

his continual advancement in spiritual fervour, and his gift of tears and constant prayer. His sighs after heaven were crowned with a joyful and happy death in 693, ten years after St. Cuthbert.

See *Chronica Sconensia*, et *Elphiston*.

MAY XXVII.

ST. JOHN, POPE, M.

See Anastasius, Theophanes, Marcellinus, &c. collected by Papebroke, Maij, t. 6. Fleury, Hist. b. 32.

A. D. 526.

POPE JOHN was by birth a Tuscan. He distinguished himself from his youth in the Roman clergy, of which he became the oracle and the model. He was archdeacon when, after the death of Hormisdas in 523, he was chosen pope. Theodoric the Arian king of the Goths held Italy in subjection, and though endowed with some great qualities, did not divest himself of that disposition to cruelty and jealousy, which is always an ingredient in the character of an ambitious tyrant and a barbarian. It happened that the emperor Justin published an edict, ordering the Arians to deliver up all the churches they were possessed of to the Catholic bishops, by whom they were to be consecrated anew. Theodoric, who was the patron of that sect, took this law very ill; and in revenge threatened, that if it was not repealed in the East, he would not only treat the Catholics in his dominions in the same manner, but would fill Rome with blood and slaughter. Being, however, in some awe of the emperor, he resolved to try what he could do by negotiation; and sent the pope at the head of an embassy of five bishops and four senators, of which three had been con-

suls, to Constantinople on that errand. John used all manner of entreaties to decline such a commission, but was compelled by the king to take it upon him. He was received in the East with the greatest honours possible; and the whole city of Constantinople went out twelve miles to meet him, carrying wax tapers and crosses. The emperor, to use the words of Anastasius, prostrated himself before the most blessed pope, who also relates that the saint entering the city, restored sight to a blind man at the golden gate, who begged that favour of him. The same is mentioned by St. Gregory the Great, who adds, that the horse on which he rode, would never after bear any other rider.¹ The joy of that city was universal on this occasion, and the pomp with which the successor of St. Peter was received, seemed to surpass the festival of a triumph. Authors vary as to the issue of his embassy; some say that the pope confirmed Justin in his resolution of taking away the churches from the heretics; but Anastasius tells us that the pope persuaded Justin to treat the Arians with moderation, and to leave them the churches of which they were possessed, and that the emperor acquiesced. However that be, whilst our saint was in the East, Theodoric caused the great Boëtius, who was the pope's most intimate friend, both before and after he was raised to the pontificate, to be apprehended.² And no sooner was pope John landed at Ravenna in Italy, but, together with the four senators his colleagues, he was cast into a dark and loathsome dungeon. The tyrant forbid any succour or comfort to be allowed to the prisoners, so that by the hardships of his confinement and the stench of the place, the good pope died at Ravenna on the 27th of

¹ Dial. 1. 3. c. 2. See Dom. Francis Gianotti's Diss. on the embassy of pope John to the emperor Justin, among the Dissertations of the Academy of Church History at Bologna in 1758.

² See Note, page 432.

May 526, soon after the cruel execution of Boëtius, having sat two years and nine months. His body was conveyed to Rome, and buried in the Vatican Church. The two letters which bear his name are supposititious, as appears from their very dates, &c.

When we see wicked men prosper, and saints die in dungeons, we are far from doubting of providence, we are strengthened in the assured belief, that God who has stamped the marks of infinite wisdom and goodness on all his works, has appointed a just retribution in the world to come. And faith reveals to us clearly this important secret. We at present see only one end of the chain in the conduct of providence towards men; many links in it are now concealed from our eyes. Let us wait a little, and we shall see in eternity God's goodness abundantly justified. Who does not envy the happiness of a martyr in his dungeon, when he beholds the inward joy, peace, and sentiments of charity with which he closes his eyes to this world! and much more when he contemplates in spirit the glory with which the soul of the saint is conducted by angels, like Lazarus, to the abodes of immortal bliss! On the contrary, the wicked tyrant cannot think himself safe upon his throne, and amidst his armies; but sits, like Damocles, under the terrible sword in the midst of his enjoyments, in the dreary expectation every moment of perishing. At best, his treacherous pleasures are a wretched exchange for the true joy and peace of virtue; nor can he fly from the torment of his own conscience, or the stench of his guilt. How dreadfully are his horrors increased upon the approach of death! And how will he to all eternity condemn his extravagant folly, unless by sincere repentance he shall have prevented everlasting woes!

