

TO THE QVENES MOSTE EXCEL- Lent Maiestie Quene Elizabeth, by the grace of God Quene of England, Fraunce & Ireland, defendour of the faith, and supreme gouernour of the saide Realme of Englande and Irelande, next vnder the Lorde, as well in causes ecclesiasticall, as also to the temporall state appertaining, her humble subiect IOHN FOX hartely wisheth and desireth with increase of Gods holy spirite and grace, long to florishe and reigne in perfect health, and much honour, through the mercie and fauour of Christ Iesus, our Lorde and æternall Sauour, to the comfort of his church, and glorie of his holy name.

Constantine the greate and mightie Emperour, the sonne of Helene an Englyshe woman of this youre Realme and countrie (moste Christian and renowned Prynresse Queene Elizabeth) after he had pacified and established the church of Christ, being long before vnder persecution, frō the tyme of our sauour Christ almost 400 yeres: and comming in his progresse at length to a citie called Cæsaria, (where Eusebius wryter of the Ecclesiasticall story was then placed Byshop) required of the sayde Eusebius vpon his owne free motion, to demaund and aske of him what so euer he thought expediēt or neceßary for the state and commoditie of his Church, promising to graunt vnto him the same whatsoever he should aske. whiche Eusebius, if he had thē required what terrene benefite soeuer he would, either of posseßions to be geuen, or of impositiōs to be released, or any other lyke &c. he had no doubt obtained his request of that so lyberall, and so noble harted Emperour. But the good and godly Byshop, more nedy then gredy, more spiritually geuen, then worldly minded, who had learned rather to take a litle, thē to aske much, setting all other respectes aside, made this petition, onely to obtaine at his maiesties hande, vnder his seale and letters autentique, free leaue and license through al the monarchie of Rome, going to all cōsulles, Procōsulles, Tribunes and other officers in all cities and countries, to searche out the names, sufferinges and actes, of all such as suffered in al that tyme of persecution before, for the testimonie and faith of Christ Iesus. The number of all whiche holy and blessed Martyrs, vpon the sayd licence being searched out, amounted to the accompt, for euery daye in the Calendary to be ascribed (as Hierome wryting to Chromatius and Heliodorus doth wytnesse) fiftie thousande Martyrs, sauing only the first daye of Ianuary excepted. For that day beyng assigned to the chousing of their Consules, was therefore festiually solennized throughout all the Romaine Empire.

In whiche Historie (moste excellent and noble Queene) twoo thynges put me in a variable doubt, whether of these two rather to cōmend and extolle: the good Emperour, or the godly Byshoppe: the one for his Princely proferre, the other for his godly

and sincere petition. The Emperour for his rare and syngular affection in fauouring and furtherynge the Lordes churche, or the Byshoppe in zealyng the publique busines of the Lorde, before the priuate lucre of hym selfe Certes in bothe together may to vs appeare, what all maner estates may learne to knowe: not onelye what in those dayes was done, but also what ought nowe to be followed. In the Byshop is to be noted: the goodes and ornamētes of the Church cheifly to consiste, not in Donatiues and patrimonies, but in the bloud, actes and lyfe of Martyres, the seekyng and settinge foorth whereof ought to occupie the studie of true Christian Byshoppes. In the Emperour also we beholde howe studiously the Nobilitie in those dayes were set to tēder the state and vtilitie of the Churche, and the Ministers of the same: in geuyng to thē, not in takynge from them, yea, in preuenting their shamefast modestie, with their Princely liberalitie. Such was thē þe carefull affection of them in those dayes towards the Lorde, that it rebounded also vnto his churche, and ministerie thereof, in furnishyng and in gratifyng them, inlarging them, in priuileging and enrichyng them with ample giftes and Princely benefites, that the lyke affection hath rare ben foude since those dayes: as may appeare in that whiche the Romaine churche at this present calleth the donation of Constantine, whiche although it be forged and counterfeited of thē selues (as no doubtte it is) yet it can not bee denied, but that Emperours and Princes were in those dayes Patrones highly beneficial vnto the same. would God the other for their partes had agayne been as moderate in not abusing so great liberalitie vpon them bestowed. But of this fewer woordes the better, neither is this the purpose why I do inferre the historie. wherfore then pertaineth the illation thereof, your maiestie perhappes will muse? Forsoth for two causes speciall.

For first thinking with my selfe to wryte to your Maiestie, as duetie byndeth in the Preface of this boke: then againe pondering with my selfe the famous actes, the memorable doinges, the Princely proceedinges of your grace, and conferringe the same, with the like valiaunt factes of that worthy Emperour, I could not enter mention of the one, but must nedes wryte of the other. Such is the mercifull goodnes of almightie God vpon his poore afflicted creatures, that though he suffer sometyme the Tyraunt to rage, and the Hypocrite to reigne for the iniquitie of the people, yet some tyme againe, the same hande of the Lorde whiche woundeth, healeth: that presseth, refreßheth: that striketh, salueth againe, to make amendes withall. what a sore and dreadfull hand of the Lorde in the primatiue tyme of the churche was sene vnder so many persecuting Emperours, and cruell consules? At length the Lord sent this mild Constantinus, to cease bloud, to staye persecutiom, to refreshe his people. In much like maner what bitter blastes, what smarting stormes haue been felt in England duryng the space of certaine yeares, till at last Gods pitifull grace sent vs youre Maiestie to quenche fier brandes, to asswage rage, to releaue innocentes. what a multitude of godly Martyrs were slayne before the tyme of the sayde Constantine, is partly aboue declared. And likewyse what a number also before your graces happie reigne were murdered, in this present historie here followyng is comprehended. Ouer and besides, to compare tyme with tyme, and place with place: what was in his tyme founde so happie, for whiche we haue not as great cause nowe to blesse God in this

so gracious a tyme of yours. For as God gaue then great reaste to his Churche by the reigne of him: so hath it pleased the Lorde with no lesse aboundaunce of peace to blesse vs by the meanes of you.

