a son ... All such tritheistic notions are a three-headed illusion of the Dragon, which easily crept in among the sophists in the present reign of Antichrist. Or have you not read of the spirit of the dragon, the spirit of the beast, the spirit of the false prophets, three spirits? Those who acknowledge the trinity of the beast are possessed by three spirits of demons. These three spirits incite war against the immaculate Lamb, Jesus Christ (Apoc. 16). False are all the invisible gods of the Trinitarians, as false as the gods of the Babylonians. Farewell.

In the third letter, Servetus maintains that the Word, who existed before Christ, became the Son of God at the incarnation, so that by him we could see the face of God. To Calvin he says, "You are offended with me for speaking as I do of the human form of Christ; but have patience and I shall lead you up to my conclusion—*te manducam*" (*Opera*, 653-4 & *CR*, 581-2, Willis 1877:173-4). Servetus then demonstrates his pantheistic system in the fourth letter (*Opera* 661-2 & *CR*, 593-4, Willis 1877:174-5):

God is only known through manifestation, or communication, in one shape or another. In Creation God opened the gates of His Treasury of Eternity ... Containing the Essence of the Universe in Himself, God is everywhere, and in everything, and in such wise that he shows himself to use as fire, as a flower, as a stone ... All accidents, further, are in God; whatever befall is not apart from God. Without beginning and without end, God is always becoming – *Semper est Deus in fieri*.

In the twelfth letter Servetus criticises Calvin's teaching on works and faith and his view on total depravity (*Opera* 671-2 & *CR*, 606-8, Willis 1877:175-6):

All that men do, you say is done in sin and is mixed with dregs that stink before God, and merit nothing but eternal death. But therein you blaspheme. Stripping us of all possible goodness you do violence to the teaching of Christ and his Apostles, who ascribe perfection or the power of being perfect to us: 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.' (Matt. V. 48) You scout this celestial perfections because you have never tasted perfection of

¹⁰⁰ "Deinde nihil quoeis quod non reperias in mea Istitutione, si illinc petere libeat..." (*Opera*, 494; Audin 1850:433).

¹⁰¹ This letter was three times as long as the first one: the first is two pages (482-3), the second seven pages (487-95).

the kind yourself. In the works of the Saintly, I say, there is nothing of the corruption you feign. The works of the Spirit shine before God and before men, and in themselves are good and proper. Thou reprobate and blasphemous, who calumniatest the works of the Spirit – *Tu improbus et blasphemus qui oper Spiritus calumniaris!*

In the thirteenth letter he reprimands Calvin for his view on Justification and does not hesitate to call him ‘Simon Magus’ (*Opera* 673-4 & *CR*, 610, Willis 1877:176-7):

What do I hear? The spirit of man suffers no change through sin! But if sin cause change, then must there also be change when sin is taken away. He, forsooth, who sits in darkness differs in nothing from him who sits in light! Your justification is Satanic merely if the conscience within you remains as it was before, and your new life of faith differs in nothing from the old death. God grant, O Calvin, that, ridding you of your magical fascinations, you may abound to overflowing in all good things; but Peter’s disputation against Simon Magus refutes you, teaching, as it does, the excellence of works even in the heathen. The justification you preach, therefore, is mere magical fascination and folly.

In the twentieth letter an interesting account of the true Church is introduced. Servetus interprets the church mystically rather than biblically, even though he insists that his system is based on the Bible. The Origin of the true invisible Church was generated by the Holy Spirit and to restore it he, like angel Michael, is anxious to fight against the Papacy (*Opera*, 687-8 & *CR*, 628-9, Willis 1877:181-2):

The true-Church of Christ, indeed, is independent of the Scriptures. There was a Church of Christ before there was any writing—of the Apostles. But where is now the Church? Ever present in celestial spirits and the souls of the blest, it fled from earth as many as 1260 years ago. It is in heaven, and typified by the woman adorned with the sun and the twelve stars (Revelation). Invisible among us now, it will again be seen before long. We with ours, the congregation of Christ, will be the Church. Towards the restoration of this Church it is that I labour incessantly; and it is because I mix myself up with that battle of Michael and the Angels, and seek to have all the pious on my side, that you are displeased with me. As the good angels did battle in heaven against the Dragon, so do other angels now contend against the Papacy on earth. Do you not believe that the angels will prevail? But as the Dragon could not, so neither can the Papacy, be worsted without the angels. The celestial regeneration by baptism it is that makes us equals of the angels in our war with spiritual iniquity. See you not, then, that the question is the restoration of the Church driven from among us? The words of John show us that a battle was in prospect: seduction was to precede, the battle was to follow; and the time is now at hand. Who, think you, are they who shall gain the victory over the Beast? They, assuredly, who have not received his mark. Grant, O God, to thy soldier that with thy might he may manfully bear him against the Dragon, who gave such power to the Beast. Amen!