Note.--Anitius Manlius Torquatus Severinus Boetius was born at Rome in 470. His father Boetius, who had been thrice consul, died in 490. The son at ten years of age was sent to Athens, where he continued his studies nineteen years: after which, returning home, he was declared patrician. He married a lady of great learning, wit, and beauty, named Elpis, to whom are ascribed the hymns which are used by the Church on the festival of SS. Peter and Paul. (See Boetius, l. 2. de Consol.) In the year 500, king Theodoric, who mostly resided at Spoleto or Ravenna, came to Rome; where he was so charmed with the generosity, disinterestedness, integrity, and abilities of Boetius, that he made him master of the palace, and secretary for all public affairs, which two great offices vested him with the whole authority and management of the state. Boetius set himself to govern the people by the most excellent maxims of policy and virtue, which he studied also to instil into the mind of the barbarian king. He taught him, though an Arian, to forbear all persecution, and even to cherish and protect the Catholic Church: to establish his throne by encouraging and promoting virtue: to study peace, because the glory of a prince consists in the tranquillity and happiness of his subjects; and a king that is truly the father of his people, ought to be sensible, that it is his first and most essential duty to improve his kingdom, and to govern well his people: which arduous duty calls for his whole application; and for which he cannot find leisure, who too easily busies himself in foreign wars. An *ambitious* conqueror is the greatest tyrant and scourge of his own people, as well as of other nations. Our philosopher, moreover, persuaded his prince to ease the burdens and taxes of his subjects, because their riches were the prince's strength: to husband well his treasury, a neglect of which bringeth upon a commonwealth contempt abroad, weakness at home, and misery on all sides; it maketh the people hungry, the prince necessitous, contemptible, and impotent: soldiers mutinous, and subjects miserable. He counselled him to entertain in time of peace well-disciplined troops, which would add majesty to his state, and be a terror to his enemies; and in this sense Theodoric used to say that war was never better made than in time of peace. The wise and Christian statesman taught him never to confer any office or dignity but according to merit, without any regard to favour; also to be severe and vigilant in executing the laws, and in punishing delinquents; for justice is the basis of the throne and the security of the people; as by it thieves, adulterers, and forgers tremble; oppressors of the poor are punished as disturbers

of the peace and enemies to the state, and crimes are banished. He advised him to cherish both the useful and the liberal arts, and to encourage learned men, which conduct never fails to promote wit, prudence, valour, a public spirit, and every means of temporal happiness. He exhorted him to be magnificent in public buildings, and certain manly well-chosen recreations, making them suitable to the majesty of his kingdom.

By these and the like maxims Theodoric governed some years like an excellent prince, as Ennodius draws his portrait in his panegyric. He was assisted in his councils by most virtuous and learned men, among whom were his secretary, Cassiodorus, (who afterward, under king Vitiges, put on the monastic habit in Calabria,) Ennodius, Boetius, and others; and whilst the French, Visigoths, and other new nations, which shared among them the spoils of the Roman empire, remained sunk in barbarism, his court was the centre of politeness; under the reign of a Goth literature was cultivated, and some rays of the golden age of Augustus seemed again to warm Italy, and make it almost forget that it was fallen a prey to barbarians. Of these advantages, the illustrious daughter of Theodoric, Amalasunta, reaped in her education the most happy fruits; but much more happy had Italy been if the prince himself had not forgot these excellent lessons.

Boetius, to unbend in some measure, and to improve his mind, always joined with his application to public affairs, the amusement of serious studies, and in his leisure hours made various mathematical instruments. He composed music, of which he sent several pieces to Clovis, the king of the French; he also made, and sent to Gondebald king of the Burgundians, sun-dials constructed to every different aspect of the sun, hydraulics, and machines which marked exactly the course of the sun, moon, and stars, though without wheels, weight, or spring, by the means only of water in a hollow tin globe, which turned perpetually by its own weight. The Burgundians admired how these machines were moved, and marked the hours, and watched them day and night to satisfy themselves that nobody ever touched them; and being convinced of the fact, imagined that some divinity resided in them, and moved the finger upon the dial-plate. This gave occasion to a correspondence between that nation and Boetius, which he made use of to dispose them heartily to embrace the maxims of the gospel.

This great man was a long time the oracle of his prince, and the idol of the people; and the highest honours in the state were not thought adequate to his virtue and abilities.

