

man in this world, how singular to euer he be (Christ onely excepted) but some blenithe or other toyneth him selfe withall, where of more perchance shall be sayd when we come to Cyprian.

And now to returne agayne to the order of bishops of Rome incuncted: after Eleutherius afore mentioned, next in the bishopprie of Rome succeeded Victor, who as Platina sayth, died quietly in the dayes of Seuerus. But Damafus Supplementum, Lib. 8. and such as follow the common Chroniques, affirme that he died a Martyr, after he had lived x. or as some say xij. yeares. This Victor was a great byrre (as partly before is signified) in the controuersie and contention of Easterday, for the which he would haue proceeded in excommunication against the churches of Asia, had not Irenaeus then bishop of Lyons, with the counsaile of other his brethren there assembled, repressed his intended violence. As touching that controuersie of Easter in those daies of the primitive Church, the original thereof was this, as Eusebius, Socrates, Platina, and other record. First, certain it is, that the Apostles onely being intentiue and attendaunt to the doctrine of saluation, gaue no heed nor regard to the obseruation of dayes & times, neither bound the Church to any ceremonies and rites, except those things necessary mentioned in the Actes of the Apostles, as strangled and blood; which was ordayned then of the holy Ghost, notwithstanding a most urgent and necessary cause, touched partly in y^e history before. For when the murdering and blood of Infants was commonly obieced by the Heathen persecutors agaynst the Christians, they had no other argument to help themselves, nor to retell the aduersarie, but only their own law; by the which they were commaunded to abstaine not onely from all mens blood, but also from the blood of all comon beastes. And therefore that law seemeth by the holy Ghost to be geuen, & also to the same end & continued in the Church, so long as the cause, that is the persecutions of the Heathen Christians continued. Beside these we read of no other ceremonies or rites, which the Apostles greatly regarded, but left such things free to the libertie of Christians, euer y^e man to vse therein his own discretion, for the using or not using thereof. Whereupon, as concerning all the ceremoniall obseruations of dayes, tymes, places, meates, drinks, vestures, and such other; of all these things neither was the diuersitie among men greatly noted, nor any vniformitie greatly required. In so much, that Irenaeus writing to Victor of the tradition of dayes, and of fasting, and of the diuersitie of these things then used among y^e primitive fathers, sayth: Nihilominus omnes illi pacem inter se retinuerunt, & retinemus etiam nū; & ieiunij dissonantia, fidei concordiam commendat, &c. That is, notwithstanding all this varietie, all they kept peace among themselves, & yet we keepe it still; and this difference of fasting among vs, commendeth more the concord of faith. And so long did the doctrine of Christian libertie remaine whole & sounde in the Church till the tyme of Victor, which was about the yeare of our Lord, 200. Although the diuersitie of these vsages, began somethyng before also in the dayes of Pius and Anicetus, about the yere of our Lord, 163, to be mistakid: yet restraime hereof was not so much vrged before, as in y^e tyme of Victor. And yet neither did the violence of Victor take such place, but that the doctrine of Christian libertie was defended and maintained by meanes of Irenaeus and other, and so continued in the Church till after the Councell of Nice. And thus much concerning the doctrine of Christian libertie of the differences of rites and ceremonies.

Now to returne to Victor agayne, to shew what diuersitie there was in obseruing the day of Easter, and how it came, thus is the story: First, in the tyme of Pius and Anicetus, an. 163, the questio of Easter day began first to be moued; at what tyme Pius, by the reuelation of Hermes, decreed the obseruatio of that day to be chaunged from the wonted manner of the 14. day of the moone in the first moneth, vnto the next Sunday after. After him came Anicetus, Soter, and Eleutherius Bishops of Rome, which also determined the same. Agaynst these thode Melito Bishop of Sardis, Polycarpus, and as some thinke, Egesippus, with other learned men of Asia which Polycarpus being sent by the brethren of Asia, came to Rome as is aforesayd, to conferre with Anicetus in that matter: wherein when they could not agree after long debating, yet notwithstanding, they did both communicate together with reuerence, & departed in peace. And so the celebration of Easterday remained Adiaiphoron, as a thing indifferent in the Church, till the tyme of Victor, who following after Anicetus and hys fellowes, and chiefly stirring in this matter, endeuoured by all meanes and might, to draw, or rather subdue the Churches of Asia vnto hys opinion, thinking moreouer to excommunicate all those Bishops and churches of Asia, as heretickes and schisma-

tickes, which disagreed from the Romaine order, had not Irenaeus otherwise restrayned him from that doynge, as is aforesayd, which was about the yeare of our Lord, 191. in the reigne of Commodus. Thus then began the vniformitie of keeping that holy day to be first required, as a thing necessary; & all they accompted as heretickes and schismatickes, which dissentid from y^e Bishop & tradition of Rome.

