

A briefe recapitulation of such benifices as were wrought by Constantine upon Christes Church.

nishment, or to the mines of metall, or to any publike or private labour to them inflicted. Such as were put to any shame or open shame among the multitude, hee willed them to be discharged from all such blamish of ignominy. Souldiours which before were deprived either of their place, or put out of their wages: were put to their liberty, either to serue againe in their place, or quietly to lyue at home. whatsoeuer honour, place, or dignitie had bene taken away fro any man, should be restored to them againe. The goods and possessions of them that had suffered death for Christ, howsoeuer they were alienated, should returne to their heires, or next of kinne: or for lacke of them should be given to the Church. Hee commaunded mozeouer that onely Christians should beare office. The other he charged and retrained, that neither they should sacrifice, nor exercise any moze diuinites and ceremonies of the heathen Idolaters. He corrected mozeouer and abolished all such vnlawfull manners and vnhonest vices in Cities, as might be hurtfull any waies to the Church, as the custome that the Egyptians had in the flowing of Nilus, at what time the people used to runne together lyke brute beasts, both men & women, and with all kinde of filthines and Sodomitic to pollute their Cities, in celebrating the increase of that riuier. This abhominacion Constantine extinguisht, causing that wicked order called Androgynæ, to be killed. By reason whereof the Riuer afterward (through the benefite of God) yelded moze increase in his flowing, to the greater fertilitie of the ground, than it did before.

Among the Romanes was an olde lawe, that such as were barren hauing no fruite of children, should be amerced of halfe their goddes. Also, that such as being about the peaces of the vniuersitie, should not be nūbered in the same priuileges with them that were married, neither should be heires to them, to whom notwithstanding they were next in kinde. These lawes because they seemed vnrasonable, to punish the defect of nature, or gift of virginity, by mans lawe, hee abrogated and toke away. An other order was among the Romanes, that they which made their willes being sicke, had certaine prescribed and conceiued wordes appoynted to the to be, which vnlesse they followed, their willes stode in none effect. This lawe also Constantine repealed, permitting to every man in making his testament to be what wordes, or what witnesses he would. Like wise among the Romanes hee restrained and toke away the cruel and bloody spectacles & fights, where men were wont with swordes one to kill an other. Of the barbarous and filthy fashion of the Aethiopsians in Phoenicia, I haue mentioned before, pag. 104. where they used to expose and set forth their virgines to open fornication, before they should be married, which custome also Constantine removed away. Where no Churches were, there hee commaunded new to be made: where any were decayed, hee commaunded them to be repaired: where any were to litle, hee caused them to be enlarged, geuing to the same great giftes and reuenues: not onely of such tributes and taxes conuining to him from certaine lūdy Cities, which hee transferred vnto the Churches, but also out of his owne treasures. When any Bishops required any Council to be had, hee satisfied their petitions: And what in their Councils and Synodes they established, being godly & honest, hee was ready to confirme the same.

The armour of his souldiours, which were newly come from Gentilitie, he garnished with the armes of the crosse, whereby they might learue the sooner to forget their olde superstitious idolatry. Mozeouer like a worthy Emperour he prescribed a certaine forme of prayer in steade of a Cathedrine for every man to haue, & to learne how to pray and to inuocate God. The which forme of prayer is recited in the fourth booke of Eusebius De vita Constantini, in wordes as foloweth.

Te solum nouimus Deum, te regem cognoscimus, te adiutorem inuocamus, abs te victorias petimus, per te victorias inimicorum constituimus, tibi presentium bonorum gratiam acceptam ferimus, & per te futura quoque speramus, tibi supplices sumus omnes: Imperatorem nostrum Constantinum, ac pienssimos eius filios, in longissima vita incolumes nobis ac victores custodire supplices oramus, per Christum dominum nostrum. Amen. In English.

We knowledg thee onely to be our God, we confesse thee onely to be our King, we inuocate and call vpon thee our onely helper, by thee we obtaine our victories, by thee we vāquish and subdue our enemies, to thee we attribute whatsoeuer present commodities we enioy, & by thee we hope for good things to come, vnto thee we direct all our suit & petitions: most humbly beseeching thee to conserue

Constantine our Emperour, and his noble childre in long life to continue, and to geue them victory ouer all their enemies, through Christ our Lord Amen.

In hys owne palace, hee let vp an house peculiar for prayer and doctrine, vling also to pray and sing with his people. Also in hys warres hee went not without hys tabernacle appoynted for the same. The Sunday hee commaunded to be kept holy of all men, and free from all iudiciarie causes, from markets, martes, faires, & all other manuell labors, onely husbandry excepted: especially charging that no Images or Monuments of Idolatry should be set vp.

