

the acts of St. Maximus, the authentic relations of his interrogatories and sufferings, and other ancient pieces concerning his life, ap. Combefis, t. 1, Oper. S. Maximi.

DECEMBER XXXI.

SAINT SYLVESTER, POPE, C.

See the Pontifical, published by Anastasius, Rufin, &c. amongst the moderns, Tillemont, t. 7, p. 267. Oraï, t. 4 and 5.

A. D. 335.

ST. SYLVESTER, whom God appointed to govern his holy church in the first years of her temporal prosperity and triumph over her persecuting enemies, was a native of Rome, and son to Rufinus and Justa. According to the general rule with those who are saints from their cradle, he received early and in his infancy the strongest sentiments of Christian piety from the example, instructions, and care of a virtuous mother, who, for his education in the sound maxims and practice of religion, and in sacred literature, put him young into the hands of Charitius or Carinius, a priest of an unexceptionable character and great abilities. Being formed under an excellent master, he entered among the clergy of Rome, and was ordained priest by Pope Marcellinus, before the peace of the church was disturbed by Dioclesian, and his associate in the empire. His behaviour in those turbulent and dangerous times recommended him to the public esteem, and he saw the triumph of the cross by the victory which Constantine gained over Maxentius within sight of the city of Rome on the 28th of October, 312. Pope Melchisedes dying in January, 314, St. Sylvester was exalted to the pontificate, and the same year commissioned four legates, two priests, and two deacons, to represent him at the great council of

proceed from transcribers, especially in his dispute with Pyrrhus: we may attribute them in some of his works to the persecutions, which at once overwhelmed his mind and body. There are many works of St. Maximus which never have been printed. See Montfaucon, Bibl. Coislin. pag. 307, ad pag. 311, item pag. 412.

the Western Church, held at Arles in August, in which the schism of the Donatists, which had then subsisted seven years, and the heresy of the Quarto-decimans were condemned, and many important points of discipline regulated in twenty-two canons. These decisions were sent by the council before it broke up with an honourable letter to Pope Sylvester, and were confirmed by him and published to the whole church.(1) The general council of Nice was assembled against Arianism in 325. Socrates,(2) Sozomen,(3) and Theodoret,(4) say that Pope Sylvester was not able to come to it in person on account of his great age, but that he sent his legates. Gelasius of Cyzicus(5) mentions that in it "Osius held the place of the bishop of Rome, together with the Roman priests Vito and Vincentius." These three are named the first in subscriptions of the bishops in the editions of the acts of that council,(6) and in Socrates, who expressly places them before Alexander, patriarch of Alexandria, and Eustathius, patriarch of Antioch.* St. Sylvester greatly advanced religion by a punctual discharge of all the duties of his exalted station during the space of twenty-one years and eleven months; and died on the 31st of December, 335. He was buried in the cemetery of Priscilla. St. Gregory the Great pronounced his ninth homily on the gospels on his festival, and in a church which was dedicated to God in his memory by Pope Symmachus.(7) Pope Sergius II. translated his body into this church, and deposited it under the high altar. Mention is made of an altar consecrated to God in his honour at Verona about the year 500; and his name occurs in the ancient Martyrology, called St. Jerom's, published by Florentinius, and in those of Bede, Ado, Usard, &c. Pope Gregory IX., in 1227, made his festival general in the Latin church; the Greeks keep it on the 10th of January.

(1) See epist. Synodi Arel. ad Sylvest. Pap. Conc. t. 1, p. 1425.

(2) Socr. l. 1, c. 5. (3) Sozom. l. 1, c. 6. (4) Theodoret, l. 1, c. 7.

(5) Gelas. Cyz. Hist. Conc. Nicæn. l. 2, c. 5, t. 2, Conc.

(6) Conc. t. 2, p. 50.

(7) Conc. t. 1, p. 1368.

* The history of Constantine's donation of Rome is refuted by Pagi, Critic. in Annal. Baron. Papebroke, Act. Sanct. Nat. Alexander, Hist. Eccl. Noris, t. 4. Oper. Marnettii, Orig. Christ. t. 2, p. 232, &c.

After a prodigious effusion of Christian blood almost all the world over during the space of three hundred years, the persecuting kingdoms at length laid down their arms, and submitted to the faith and worship of a God crucified for us. This ought to be to us a subject of thanksgiving. But do our lives express this faith? Does it triumph in our hearts? It is one of its first precepts that in all our actions we make God our beginning and end, and have only his divine honour and his holy law in view. All our various employments, all our thoughts and designs must be referred to, and terminate in this, as all the lines drawn from the circumference of a circle meet in the centre. We ought therefore so to live that the days, hours, and moments of the year may form a crown made up of good works, which we may offer to God. Our forgetfulness of him who is our last end, in almost all that we do, calls for a sacrifice of compunction in the close of the year: but this cannot be perfect or acceptable to God, unless we sincerely devote our whole hearts and lives to his holy love for the time to come. Let us therefore examine into the sources of former omissions, failures, and transgressions, and take effectual measures for our amendment, and for the perfect regulation of all our affections and actions for the future, or that part of our life which may remain.

ST. COLUMBA, V. M.

THE new Paris Breviary fixes her death either in 258 or in 273. The latter date reduces it to the journey which Aurelian took into Gaul in that year, when he gained a great victory at Chalons. She suffered at Sens. Her relics were kept in the Benedictin abbey till they were dispersed by the Huguenots, together with those of many other saints kept there, as Baillet observes. St. Owen, in his life of St. Eligius, mentions a chapel which bore her name at Paris.

ST. MELANIA THE YOUNGER.

MELANIA the Elder was of a most noble Spanish family, though descended of a Roman pedigree, and a relation of St. Paulinus of Nola, second to no one in Aquitain and Spain in riches or