

Difference about the ceremony of Easter.

of certaine holy Martyrs, as is aboue declared, vnto his Church. In the which tyme of tranquillitie, the Christians hauing now some lasure from the Ioyaine enemy, began to haue a little contention among themselues, about the ceremony of Easter: which contention albeir of long time before had bene stirring in the church as is before mentioned of Polycarpus and Anicetus: yet the variance and difference of that ceremony brought no breach of Christian concord and societie among them: neither as yet did the matter exceede so farre, but that the band of loue, and communion of brotherly life continued, although they differed in the ceremony of the day. For they of the west Church pretending the tradition of Saule and Peter, but in deede beyng the tradition of Hermes and of Pius, kept one day, which was vpon the Sunday after the 14. day of the first moneth. The Church of Asia following the ordinance of Iohn the Apostle, obserued an other, as more shalbe declared (the Lord willing) when we come to the tyme of Victor Bishop of Rome. In the meane tyme as concerning the fourth persecution, let this hetherto suffice.

The fift Persecution.

After the death of Commodus, raigned Pertinax but few monthes, after whom succeeded Seuerus. Under whom was raised the fift persecution against the christian faith: who raigned the terme of 18. yeares, the first 5. yeares of the same, was very fauourable and courteous to the Christians. Afterward through sinister suggestions and malicious accusations of the malignant, was incensed against them, that by Proclamations he commaunded no Christians any more to be suffered. Thus the rage of the Emperour beyng inflamed agaynst them, great persecution was started vpon euery side, whereby an infinite number of Martyrs were slayne, as Eusebius in his first booke recordeth, which was about the yeare of our Lord, 205. The crimes and false accusations objected against the Christians, are partly touched before, pag. 46. as sedition and rebellion against the Emperour, sacrilege, murthering of Infants, incestuous pollution, eating rawe flesh, libidinous concupiscence, wherof terraine in deede called then Gnostici, were infamed. Item, it was objected against them, for worshipping the head of an Ass, which wherof it should rite, I finde no certain cause, except it were perhaps by Jewes. Also they were charged for worshipping the sunne, for that peraduenture before the same rite, they conuented together singing their morning hymnes vnto the Lord, or els because they prayed toward the East: but especially for that they would not wish them worship their idolatrous gods and were counted as enemies to all men, &c.

The Captaines and Presidents of this persecution vnder the Emperour were Hilarianus, Vigellius, Claudius, Hermianus Ruler of Cappadocia, Cecilius, Capella, Vesprius, also Demetrius mentioned of Cyprian. And Aquila Judge of Alexandria, of whom Euseb. Lib. 6. cap. 5. maketh relation.

The places where the force of this persecution most raged, were Aethiopia, Alexandria, Cappadocia, and Carthage.

The number of them that suffered in this persecution, by the report of the Ecclesiasticall story was unnumerable. Of who the first was Leonides, the father of Origene, who was beheaded: with who also Origene his sonne, beyng of the age the of 17. yeares, should haue suffered (such a feruent desire hee had to be Martyred for Christ) had not his mother pryncipally in the night season conuicid away his clothes & his shirt, wherupon more for shame to be seen, then for feare to die, he was constrained to remaine at home: and when he could do nothing els, yet he writing to his father a letter to this effect: Cane tibi, ne quid propter nos aliud quam martyrii constanter sciendi propositum cogites, that is, Take heede to your selfe, that you tourne not your thought and purpose for our sake, &c. Such a feruency had this Origene being yet young, to the doctrine of Christs faith, by the operation of Gods heavenly providence, and partly also by the diligent education of his father, who brought him vp from his youth most studiously in all good literature, but especially in y reading & exercise of holy scripture, wherem he had such inward & mystical speculation, that many times he would moue questions to his father, of the meaning of this place, or y place in y scripture. Inasmuch y his father diuers times would vncouer his best being a sleepe, & kille it, giuing thanks to God which had made him so happy a father of such a happy child. After the death of his father, and all his goods confiscated to the Emperour, he with his poor mother, and sixe brethren, beyng brought to such extreme poverty, did sustaine both himself and them by teaching a scholl. And at length beyng wearie

of y profession, he transferred his study onely to the knowledge and seeking of diuine Scripture, & such other learning conduicible to the same. So much he profited both in the Hebrew and other tongues, that he conuerted y Hebrew text with the translation of the Ixx. And moreover did conuerse and find out the other translations which we call the common translation of Aquila, of Symmachus, and Theodotion. Also he adioyned to these aforesaid other four translations, wherof more is in the story of Eusebius expressed.

