

token of fortitude, I haue rescued and deliuered our Citie from the yoke of the tyrant. Euseb lib. 9. cap. 9.

By this heauenly victorie of Constantinus, and by the death of Maxentius no little tranquillity came to the church of Christ. Although notwithstanding in the East churches the storme of this tenth persecutio was not yet altogether quiered, but that some taile thereof in those partes remained for the space of ij. or iij. yeare. But of this we minde to speake (Christ willing) hereafter. In the meane season, to retorne againe to the west partes here in Europe, where Constantinus then had most to doe, great tranquillitie followed, and long continued in the church without any open slaughter, for a thousand yeares together (to the time of Iohn Wickliffe and Waldenses, as is before touched) by the means of the godly beginning of good Constantinus, who with his fellow Licinius, being now stablished in their dominion, estones set forth their generall proclamation or edict, not constraining therein any man to any religion, but geuing liberty to all men, both for the Christians to persist in their profession without any danger, and for other men freely to adioyne wth them, whosoever pleased. Which thing was very well taken, and highly allowed of the Romans, and al wise men. The copie of the Edict or constitution here ensueth.

*The copie of the Imperiall constitution of Constantinus and Licinius, for the establishing of the free worshipping of God, after the Christian religion.*

Not long agoe we weying with our selues, that the libertie and freedome of religion ought not in any case to be prohibited, but that free leaue ought to be geuen to euery man to doe therein according to his wil and minde, we haue giuen commandement to all men to qualifie matters of religion as they themselves thought good, and that also the Christians shoulde keepe the opinions and faith of their religion. But because that many & fundry opinions by the same our first licence spring and increase through such libertie graunted, we thought good manifestly to adde thereunto, and make plaine such things, wherby perchance some of them in time to come, may from such their obseruance be let or hindered. When therefore by prosperous successe, I Constantinus Augustus, and I Licinius Augustus came to Mediolanum, and there fate in counsell vpon such things as serued for the vtilitie and profit of the common weale, these things amongst others, we thought woulde be beneficiall to all men, yea and before all other things we purposed to establish those things, wherein the true reuerence and worship of God is comprehended, that is, to geue vnto the Christians free choise to followe what religion they thinke good, and whereby the same sinceritie and celestiall grace which is in euery place receaued, may also be embraced and accepted of all our louing subiects. According therefore vnto this our pleasure vpon good aduise ment and sounde iudgement, we haue decreed, that no man so hardy, be denied to chuse and followe the Christian obseruance or religion: But that this libertie be geuen to euery man, that he may apply his minde to what religion he thinketh meete himselfe, whereby God may performe vpon vs all his accustomed care and goodnesse. To the intent therefore you might knowe that this is our pleasure, wee thought it necessary this to wryte vnto you, whereby all such errors and opinions being remoued, which in our former letters (being sent vnto you in the behalfe of the Christians) are conteyned, and which seeme very vndirecte and contrary to our clemency, may be made frustrate & adnihilate. Now therefore firmly and freely we will and commaunde, that euery man haue a free libertie to obserue the Christian religion, and that without any grieffe or molestacion hee may be suffered to doe the same. These things haue we thought good to signifie vnto you by as plaine wordes as we may, that we haue geuen to the Christians free and absolute power to keepe and vse their religion. And for as much as this libertie is absolutely geuen of vs vnto them, to vse and exercise their former obseruance, if any be so disposed, it is manifest that the same helpeth much to establish the publike tranquillitie of our time, euery man to haue licence and libertie to vse and chuse what kinde of worshipping he list himself. And this is done of vs onely for the intent, that we woulde haue no man to be enforced to one religion more then an other. And this thing also amongst others we haue provided for the Christians, that they may haue againe the possessio of such places, in which heretofore they haue bene accustomed to make their assemblies, so that if any haue bought or purchased the same either of vs, or of any other: the same places without delay we will to be restored againe vnto the sayd Christians. And if any man haue obtained the same by gift from vs, and shall require any recompence to be made to them in that behalf: Then let the Christians repaire vnto the President (being the iudge appointed for that place) that consideration may be had of those me by our benignitie: al which things

