

was but lately converted to God, by the sacred singing at church he was moved to shed abundance of sweet tears.<sup>1</sup> But he much bewails the danger of being too much carried away by the delight of the harmony, and confesses that he had sometimes been more pleased with the music than affected with what was sung,<sup>2</sup> for which he severely condemns himself. St. Charles Borromeo in his youth allowed himself no other amusement but that of grave music, with a view to that of the Church. As to music as an amusement, too much time must never be given to it, and extreme care ought to be taken, as a judicious and experienced tutor observes, that children be not set to learn it very young, because it is a thing which bewitches the senses, dissipates the mind exceedingly, and alienates it from serious studies, as daily experience shows. Soft and effeminate music is to be always shunned with abhorrence, as the corrupter of the heart, and the poison of virtue.

### ST. THEODORUS THE STUDITE, ABBOT.

St. PLATO, the holy abbot of Symboleon upon Mount Olympus, in Bithynia, being obliged to come to Constantinople for certain affairs, was received there as an angel sent from heaven, and numberless conversions were the fruit of his example and pious exhortations. He reconciled families that were at variance, promoted all virtue and corrected vice. Soon after his return to Symboleon, the whole illustrious family of his sister Theoctista resolved to imitate his example, and renouncing the world, founded the abbey of

<sup>1</sup> S. Aug. Conf. 1. 9, c. 6. 1. 10. c. 33.

<sup>2</sup> Ib. 1. 10. c. 33.

Saccudion near Constantinople in 781. Among these novices no one was more fervent in every practice of virtue than Theodorus, the son of Theoctista, then in the twenty-second year of his age. St. Plato was with difficulty prevailed upon to resign his abbacy in Bithynia to take upon him the government of this new monastery, in 782. Theodorus made so great progress in virtue and learning that, in 794, his uncle abdicated the government of the house, and, by the unanimous consent of the community, invested him in that dignity, shutting himself up in a narrow cell.

The young emperor Constantine having, in 795, put away Mary, his lawful wife, after seven years' cohabitation, and taken to his bed Theodota, a near relation of SS. Plato and Theodorus, the saints declared loudly against such scandalous enormities. The emperor desired exceedingly to gain Theodorus, and employed for that purpose his new empress Theodota; but though she used her utmost endeavours, by promises of large sums of money and great presents, and by the consideration of their kindred, her attempts were fruitless. The emperor then went himself to the monastery; but neither the abbot nor any of his monks were there to receive him. The prince returned to his palace in a great rage, and sent two officers with an order to see Theodorus and those monks who were his most resolute adherents severely scourged. The punishment was inflicted on the abbot and ten monks with such cruelty that the blood ran down their bodies in streams; which they suffered with great meekness and patience. After this they were banished to Thessalonica, and a strict order was published, forbidding any one to receive or entertain them, so that even the abbots of that country durst not afford them any relief. St. Plato was confined in the abbey of St. Michael. St. Theodorus wrote him

from Thessalonica an account of his sufferings, with the particulars of his journey.<sup>1</sup> He wrote also to pope Leo III. and received an answer highly commending his wisdom and constancy. The emperor's mother, Irene, having gained the principal officers, dethroned her son, and ordered his eyes to be put out: which was executed with such violence that he died of the wounds in 797. After this Irene reigned five years alone, and recalled the exiles. St. Theodorus returned to Saccudion, and reassembled his scattered flock; but finding this monastery exposed to the insults of the Mussulmans or Saracens, who made incursions to the gates of Constantinople, took shelter within the walls of the city. The patriarch and the empress pressed him to settle in the famous monastery of Studius, so called from its founder, a patrician and consul, who, coming from Rome to Constantinople, had formerly built that monastery. Constantine Copronymus had expelled the monks; but St. Theodorus restored this famous abbey, and had the comfort to see in it above a thousand monks.

