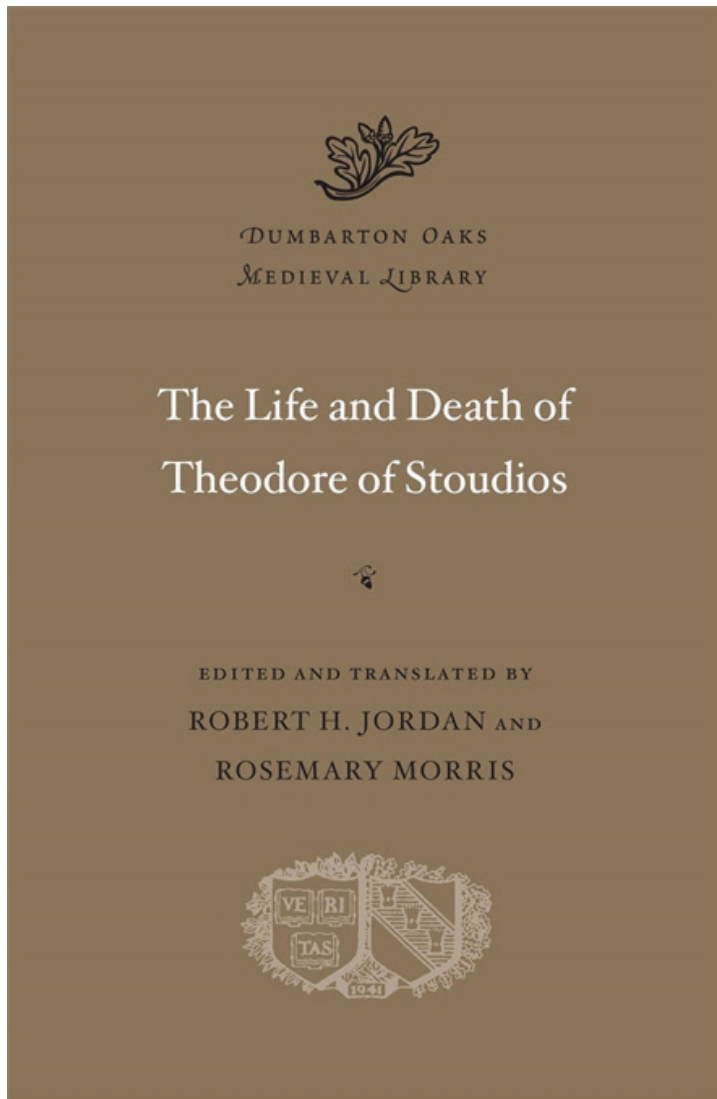


# The Life and Death of Theodore of Stoudios

EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY  
ROBERT H. JORDAN AND ROSEMARY MORRIS



Theodore (759–826), abbot of the influential Constantinopolitan monastery of Stoudios, is celebrated as a saint by the Orthodox Church for his stalwart defense of icon veneration. Three important texts promoting the monastery and the memory of its founder are collected in *The Life and Death of Theodore of Stoudios*.

In the *Life of Theodore*, **Michael the Monk** describes a golden age at Stoudios, as well as Theodore's often antagonistic encounters with imperial rulers. The *Encyclical Letter of Naukratios*, written in 826 by his successor, informed the scattered monks of their leader's death. *Translation and Burial* contains brief biographies of Theodore and his brother, along with an eyewitness account of their reburial at Stoudios.

These works, translated into English for the first time, appear here alongside new editions of the Byzantine Greek texts.

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# The Life and Death of Theodore of Stoudios



Edited and Translated by

ROBERT H. JORDAN

and

ROSEMARY MORRIS

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LIFE OF THEODORE  
OF STOUDIOS

Βίος καὶ πολιτεία τοῦ ὁσίου πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ ὁμολογητοῦ Θεοδώρου ἡγουμένου μονῆς τῶν Στουδίου συγγραφεὶς παρὰ Μιχαὴλ Μοναχοῦ. Εὐλόγησον πάτερ.

