

joyced thereat, for that they haue bene counted worthy to suffer for the Lord their God. The extreme necessitie of death cannot moue vs agaynst your maiety, neyther yet any despiratiō, O Emperour, which is wont in ventrous affayres to do much, shal arme vs agaynst you. Behold here we cast downe our weapons, and resist not, for that we had rather to be killed, than kill, and guiltles to dye, then guilty to liue. What soeuer more ye will commaund, appoynt and inioyne vs, we are here ready to suffer, yea both fire sword, and whatsoeuer other tormentes. We confesse our selues to be Christians, we cannot persecute Christians, nor will do sacrifice to your deuillish Idols.

With which their aunswer the kyng beyng altogether incensed and moued, commaunded the second tyme the tenth man of them that were left to be in like case murdered. That crueltie also beyng accomplished, at length whē the christyan souldiours would in no wise condescend vnto his wynde, he ier vpon them with his whole host, both foote men and also horsemē, and charged them to kil them all, who with all force ier vpon them, they making no resistance, but thowynge downe their armour, yelded theyr lynes to the persecutoys, and offered to them theyr naked bodics.

Victor at the same tyme was not of that bande, nor yet then any souldiour, but one beyng an old souldioy, and dismissed for his age. At which tyme he coming sodainly vpon them as they were bassetting and making mery with the spoyles of the holy Martyrs, was bidden to sit downe with them: and iust asking the cause of that their so great reioysing, and vnderstanding the truth thereof, detested the gueltes, and refused to care with them. And then being demanded of them whether happily he were a Christian or no: openly confessed and denied not, but that he was a christian, and euer would be. And thereupon they rushing vpon him, killed him, and made him partner of the like Martyrdom and honour.

Beda in his history writeth, that this persecution beyng vnder Dioclesian, endured vnto the seuenth yere of Constantinus, and Euseb Lib 8. cap. 6 sayth, that it lasted vntill the 7. yere of Constantinus. It was not yet one yere from the day in which Dioclesian & Maximianus ioyning themselves together, began their persecution, when that they sawe the number of the Christians rather to increase then to diminish, notwithstanding all the cruelty that euer they couid shew, and now were out of all hope for the viter roryng out of them, which thing was the cause of their fierc enterpryse, and had now enen their fill of blood, and lothed as it were, the shedding thereof, they ceased at the last of theyr owne accord to put any mo christians to death: But yet of a great multitude they did thrust out their right eyes, and mayned their left legs at the hamme with a searing iron, condemning them to the mines of mettals; not so much for the vse of their labour, as for the desire of afflicting them. And this was the clemencie and releafe of the crueltie of those Princes, which sayd that it was not meete that the cities should be defiled with the blood of citizens, and to make the Emperours highnesse to bee defamed with the name of cruelty, but to shew his princely beneficencie and liberallitie to all men. Eusebius, Lib. 8. cap. 10.

When Dioclesianus and Maximianus had reigned together Emperours twenty yeres and one (Nicephorus saith xxii. yeres) at length Dioclesian put himselfe from his imperiall dignitie at Nicomedia, and liued at Salona, Maximianus at Mediolanum, and led both of the a priuate life in the 309. yere after Christ. This strange and meruailous alteration gaue occasion, and so came to passe, that within short space after, there were in the Romaine commō welth many Emperours at one tyme.

In the beginning of this persecution, you heard how Dioclesian beyng made Emperour, tooke to him Maximian. Also how these two gouerning as Emperours together, chose other two Cæsars vnder them, to wit, Galerius Maximinus & Constantius the father of Constantine the great. Thus then Dioclesian raigning with Maximian, in the 19. yere of his raigne, began his furious persecution against the christians, whose raigne after the same continued not long. For so it pleased God to put such a snaffle in the tyrants mouth, that within two yeres after, he caused both him and Maximian (for what cause he knoweth) to geue ouer his Imperiall function, and so to remaine not as emperours any more, but as priuate persones. So that they beyng now displaced and dispossessed, the Imperiall dominion remayned in Constantius & Galerius Maximinus, which two deuided the whole Monarchie betwene them: so that Maximinus should gouerne the East countreys, & Constantius the west partes. But Constantius as a modest Prince, onely contented with the Imperiall title, refused Italy and Apyake, contenting himselfe only with France, Spaine,