In 802 the empress Irene was deposed by Nicephorus, her chief treasurer, and banished to a monastery in Prince's Island, and afterward to isle of Lesbos, where she died in close confinement in 803. Nicephorus assumed the imperial diadem on the last day of October, in 802. He was one of the most treacherous and perfidious of men, dissimulation being his chief talent, and it was accompanied with the basest cruelty against all whom he but suspected to be his enemies; of which the chronicles of Theophanes and Nicephorus have preserved most shocking instances. He was a fast friend to the Manichees or Paulicians, who were numerous in Phrygia and Lycaonia, near his own country, and was fond of

their oracles and superstitions to a degree of frenzy. He grievously oppressed the Catholic bishops and monasteries, and when remonstrances were made to him by a prudent friend, how odious he had rendered himself to the whole empire by his avarice and impiety, his answer was, "My heart is hardened. Never expect any thing but what you see from Nicephorus." Setting out in May 811, to invade Bulgaria, he desired to gain St. Theodorus, who had boldly reprov'd him for his impiety. He sent certain magistrates to the holy abbot for this purpose. The saint answered them as if he was speaking to the emperor, and said, "You ought to repent, and not make the evil incurable. Not content to bring yourselves to the brink of the precipice, you drag others headlong after you. He whose eye beholdeth all things, declareth by my mouth that you shall not return from this expedition. Nicephorus entered Bulgaria with a superior force, and refused all terms which Crummius, king of the Bulgarians, offered him. The barbarian, being driven to despair, came upon him by surprise, enclosed, attacked, and slew him in his tent on the 25th of July, in 811, when he had reigned eight years and nine months. Many patricians and the flower of the Christian army perished in this action. Great numbers were made prisoners, and many of these were tormented, hanged, beheaded, or shot to death with arrows, rather than consent to renounce their faith, as the Bulgarians, who were then pagans, would have forced them to do. These are honoured by the Greeks as martyrs on the 23d of July. King Crummius caused a drinking-cup to be made of the emperor's head, to be used on solemn festivals, according to the custom of the ancient Scythians. Stauracius, the son of Nicephorus, was proclaimed emperor; but he being wounded in the late battle, took the monastic habit, and died of his

wounds in the beginning of the following year. Two months after the death of Nicephorus, Michael Curopolates, surnamed Rangabè, who had married Procopia, the daughter of Nicephorus, was crowned emperor on the 2d of October. He was magnificent, liberal, pious, and a zealous Catholic. By his endeavours all divisions in the Church of Constantinople were made up, and the patriarch St. Nicephorus reconciled with St. Plato and St. Theodorus. Michael commanded the Paulicians to be punished with death; and some were beheaded. But St. Nicephorus put a stop to the further execution of that edict, by persuading him that it was better to leave those heretics room for repentance, though the abominations which they practised were most execrable. An Armenian called Paul, who made his escape from Constantinople into Cappadocia, and there setting up a school, and pretending to inspiration, continued chief of this sect for thirty years: from him these Manichees were called Paulicians, but by his sons and others, were soon divided into several sects, all infamous for abominable impurities.<sup>1</sup> St. Plato died in 813, on the 19th of March, and the emperor Michael having been shamefully defeated by the Bulgarians, resolved to resign the empire. This design he communicated to Leo the Armenian, governor of Natolia, and son of the patrician Bardas, who thereupon was chosen and crowned the emperor, on the 11th of July. Michael, with his wife and children, took sanctuary in a church, and all of them embraced the monastic state. Leo defended Constantinople against the barbarians; but having perfidiously attempted to kill their king, under pretence of a conference, that prince in rage, took Adrianople, and carried the archbishop Manuel and the rest of the inhabitants captives into Bulgaria, where they converted

<sup>1</sup> See Theophan. Contin.



many to the Christian faith. For their zeal in preaching Christ, the archbishop and three hundred and seventy-six other Christian captives were put to cruel deaths by order of the successors of Crummus. The Greek Church honours them as martyrs on the 22d of January.

