

A student of 18, named Thos. Aikenhead, whose habits were studious and whose morals were irreproachable, had in the course of his reading, met with some of the ordinary criticism of the Bible. He fancied he had lighted on a mine of wisdom which had been hidden from the rest of mankind, and, with the conceit from which half educated lads are seldom free, proclaimed his discoveries to four or five of his companions. Trinity in unity, he said, was as much a contradiction as a square circle. Ezra was the author of the Pentateuch. The Apocalypse was an allegorical book about the philosopher's stone. Moses had learned magic in Egypt. Christianity was a delusion and would not last till the year 1800. For this wild talk, of which in all probability, he would himself have been ashamed, long before he was five and twenty, he was prosecuted by the Lord Advocate. Aikenhead might undoubtedly have been tried by the law of Scotland, punished with imprisonment till he would retract his errors and do penance before the congregation of his parish; and every man of sense and humanity would have thought this a sufficient punishment for the prate of a forward boy, but Stewart (the prosecuting Lord Advocate), as cruel as he was, base called for blood.

The Lord Advocate exerted all his subtlety. The poor youth, at the bar, had no counsel. He was altogether unable to do justice to his own cause. He was convicted and sentenced to be hanged at the foot of the gallows. It was in vain that he with tears abjured his errors and begged piteously for mercy. He petitioned the Privy Council that, if his life could not be spared, he might be allowed a short respite to make his peace with God. It remained to be seen how the ((Presbyterian) clergy of Edinburgh would act. That divines should be deaf to the entreaties of a penitent who asks, not for pardon, but for a little more time to receive their instructions and to pray to heaven for the mercy which cannot be extended to him on earth, seems almost incredible. Yet so it was. The (Presbyterian) ministers, not only demanded the poor boy's death, but his speedy death, though it should be his eternal death. Even from their pulpits they cried out for cutting him off.

Aikenhead was hanged between Edinburgh and Leith (Jan. 9th, 1692.) The preachers, who were the boy's murderers, crowded round him at the gallows, and while he was struggling in the last agony, insulted heaven with prayers more blasphemous than anything that he had uttered. Wodrow has told no blacker story of Dundee. All this happened in the ninth year of the reign of the glorious and immortal William of Orange. The Covenanters had gained the upper hand over the Catholic Church of Rome, and the Episcopal Church of England and this *Reign of Terror* was the im-