

relics esteemed the greatest treasure of the abbey of Barking; in which St. Erkonwald, the founder, made his sister, St. Edilburge, the first abbess, but gave her St. Hildelide for her assistant, whom he called over from France, where she had made her religious profession, though an English lady by birth.\* As she was the directress of Edilburge, during her life, so she succeeded her in the government of this monastery after her death, and is named in the English Calendars on the 24th of March.(1) On St. Wulfhilde, see William of Malmesbury, l. 2. Pontif. and her life in Capgrave, and in John of Tinmouth.†

## DECEMBER X.

### ST. MELCHIADES, POPE.

From Eus, l. 9, c. 9. St. Optat. l. 1. St. Aug. See Tillemont.

A. D. 314.

**MELCHIADES**, or **MILTIADES**, succeeded Eusebius in the see of Rome, being chosen on the 2d of July, 311, in the reign of **Maxentius**. Constantine vanquished that tyrant on the 28th of October in 312, and soon after issued edicts, by which he allowed Christians the free exercise of their religion, and the

(1) Bede. Hist. l. 4, c. 10.

\* Du Plessis imagines Trithemius and others who mentioned St. Hildelide, abbess, among the saints who flourished at Faremoutier, mistook this name for St. Hilda, though she never was there. It is true that St. Hildelide was never abbess at Faremoutier, but at Barking in England. But she had unquestionably lived at Faremoutier or at Chelles, before she came to Barking. See Bede, (l. 4, c. 10.) Du Plessis, (Hist. de l'Egl. de Meaux, l. 1, n. 84.)

† John of Tinmouth, monk of St. Alban's flourished in 1370, and compiled the lives of one hundred and fifty-seven British, English, Scottish, and Irish saints. His Sanctilogium is extant in MS. in the Lambeth Library, quoted by Wharton, (Anglia Sacra, t. 2, p. 75, &c.) also in the Cottonian Library; but this copy is so much damaged by the conflagration of an adjoining house, next the wall of the library, when it was kept at Westminster, that the leaves are glued together. By the methods which are used at the Vatican library and at Herculaneum, to unfold MSS. which are worn with age, and in which the leaves adhere together, several of these endamaged MS. books might probably be again made useful. John Capgrave in his *Legenda Sanctorum Angliæ*, printed at London in 1516, collected one hundred and sixty-eight lives of saints, all which, except fourteen, he copied verbatim from John of Tinmouth, says Leland in *Joan. Tinmouthensi*: yet in Timouth several things occur which are not in Capgrave.

liberty of building churches. To pacify the minds of the pagans, who were uneasy at this innovation, when he arrived at Milan in the beginning of the year 313, he, by a second edict, ensured to all religions except heresies, liberty of conscience. Among the first laws which he enacted in favour of Christians, he passed one to exempt the clergy from the burden of civil offices. He obliged all his soldiers to repeat on Sundays a prayer addressed to the one only God; and no idolater could scruple at such a practice. He abolished the pagan festivals and mysteries in which lewdness had a share. Unnatural impurity being almost unrestrained among the heathens, the Romans, when luxury and debauchery were arrived at the highest pitch among them, began to shun marriage, that they might be more at liberty to follow their passions. Whereupon Augustus was obliged by laws to encourage and to command all men to marry, inflicting heavy penalties on the disobedient. (1) The abuses being restrained by the Christian religion more effectually than they could have been by human laws, Constantine, in favour of celibacy, repealed the Poppæan law. This emperor also made a law to punish adultery with death. (2) The good pope rejoiced exceedingly at the prosperity of God's house, and, by his zealous labours, very much extended its pale; but he had the affliction to see it torn by an intestine division, in the Donatist schism, which blazed with great fury in Africa. Mensurius, bishop of Carthage, being falsely accused of having delivered up the sacred scriptures to be burnt in the time of the persecution, Donatus, bishop of Cassa-nigra in Numidia, most unreasonably separated himself from his communion, and continued his schism when Cecilian had succeeded Mensurius in the see of Carthage, and was joined by many jealous enemies of that good prelate, especially by the powerful lady Lucilla, who was personally piqued against Cecilian whilst he was deacon of that church. The chismatics appealed to Constantine, who was then in Gaul, and entreated him to commission three Gaulish bishops, whom they specified, to judge their cause against Cecilian. The emperor granted them these judges they demanded, but ordered the aforesaid bishops to repair to Rome, by letter,

(1) See his *Lex Julia*, and *Lex Poppæa*.