Calvin was wearied by all these insulting letters to him. Servetus' letters were very 'full of his own logic' and thus Calvin saw little hope of correcting him. Servetus, nevertheless, desired to continue the correspondence. Calvin sent Servetus his *Institutio Religionis Christianae* (*Opera*, 486; see Willis 1877:166-7). Servetus read Calvin's book and returned it with the supposed erroneous notes on the margins of *De Baptismo*. Later a couple of pages with these notes were provided to the Roman Catholic inquisitors at the trial of Vienne as crucial evidence to uncover his mask (*Opera*, 847, 849).

Servetus criticised Calvin thus: "Since you fear I am Satan, I stop. So then return my writings, and farewell. If you really believe that the Pope is Antichrist, you will also believe that the Trinity and infant baptism according to the reading of Papacy are the doctrine of demons. Again farewell" (*Opera*, xxxi, Wilbur 1972:134). Although Servetus wanted Calvin to return the writings, he never did.¹⁰² Servetus sought other pastors whom he could convince. He also sent another letter to Peter Viret to get his writings back, but it was ineffective (Ford 1860:47). He also sent three other letters to another pastor of Geneva, Abel Poupin. The third letter is extant – *Hac tertia epistola*.¹⁰³ This letter would be presented as evidence at the trial of Geneva. In the third letter he criticises the doctrine of the Trinity, again, and blasphemously calls God a watchdog like the three-head monster, Cerberus: "For the one god you have a three-headed Cerberus."¹⁰⁴ He expressed his resolution to die for his doctrine at the end of the letter to Poupin (*Opera*, 751 & Allwoerden, 1727:49):

I know for sure that I shall die in this cause; but my courage does not fail me because of this; I shall show you a disciple worth of my master. I much regret that, through you, I am not allowed to amend some places in my writings now in Calvin's hands. Farewell, and look for no more letters from me. I stand to my post and mediate, and look out what may further come to pass. For come it will - surely it will come, and that without long delay.

In contrast to Servetus' arrogant antagonism, Calvin showed him God's grace and his patience and tenderness, labouring to turn him from his errors to the truth. We can sense

¹⁰² There were certain notes in it: "From your brother and friend Michel Villanovanus, doctor of medicine in Vienne" (Hillar 1997:242). The notes were written in the first draft of *Christianismi Restitutio*.

¹⁰³ He was a pastor in Geneva from 1543-1556 and had been a Franciscan monk (*Opera*, n.1,750). The date of this letter was not recorded, but it must be dated 1548 because the correspondence with Calvin was over in 1548 and then he sent a letter to him. It is contained in *Opera*, 750-1.

¹⁰⁴ "Pro uno deo, habetis tricipitem cerberum...." (*Opera*, 750). According to Greek mythology, Cerberus was a monstrous three-headed watchdog over the world of the dead, Hades. He prevented the spirits of the dead from leaving Hades and the living from entering. His parents are Typhon and Echidna. For the last of twelve labours he was commanded to serve Eurystheus. Hercules went to the underworld to bring Cerberus back to the upper world. Hesiod describes Cerberus in his book, *Theogony*, where Cerberus is "the savage, the bronze-barking dog of Hades, fifty-headed, and powerful, and without pity" (Hesiod, 141).

that Calvin's patience was now exhausted because of Servetus' stiff-necked attitude. Calvin sent a letter (February 13, 1546) to Farel, saying that "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 it 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" (Calvin, *Letters*, vol. II, 33 on February 13, 1546).¹⁰⁵ He explicated his views on heresy. Simultaneously, it is implied that if he went to Geneva, his safety could not be guaranteed. The last expression – 'I shall never permit him to depart alive' – has given occasion for numerous reproaches against Calvin. It has frequently been assumed that Calvin secretly had a murderous intention to kill Servetus so that he willingly provided the inquisitors of Vienne with the crucial proofs. A pastor of Belfast, Scott Porter (1854:75), alleges that the expression came from Calvin's personal hatred towards Servetus and indicated a seven-year long secret conspiracy:

