For the condition of ſervants by the law of Scotland, ſee Law.

SERVETISTS, a name given to the modern Antitrinitarians, from their being ſuppoſed to be the fol­lowers of Michael Servetus ; who, in the year 1553 was burnt at Geneva, together with his books.

SERVRTUS (Michael), a learned Spaniſh physician, was born at Villaneuva, in Arragon, in 1509. He was ſent to the univerſity of Toulouſe to ſtudy the civil law. The Reformation, which had awakened the moſt poliſhed nations of Europe, directed the attention of thinking men to the errors of the Romiſh church and to the ſtudy of the Scriptures. Among the reft Ser­vetus applied to this ſtudy. From the love of novelty, or the love of truth, he carried his inquiries far beyond the other reformers, and not only renounced the falſe opi­nions of the Roman Catholics, but went ſo far as to queſtion the doctrine of the Trinity. Accordingly, af­ter ſpending two or three years at Toulouſe, he deter­mined to go into Germany to propagate his new opi­nions, where he could do it with moſt ſafety. At Ba­ſil he had ſome conferences with Oecolampadius. He went next to Straſhurg to viſit Bucer and Capito, two eminent reformers of that town. From Straſhurg he went to Hugenau, where he printed a book, intitled *De Trinitatis Erroribus,* in 1531. The enſuing year he publiſhed two other treatiſes on the same ſubject: in an advertiſement to which, he informs the reader that it was not his intention to retract any of his former ſentiments, but only to ſtate them in a more diſtinct and accurate manner. To theſe two publications he had the courage to put his name, not ſuſpecting that in an age when liberty of opinion was granted, the exerciſe of that liberty would be attended with danger. After publiſhing theſe books, he left Germany, probably find­ing his doctrines not ſo cordially received as he expect­ed. He went firſt to Baſil, and thence to Lyons, where he lived two or three years. He then removed to Pa­ris, where he ſtudied medicine under Sylvius, Fernelius, and other profeſſors, and obtained the degree of maſter of arts and doctor of medicine. His love of controverſy involved him in a ſerious diſpute with the phyſicians of Paris ; and he wrote an Apology, which was ſuppreſſed by an edict of the Parliament. The miſunderſtanding which this diſpute produced with his colleagues, and the chagrin which ſo unfavourable a termination occaſioned, made him leave Paris in diſguſt. He ſettled two or three years in Lyons, and engaged with the Frellons, eminent printers of that age, as a corrector to their preſs. At Lyons he met with Pierre Palmier, the archbiſhop of Vienne, with whom he had been ac­quainted at Paris. That Prelate, who was a great en­courager of learned men, preſſed him to accompany him to Vienne, offering him at the same time an apartment in his palace. Servetus accepted the offer, and might have lived a tranquil and happy life at Vienne, if he could have confined his attention to medicine and lite­rature. But the love of controverſy, and an eagerneſs to eſtabliſh his opinions, always poſſeſſed him. At this time Calvin was at the head of the reformed church at Geneva. With Servetus he had been acquainted at Pa­ris, and had there oppoſed his opinions. For 16 years Calvin kept up a correſpondence with him, endeavouring to reclaim him from his errors. Servetus had read the works of Calvin, but did not think they merited the high eulogies of the reformers, nor were they ſufficient to convince him of his errors. He continued, however, to conſult him ; and for this purpoſe ſent from Lyons to Geneva three queſtions which reſpected the divinity of Jeſus Chriſt, regeneration, and the neceſſity of baptiſm. To theſe Calvin returned a civil anſwer. Servetus treat­ed the anſwer with contempt, and Calvin replied with warmth. From reasoning he had recourſe to abuſive language; and this produced a polemical hatred, the moſt implacable diſpoſition in the world. Calvin having ob­tained ſome of Servetus’s papers, by means, it is ſaid, not very honourable, ſent them to Vienne along with the private letters which he had received in the courſe of their correſpondence. The conſequence was, that Servetus was arreſted ; but having eſcaped from priſon, he reſolved to retire to Naples, where he hoped to practiſe medicine with the ſame reputation which he had ſo long enjoyed at Vienne. He imprudently took his route through Geneva, though he could not but know that Calvin was his mortal enemy. Calvin informed the magiſtrates of his arrival ; Servetus was apprehended, and appointed to ſtand trial for hereſy and hlaſphemy. It was a law at Geneva, that every accuſer ſhould ſurrender himſelf a priſoner, that if the charge ſhould be found falſe, the accuſer ſhould ſuffer the puniſhment in which he meant to involve the accuſed Calvin not chooſing to go to priſon himſelf, ſent one of his domeſtics to preſent the impeachment againſt Servetus. The articles brought againſt him were collected from his writings with great care ; an employment which took up three days. One of theſe articles was, “ that Servetus had denied that Judæa was a beautiful, rich, and fertile country ; and affirmed, on the authority of travellers, that it was poor, barren, and diſagreeable.” He was also charged with “ corrupting the Latin Bible, which he was em­ployed to correct at Lyons, by introducing imperti­nent, trifling, whimsical, and impious notes of his own through every page.” But the main article, which was certainly fatal to him, was, “ that in the perſon of Mr Calvin, miniſter of the word of God in the church of Geneva, he had defamed the doctrine that is preach­ed, uttering all imaginable injurious, blaſphemous words againſt it.”

Calvin viſited Servetus in priſon, and had frequent conferences with him ; but finding that, in oppoſition to all the arguments he could employ, the priſoner re­mained inflexible in his opinions, he left him to his fate. Before ſentence was paſſed, the magiſtrates of Geneva conſulted the miniſters of Bale, of Bern, and Zurich ; and, as another account informs us, the magiſtrates of the Proteſtant Cantoris of Switzerland. And to ena­ble them to form a judgment of the criminality of Ser­vetus, they tranſmitted the writings of Calvin, with his anſwers. The general opinion was, that Servetus ought to be condemned to death for blaſphemy. He was ac­cordingly ſentenced to be burnt alive on the 27th of October 1553. As he continued alive in the midſt of the flames more than two hours, it is ſaid, finding his torment thus protracted, he exclaimed, “ Unhappy wretch that I am ! Will the flames be inſuſſicient to terminate my miſery! What then ! Will the hundred pieces of gold, and the rich collar which they took from me, not purchaſe wood enough to conſume me more quickly ! “ Though the ſentence of death was paſſed againſt Servetus by the magiſtrates of Geneva, with the