(2) See Gothofred, ad *Cod. Theod. l. xi. tit. 36*.

entreating Pope Melchiades to examine into the controversy, together with these Gaulish bishops, and to decide it according to justice and equity. The emperor left to the bishops the decision of this affair, because it regarded a bishop.(1) Pope Melchiades opened a council in the Lateran palace on the 2d of October, 313, at which both Cecilian and Donatus of Cassanigra were present; and the former was pronounced by the pope and his council innocent of the whole charge that was brought against him. Donatus of Cassanigra was the only person who was condemned on that occasion; the other bishops who had adhered to him were allowed to keep their sees upon their renouncing the schism. St. Austin, speaking of the moderation which the pope used, calls him an excellent man, a true son of peace, and a true father of Christians. Yet the Donatists, after his death, had recourse to their usual arms of slander to asperse his character, and pretended that this pope had delivered the scriptures into the hands of the persecutors; which St. Austin calls a groundless and malicious calumny. St. Melchiades died on the 10th of January, 314, having sat two years, six months, and eight days, and was buried on the Appian road, in the cemetery of Calixtus; is named in the Roman Martyrology, and in those of Bede, Ado, Usuard, &c. In some calendars he is styled a martyr, doubtless on account of his sufferings in preceding persecutions

This holy pope saw a door opened by the peace of the church to the conversion of many, and he rejoiced at the triumph of the cross of Christ. But with worldly prosperity a worldly spirit too often broke into the sanctuary itself; insomuch that the zealous pastor had sometimes reason to complain, with Isaiah, "*Thou hast multiplied the nation, and hast not increased my joy.*"(2) Under the pressures of severe persecution the true spirit of our holy religion was maintained in many among its professors during the first ages; yet, amidst the most holy examples, and under the influence of the strongest motives and helps, avarice and ambition insinuated themselves into the hearts of some, who, by the abuse of the greatest graces, became of

(1) S. Aug. ep. 105, p. 290, et ep. 43, p. 94, et in Brevic. Collat. die 3, c. 12, et 17. Eus. l. 10, c. 5. S. Optat. l. 1, p. 44.

(2) Isa. ix. 3.

all others the most abandoned to wickedness ; witness Judas the apostate in the college of the apostles ; also several amongst the disciples of the primitive saints, as Simon Magus, Paul of Samosata, and others. But with temporal honours and affluence, the love of the world, though most severely condemned by Christ, as the capital enemy to his grace and holy love, and the source of all vicious passions, crept into the hearts of many, to the utter extinction of the Christian spirit in their souls. This, indeed, reigns, and always will reign, in a great number of chosen souls, whose lives are often hidden from the world, but in whom God will always provide for his honour faithful servants on earth, who will praise him in spirit and truth. But so deplorable are the overflowings of sensuality, avarice, and ambition, and such the lukewarmness and spiritual insensibility which have taken root in the hearts of many Christians, that the torrent of evil example and a worldly spirit ought to fill every one with alarms, and oblige every one to hold fast, and be infinitely upon his guard that he be not carried away by it. It is not the crowd that we are to follow, but the gospel : and though temporal goods and prosperity are a blessing, they ought extremely to rouse our attention, excite our watchfulness, and inspire us with fear, being fraught with snares, and by the abuse which is frequently made of them, the ruin of virtue.

### ST. EULALIA, V. M.

PRUDENTIUS\* has celebrated the triumph of this holy virgin, who was a native of Merida, then the capital city of Lusitania

\* AURELIUS PRUDENTIUS CLEMENS, the glory of the ancient Christian poets, was born in Spain in 348, (Præf. in hymn. in Cathemer. p. 1,) not at Saragossa, as Ceillier and some others mistake ; (though he resided there some time in quality of governor ;) but at Calahorra, in Old Castile. (Hymn. l. de Cor. p. 116, et hymn. 18, v. 31.) After his childhood he studied eloquence under a celebrated rhetorician, and, according to the custom of the schools in that age, learned to declaim upon all sorts of subjects, and, by pleading, to make a bad cause appear good : which kind of exercises he afterwards severely condemned and repented of, as an art of disguising the truth, and of lying. Isocrates's panegyrics on Helena and Busiris, show this custom to have been ancient in the schools of rhetoricians : and Cicero mentions several instances of Georgias, &c. (In Bruto, de Orat. § 8.) Prudentius deploras still more bitterly other irregularities into which he had been betrayed in his youth. (Præf. in Cathem. et hymn. 9, de Sanct. Calagurit.) He was made twice governor of provinces and cities in Spain ; after which he tells us (Præf. in Ca,