Neither can I bring myself to believe that Calvin was a man of high honor or a tender conscience. His keeping the vow which he had registered against Servetus in case of his coming to Geneva, for seven years secret from the intended victim, was a piece of deception from which a generous open foe, even in cherishing deadly hostility, would have shrunk. Luther could not have done it. His open-hearted German nature would have revolved at the proceeding of the wily Frenchman. Had he been in Calvin's place, it would not have been to Farel that he would have expressed his murderous intention, if he had unfortunately been prompted by passion to form it for a moment; but to Servetus himself. He would have written to him, '*Come not near me! Keep aloof! For as surely as I can lay my hand upon you I will commit you to the flames!*'¹⁰⁶

Porter (1854:5) also infers a similar allegation based on the last expression in another article:

I have accused Calvin of keeping this murderous intention secret from the intended victim [Servetus] ... There would be some force in this, if the letter expressing his determination to put Servetus to death, had been sent to himself, and not to Farel, a man with whom it is apparent he never had any intercourse till the day of his being committed to the flames; the man, too, who was subjected to the torturing fire."

¹⁰⁵ The following letter is originally in Latin: "Servetus nuper ad me scripsit, ac literas adjunxit longum volumen suorum delirorum, cum trasonica jactantia, dicens me stupenda et hactenus inaudita visurum. Si mihi placeat, huc Servetus venturum receipt. Sed nolo fidem meam interponere. Nam si venerit, modo valeat mea autoritas, vivum exire numquam patiar" (*Opera*, 283). Brown (1815:26) even suspects it to be the genuine letter of Calvin with six speculations.

¹⁰⁶ Porter was junior pastor of the first Presbyterian Congregation, Belfast, as well as professor of Theology in the Association of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterians of Ireland. On the 300th anniversary of Servetus' execution he argued his three lectures against Dr. William D. Killen 1843: who wrote *The Unitarian Martyr-A Defence of John Calvin in the Case of Michael Servetus* in 1854.

The historian Edward Gibbon, like Porter, also claims that the personal animosity of Calvin caused Servetus' arrest in Vienne as well as in Geneva (Gibbon 1932:314):

1. The zeal of Calvin seems to have been envenomed by personal malice, the judges of Vienne, and betrayed, for his destruction, the sacred trust of pretence of a private correspondence. 2. The deed of cruelty was not varnished by the pretence of danger to the church or state. In his passage through Geneva Servetus was a harmless stranger, who neither preached, nor printed, nor made proselytes.

A last example of these accusations can be seen in Ruter, who believes that Calvin not only had "the most impalpable hatred", but was also "bent on revenge, obtained by secret means" (Ruter 1814:10). All the allegations focus on Calvin's personal intention of killing Servetus. Georges Montorgueil rebukes Calvin, arguing that "Calvin killed him ... [Calvin] threatened his own, fearing that the antique beauty of Servetus' pantheism would erode the haughty empire he had carved out, waged a cowardly and hypocritically war against him which, once the gentle dreamer fell into his hands, became refined in its cruelty" (Bungener 1863:242). Bungener (1863:242) suggests that this is a reasonable opinion:

That Calvin should have spoken beforehand of demanding the death of the heretic, should the opportunity occur, is fundamentally better than if he had acted towards him with more circumspection, and concealed from him what awaited him at Geneva. This better, moreover, has the advantage of clearly defining how the question stood in Calvin's mind. If, on the one hand, it is painful and grievous to us to see him ready to ask for the death of a man who has entered into familiar correspondence with him, the fact established, on the other hand, at least the total absence of all personal animosity.