With Victor thode Theophilus Bishop of Cefarea, Narcissus of Hierusalem, Irenaeus of Lyons, Palmas of Rhodus, Banchillus of Corinth, the Bishop of Hierocia, and other moe. All which condescende to haue the celebration of Easter vpon the Sunday, because they would differ fro the Jewes in all things, as neare as they might, and partly because the resurrection of the Lord fell on the same day.

On the contrary side diuers Bishops were in Asia, of whom the principall was Policrates Bishop of Ephesus; who being assembled with a great multitude of Bishops and brethren of those parties, by the common assent of the rest, wrote agayne to Victor, and to the Church of Rome, declaring, that they had euer from the begynning obserued that day, according to the rule of Scripture vnbaundered, neither adding nor altering any thing fro the same. Alledging moreouer for them the examplis of the Apostles and holy fathers their predecessors, as Phillip the Apostle, with hys three daughters at Hierapolis; also John the Apostle and Euangelist at Ephesus, Polycarpus at Smyrna Thraseas at Eumonia, Bishoppes and Martyrs, Iphigenia of Sagaris at Laodicea Bishop and Martyr, Holy Papyrius, and Melito at Sardis. Beside these bishops also of his own kinde, and his owne successores, to the number of seuen which all were bishops before him, & he the eight now after them. All which obserued (saith he) the solemnitie of the same day, after the same wise and sort as we do now.

Victor being not a litle moued herewith, by letters agayne denounceth agaynst them (more bold vpon authority, then wise in his communication) violent excommunication, Albert by the wise handling of Irenaeus, and other learned men, that matter was staid, and Victor otherwise perswaded. What the persuasions of Irenaeus were, partly may appear in Euseb. Lib. 5. cap. 26. the summe whereof tendeth to this effect: That the variance and difference of ceremonies is no straunge matter in the Church of Christ, when as this varietie is not onely in the day of Easter, but also in the manner of fasting, & in diuers other vsages among the Christians. For some fast one day, some two days, some other fast moe. Other there be, which counting xl. houres, both day & night, take that for a full dayes fast. And this so diuers fashion of fasting in the church of Christ, began not onely in this our tyme, but was before among our forefathers. And yet notwithstanding they with all this diuersitie, were in vnitie among themselves, and so be we; neither doth this difference of ceremonies any thing hinder, but rather commendeth the concord of faith. And bringeth forth the examplis of the fathers of Telephorus, Pius, Anicetus, Soter, Eleutherius, and such other, who neither obserued the same vsage themselves, neither prescribed it to others; and yet notwithstanding kept Christian charitie with such as came to communicate with them, not obseruing the same forme of things which they obserued, as well appeared by Polycarpus and Anicetus; which although they agreed not in one vniforme custome of rites, yet refused not to communicate together, the one geuing reuerence vnto the other. Thus the controuersie being taken by betwene Irenaeus & Victor, remained free to the tyme of Nicene Councell. Hæc ex Iren. Eusebius. And thus much concerning the controuersie of that matter, and concerning the doings of Victor.

After Victor, succeeded in the see of Rome Zephyrinus, in the dayes of the foresayd Seuerus, about the yeare of our Lord, 203. To this Zephyrinus be ascribed two Epistles, in the first Tome of the Councils. But as I haue sayd before of the decretall Epistles of other Romaine Bishops: so I say and verily suppose of this, that neither the countenance of the stile, nor the matter therein contained, nor the condition of the tyme, doth otherwile giue to thinke of these letters, but that they be verily bassard letters, not written by these fathers, nor in these tymes; but craftily and wickedly pac in by some, which to ser by y^e primacie of Rome, haue most pestilently abused the authority of these holy & ancient fathers, to deceaue the simple Church. For who is so rude, but that in considering onely the state of those terrible tymes, may easily vnderstand except affectio blind him, beside a number of other probable coniectures to lead him, that the poore persecuted bishops in that tyme, would haue bene glad to haue any safe couert to put their heades in: so far was it ff, that they had any lust or laiture, the to seeke for any Primacie or Patriarckship, or to daine all other churches to appeale to the see of Rome, or to exempt all

Victor Bishop of Rome. Victor reported of some to dye a Martyr.

The cause discussed why the holy Ghost forbade blood and strangled in the primitive Church.

Ex Euseb. lib. 5. Cap. 26. The doctrine of Christian libertie in outward vsages.

{ Anno. } 200.

Ex Euseb. Lib. 4. Cap. 26. Polycarpus and Anicetus disagreeing in controuersie, yet agreed in charitie.

Vniformitie in ceremonies not to be required as a thing necessary.

Policrates Bishop of Ephesus.

Bishop in those dayes martyred.

Victor excommunicating the Churches of Asia.

Irenaeus to Victor.

Diuersitie commendeth the concord of faith.

Zephyrinus Bishop of Rome.

The Epistle and ordinances of Zephyrinus suspected to be counter-jfet.