

The first booke contayning the 300. yeares next after Christ.



Hese things before premised, hauing thus hitherto prepared way vnto our story, let vs nowe (by the grace and speeche of Christ our Lord) enter into the matter: as we haue heretofore set forth in a generall description the whole state as wel of the primitive as of the latter times of this Church of Rome: now consequently to discourse in particular for the Actes and doings of euery age, by it selfe, in such order as is afore prescribed.

1. First, to declare of the suffering time of the Church, which conteineth about the time of three hundred yeares after Christ.
2. Secondly, the flourishing & growing time of the same: conteyning other 300. yeares.
3. Thirdly the declining time of the Church, and of true Religion, other 300. yeares.
4. Fourthly, of the time of Antichrist, raigning & raging in the Church, since the losing of Sathan.
5. Lastly, of the reforming time of Christs Church in these latter 300. yeares.

In the tractation of all which things our chiefe purpose and induer shall be (so neare as the Lord will giue vs grace) not so much to intermedle with outward affaires of Princes, or matters ciuile. Except somtime for example of life as specially minding (by the helpe of the Lord) to prosecute such things, which to the Ecclesiasticall state of the Church are appertaining: as first to entreat of the establishing of Christian faith, then of the persecutions of tyrants, the constancy and patience of Gods Saintes, the first connexion of Christian Realmes to the faith of Christ namely of this Realme of England & Scotland: first beginning with king Lucius, and so forwarde following the order of our English kings here in this land, to declare the maintenance of true doctrine, the false practise of Heresies, the creeping in of superstition, and hypocrisie, the manifold assaultes, warres and tumults of the princes of this world, against the people of God, wherein may appeare the wonderfull operation of Christs mightie hand, euer working in his church, & neuer ceasing to defend the same against his enemies, according to the verity of his owne word, promising to be with his Church while the worlde shall stand, so as by the proces of this story may wel be proved, and be testified in the sequell thereof.

In the tractation of all which things 2. especiall pointes I chiefly commend to the reader, as most requisite and necessary of euery Christian man to obserue & to note for his owne experience and proficte, as first the disposition & nature of this worlde: secondly the nature & condition of the kingdome of Christ, the vanitie of the one, and stablishment of the other: The vnysperous and vnquiet state of the one, ruled by mans violence & wisdom: And the happy successe of the other euer ruled by Gods blessing & providence. The wrath and reuenging hand of god in the one and his mercy vpon the other. The world I call all such as be without or against Christ, whether by ignorance not knowing him, or by heathenish life not following him, or by violence resisting him. On the other side the kingdome of Christ in this world I take to be all them which belong to the faith of Christ, & here take his part in this world against the world. The number of whom although it be much smaller then the other and alwaies lightly is hated & molested of the world, yet it is the number, which the Lord peculiarly doth blest and prosper, and euer will. And this number of Christs subiects is it, which we call the visible Church here in earth, which visible Church hauing in it selfe a difference of 2. sorts of people, so is it to be diuided in two parts, of which the one standeth of such as be of outward profession onely, the other which by election inwardly are ioyned to Christ, the first in wordes & lips seemeth to honor Christ, and are in the visible Church onely, but not in the Church inuisible, & partakerh the outward Sacraments of Christ, but not the inward blessing of Christ: the other are both in the visible & also in the inuisible Church of Christ, which not in wordes onely and outward profession, but also in hart doe truly serue & honour Christ, partaking not onely the Sacramentes, but also the heauenly blessings and grace of Christ.

And many times it happeneth, that as betweene the world, and the kingdome of Christ there is a continual repugnance: so betweene these two partes of this visible

Church aforesaid, oft times groweth great variance and mortal persecution, insomuch that sometime y true church of Christ hath no greater enemies, than of their owne profession and company, as happened not onely in the time of Christ, and his Apostles, but also from time to time almost continually, Euseb. Lib. 8. cap. 1. But especially in these latter daies of the Church vnder the persecution of Antichrist and his retinue, as by the reading of this volume more manifestly hereafter may appeare.

At the first preaching of Christ, and coming of the Gospell: who should rather haue knowne & receaued him, then the Phariseis and Scribes of that people, which had his law? And yet who persecuted and reiecte him more, then they themselves? What followed? They in refusing Christ to be their king, and chosing rather to be subiect vnto Caesar, were by the layde their owne Caesar at length destroyed: when as Christs subiectes the same time escaped the daunger, where by it is to be leaured, what a dangerous thing it is to refuse the Gospell of God, when it is so greatly offered.

