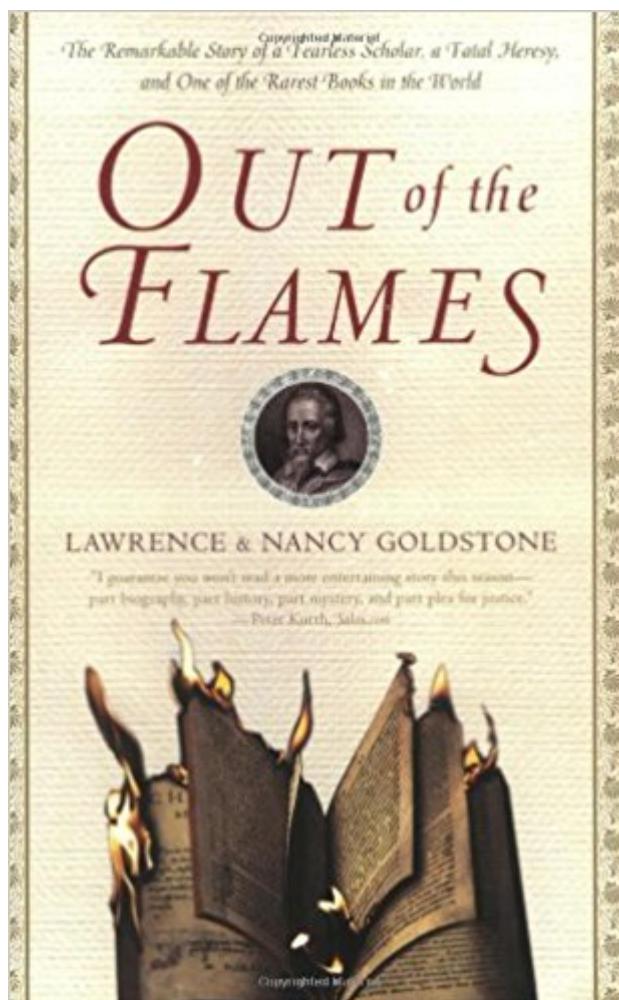


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Out Of The Flames: The Remarkable Story Of A Fearless Scholar, A Fatal Heresy, And One Of The Rarest Books In The World



Synopsis

Out of the Flames is an extraordinary story - providing testament to the power of ideas, the enduring legacy of books, and the triumph of individual courage. Out of the Flames tracks the history of *The Christianismi Restituto*, examining Michael Servetus's life and times and the politics of the first information during the sixteenth century. *The Christianismi Restituto*, a heretical work of biblical scholarship, written in 1553, aimed to refute the orthodox Christianity that Michael Servetus' old colleague, John Calvin, supported. After the book spread through the ranks of Protestant hierarchy, Servetus was tried and agonizingly burned at the stake, the last known copy of the *Restitutio* chained to his leg. Servetus's execution marked a turning point in the quest for freedom of expression, due largely to the development of the printing press and the proliferation of books in Renaissance Europe. Three copies of the *Restitutio* managed to survive the burning, despite every effort on the part of his enemies to destroy them. As a result, the book became almost a surrogate for its author, going into hiding and relying on covert distribution until it could be read freely, centuries later. Lawrence and Nancy Goldstone follow the clandestine journey of the three copies through the subsequent centuries and explore its author's legacy and influence over the thinkers that shared his spirit and genius, such as Leibniz, Voltaire, Rousseau, Jefferson, Clarence Darrow, and William Osler.

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Customer Reviews

When Michael Servetus was burned at the stake for heresy in 1553, he had spent much of his life

running from the Church. Born into a noble Spanish family, he studied medicine and the humanities extensively. By age 20, he had written a treatise on the Trinity that incensed Church authorities and led him into self-imposed exile. But the book that doomed Servetus was *Christianismi Restitutio* (Christianity Restored), which challenged, among other ideas, John Calvin's doctrine of predestination and argued that God exists in all people and all things. The reaction to Servetus's text was so vehement that all copies discovered were destroyed. As the Goldstones (book collectors and authors of *Used and Rare, etc.*) reveal, three copies of the book still exist. In this lively account, the authors vividly recreate a Renaissance world of revolution and reform in which the dissemination of ideas flourished thanks to the printing press. They also trace the paths of the surviving copies of *Christianismi Restitutio* as they make their way through the hands of Voltaire, Rousseau, Jefferson and physician William Osler. More than a theological treatise, the *Christianismi Restitutio* contains a paragraph that explains pulmonary circulation, decades before William Harvey generally credited with this discovery announced his find. The Goldstones offer both a portrait of an important but neglected Renaissance humanist and a testimony to the power of books to shape minds and hearts. Illus. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