During these public commotions, St. Theodorus enjoyed the sweet calm of his retirement, studying every day to advance in the perfection of holy charity, and to die more perfectly to himself. He was versed in the sciences, but was the more solicitous to acquire a settled humility of heart, without which learning serves only to puff up. Humility and purity of heart give light of understanding, purge the affections, and illustrate the mind; for it is impossible, as Cassian remarks,<sup>1</sup> that an unclean mind should obtain the gift of spiritual knowledge, or an unmortified heart that of divine charity. Our saint's solitude was disturbed by a storm which threatened the Eastern Church. The heresy of the Iconoclasts, which Leo the Isaurian had set up in the East in 725, was espoused by Leo the Armenian, who, in December, 814, signified his intention of abolishing holy images to the patriarch St. Nicephorus. The patriarch replied: "We cannot alter the ancient traditions. We venerate images as we do the cross and the books of the gospels, though there is nothing written concerning them," (for the Iconoclasts agreed to reverence the cross and the gospels.) The holy patriarch was deprived in 815, and Theodotus Cassiterus, an Iconoclast, at that time equerry to the emperor, an illiterate layman was ordained in his room. As soon as Nicephorus was deposed, the enemies of holy images began to deface, pull down, burn, and profane them all manner of ways. St. Theodorus the Studite, to repair this scandal as

<sup>1</sup> Collat. 14. c. 10.

much as in him lay, ordered all his monks to take images in their hands, and to carry them solemnly lifted up in the procession on Palm-Sunday, singing a hymn which begins, "We reverence thy most pure image," and others of the like nature, in honour of Christ. The emperor, upon notice hereof, sent him a prohibition to do the like upon pain of scourging and death. The holy abbot, nevertheless, continued to encourage all to honour holy images, for which the emperor banished him into Mysia, and commanded him to be there closely confined in the castle of Mesope, near Apollonia. He forebore not still to animate the Catholics by letters, of which a great number are extant. His correspondence being discovered, the emperor ordered him to be conveyed to the tower Bonitus, at a greater distance, in Natolia; and afterward sent Nicetas, his commissary, to see him severely scourged. Nicetas, seeing the cheerfulness with which St. Theodorus put off his tunic, and offered his naked body, wasted with fasting, to the blows, was moved with compassion and conceived the highest veneration for the servant of God. In order to spare him, as often as the sentence was to be executed, he contrived, under pretence of decency, to send all others out of the dungeon; then, throwing a sheep-skin over Theodorus's back, he discharged upon it a great number of blows, which were heard by those without; then pricking his arm, to stain the whips with blood, he showed them when he came out, and seemed out of breath with the pains he had taken. By his indulgence, St. Theodorus was able to write several letters in support of the Catholic cause. The most remarkable are those which he sent to all the patriarchs, and to pope Paschal. To this last he writes: "Give ear, O apostolic prelate, shepherd appointed by God over the flock of Jesus Christ; who have received the keys of the

kingdom of heaven; the rock on which the Catholic Church is built; for you are Peter, since you fill his see. Come to our assistance.”<sup>1</sup> The pope having vigorously ejected from his communion Theodotus and all the Iconoclasts, St. Theodorus wrote him a letter of thanks, in which he said: “You are from the beginning the pure source of the orthodox faith: you are the secure harbour of the universal Church, her shelter against the storms of heretics, and the city of refuge chosen by God for safety.”<sup>2</sup> All the five patriarchs were unanimous in the condemnation of the Iconoclasts, as appears by the letters of St. Theodorus, and other monuments.

Several famous Iconoclasts having been converted by our saint, he and his disciple Nicholas were both hung in the air, and cruelly torn with whips, each receiving a hundred stripes. After this they were shut up in a close and noisome prison, so strictly guarded, that no one could come near them. Here they remained three years, enduring extreme cold in winter, and almost stifled in summer; eaten by all sorts of vermin, and tormented with hunger and thirst: for their guards, who were continually scoffing at them, threw them in at a hole in a window only a little piece of bread every other day. St. Theodorus testifies, that he expected they would be left very soon to perish with hunger; and adds, “God is yet but too merciful to us.”<sup>3</sup> He strenuously maintained the rigorous discipline of canonical penances, which all penitents were to undergo, who, for fear of torments or otherwise, had conformed to the Iconoclasts.<sup>4</sup> One of his letters being at length intercepted, the emperor sent orders to the governor of the East, to cause