The like example of Gods wrathful punishment is to be denoted no lesse in the Romanes also themselves. For when Tiberius Caesar, hauing receaued by letters from Pontius Pilate, of the doings of Christ, of his miracles, resurrection, and ascension into heauen, & how he was receiued as God of many, was himselfe also moued with helief of the same, and did confesse thereof with the whole Senate of Rome, to haue Christ adored as god: but they not agreeing therunto refused him, because that contrary to the law of the Romanes, he was consecrated, (and they) for God, before the Senate of Rome had so decreed & approued him. Et Tertul. Apol. cap. 5. Thus the vaine Senate following rather the law of man, then of God, & which were contented with the Emperour to reigne ouer them, were not contented with the meeke king of glory the sonne of God to be their king. And therefore after much like sort to y Jewes were scourged and intrapped for their vnwill refusing, by the same way which they themselves did preferre. For as they preferred the Emperour, and reiecte Christ, so the iust permission of God, did strike by their owne Emperours against them in such sort, that both the Senatours themselves were almost all denoued, & the whole Citie most horrible afflicted the space almost of 300. yeares together. For first the same Tiberius, which for a great part of his reigne was a moderate and a tollerable Prince, afterward was to them a sharpe and heauy tyrant, who neither fauoured his owne mother, nor spared his owne newnes, nor the Princes of the Citie, such as were his owne counsellors, of whom to y number of xx. he left not past two or three aliue, & so cruell was he to the Citie, that as the story recordeth: Nullus a pœna hominum cessabat dies, ne religiosus quidem ac sacer. Suet. reporteth him to be so sterne of nature and tirannical, that in time of his reigne, very many were accused and condemned with their wiues & children, Maydes also first deflowred, then put to death. In one day he recordeth xx. persons to be drawen to y place of execution. By whom also, through the iust punishment of God Pilate vnder whom Christ was crucified, was apprehended and accused at Rome, deposed, then banished to the towne of Lyon, and at length did slaye himselfe. Neither did Herode and Cayphas long escape, of whome more followeth hereafter. Agrippa also by him was cast vnto prison, albeit afterward he was released. In y raigne of Tiberius the Lord Jesus the sonne of God, in the xxxiii. yeare of his age, which was the xxv. of this Emperour by the malice of the Jewes, suffered his blessed passion for the conquering of sinne, death, and Sathan the Prince of this world, and toke againe the third day. After whose blessed passion & resurrection, this folesayde Tiberius Nero (otherwise called) Tiberius Nero, lined by. yeares, during which time no persecution was yet stirring in Rome against the Christians, through y commaundement of the Emperour.

In the raigne also of this Emperour, and yeare which was the next after the passion of our Saniour, or somewhat more, S. Paul was conuerted to the faith. After the death of Tiberius: whē he had raigned 23. yeares, succeded C. Caesar Caligula, Claudius Nero, and Domitius Nero: which 3. were likewise such scourges to the Senate and people of Rome that the first not onely toke other mens wiues violently from them, but also deflowred three of his owne sisters, and afterward banished them. So wicked he was that he commaunded himselfe to be worshipped as God, and temples to be erected in his name, and vled to sit in the temple among the Gods, requiring his images to be set by in all temples, and also in the temple of Jerusalem whiche caused great turbauance among the Jewes, and then began the abhominacion of desolation to be set by in y holy place, spoken

Euseb. Lib. 1. cap. 1.

Gods punishment for refusing the Gospell.

Tiberius Caesar moueth the Senate to haue Christ receaued. Christ refused of the Senate of Rome.

The vayne cause why the Senate of Rome refused Christ. Tertul. Apol. cap. 5. Euseb. lib. 2. cap. 3. The Senate and Citie of Rome plagued for refusing of Christ.

Ex Suet. in vita Tiberii.

Christ suffereth and sleth awayne.

An. 34. Saint Paul conuerted. An. 35. An. 39. Caesar Caligula.

Caligula commaunded his image to be set vp in the Temple of Hierusalem.

Two things in this history chiefly to be noted.

The world.

The kingdome of Christ in this world.

The visible Church.

The Church of Christ diuided in two sortes of people.