

had accompanied him from Wales and Cornwall. He was himself entirely taken up in his pastoral functions, and his diligence in acquitting himself of every branch of his obligations was equal to his apprehension of their weight. When he had completed the conversion of that country, he resigned his bishopric to a disciple, and retired into the isle of Bas, where he died in holy solitude, on the 12th of March, about the year 573, near one hundred years old.\* During the inroads of the Normans, his relics were removed to the abbey of Fleury, or St. Bennet's on the Loire, but were lost when the Calvinists plundered that church. Leon, the ancient city of the Osismians, in which he fixed his see, takes his name. His festival occurs in the ancient Breviary of Leon, on the 10th of October, perhaps the day of the translation of his relics. For in the ancient Breviary of Nantes, and most others, he is honoured on the 12th of March. See Le Cointe's Annals, the Bollandists on this day, and Lobineau in the Lives of the Saints of Brittany, from his acts compiled by a monk of Fleury, about the close of the tenth century.

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### MARCH XIII.

#### ST. NICEPHORUS, C.

##### PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE.

From his life by Ignatius, deacon of Constantinople, afterwards bishop of Nice, a contemporary author; and from the relation of his banishment by Theophanes. See Fleury, l. 45, 46, 47. Ceillier, t. 18. p. 467.

A.D. 828.

THEODORUS, the father of our saint, was secretary to the emperor Constantine Copronymus. but when that tyrant declared himself a persecutor of the Catholic church, the faithful minister remembering that we are bound to obey God rather than man, maintained the honour due to holy images with so

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\* St. Paul was ordained priest before he left Great Britain, about the year 530. The little island on the coast of Armorica, where he chose his first abode in France, was called Medonia, and seems to be the present Molene, situated between the Isle of Ushant and the coast. The first oratory which he built on the Continent, very near this island, seems to be the church called from him Lan-Pol.

much zeal, that he was stripped of his honours, scourged, tortured, and banished. The young Nicephorus was from his cradle animated to the practice of virtue by the domestic example of his father: and in his education, as his desires of improvement were great and the instructions he had very good, the progress he made was as considerable; till, by the maturity of his age, and of his study, he made his appearance in the world. When Constantine and Irene were placed on the imperial throne, and restored the Catholic faith, our saint was quickly introduced to their notice, and by his merits attained a large share in their favour. He was by them advanced to his father's dignity, and, by the lustre of his sanctity, was the ornament of the court, and the support of the state. He distinguished himself by his zeal against the Iconoclasts, and was secretary to the second council of Nice. After the death of St. Tarasius, patriarch of Constantinople, in 806, no one was found more worthy to succeed him than Nicephorus. To give an authentic testimony of his faith, during the time of his consecration he held in his hand a treatise which he had written in defence of holy images, and after the ceremony laid it up behind the altar, as a pledge that he would always maintain the tradition of the church. As soon as he was seated in the patriarchal chair, he began to consider how a total reformation of manners might be wrought, and his precepts from the pulpit received a double force from the example he set to others in an humble comportment, and steady uniform practice of eminent piety.\* He applied himself with unwearied diligence to all the duties of the ministry; and, by his zealous labours and invincible meekness and patience, kept virtue in countenance, and stemmed the tide of iniquity. But these glorious successes rendered him not so conspicuous as the constancy with which he despised the frowns of tyrants, and suffered persecution for the sake of justice.

The government having changed hands, the patrician Leo the Armenian, governor of Natolia, became emperor in 813, and being himself an Iconoclast, endeavoured both by artifices and open violence to establish that heresy. He studied in the first

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\* The Confession of Faith, which, upon his promotion, he sent to Pope Leo III., is published by Baronius, ad an. 811, and in the seventh tome of Labbe's Councils, &c. In it the saint gives a clear exposition of the principal mysteries of faith, of the invocation of saints, and the veneration due to relics and holy images.

place, by crafty suggestions, to gain over the holy patriarch to favour his design. But St. Nicephorus answered him: "We cannot change the ancient traditions: we respect holy images as we do the cross and the book of the gospels." For it must be observed that the ancient Iconoclasts venerated the book of the gospels, and the figure of the cross, though by an inconsistency usual in error, they condemned the like relative honour with regard to holy images. The saint showed, that far from derogating from the supreme honour of God, we honour him when for his sake we pay a subordinate respect to his angels, saints, prophets, and ministers: also when we give a relative inferior honour to inanimate things which belong to his service, as sacred vessels, churches, and images. But the tyrant was fixed in his errors, which he at first endeavoured to propagate by stratagems. He therefore privately encouraged soldiers to treat contemptuously an image of Christ which was on a great cross at the brazen gate of the city; and thence took occasion to order the image to be taken off the cross, pretending he did it to prevent a second profanation. St. Nicephorus saw the storm gathering, and spent most of his time in prayer with several holy bishops and abbots. Shortly after, the emperor, having assembled together certain Iconoclast bishops in his palace, sent for the patriarch and his fellow-bishops. They obeyed the summons, but entreated his majesty to leave the government of the church to its pastors. Emilian, bishop of Cyzicus, one of their body, said: "If this be an ecclesiastical affair, let it be discussed in the church, according to custom, not in the palace." Euthymius, bishop of Sardes, said: "For these eight hundred years past, since the coming of Christ, there have been always pictures of him, and he has been honoured in them. Who shall now have the boldness to abolish so ancient a tradition?" St. Theodorus, the Studite, spoke after the bishops, and said to the emperor: "My Lord do not disturb the order of the church. God hath placed in it apostles, prophets, pastors, and teachers.(1) You he hath entrusted with the care of the state; but leave the church to its pastors." The emperor, in a rage, drove them from his presence. Some time after, the Iconoclast bishops held a pretended council in the imperial palace, and cited the patriarch to appear before them. To their summons he returned this answer: "Who gave you