The successe of his affayres I graunte was great: and no lesse haue wee to geue

praise to God for þe maruelous workes brought to passe by you. In cōsidering likewise howe beneficiall, howe carefull, howe bountefull hee was to the Churche of the Lorde: although the lyke Donations haue not yet appeared in giftes geuen by youre grace vnto the Churche, yet the same care and tendernesse of harte in youre Maiestie hathe not been lackinge. what mekenesse and clemencie was in that noble and great Emperour, whiche is and hathe not beene greater in you?

Briefly let Constantinus be neuer so great: yet wherein is your noble grace to him inferiour? in many thinges equall, in this superiour, for that Constantinus, being only but an helper vnto the persecuted, your highnes hath dispatched that persecution frō other, vnder whiche ye were entangled your selfe: and that chiefly (what so euer they pretended) for the truthe of your profeseion wherein your grace hath more to reioyce then in any other thing els beside. For if it be true that Hierome saith. Martyrum passio, triumphus dei, then what cause haue you to reioyce in the Lorde, when you cause the Lorde to triumphe in you? And for so muche as I haue begonne to compare, and yet my penne can make no end, this further I wyll adde, that the aide and succour of the saide Constantine in healing the persecuted churche, though it was great and worthy commendation, yet reached it no further then his owne dominions.

Here nowe if it were not for suspicion of flatterie, I could recite, not onely what we at home, your natural and louing subiectes: but also what other forraine Realmes abroade haue receiued by your grace, or rather by Gods grace in you: as neyther the Realme of Scotlande, nor yet of Fraunce to this daye wyll or can deny the same. Of the whiche two Realmes whiche had alwayes been before contrary and mortall enemies to this Realme of Englande, the one of thē being so greatly entangled with forrane enemies, as without your Princely helpe, they were lyke vtterly to haue been ouerthrowen, must nedes therfore, and do no lesse, I dare say, recōpt thē selues bound to your Maiestie, then their libertie and countrie is worth. The other likewise, if their tongues here present myght with one voyce declare, what their hartes inwardly do thinke, no doubt they wold hold vp their handes to heauē, and blesse the Lord for the goodnes they haue and doe receyue by your gracious meanes. But I had rather with suspiciō of flatterie to discharge my deutie, then with scrupulous silence to be founde ingratefull.

The second and principall cause why I haue induced this foresayde matter of Constantine and Eusebius, is this: for that your Maiestie in markyng the humble petition of the Byshop, and the gentle graunt of the Emperour, maye the rather be intreated to accept this my poore and simple endeuoure, in setting forth this present history, touching the Actes and Monumentes of suche

godly Martyrs as suffered before youre reigne for the like testimonie of Christ and his truth. For if thē such care was in searching and setting forth the doynge and Actes of Christes faithfull seruantes, suffering for his name in the primatiue tyme of the Church: why should they now be more neglected of vs in the latter church, suche as geue their bloud in the same cause and like quarell? For what should we say? Is not the name of Christe as precious nowe, as then? were not the tormentes as great? is not the cause all one? And if the aduersaries wyll saye contrarye and repugne agayne, alleaging that those in the primatiue tyme suffered then for Christe, these suffered not for Christe, but for Heresie:

I wyll aunswere them againe as Martine Luther aunswere vnto the Pope. Let the Pope, sayd he, and his Popelinges graunt Christ onely to be my Sauour, and that the fayth onely in Christ iustifieth a Christian man, I wil take him for a good Byshop, and his religion to be ryght. But that he wyll neuer do, so long as he is Pope. For Pope holy, and fayth onely, can not otherwyse ioyne together, but that all his idolatrous worship, his superstitious merites, and trifling traditions must nedes geue place, and lose their autoritie. For in these three I recompte all the Popes whole religion to consist, but of this enough.

Nowe returning agayne to our pruposed matter, and followyng the example of Eusebius this worthy Byshop, although I can not atcheue yt so perfectly as he hathe done, yet haue I laboured and trauayled according to my infirme habilitie, what I may, in collecting and setting forth the actes, fame and memorie of these our Martyrs of this latter tyme of the church, whiche according as my dutie doth bynde me, next vnder the Lorde, I offer and present here vnto your Maiestie, humbly desyring, and nothing yet misdoubting, but that your highnes and singuler clemēcie, likewyse followyng the steppes of that noble Constātine, with no lesse propensitie of faouere and furtheraunce, wil accept and also aβiste these my laborious trauailes to the behoufe of the church, against the importunitie of the malignaunt: if perauenture any suche spurners against the truthe shall appeare, as I feare they wil, bending them selues to maligne and detracte the doynge hereof, as they do all other thinges, being contrary to their corrupt religion and affection, except your graces aβistaunce shall releaue and defense me against the same. who in so doing not onely shall make me thinke my paynes and labours herein the better bestowed: but also shall encourage, by the same your princely benignitie, both me and all other my fellowe brethren to proceade (the grace of the Lorde so aβisting vs) in further trauayle, to accomplyshe that whiche our diligence can extende vnto for the vse of Christes church, vtilitie of your Realme, and the glorie of his holy name: to whome as we geue moost hartie thanks for exalting your maiestie out of your aduersitie: so we beseche him to conserue you in longe prosperitie, with the dayes not only of Constantinus reigne, but also with them whose reigne hath ben longest in any common wealth.

Viuat Regina in Domino.

Your Maiesties faithfull and humble
subiect in the Lord.

I. Foxe.