Men of the Clergy and of the ministry in all places hee endued with speciall priuileges and immunities, so that if any were brought before the ciuill Magistrate, and listed to appeale to the sentence of his Bishop, it should be lawfull for him so to doe: and that the sentence of the Bishop should stande in as great force as if the Magistrate or the Emperour himselfe had pronounced it.

But here is to be obserued & noted by the way, that the Clerkes & ministers the newly creeping out of pericution, were in those dayes, neyther in nūber so great nor in order of life, of y like dispositiō to these in our dayes now liuing.

No lesse care and prouision the sayd Constantinus also had to the maintenance of scholes pertaining to the Church and to the nourishing of good artes and liberal sciences, especially of Diuinitie: not onely with stipends and subsidies furnishing them, but also with large priuileges and exemptions defending the same, as by the wordes of his own law is to be seene: and read as follooweth: Medicos, Grammaticos, & alios professores literarum & doctores legum, cum vxoribus & liberis, &c. In English: Professors, Gramarians, and all other professors of liberal artes, and Doctors of the law, with their wiues and childre, and all other their possessions, which they haue in Cities: we commaund to be freed from all ciuill charges and functions, neyther to receive foreyn straungers in prouinces, nor to be burdened with any publique administration, nor to be cited vp to ciuill iudgement, nor to be drawne out, or oppressed with any iniury. And if any man shall vex them, hee shall incurre such punishment, as the Iudge at his discretion shall award him. Their stipendes mozeouer and salaries, we commaunde truly to be payd them, whereby they may moze freely instruct other in artes and sciences, &c.

ouer and besides this, so farre did hys godly zeale and princely care and prouision extend to the Church of Christ, that hee commaunded and provided bookes and volumes of the Scripture, diligently and playnly to be written and copied out, to remaine in publique Churches to the vse of posterity, whereupon writing to Eusebius byshop of Cæsarea in a speciall letter (recorded in the 4. booke of Eusebius, De vita Constant.) he willeth him with all diligence to procure 50. volumes of parchment well bound and compact: wherein hee should cause to be written out of the Scripture in a fayre legible hand, such things as hee thought necessary and profitable for the instruction of the Church. And alloweth him for that business two publique Mintsters. Also writeth concerning the same, to the generall of hys army, to support and further hym with such necessities, as thereunto should appertayne, &c.

In viewing, perusing, and writing this story, and in considering the Christian zeale of this Emperour, I wilst that eether this our printing and plenty of books had bene in his dayes: or that this so heroycal hart toward Christes Religion, as was in this so excellent Monarche, might something appeare in inferior Princes raiguing in these our printing dayes, &c.

The liberal hand of this Emperour, borne to do all men good, was no lesse also open and ready toward the needie povertie of such, which either by losse of parents, or other occasions were not able to helpe their selues: to whom hee commaunded and provided two subuention both of cozne and raiment to be ministred out of his owne coffers, to the necessary reliefe of the poore men, women, children, orphanes, and widowes, Euseb. de vita Constant. Lib. 4.

Finally, among all the other monuments of his singular clemencie and munificence, this is not to be pretermitted: that though all the Emperie of Rome and prouinces belonging to the same, not onely he diminished such taxes, reuenues, and imposts, as publickly were conuining to him, but also clearly remitted and releaced to the contributors, the fourth part of the same.

This present place would require something to be sayd of the donation of Constantine: whereupon as vpon their chiefe anchor holde, the Bishops of Rome doe grounde their supreme dominion and right, ouer all the politicall government of the west partes, & the spiritall government of all the other Seas and partes of the world, which donation

The Sunday appoynted to be kept holy.

Liberties and priuileges granted to the clergy.

The prouision on and liberality of Constantine in maintayning scholes.

The priuilege granted by Constantine to vniuersities and scholes.

The prouident care of Constantine to haue the scripture in Churches. Ex Euseb. lib. 4. de Vita Constant.

A wish of the author admonitory to Princes.

The liberality of Constantine towardes the poore and needie.

Constantine remitteth the fourth part of hys rentes and reuenues.

Deuotion of Constantine.

Where wickednesse is punished there goodnesse followeth.

The liberality of Constantine in geuing to Churches.

Euseb. lib. 4. de Vita Constantini.

The forme of prayer appoynted of Constantine for hys souldiours.