1 S. Theod. Studit. ep. 3.

2 Ep. 15.

3 S. Theod. Stud. ep. 34.

4 Ep. 11, &c.



him to be severely chastised. The governor committed the execution to an officer, who caused Nicholas, the disciple who had writ the letter, to be cruelly scourged; then a hundred stripes to be given to Theodorus; and after this, Nicholas to be again scourged, and then to be left lying on the ground, exposed to the cold air, in the month of February. The abbot Theodorus also lay stretched on the ground, out of breath, and was a long time unable to take any rest, or receive almost any nourishment. His disciple, seeing him in this condition, forgetting his own pain, moistened his tongue with a little broth, and after he had brought him to himself, endeavoured to dress his wounds, from which he was forced to cut away a great deal of mortified and corrupted flesh. Theodorus was in a high fever, and for three months in excessive pain. Before he was recovered an officer arrived, sent by the emperor to conduct him and Nicholas to Smyrna, in June, 819. They were forced to walk in the day-time, and at night were put in irons.

At Smyrna, the archbishop, who was one of the most furious among the Iconoclasts, kept Theodorus confined in a dark dungeon under ground eighteen months, and caused him to receive a third time a hundred stripes. When the saint set out from thence to be conveyed to Constantinople, the inhuman archbishop said, he would desire the emperor to send an officer to cut off his head, or at least to cut out his tongue. The persecution ended the same year, with the life of him who had raised it. Michael, commander of the confederates, (a body of troops so called,) was cast into prison by the emperor for a conspiracy against him, and his execution was only deferred one day, out of respect to the feast of Christmas, at the intercession of the empress. In the mean time the rest of the conspirators slew

Leo at matins on Christmas night: his four sons and their mother were banished to the isle of Prote; and Michael was taken out of his dungeon, and, his fetters being knocked off, was crowned emperor. He was a native of Phrygia, and, from an impediment in his speech, is surnamed Michael the Stutterer. He had been educated in a certain heresy, in which was a mixture of Judaism, most of its laws being observed by this sect, except that baptism is substituted for circumcision, as Theophanes informs us. He denied the resurrection, maintained fornication to be lawful, and contemned studies, valuing himself only in the knowledge of mules, horses, and sheep. He at first affected great moderation toward the Catholics, but soon threw off the mask, and became a great persecutor. In the beginning of his reign the exiles were restored, and, among others, St. Theodorus the Studite came out of his dungeon after full seven years imprisonment, from 815 to 821. He wrote a letter of thanks to Michael, exhorting him to be united with Rome, the first of the Churches, and by her with the patriarchs, &c. Going toward Constantinople, he was received with the greatest honours, and wrought many miracles on the road. The new emperor refused to suffer any images in the city of Constantinople: on which account St. Theodorus, after making fruitless remonstrances to that prince, left it, and retired into the peninsula of Tryphon, and was followed by his disciples. He was taken ill in the beginning of November, yet walked to church on the fourth day, which was Sunday, and celebrated the holy sacrifice. His distemper increasing, he was not able to speak aloud, but he dictated to a secretary his last instructions, and to a great number of bishops and devout persons, who came to visit him in his sickness; and he left his monks an excellent testament, recommending to them fer-

your in all monastic duties, never to have any property, not so much as of a needle; to leave the care of temporal things to their steward, exacting from them an account, and reserving to themselves only the care of souls; to admit no delicacy in eating, not even in the entertainment of guests; to keep no money in the monastery, and to give all superfluity to the poor; to walk on foot, and when necessary to ride in long journeys to make use only of an ass; not to open the gate of a monastery to any woman, nor ever to speak to any except in presence of two witnesses; to catechize or hold conferences three times a week; to transact no business, spiritual or temporal, without taking the advice of the master, &c. These rules were then observed by the monks in the East, and are more enlarged upon in his greater catechism. When his last hour approached, he desired the usual prayers of the Church to be read, received extreme unction, and afterward the viaticum. After this, the wax tapers were lighted, and his brethren, placing themselves round about him in a circle, began the prayers appointed for dying persons. They were singing the hundred and eighteenth psalm, which the Greeks still sing at funerals, when he expired in the sixty-eighth year of his age. He died in the peninsula of Tryphon, on the coast of Bithynia, near Constantinople, on the 11th of November: and is commemorated by the Latins on the day following. His successor, Naucratus, abbot of Studius, wrote the circumstances of his death in a circular letter. His body was translated to the monastery of Studius, eighteen years after his death.

See the letter of Naucratus, and the saint's authentic anonymous life; also Theophanes in Chronogr. &c.