

Maximinus an enemy to the Christians.

With this Constantius was ioynd (as hath bene aforesayd) Galerius Maximinus, a man as Eutropius affirmeth, very cruell and a passing good iouidior: furthermore, a rauiouer of wife and leaured men, of a quiet disposition, not rigorous, but in his dronkenesse, wherof he would ioune after repent him, as Victor writeth. whither he meant Maximinus the father, or Maximinus his sonne, it is vncertaine. But Eusebius saith otherwile describeth the conditions of him in his viii. booke, and first chapter. For he sayth he was of a tyrannicall disposition: The fearefullest man that might be, and curious in all magicall imperfection, in so much that without the diuinations and amowres of diuels he durst do nothing at all, & therefore he gaue great offices and dignities to enchaunters. Furthermore that he was an exactor and extortioner of the Citizens, liberrall to those that were flatterers, gentle to iurifers and riote, a great drinker of wine, and in his furious dronkenesse most like a mad man, a ribaud, an adulterer, which came to no City but he ramlied virgins & defiled mens wines. To conclude he was so great an idolater, that he built vp Temples in every City, and repayed those that were fallen in great decay: and he chose out the most worst of his politicall Magistrates to be the idols priests, and deuised that they should execute that their office with great authority and dignity, and also with warlike pompe. But to Christian pietie and religion he was most incensur, and in the East Churches exercised cruel persecution, and vied as executioners of the same, Persecutus, Quintianus, and Theotechnus beside others.

The wickednes of Maximinus described.

A terrible plague sent by God to Maximinus.

Notwithstanding he was at length reuoked from his cruelty by the iust iudgement and punishment of God. For he was suddenly beped with a fatall disease most filthy and desperate, which disease to describe was very straunge, taking the first beginning in his flesh outwardly, fro thence it proceeded more and more to the inward parts of his body. For in the priuy members of his body ther happened vnto him a suddayne putreficatio, and after in the bottom of the same a botchy corrupt bile, with a Fistula, consuming & eating vp his entrails, out of the which came swarming forth an innumerable multitude of lice, with such a pestiferous stinche that no man coulde abide him, and so muche more, for that all the grossenesse of his body by abouidance of meate before he fell sick, was turned also into a fat: which fat now putrified, and stinking was so vgiome and horrible, that none that came to him coulde abide the sight thereof. By reason wherof, the Physicians which had him in cure, some of the not able to abide the intollerable stinche were commaunded to be slayne. Other some because they could not heale him being so swollen and past hope of cure were also cruelly put to death. At length being put in remembrance that his disease was sent of God, he began to forsethinke the wickednesse that he had done agaynst the fayours of God, and to conuincing agayne to humilite, first consitereth vnto god all his offences, then calling them vnto him which were about him, forthwith commaunded all men, to cease from the persecutions of the Christians. Requiring moreover that they should set by his Impericall proclamations, for the restoring and reedifying of their temples, and that they would obaiyne this of the Christians. Requiring moreover that they should set by his Impericall proclamations, in their assemblies (which without all feare and doubt they might be bolde to make) that they would denoutly pray to the Lord for the Emperour. Then forthwith was the persecution slayed, and the Impericall proclamations in every City were set up, contayning the retraction or countermand of those things which agaynst the Christians were before decreed, the copy wherof ensueth.

Maximinus killeth hys physicians.

Maximinus countermand in the behalfe of the Christians.

Amongst other things which for the benefite and commodity of the common weale we established, we commaunded to reforme all things according to the auncient lawes and publicke discipline of the Romanes, and also to vse this pollicy, that the Christians which had forsaken the religion of their forefathers should be brought agayne to the right way. For such pharisaicall singularity was amongst them, that those things which their elders had received and allowed, they reiected and disallowed, deuising euery man such lawes as they thought good, and obserued the same, assembling in diuers places great multitudes of people.

Therefore when our foresaid decree was proclaymed, many there were that felt the penalty thereof. And because we see yet that there be many which perseuere in the same, which neither geue due worship vnto the Celestiall Gods neither receiue the God of the Christians, we hauing respect to our accustomed benignitie, wherewith we are wont to shew fauour vnto all men, thinke good in this cause also to extend our clemencie, that the Christians may be agayne tollerated, and appoynt them places where againe they may meet together, so that they doe nothing

contrary to publick order and discipline. By an other Epistle we meane to prescribe vnto the iudges, what shall be conuenient for them to do. Wherefore according as this our bountifull clemencie deserueth, let them make intercession to God for our health, common weale, and for themselves, that in all places the state of the common weale may be preferred, and that they themselves may be able safely to liue within their bondes. Euseb. lib. 8. cap. 11. 11mo.