They that write of the life of Origene, testify of him that he was of wit quicke and sharpe, much patient of labour, a great traueiler in the tongues; of a spare dyet, of a straight life, a great faste, his teaching & his liuing were both one: his going was much barefoot. A straight obseruer of that saying of the Lord, bydding to haue but one coate, &c. he is said to haue written so much as seuen Notaries, & so many maades euery day could penne. The number of his bookes by the accept of Hierome, came to 7000. Volumes, y copies wherof he used to sel for 3. d. or a little more, for the sustentation of his liuing. But of hym more shalbe touched hereafter. So zelous he was in the cause of Christ, and of Christs Martyrs, that he nothing fearyng his owne perill would assist & exhort them going to their death, & kille them, inasmuch that he was oft in copertie to be stoned of the multitude. And sometimes by the prouision of Christen men had his house garded about with souldiers, for the safety of them, which daily resorted to heare his readings; & many times he was compelled to these places & houses, for such as laid waite for him in all places, But such was the prouidence of God to preserve him in the middelt of all this tempest of Seuerus. Among other which resorted vnto him, & were his hearers, Plutarchus, was one, and died a martyr, & with him Serenus his brother who was burned. The third after theie was Heraclides, the fourth Heron, who were both beheaded. The fifth was an other Serenus also beheaded, Rhais, and Potamiena, who was tormented with pitch poured vpon her, & martyred with her mother, Marcella, who died also in the tyme. This Potamiena was of a fresh and flourishing beauty; who because she could not be removed from her profession, was committed to Basilides one of the Captaines there in the armie, to see the execution done; Basilides receyuing her at the Judges hand, & leading her to the place, shewed to her some compassion in repelling the rebukes and raylings of the wicked aduerariers: for the which Potamiena, the virgine, to requite againe his kindness, bad him see of good comfort, saying that she would pray y Lord to shewe mercy vpon him. And so went she to her Martyrdom, which she both strongly and quietly did sustaine.

Not long after it happened that Basilides was required to giue an other in a matter concerning his fellowes scholers: which thing he denie to doe, plainly affirming y he was a Christian. For their other then, was wont to be by the Idoles & the Emperour. At the first he was thought dissimulingly to iest; but after whē he was heard constantly, & in earnest to confirme the same, he was had before the iudge, and so by him committed to ward. The Christians maruiling thereat, as they came to him in the prison inquired of him the cause of that his sodaine conuersion. To whom he answered againe and saide, that Potamiena had praied for him to the Lord, & so he saw a crowne put vpon his head: adding moreover that it should not be long, but he should be receiued. which things thus done, y next day following, he was had to the place of execution, and there beheaded. Euseb. Lib. 6. cap. 5. Albeit the said Eusebius, giueth this story of no credit, but onely of heart say, as he there expresseth.

As diuers and many there were that suffered in the daies of this Seuerus: so some were againe which through the protection of God his prouidence, being put to great torments, yet escaped w life. Of whom was one Alexander, who for his constant confession and torments suffered, was made Bishop afterwarde of Hierusalem; together with Narcissus, who being then an olde man of an hundred and threescore yeares and thre, as sayeth Eusebius, was vniuersally for his age to gouerne that function alone.

Of this Narcissus is reported in the Ecclesiasticall historie, that certaine miracles by him were wrought verie notable, if they be true. First of water by him turned into oyle at the solempne vigile of Easter, what time the congregation wanted oyle for their lampes. Another miracle is also told of him, which is this. There were thre euill disposed perious, who seeing the foundines & graue constancy of his vertuous life, & fearyng their owne punishment, as a conscience that is guiltie, is alwaies fearful, thought to preuent his accusations, in accusing him first, & laying an haynous crime to his charge. And to make their accusation more

Seuerus Emperour. Anno. 195.

The 5. persecution. Ex Euseb. Lib. 6. cap. 2. Anno. 205. The false accusations agaynst the Christians.

The captaines and ministers of this persecution. Ex Tertul. ad Scaphulum.

Leonides father of Origene Martyr.

Origene kept from Martyrdom by his mother.

Origene Comended. Ex Euseb. Lib. 6. cap. 3.

Ex Euseb. Anno. Symone. 14. C. c.

Plutarchus scholler of Origene, and Serenus his brother Martyred. Heraclides, Heron, Rhais, Potamiena, Marcella, the scholler of Origene and Martyrs.

Basilides of a persecution made a martyr.

Ex Euseb. Lib. 6. ca. 5.

Alexander confessor and Bishop of Hierusalem. The notable age of Narcissus Bishop of Hierusalem.

A miracle of water turned into oyle. Ex Euseb. Lib. 6. Ca. 9.