we will and commaunde, that you see to be geuen and restored freely, and with diligence vnto the societie of the Christians, all delay set apart. And because the Christians themselves are vnderstoode to haue had not onely those places wherein they were accustomed to resort together, but certaine other peculiar places also, not being priuate to any one man, but belonging to the right of their congregation and societie: you shall see also al those to be restored vnto the Christians, that is to say, to euery fellowship and company of the same, according to the decree, whereof we haue made mention, all delay set apart. Prouided that the order we haue taken in the meane time be obserued, that if any (taking no recompence) shall restore the same lands and possessions, they shall not mistrust but be sure to be saued harmelesse by vs. In all these things it shall be your part to employ your diligence in the behalfe of the foresayd companie of the Christians, whereby this our commaundement may speedely be accomplished, and also in this case by our clemencie the common and publike peace may be preferred. For vndoubtedly by this means, as before we haue sayde, the good will and fauour of God towards vs (whereof in many cases we haue had good experience) shall alwayes continue with vs. And to the intent that this our constitution may be notified to all men, it shall be requisite that the copie of these our letters be set vp in all places, that men may reade and knowe the same, least any should be ignorant thereof.

By these hypozozies I doubt not (good reader) but thou dost right well consider and behold with thy selfe the marvellous working of God his mighty power: to see so many Emperours at one time conspired and confederate together against the Lord and his Christ annoynted, whose names before we haue recited, as Dioclesian, Maximinian, Galerius, Maxentius, Maximinus, Seuerus, Licinius, who hauing the subiection of the whole world vnder their dominion, did bende and extende their whole might and deuises, to extirpate the name of Christ, and of all Christians, wherein if the power of man could haue preuailed, what could they not doe? or what could they doe more then they did? If policie or deuises could haue serued, what policie was there lacking? If torments or paines of death could haue helped, what cruelty of torment by man could be inuented, which was not attempted? If lawes, edictes, proclamations, wyttten not onely in tables, but ingrauen in brasse, could haue stande, all this was practised against the weake Christians. And yet notwithstanding, to see howe no counsaile can stand against the Lord, note heere how all these be gone, and yet Christ and his Church doth stande. First, of the taking away of Maximinian you haue heard, also of the death of Seuerus, of the drowning mozeouer of Maxentius, inough hath bene sayde. What a terrible plague was vpon Galerius, consuming his priue members with Lice, hath bene also described. Howe Dioclesian the quondam being at Salona, hearing of the proceedings of Constantinus, and this his Edict, either for sorrow died, or as some say did poyson himselfe. Onely Maximinus now in the East partes remained aliuie, who bare a deadly hatred against the Christians, and no lesse expressed the same wth moztall persecution, to whome Constantine and Licinius caused this constitution of theirs to be deliuered: at the sight whereof, although hee was somewhat appaled, and defeated of his purpose: yet forasmuch as he saw himselfe too weake to resist the authoritie of Constantinus and Licinius the superiour Princes: Hee dissembled his counterfet pietie, as though hee himselfe had tendered the quiet of the Christians: directing downe a certaine decree in the behalfe of the Christians, wherein hee pretended to wryte to Sabinus afoze mentioned, first repeating vnto him the former decree of Dioclesian and Maximinian in seto wordes, with the commandement therein contained touching the persecution against the Christians. After that hee reciterh the Decree which hee himselfe made against them, when he came first to the imperiall dignitie in the East part ioyned wth Constantius. Then the Countermaund of an other Decree of his agayne, for the rescuing of the Christians, wth such sayned and pretended causes, as is in the same to be seene. After that declared howe he coming to Nicomedia, at the sute and supplication of the Citizens (which he also saied, as may appeare before) he applying to their sute, reuoked that his former Edict, and granted them that no Christian should dwell within their Citie or territories. Upon which Sabinus also had geuen forth his letters, rehearsing withall the generall countermaund sent forth by him, for the persecution againe of the Christians. Last of all now hee sendeth downe againe an other Surrecountermaund, with the causes therein conteyned, touching the safetie of the Christians, and tranquillitie of them: Commaunding Sabinus to publish the same. Which edict of his is at large set forth of Eusebius, lib. 9. cap. 9. But this Surrecountermaunde hee then dissimuled, as he had

The consideration of Gods work in defending hys Christians.

The kinges of the earth haue risen, and Princes together against the Lord, and agaynst hys Christ. Psal. 2. No counsell standeth agaynst God.

The destruction of the cruell Emperours.

Dioclesian dyeth for sorrow.

The effect of the decree which Maximinus made agaynst hys wil or surecountermaund for feare of C. and Licinius in the behalfe of the Christians.

The surrecountermaunde of Maximinus dissembled.

Euseb. Lib. 9. Cap. 9.

Note well these thousand yeares and then read the xx. chap. of the Apoc. Satanas was bound vp for a thousand yeares, &c.

The copie of the imperiall constitution of Constantinus and Licinius. Euseb. Lib. 10. cap. 5.