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But one of his inferior officers whose name was also Maximinus, was not well pleased when this countermand was published throughout all Asia, and the Provinces where he had to do. Yet he being qualified by this example that it was not conuenient for him to repugn the pleasure of those Princes which had the chief authority as Constantius and Maximinus, set forth of himselfe no edict touching the same: but commaunded his officers in the presence of others, that they should somewhat stay from the persecution of the Christians: of which commaundement of the inferior Maximinus, each of them gaue intelligence vnto their fellowes by their letters. But Sabinus which then amongst them all, had the chiefest office and dignitie: to the substitutes of euery countrey, wrote by his letters the Emperours pleasure in this wile.

Sabinus in the fauour of the Christians published the decrees.

The maiestie of our most gracious and Soueraigne Lordes the Emperours, hath lately decreed with speciall diligence and deuotio, to induce all men to an vniforme life, so that they which seemed to dissent from the Romaine custome by a strange manner of liuing, shoulde exhibite to the immortal Gods their due and proper worshipping, but the wilfull and obstinate minde of diuers so much, and so continually resisted the same, that by no lawfull means they might be reuoked from their purpose, neither made afraid by any terror or punishment. Because therefore it so came to passe, that by this means many put themselves in perill and ieeperdy: The maiestie of our soueraigne Lordes the Emperours according to their noble pietie, considering that it was far from the meaning of their princely maieties that suche things should be, whereby so many men and muche people should be, destroyed, gaue me in charge that with diligence I should write vnto you, that if any of the Christians from henceforth fortune to be taken in the exercise of their religion, that in no wise you molest the same, neither for that cause you doe iudge any man worthy of punishment: for that in all this time it hath evidently appeared that by no means they might be allured from such wilfulness. It is therefore requisite that your wisdom write vnto the Questors, Captaynes, and Constables of euery City and village, that they may know it not to be lawfull for them, or any of them, to do contrary to the precept of this commaundement, neither that they presume to attempt the same. Euseb. lib. 9. cap. 1.

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The gouernours therefore of euery prouince, supposing this to be the determinate pleasure (and not sayned) of the Emperour, did first aduertise thereof, the rusticall & Pagan multitude: After that they released and set at liberty all suche prisoners as were condemned to the nextall mines, & to perpetuall imprisonment for their faith, thinking thereby (where in deed they were deceived) that the doing thereof would well please the Emperour. This therefore seemed to them as vlooked for, and as light to traouellers in a darcke night. They gather themselves together in every City, they call their Synodes and counsels, & much matnell at the lodden change and alteration. The Iudels themselves extoll the onely and true God of the Christians. The Christians receiue agayne all their former libertie, and such as fell away before in the tyme of persecution, repent themselves and after penance done, they returned agayne to the congregation. Betwixt the Christians reioiced in every City, praying God with hymnes and Psalmes. Eusebius ibidem. This was a maruailous so-daine alteration of the Church, from a most vnbappy state into a better, but scarce suffered Maximinus the Tyrant the same by, monethes vniuolated to continue. For whostinceder seemed to make for the subuersion of the same peace (yet scarcely hatched) that do he onely meditate. And first of all he took from the Christians all libertie and leaue for them to assemble and congregare in churchyardes vnder a certayne coulour. After that he sent certayne Officers vnto the Athenians, to sollicite them agaynst the Christians, and to prouoke them to aske of him as a recompence and great reuward, that he would not suffer any Christian to inhabite in their countrey: and amongst them was one Theotechnus, a most wicked miscreant, an inchaunter, and a most deadly enemy agaynst the Christians. He first made the way whereby the Christians were put out of credit, and accorded to the Emperour, to which fraud also he created a certayne Idol of Iupiter to be worshipped of the inchaunters and coniuers, and mingled the same worship with ceremonies, full of deccurable witchcraft. Lastly, he caused the same Idol to geue this sound out of hys mouth,

Persecution ceaseth for a time.

The Infidels acknowledge the God of the Christians.

One alteration vpon another.

The deuillish practise of Theotechnus.