He continues to observe that Calvin did not intend killing Servetus personally, but hated the heretic who should be killed: "Calvin, then, could not hate him personally, and he may therefore have said, with perfect sincerity during the trial, that he had hated, and did hate, the errors, – not the man" (Ruter 1814:10). Bungener seems to discount the allegation that Calvin wanted Servetus killed out of personal hatred, by indicating that it was the heretic and the heresy that he wanted judged. Calvin tried to save him for sixteen years (*Opera*, 460). It is considered that the charge comes from misunderstanding Calvin. Against Porter's allegation Killen points out Calvin's honesty (Killen 1854:n.,13):

If we are to believe these writers, the Reformer must have been an uncommonly candid murderer, for a man who designs to take way the life of his fellow-creature, seldom gives so long notice of his intentions. For many years before Servetus was arrested by the agents of the Inquisition, Calvin knew that he was living at Vienne, and yet permitted him to remain unmolested. The Reformer was extremely unwilling to proceed to extremities, and instead of desiring his death, tried by threats to deter him from coming to

Geneva. Calvin honestly expresses his own feeling in reference to Servetus, when he says, 'I neither hate nor despise you, *nor do I wish to persecute you*; but I would be hard us iron, when I behold you insulting sound doctrine with such audacity.'

Henry gives the best explanation for this misunderstanding of Calvin:

This, among a thousand other matters, was but an outbreak of anger, a threat uttered in passion; the letter, which was sent the same day have to Frelon, containing an expression of hope that Servetus might still be converted. Calvin had probably answered his communication, and now spoke of the circumstance to Farel. His enemies have made the sentence referred to of vast importance, because they can find no worse cause of accusation against him. They do not perceive that their complaint is unreasonable, for had Calvin desired the death of Servetus, he would have encouraged his coming to Geneva. It is incredible how many fables have been founded on this expression; to what ravings even it has given occasion, and that up to the present day. For us it is a matter of no importance whatever, since Calvin subsequently acknowledged with all simplicity, that he considered the death of Servetus necessary (Henry 1849:181-2).

Lingle leads us to think that the statement is reasonable and not blind (Lingle 1900:8-9):

We have just seen that Calvin, after many years of patience, had come to the place where he regarded Servetus as a Satan who was busy with tearing down the kingdom of God. Not only so, if Calvin really had murder in his heart and wanted to destroy Servetus, there were two ways in which he could have done it. He could have allowed him to come on to Geneva; instead of that he wanted to send a little note to the Archbishop of Vienne revealing the identity of Servetus. Vienne was not over one hundred miles from Geneva. Servetus lived there for thirteen years in the palace of Archbishop under an assumed name. Calvin and a few of his intimate friends were probably the only people in all the world who knew Servetus' secret for thirteen years, and kept it. A word from Calvin to the Catholic authorities at any time during all those years would have sent Servetus to the stake, but Calvin never spoke that word.

Of Calvin's attitude, determined from their correspondence, the historian Schaff says, "We must admire his patience and moderation in giving so much of his precious time to the questions of a troublesome stranger and pronounced opponent" (Schaff 1993:728). We are not able to persuade ourselves that there was in this expression, a particle of deliberate malice. If he had desired Servetus' death, he would not have prevented him from coming to Geneva and waited so long until de Trie would make contact with his cousin. Besides, Calvin wrote a similar letter to Viret on September 1, 1548: "I think I once read to you my answer to Servetus. I was at length disinclined from striving longer with the incurable obstinacy of a heretic; and, indeed, I ought to have followed the advice of Paul. He now attacks you. You will see how long you ought to persist in rebutting his follies. He will

twist nothing out of me henceforward” (Calvin, *Letters*, vol. II, n. 2, 33).¹⁰⁷ What we can determine is that the two letters must have been written in similar circumstances.

After Calvin visited Servetus two hours before his execution, he reported of the interview as follows (*Opera*, 460):

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 offence, 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 admonishing, he burst against me in I do not know what type of rage or anger.

This is a reflection of Calvin’s true feelings towards Servetus. Calvin bestirred himself to convert and guide Servetus to the right way, but Servetus not only resisted his good intentions but severely insulted him.

