

ned in their old houses, had large and great churches, new builded from the foundation, for them to frequent together. In such increament (saith Eusebius) by processe of tyme did the church of christ grow and shoute vp daily more and more, profiting and spreading through all quarters, which neither came of men could miringe, nor any deuill could inchaunte, neither the castric policie of mans wit could supplant, so long as the protection of God his beaunitie came went with his people, keeping them in good order, according to the rule of christian life.

But as commonly the nature of al men being of it selfe unruly and vntowarde, alwaies seeketh & desireth prosperitie, and yet can neuer wel vie prosperitie, alwaies would haue peace, and yet hauing peace, alwaies abuseth y same: so here likewise it happened with these me, which through this to great libertie & prosperitie of life began to degenerate & languishe vnto idleness & delycacy, & one to worke spite and contumely against an other, struing and contending among themselves for every occasiõ, with railing wordes after most despightfull manner: bishops against bishops, and people against people, mouing hatred and seditiõ one against an other, besides also cursed hypocritie and simulation with all extremitye increasing more and more, by reason wherof the iudgement of god after his wonted maner, (whilst yet the congregatiõ began to multiply) began by a litle and litle to visite our men with persecution, falling first vpon our brethren which were abroad in warfare, but wher they toucht y other nothing of very litle, neither did they seeke to appeale gods wrath, & call for his mercy, but wickedly thinking with our selues, that god neither regarded nor would visite our transgressions, we heaped our iniquities daily more and more one vpon an other, & they which seemed to be our pastors refusing the rule of piety, were inflamed with mutual contentions one against an other, and thus whilst they were giuen onely to the studie of contentions, theatings, emulations, mutual hatred, & discord, every man seeking his owne ambition, and persecuting one another after the maner of tirany: Then, then, I say, the Lord according to the voice of Ieremye toke awaye the beauty of the daughter of Sion, & the glory of Israell, fell downe from heauen, neither did he remember the footstole of his secte in the day of his wrath. And the Lord returned all y comely ornaments of Israell, & destroyed all her gorgeous buildings, and according to the saying of the psalme, subuerted and extinguished the Testament of his seruant, and prophaned his sanctuary in destruction of his churches, and in laying wast the buildinges thereof so that all passages spoiling the multitude of the people, they were made an obloquie to al the dwellers about. For he hath exalted the strength of his enemies, and turned awaye the helpe of his sword from her, nor ayded her in the battayle, but ceased from the purging of her and her seate. He strooke downe to the ground and deminished her daies and ouer all this poured vpon her confusion. All these things were fulfilled vpon vs, when we saw the temples rased from the top to the ground, and the sacred scriptures to be burnt in the open market place, and the passours of the church to hide themselves, some here, some there, some other taken prisoners with great shame, were mocked of their enemies, wher also according to the saying of the prophet in another place: Contempt was poured out vpon the princes, and they caused to goe out of the waye, and not to keepe the strait path.

The x. Persecution.

BY reason wherof (the wrath of God being kindled against his church) ensued the tenth and last persecution against the christians, so horrible and greuous, that maketh the pen almost to tremble to writ vpon it, so tedious that neuer was any persecution before or since comparable to it for the tyme it continued, lasting the space of tenne yeares together. This persecution although it passed through the handes of diuers tyrantes and workes more than one or two, yet principally it beareth the name of Dioclesian who was Emperour as is aboue noted, next after Carus & Numerianus. Thys Dioclesian euer haung an ambitious minde, aspirid greatly to be Emperour. To whom Drusus his Concubine had, that first he should kill a wilde Boare before he should be Emperour. Hee taking effect at these wordes, vled much with handes to kill wilde Boares: but seeing no successe to come thereof, vled this prouerbe: Ego Apros occido, alius pulpamento fruitor, that is, I kill the Boares, but other doe eat the fleshe. At length the sayde Dioclesian being nominate to be Emperour, and seeing Aper (who had killed Numerianus the Emperour) standing thereby sware, to the souldiers that Numerianus, was

wrongfully killed, and forthwith turning vpon Aper with his sword, slew him. Vopisc. After this he being established in the Empire, and seeing on every side diuers and sundrie edmonitions rising vp against him, which he was not well able himselfe to sustaine, in the first beginning of his reign he chuleth for his Colledge Maximianus suruained Hercules, y father of Maxentius, which two Emperours, because of diuers warres that rose in manye prouinces, chose to the two other noble men, Galerius, & Constantinus, whom they called Cæsars. Of whom Galerius was sent into the East partes against the p̄terians. Constantinus was sent ouer to Britannie to his our country of England, to recouer the tribute, where he toke to wife Helena the daughter of king Coil, which was a maiden excelling in beautye, and no lesse famously brought vp in the study of learning, of whom was borne Constantinus the great.