(1) Eph. iv. 11.

this authority? was it the pope, or any of the patriarchs? In my diocese you have no jurisdiction." He then read the canon which declares those excommunicated who presume to exercise any act of jurisdiction in the diocese of another bishop. They, however, proceeded to pronounce against him a mock sentence of deposition; and the holy pastor, after several attempts made secretly to take away his life, was sent by the emperor into banishment. Michael the Stutterer, who in 820 succeeded Leo in the imperial throne, was engaged in the same heresy, and was also a persecutor of our saint, who died in his exile, on the 2nd of June, in the monastery of St. Theodorus, which he had built in the year 828, the fourteenth of his banishment, being about seventy years old. By the order of the empress Theodora, his body was brought to Constantinople with great pomp, in 846, on the 13th of March, on which day he is commemorated in the Roman Martyrology.\*

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\* St. Nicephorus has left us a chronicle from the beginning of the world: of which the best editions are that of F. Goar, with the chronicle of George Syncellus at Paris, in 1652, and that of Venice among the Byzantine historians, in 1729. Also a short history from the reign of Mauritius to that of Constantine and Irene, published at Paris, in 1616, by F. Petau; and reprinted among the Byzantine historians, at Paris, in 1649, and again at Venice, in 1729. The style is justly commended by Photius. (cod. 66.) The seventeen canons of St. Nicephorus are extant in the collection of the councils, t. 7. p. 1297, &c. In the second he declares it unlawful to travel on Sundays without necessity. Cotelier has published four others of this saint, with five of the foregoing, and his letter to Hilarion and Eustrasius, containing learned resolutions of several cases. (Monum. Græc. t. 3. p. 451.) St. Nicephorus wrote several learned tracts against the Iconoclasts, as three Antirrhethics or Confutations, &c. Some of these are printed in the Library of the Fathers, and F. Combefis's Supplement or Auctuarium, t. 1. in Canisius's *Lectiones Antiquæ*, republished by Basnage, part 2, &c. But a great number are only found in MSS. in the libraries of England, Paris, and Rome. The saint often urges that the Iconoclasts condemned themselves by allowing veneration to the cross; for the image of Christ upon the cross is more than the bare cross. In the second Antirrhetic he most evidently establishes the real presence of the Body of Christ in the Eucharist; which passage is quoted by Leo Allatius. (l. 3. de Consens. Ecclesiæ Occident. et Orient. c. 15. p. 1223.) He does the same almost in the same words, l. de Cherubinibus a Moyse Factis, c. 7. apud Canis. t. 2. ed. Basn. part 2. p. 13. & t. 9. Bibl. Patr. Three Antirrhethics are entitled, Against Mamonas (i. e. Constantine Copronymus) and the Iconoclasts. A fourth was written by him against Eusebius and Epiphanius, to prove that Eusebius of Cæsarea was an obstinate Arian, and Epiphanius a favourer of Manicheism, and a very different person from St. Epiphanius of Salamine. F. Anselm Banduri, a Benedictin monk of Ragusa, undertook at Paris a complete edition of the works of St. Nicephorus, in two volumes in folio; but his death prevented the publication. His learned Prospectus, dated in the monastery of Saint Germain-des-Près, in 1705, is inserted by Fabricius in *Biblioth. Gr. t. 6. p. 640.* and in part by Oudin, de Script. t. 2. p. 13.

It is by a wonderful effect of his most gracious mercy and singular love that God is pleased to visit all his faithful servants with severe trials, and to purify their virtue in the crucible, that by being exercised it may be made heroic and perfect. By suffering with patience, and in a Christian spirit, a soul makes higher and quicker advances in pure love, than by any other means or by any other good works. Let no persons then repine, i by sickness, persecution, or disgraces, they are hindered from doing the good actions which they desire, or rendered incapable of discharging the duties of their station, or of labouring to convert others. God always knows what is best for us and others: we may safely commend to him his own cause, and all souls which are dearer to him than they can be to us. By this earnest prayer and perfect sacrifice of ourselves to God, we shall more effectually draw upon them the divine mercy than by any endeavours of our own. Let us leave to God the choice of his instruments and means in the salvation of others. As to ourselves, it is our duty to give him what he requires of us: nor can we glorify him by any sacrifice either greater or more honourable, and more agreeable to him than that of a heart under the heaviest pressure, ever submissive to him, embracing with love and joy every order of his wisdom, and placing its entire happiness and comfort in the accomplishment of his adorable most holy will. The great care of a Christian in this state, in order to sanctify his sufferings, must be to be constantly united to God, and to employ his affections in the most fervent interior exercises of entire sacrifice and resignation, of confidence, love, praise, adoration, penance, and compunction, which he excites by suitable aspirations.

#### ST. EUPHRASIA, V.

ANTIGONUS, the father of this saint, was a nobleman of the first rank and quality in the court of Theodosius the younger, nearly allied in blood to that emperor, and honoured by him with several great employments in the state. He was married to Euphrasia, a lady no less illustrious for her birth than virtue, by whom he had only one daughter and heiress, called also Euphrasia, the saint of whom we treat. After her birth, her pious parents, by mutual consent, engaged themselves by vow to pass the remainder of their lives in perpetual continency, that they