2.2.9 *Christianismi Restitutio*

The correspondence between Calvin and Servetus began in 1546 and ended in 1548 (Macdonell 1983:132). It is with certainty that Calvin felt that he could not persuade Servetus to return back (Luck 1963:198). Servetus ceased sending the further letters when realised he could not convince Calvin of his theories. Servetus prepared his last book between 1546 and 1553, and sent Calvin a copy of *Christianismi Restitutio* through Frelon. On August 17, 1553, during the trial at Geneva, Servetus confessed to sending a copy to Calvin six years earlier (*Opera*, 734; Cuthbertson 1912:40-1). Calvin confirmed that “Servetus lately wrote to me, and coupled with his letter a long volume of his delirious fancies” (Calvin, *Letters*, vol. II, 33 on February 13, 1546). This was in a letter to Farel on February 13, 1546. Calvin sent this copy to Peter Viret at Lausanne (*Opera*, 843),¹⁰⁸ which was used as crucial evidence at the trial of Geneva (*Opera*, n. 2, 734). Thus, it can be concluded that he had completed a draft of his last book by 1546. During the next six years Servetus rewrote and revised his manuscript, hoping to publish it in 1552 (Osler 1909:31).

¹⁰⁷ Pierre Viret was sent a letter in summer of 1553 by Servetus and asked Calvin’s advice on August 25, 1548. See *Opera* (n. 1, 780).

¹⁰⁸ Trie informed Arneys in the third letter on March 31, 1553: “I should indeed have already sent the book [in MS.] which I refer to, had it been in this city; but it has been at Lausanne these two years past. Had M. Calvin kept it by him, I believe: he would long ago, for all it is worth have returned it to the writer; but having lent it for perusal to another, it was, as it seems, retained by him.”

It can be confirmed that he was resolved to spreading his thoughts through publications, rather than through corresponding with the reformers (Allwoerden, 1727:107-10).

Servetus had to find a printer to publish *Christianismi Restitutio*. Servetus was unsuccessful in securing Marrinus, one of his German friends, as a publisher. In a letter, dated April 9, 1552 Marrinus wrote: "But I beg you not to question my friendly feelings towards you. To what you say besides I shall reply at greater length and more particularly on another occasion. Farewell! Thy MARRINUS" (*Opera*, 835). After an intense and painful search, with the help of his patron, the archbishop Palmier, he found some printers in Vienne. Servetus met Balthasar Arnoullet, a businessman and bookseller and Guillaume Guérout, his brother-in-law (Willis 1877:191-2 & Henry 1849:184). He promised them a bonus of 100 *écus* for each of the printings¹⁰⁹ Guérout, the corrector of the press, had been banished from Geneva due to a sexual affair. He was an enemy of Calvin and could easily be induced to do the work. He knew of the risk of publishing it in Roman Catholic France, as well that it was directed against the reformers' doctrines. He must have known that it was heretical, because no author's name nor publisher is shown on the title page. Arnoullet, the printer, like Marrinus¹¹⁰ before him, hesitated to issue a book without the permission of the clergy. Arnoullet must have had misgivings about printing it, though he insisted on his ignorance about the author at the inquisition of Vienne. With a promise of an additional bonus and under Guérout's importunity, Arnoullet finally consented publish it secretly. He confessed that Guérout deceived him about the content of the book (*Opera*, 752). The book appeared with the pseudonymous initials M.S.V. (Michael Servetus Villeneuve) on the last page. Servetus himself corrected the manuscript. It took three months to complete.¹¹¹ The book was printed secretly in a small house outside the printing shop on January 3, 1553. The full title of *Christianismi Restitutio* is written as follows:

Christianismi Restitutio. The whole apostolic church is summoned to the threshold. Once again there is restored knowledge of God, of the faith of Christ our justification, of the regeneration of baptism, and of participation in the Lord's Supper. And finally with the heavenly kingdom restored to us, the wicked captivity in Babylon has been ended and antichrist with his hosts

¹⁰⁹ Silver and gold money used from 13th through the 18th century in France. 1 *écu* seems to be equal to \$3.75, based on the currency of the USA between 1750 and 1965. See & Durant & Ariel (1965:ix). Arnoullet and Guérout agreed to printing the book provided that "Servetus was to bear the expense, make the corrections himself, sell and distribute the book and pay a bonus 100 *écus* to each of the printers" (Hillar 1997:243).

¹¹⁰ He lived at Basel and was one of Servetus' friends. He refused to print Servetus' writing for being heretical suspect and "it was too much opposed to the doctrines of Luther, Calvin, and Melanchthon to run the risk" (Naturæ 1892:19). See Drummond (1848:34).