All this while hitherto no persecution was yet stirred of these 4. princes against the church of Christ, but quietlye and moderately they gouerned the common wealth, wherfore accordingly God prospered their doings and affaires, and gaue them great victories, Dioclesian in Egypt, Maximian in Aphyricke and in Fraunce, Galerius in p̄teria, Constantinus in England and in Fraunce also. By reason of which victories Dioclesian and Maximian putte vpon pride, ordeyned a solenne triumph at Rome, after which triumph Dioclesian gaue commaundement that he would be worshipped as God, saying, that he was brother to the Sunne and Moone, and adourning his shooes with golde and precious stones commaunded the people to kysse his feete.

And not long after by the iudgement of God, for certayne enormities vled in the church, about touched, began the great and greuous persecution of the Christians, induced by the raging cruelty of Dioclesian, which was about the nyuenth yeare of his rayne, who in the Moneth of Marche when the feast of Easter was nye at hande, commaunded all the churches of the Christians to be spoiled and cast to the earth, and the bookes of holy scripture to be burnt.

Thys most violent edictes and proclamations were set forth, for the overthrowing as is saide, of the Christians temples throughout all the Romane Empire. Whether did there want in the officers any cruell execution of the same proclamations. For their temples were defaced euen when they celebrated the feast of Easter. Euseb. lib. 8. cap. 2. And this was the first edicte giuen out by Dioclesian, the next proclamation that came forth, was for the burning of the bookes of the holy scripture, which thynge was done in the open market place as before: then next vnto that were edictes giuen forth for the displacing of such as were Magistrates, and that with a great ignominie, & al other whatsoeuer bare anye office. Impysoning suche as were of the common sorte, if they would not aduise Chistianitie, and subscribe to the heathen religion. Euseb. lib. 8. cap. 3. & Nicephorus lib. 7. cap. 4. Zonas also in his seconde tome. And these were the beginning of the Chistians cruells.

It was not long after but that new edictes were sent forth, nothing for their crueltye inferior to the first: for the casting of the eldes and bishops into prisõ, and then constraining them with sundry kindes of punishments to offer vnto their Idoles. By reason wherof ensued a great persecutiõ amongst the gouernours of the church, amongst whom manye fiod manfully, passing through manye exceeding bitter tormentes, neither were ouercome therewith, being tormented and examined diuers of them diuerslye, some scourged, all their bodies ouer with whips & scourges, some with racks, rasings of y flesh intolerable were cruciated: some one way, some another way put to death. Some againe violently were dratwn to the vnpure sacrifice, and as though they had sacrificed, when in deede they did not, were let go. Other some neither committing at al to their altars, nor touching anye peece of their sacrifices, yet were borne in hand of the that stood by, that they had sacrificed, & so suffering that false iustification of their crimes, quietly went away. Other as dead men were caried and cast away, being but halfe dead. Some they cast down vpon the pavement, and traiding them a great space by the legs, made the people beleue that they had sacrificed. Furthermore other there were which stoutly withstood them, affirming with a loud voice that they had done no such sacrifice. Of whom some saide they were Chistians, & gloried in the profession of that name: some cryed saying, that neither they had, nor would enter be partakers of that idolatry. And those being buffeted on the face & mouth with the handes of the souldiers, were made to hold their peace, and to thrust out with violence. And if the Saints did seeme neuer so litle to doe, what the enunies would haue

Corruption through much peace and prosperitie crept into the Church.

Hatred and disdayne among the Church men.

Christians persecuting one another.

The wrath of God toward hys people.

The tenth persecution.

Dioclesian Emperour.

Emp. Vopisc.

Aper layne which slew Numerianus.

Anno 290.

Maximianus, Hercules fellow Emperour with Dioclesian.

Galerius, Constantinus, Cæsars vnder Dioclesian and Maximian.

Helena daughter of Coil, married to Constantinus.

Pride in Dioclesian.

Cruelly followed with pride. Anno 308. Persecution against the christians.

Christian temples destroyed. Euseb. lib. 8. cap. 2.

Bookes of the scriptures burned.

Christian Magistrates displaced.

Christian sacrifices imprisoned. Euseb. lib. 8. c. 3. Nicephorus lib. 7. cap. 4.

Zonas. tom. 2.

Bishops and Elders constrained with tormentes to sacrifice.