The Goldstones, who have written previous volumes about book collecting, here offer a look at the turbulent 1500s and Michael Servetus, a Spanish lay theologian and physician of convictions and brilliance who was executed for his polemical writings. His early desire for a rebirth of Christianity resulted in condemnation, secret flight, and the assumption of a new identity as a medical student in Paris. His studies there resulted in a major medical discovery: understanding the function of our pulmonary circulation system. He became a celebrated physician and a sought-after editor, and moved from being a Catholic to being a reformer, with views of the Trinity that antagonized John Calvin. In the anonymously published *Christianismi Restitutio*, Servetus reworked additional contentious themes, but the ugly politics of the times caught up with him. He was condemned and burned at the stake, and all but three copies of his book were destroyed. Saved from the flames, these volumes speak triumphantly of the courage of Servetus and the power of the printed word; today, the early roots of the Unitarian Church are seen in his ideas. This fascinating account is recommended for historical and religious collections. George Westerlund, formerly with Providence P.L. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

This book is jam packed with history and excellent prose, and I enjoyed quite a lot. One of the

highlights is the amount of research the authors did to provide an immense amount of background. Yet, that was also one of the book's drawbacks. In some places, the background material seemed long, tedious, and irrelevant to the main story, and I found myself scanning instead of reading to get back to the main topic. As others have mentioned, the lack of footnotes was also a problem. Still, I enjoyed the book enough to give it four stars, and I give it a hearty recommendation, especially for history buffs.

The book is well written and does spend a good time talking about the martyr to the cause of quixotic academic idealism in a world redolent with intolerance. The book also goes into early printing history, Luther and his response to Catholic abuses or at least the church's questionable practices, as well as concerning Calvin, Versalius, Liebnitz, Osler, Voltaire and more. It details various aspects of France, Germany and England and the various book dealings present through later times. And there are dealings with monuments planned and made that perhaps could have been dispensed with. Yes, the book does manage to deal with Servetus, when it gets a chance. Although the book explains quite a bit, it really deals more with the works and their history, as versus with the author himself. The book is definitely entertaining, only a bit misleading in its description.

I don't like to write reviews but do want to give this 5 stars. It's history at its best -- it treats the subject while providing lots of interesting background. I ended up reading pursuing some of the ideas in it on the 'net to learn more -- a sign of a good, engaging book. Very easy writing style made it a joy to read, and I'll keep it to re-read one day.

An extremely enjoyable and readable history - one that I would recommend not only to anyone interested in the history of Unitarianism or medicine or any specific focus in the book, but to anyone interested in the history of knowledge, the history of ideas, and the great media revolution represented by the printing press.

Goldstone thoroughly researched this book, which is almost as much a biography of Calvin as it is of Servetus. He goes into great detail on the relationship between the two, Servetus's long train of legal troubles, and the historical trail of the surviving three copies of *Christianismi Restitutio* (one of which he demonstrates to be Calvin's personal copy). It is unfortunate that *Christianismi Restitutio* has never been translated, nor does Goldstone offer a very comprehensive description of its

contents.

A fascinating historical account, of not only religious persecution by John Calvin towards Michael Servetus because of a book written by Servetus and their petty religious disagreements, ending in Servetus being burned at the stake, but how, after Calvin ordering the book written by Servetus to be burned as well, a copy of the book remarkably survived and it's journey through the centuries. Divine intervention? Well researched, Goldstone brings the life and times of two men at odds with each other to life.

This is an amazing history of christianity, particularly catholism, protestantism and calvanism from the time of the first Eucumenical Council. Really well researched and informative. Now I know why I refuse to recite the Nicene Creed from an historical viewpoint!

This is a well written and important contribution to Western History and Christian History. The origins of Unitarianism are shown in Transylvania of all places and Thomas Jefferson's special interest in the denomination. This is a biography of Miguel Severtus a 'heretic' according to the Catholic Church who was burned almost single handedly by Calvin!. This view of the early Renaissance is pivotal.

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