¹¹¹ Ford (1860:48) observes it was finished on Michael-mass in 1552.

destroyed. And at that time shall Michael stand up. And war broke out in heaven. [Vienne] 1553.¹¹²

He intended to prove that he was superior to Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and to show them out as false. It consists of Servetus' speculations and suggestions on the reformation of Christianity, thirty letters to Calvin, sixty signs of the Antichrist, and an apology to Melancthon and his followers. In the preface Servetus states the aim of his book (CR, 3-4):

The task we have set ourselves here is truly sublime; for it is no less than to make God known in his substantial manifestation by the Word and his divine communication by the Spirit, both comprised in Christ, through whom alone do we learn how the divineness of the Word and the Spirit may be apprehended in Man. Hidden from human sight in former times, God is now both manifested and communicated to the world, manifestation taking place by the Word, communication by the Spirit, to the end that we may see him face to face as it were in Creation, and feel him intuitively but lucidly declared in ourselves. It is high time that the door leading to knowledge of this kind were opened; for otherwise no one can either know God truly, read the Scriptures aright, or be a Christian.

No one in France could make out what the initials M.S.V. stood for. Nor did they know that Servetus was the author. The new book was stealthily shipped to three centres: Frankfurt, Geneva, and Lyon. Frelon who ran the bookstore in Frankfurt (the largest in Europe), sent Calvin a couple of copies in February 1553. These copies might have been destroyed after Calvin informed the pastors of Frankfurt about them on August 27, 1553.¹¹³ Jacques Berthet, owner of the bookstore in Geneva, had no idea of the book's heresy. Robert Estienne (a Genevan printer) supplied him with the books. He destroyed the books quickly (Parker 1954:101). The third shipment, to Lyon, was shipped, via the Rhône River to Pierre Merrin's shop by a priest from Vienne, Jacques Charmier. Charmier was later

¹¹² Fulton 1989: 89. The original title of the book was: *Christianismi Restitutio*. Totius ecclesiae apostolicae est ad sua limina vocatio, in intergrum restituta cognitione Dei, fidei Christi, iustificationis nostrae, regenerationis baptismi, et cænae domini manducationis Restitutio denique nobis regno coelesti, Babylonis impiæ captivitate solua, et Antichristio cum suis penitus destructo. בשה ההיא יעמוד מיכאל השר. καὶ ἐγένετο πόλεμος ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ. M. D. LIII.”; Schaff (1993:733) comments that the Hebrew motto came from Daniel 12:1 and the Greek one from Revelation 12:7. Zweig (1936:103) says the reason for naming it was “in order to demonstrate to the world that Calvin’s *Institutio* must be counter-blasted by a *Restitutio*.”

¹¹³ Calvin, *Letters*, vol. II, 422-3 on August 27, 1553: “You have doubtless heard of the name of Servetus, a Spaniard, who twenty years ago corrupted your Germany with a virulent publication, filled with many pernicious errors ... Many copies of it had been conveyed to Frankfurt for the Easter fairs: the printer’s agent, however, a pious and worthy man, on being informed that it contained nothing but a farrago of errors, suppressed whatever he had of it ... I had rather you should pass sentence on it from reading the book itself ... The bookseller, if I mistake not, will permit them to be burnt. Should anything stand in the way, however, I trust that you will act so judiciously, as to purge the world of such noxious corruptions. Besides, your way will be clear, because if the matter be submitted to your judgement, there will be no necessity for asking the magistrate to interfere.”

sentenced to three years imprisonment, as was Merrin. Merrin was sentenced for hiding the heretical books (*Opera*, n., 853).

At the trial of Vienne, Merrin was interrogated by the inquisitor of Lyon, but did not know what book's contents, written in Latin, were. The copies sent to Lyon were shipped to Vienne and were burned with Servetus' effigy on June 17, 1553. Only a few copies of *Christianismi Restitutio* survive to this day.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Unfortunately, most of the books were returned or burned together with an effigy of Servetus on June 17, 1553. One copy is *Christianismi Restitutio* of Vienna in the National Library of Austria and the second one is in the National Library in Paris. The third one is in the library of the University of Edinburgh; the Vienna edition is almost complete one. See Podach (1953:47-51). The third one is explained in Wright (1989:263-91). The third one lacks the first sixteen pages, which have been abstracted, and eighteen written pages substituted for them. Cuthbertson (1912: 37-8, 40-2, 51, & 63) concludes that the copy of Edinburgh is the original Calvin used.