and Britaine, wherefore Galerius Maximinus chose to hym his two sonnes Maximinus and Seuerus. Likewise Constantius tooke Constantinus his sonne, Cæsar vnder him. In the meane tyme, while Maximinus with his two Cæsars were in Asia, the Romaine souldiours set vp for their emperour Maxentius the sonne of Maximian, who had before deposed himselfe. Against whom Maximinus the Emperour of the East, sent his sonne Seuerus, with Seuerus which layne in the same voyage of Maxentius. In whose place then Maximinus tooke Licinius. And these were the Emperours and Cæsars, which succeeding after Dioclesian, and Maximian, prosecuted the rest of that persecution, which Dioclesian and Maximian before began, durynge neare the space of seuen or viij. yeres, which was to the yere of our Lord, 318. Sawe onely that Constantius with his sonne Constantinus, was no great doer therein, but rather a maintainer and a supporter of the Christians. which Constantius surnameed Chlorus for his palenetic, was the sonne of Eutropius, a mā of great nobilitie of the Romaine nation, as Lætus ascribed. He came of the tyme of Aeneas and Claudia, the daughter of Claudius Augustus. This man had not the desire of great and mightie dominion, and therefore parted he the Empire with Galerius, and would rule but in France, Britaine, and Spayne, refusing the other kingdomes for the trouble some and difficult gouernment of the same. Wherwife he was a Prince, as Eutropius maketh description of him, very excellent, civill, meeke, gentle, liberall, and desirous to do good vnto those that had any priuate authoritie vnder him. And as Cyrus once sayd, that he gate treasure enough, when he made his friends rich: euen so it is sayd that Constantius would often tymes say, that it were better that his subjects had treasure, than he to haue it in his treasure house. Also he was by nature sufficed with a little, In so much, that he vsed to eate and drinke in earthen vessels (which thing was counted in Agathocles the Sicilian, a great commendation) and if at any tyme came required to garnish his table, he would send for plate and other furniture to his frendes. To these vertues he added yet a more worthy ornament, that is, deuotion, loue, and affection towards the word of God, as Euseb. Lib. 8. cap. 13. affirmeth, after which vertues ensued great peace and tranquillitie in all his Princes: By which worde he being guided, neither leiued any warres contrary to pietie and christyan religion, neither he aided anye other that did the same: neither destroyed he the churches, but commaunded that the christians should be persecuted and defended, and kept them safe from all conuencions iniuries. And when that in the other iurisdictiones of the Empire, the congregations were molested with persecution, as Sozomenus declarcth, Lib. 1. cap. 6. he onely gaue licence vnto the Christians to liue after their accustomed maner. This wonderfull acte of his following, besides other, doth shew that he was a sincere worshipper of the christyan religion.

Those which bare the chiefe offices among the Ethnikes, draue out of the emperours court all the godly Christians: toher vpon this ensued, that the Emperours themselves at the last, were destitute of helpe, when suche were driuen away, which dwelling in their courts, and sayng a godly lyfe, poured out their prayers vnto God for prosperous estate and health both of the Empire & Emperour. Constantius therefore myndynge at a certayne tyme to try what sincere and good Christians he had yet in hys court, called together all hys officers and seruants in the same, sayning himselfe to chuse out such as would do sacrifice to deuils, and that those only should dwell there & keep their offices, and that those which would refuse to doe the same, should be thrust out & banished the court. At this appointment, all the courtiers deuided themselves into companies: The Emperour marked which were the constant & godliest from the rest: And when some sayd that they would willingly do sacrifice, other some openly and boldly denied to do the same: When the Emperour sharply rebuked a those which were so redy to doe sacrifice, & iudged them as false traitors vnto God, accompying them unworthy to bee in his court, which were such traitors to God, and forthwith commaunded that they only should be banished the same. But greatly he commended them, which refused to doe sacrifice and confessed God, affirmynge that they onely were worthy to be about a prince, forthwith commaunding the that thenceforth they should be the trusty counsellors and beseders both of his person & kingdom, sayng thus much more, that they onely were worthy to be in office, whome he might make account of as his assured friends, and that he meant to haue them in more estimation, then the substance he had in his treasure. Eusebius maketh mention hereof in his first booke of the life of Constantius, and also Sozomenus in his 1. booke and 6. chap.

Mauritius and hys company Martyred.

The constant boldnes of Victor in refusing to eat with the cruell persecutoys, for the whiche he was also slayne. Victor Martyr.

The number of the Christians increased for all this persecutiō.

Dioclesian and Maximian were tyred with persecution, and gaue vp their kingdom.

Euseb lib. 8. cap. 10.

An. 309.

The names of the tyrantes. Dioclesian, Maximian Emperours deposed.

Gale Maximinus.

Constantius Emperours.

Maximianus Seuerus.

Constantinus Cæsars

Maxentius, Emperour. Licinius Cæsar.

Anno. 318. The commendation of Constantius.

O happy Constantius.

Euseb. lib. 8. cap. 13. Constantius gracious to the Christians.

Sozomenus lib. cap. 6.

Constantius proueth who were true Christians in hys Court, and who were not.

Ex Euseb. de vita Constant. lib. 1.

Ex Sozomeno lib. cap. 6.

False Christians discerned from true.

Euseb. lib. de vita Constant.