He was thrice consul, and for a singular distinction of his merits in 510, without a colleague. In 522 his two sons were appointed consuls in their non-age, a privilege which had only been granted to the sons of emperors. He confesseth, that if joy can be derived from frail honours of the world he had reason enough to rejoice on that day; when he saw his two sons carried in pomp through the city in a triumphal car, accompanied with the whole senate and an infinite concourse of people, and himself was seated in the great court of the circus between his two sons consuls, receiving there the congratulations of the king and all the people. On which day, after his harangue to the king in the senate-house, he was presented with a crown, and saluted king of eloquence. After the death of Elpis, he took to wife Rusticiana, the daughter of Symmachus, the most accomplished of all the Roman ladies. But such is the inconstancy of human things, that the highest honours often only raise a man that his fall may be the greater. Neither friends, dignities, nor riches could protect Boetius from the frowns of fortune; under which, however, his virtue, which was the sole cause of his sufferings, triumphed with the greater lustre.

Happy and glorious had Theodoric reigned so long as he followed the wise counsels of Boetius. But seeing himself firmly established on the throne he abandoned himself to his disposition to tyranny, and growing old, became melancholy, jealous, and mistrustful of every body that was about his person, making two avaricious and perfidious Goths, called Conigast and Trigilla, the depositaries of his whole authority and confidence. These ministers, to gratify their insatiable covetousness, began to load the people with excessive taxes, which the king had till then forborne. In a great scarcity, they obliged the people to sell their corn into the king's granaries, and for the soldiery almost at no price: they upon groundless suspicions removed Albinus and Paulinus, two of the most illustrious senators, and others. Boetius, undertook to lay before the king in private the tears of his provinces, which had formerly so often softened his heart to compassion, and opened his hands to liberality; but finding no redress, all avenues being obstructed by harpies and flatterers, he publicly addressed him on these heads in the full senate-house. He professed the most steady allegiance and obedience to him in his own name, and in that of the other senators; declaring that they revered his royal authority in whatever hands it was lodged, and left to him the distribution of his favours more free than are the rays of the sun. They craved, however, the liberty, which had ever

been the most precious inheritance of that empire, that they might lay open their grievances, and inform him that base flatterers abused his confidence to the excessive oppression of his subjects ; insomuch, that to be born rich was to become a prey, and that the very stones related the oppressions and moans of the people. He reminded him of those noble words which they had formerly often heard from his mouth, that "the flock may be shorn, but not flayed ; and that there is no tribute comparable to the precious commodities and advantage which a prince derived from the love of his subjects." He entreated him to reassume that spirit which made him reign in their hearts as well as in the provinces : to listen to those whose loyalty had been approved by the successes of his prosperous reign : to beat his subjects in his bosom, not to trample them under his feet, and to remember that kings are given by heaven for the happiness of the people ; not to govern by the utmost exertion and extent of their power, but by the rule of their obligations ; to be the fathers of children, not masters of slaves, and to reign over men, not as tyrants at will, but so that the laws themselves only govern. He conjured him to open his eyes, and see the miseries of the provinces bewailing the concussions which they suffered, whilst they were obliged to satisfy with their sweat and blood the avarice of some particular persons, who yet were as greedy as fire, and as insatiable as the abyss. The issue of this generous speech was, that it was deemed by the king an act of rebellion, and through his artifices Boetius was banished by a decree of the mercenary ungrateful senate. After which sentence, by an order of the king, he and his father-in-law Symmachus were carried prisoners to the strong fortress of Pavia in 523. Trigilla and Conigast unjustly accused them of high treason, and Symmachus was beheaded. Boetius was also put to death in a castle situated in a desert place, about the midway from Pavia to Rome. He is said to have been first tortured by means of a wheel, to which was fastened a cord, wherewith his head was bound ; and by the turning of the wheel, was squeezed with such violence that his eyes flew out. Then he was laid on a beam and beaten with clubs by two executioners upon all the different parts of his body from his neck down to his feet ; and being still alive, he was beheaded, or rather his head was clove asunder, in the fifty-fifth year of his age, on the 23rd of October, 525. Boetius is proved innocent of the conspiracy of which he was suspected with the good pope, in his new life prefixed to the third and last French translation of his book, *Consolation de la Philosophie*,

Traduction Nouvelle, 12mo. chez Gogue, 1771. The Catholics carried off his body, and some time after buried it at Pavia. Two hundred years after king Luitprand caused it to be removed into the church of St. Austin, where he honoured it with a stately mausoleum; and the emperor Otho III. erected another to his memory with magnificent inscriptions. His estates were confiscated by Theodoric, but after his death restored by his daughter Amalasunta to his widow, who survived till Belisarius had expelled the Goths; at which time he broke down all the statues of Theodoric in Italy, though his stately sepulchral monument still remains near Ravenna, the admiration of travellers. The tyrant having cut off several other senators, fell into a deep melancholy, and was distracted with jealousies, fears, and remorse. About three months after the death of the holy pope John, when the head of a great fish was served at table, he imagined it to be the head of Symmachus, demanding vengeance against him; nor was any one able to calm his apprehension; in this phrensy he was carried raging to his bed, and he died miserably a few days after.

The cause of the death of Boetius seems to have been complicated in part with that of religion, as was the death of pope John, whom he zealously seconded in defending the faith. The constancy with which he embraced his barbarous death, calling it a gift of God, and forbidding any one to weep at it, and his great zeal and piety, have rendered his memory dear to all good men. He fell a martyr of the liberty of the people, and of the dignity of the Roman senate, and probably in part of the Catholic faith, of which he was, with pope John, the chief support. An ancient author, published by Mabillon (*Iter. Ital.* p. 22.) affirms him to have been impeached for a correspondence with the emperor Justin. But the silence of other writers persuades us that this was a slander of his enemies.

Boetius translated from the Greek the works of Euclid, Ptolemy, Plato, Aristotle, Archimedes, &c. and with so much propriety, perspicuity, and purity of language, that Cassiodorus (*l. l. ep. 45.*) prefers his versions to the originals themselves. He was so much taken with the close reasoning and method of Aristotle, that he first translated several of his treatises into Latin. The works of our author are chiefly philosophical; with five theological tracts, principally written against the Nestorian and Eutychian heresies, and almost all dedicated to the deacon John, afterward pope and martyr. His Profession of Faith is one of the most methodical pieces of ecclesiastical antiquity, justly

styled by his editor, a golden book. But his master-piece are the five books *On the Consolation of Philosophy*, which he wrote without the help of any book, during his long confinement at Pavia, under frequent interrogatories, and the daily expectation of tortures and death. He names not Christ in this whole work, but he expresses the sentiments of a perfect Christian, in a dialogue with the increated wisdom. He establishes a divine providence from reason, and speaks of the torments of the world to come. The versification in this work is not equal to the prose, though the thoughts are every where sublime. It shows Boetius to have been one of the finest geniuses that the world has ever produced. He formed the most just and noble conceptions of things with an astonishing ease; and in the most abstract and difficult matters in metaphysics, theology, and every other subject. So elegant and so finished is this original piece, that few productions of the most flourishing ages of the Latin eloquence are superior to it in purity of style, in truth and loftiness of thought, or in sweetness of expression. He says, that the only cause of his disgrace was a desire of preserving the honour of the senate. (*De Consol. Phil. c. 1.*) In his juvenile works his style is more rugged. See his life by Abbe Gervaise at Paris in 1715, and by Ceillier, t. 15. p. 563. Also the life of Boetius by Richard Graham viscount Preston, prefixed to the English translation of his book *On the Consolation of Philosophy*, published with notes by that noble lord. Papebroke honours Severinus Boetius with the title of Saint, joins his life with that of pope John, and mentions the calendars of Ferrarius and of certain churches in Italy in which his name is inserted on the 23rd of October, on which he is commemorated in the divine office in St. Peter's church at Pavia. See Papebroke, t. 6. Maij, p. 707.

SAINT BEDE, CONFESSOR,

FATHER OF THE CHURCH.

From the short account he has given of himself in the last chapter of his *Ecclesiastical History*; his disciple Cuthbert's relation of his death; his two short anonymous lives extant, one in Capgrave, the other quoted by F. Mailhew; also from Simeon of Durham, *Hist. Dunelm.* c. 14, 15, et l. de Pontif. Eborac. in manuscript. Cotton. Malmesb. de Reg. Angl. l. 2. c. 4. Matt. of West. ad an. 734. See Mabillon, *sæc. 3. Ben.* p. 1. p. 539. Bulteau, t. 2. p. 316. Cave, *Hist. Lit.* t. 1. Ed. noviss. Ceillier, t. 18. p. 1. Tanner, *Bibl. Script. Brit.* p. 86. *Biographia Brit.* t. 1. V. Bede; and Smith in app. after Bede's *Ecel. Hist.* p. 791.

A. D. 735.