I

Πολλοὶ μὲν τῶν ἁγίων κατὰ διαφόρους χώρας τε καὶ πατριάς ἐν τοῖς ἀνόπιν διαλάμπαντες χρόνοις, δίκην ἡλίου ταῖς τῶν οἰκείων ἀρετῶν ἀκτίσι τοὺς παρατυγχάνοντας κατεφώτισαν, καὶ πρὸς ζῆλον ἐνθέου πολιτείας τοὺς ἐραστὰς τῶν καλῶν, ἢ καὶ τοὺς ἄλλως ἐξ ἀπροσεξίας ἔχοντας, συνήλασάν τε καὶ πρὸς τὸ κρεῖττον ἠρέθισαν. Οὐδὲν δὲ ἤττον καὶ ὁ τοῦ καθ' ἡμᾶς συλλόγου πεφηνῶς ποιμνιάρχης καὶ τῆς Χριστοῦ ὁμολογίας πυρσολαμπῆς στῦλος Θεόδωρος, ἐν τοῖς ἡμετέροις ἀνατεταλκῶς οἶά τις πολύφωτος ἀστὴρ τόποις καὶ χρόνοις, τὴν οἰκουμένην πᾶσαν μικροῦ δεῖν ταῖς ἀσκητικαῖς λάμψεσι καὶ τοῖς τῆς ἀθλητικῆς ὁμολογίας περιέβαλεν ἀγωνίσμασι. Καὶ τοσοῦτός γε ὦφθη τῶν ἐν ἀμφοτέροις διαπρεψάντων καρτερία τε βίου καὶ ἀρετῆς ἀνδρεία ἐκθυμότητος ζηλωτής, καὶ εἰς ἑαυτὸν τὰ τούτων συλλελεχῶς ἀριστεύματα, ὡς μέχρις ἐφ' ἑαυτὸν καὶ νότου, ἐσπέρας τε καὶ τῶν ἀρκτικῶν διαδραμεῖν τοὺς τῆς

2

The life and conduct of our saintly father and confessor Theodore, abbot of the monastery of Stoudios, composed by Michael the Monk. Bless us, father.

I

Many of the holy ones, who in earlier times shone in different lands and families, enlightened like the sun those whom they encountered with the rays of their own virtues, drawing those who loved things that are good to an emulation of the godly way of life and spurring on to a better course those who were indifferent as a result of carelessness. No less too did Theodore, who came to be the chief shepherd of our flock and a blazing pillar of confession in Christ, rising like some splendid star in our place and time, suffuse almost all the world with the brilliance of his ascetic feats and the brave deeds of his confessional trials. As a very ardent emulator of those who had been conspicuous both for the steadfastness of their lives and the bravery of their virtue, he was seen to have gathered in himself that which caused them to excel, with the result that reports of his teaching spread as far as the regions of the east and south, and those of the west and north. So too, offshoots from the

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διδασκαλίας αὐτοῦ φθόγγους μερῶν· οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς ὑπὸ Θεοῦ κατευλογηθείσης αὐτοῦ πνευματικῆς τῶν μαθητῶν φυτουργίας περὶ αὐτοὺς ἐκταθῆναι τὰ κλήματα καὶ παραδείσους ψυχῶν τῷ ὄντι ἀμφιλαφεῖς καὶ ἀρετῆς ἐντεῦθεν συγκροτηθῆναι παιδευτήρια, καὶ οὐκ ἔστι τὸ παράπαν χῶρος, οὐ τὸ ὄνομα τῆς πολιτείας αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸ ἐπώνυμον οὐκ ἀφίκετο.

<sup>2</sup> Ἄλλ' ὅπως μὲν ὁ ἀοίδιμος ἐκεῖνος καθηγητῆς καὶ πατήρ τῆς καθ' ἡμᾶς ἐβίω ζωῆς, κατὰ πόδας τῆς αὐτοῦ κοιμήσεως ἔνιοι τῶν αὐτοῦ φοιτητῶν ὠδικῶς ὑπηνίξαντο, κεφαλαιώσαντες τὰ πολυμερῆ τῆς κατὰ πλάτος ὑψηλοτάτης αὐτοῦ πολιτείας ἀνδραγαθήματα ἐν ὀλίγαις ἐπέων λέξεσιν· μεθ' οὓς καὶ ἕτεροι τῶν τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ἱερομυστῶν ἐν συγγραφῆς εἶδει καὶ ἐγκωμίων σχηματισμῷ γλαφυρῶς ἄγαν κατεπεκτάδην συνέταξαν ὑπόμνημα, εἰς γῆρας θησαυρίσαντες λήθης φάρμακον.

<sup>3</sup> Καὶ ἦν μὲν ἀκόλουθον τοῖς φιλοπόνοις καὶ μὴ λίαν ἀναπεπτωκόσιν ἐξ ἀμαθίας τὸν νοῦν τοῖς ἤδη πονηθεῖσι κατεντυγχάνειν, ἀκακίθην ἐκδιδάσκεσθαι τὴν ἅπασαν τοῦ πανιέρου πατρὸς ὑπερανεστηκυῖαν τῶν πολλῶν βιοτήν, καὶ τὸ ὠφέλιμον δρέπεσθαι, εἴπερ ἐθέλοιεν, θαυμάζειν τε τῆς σοφίας αὐτοῦ τὸ βάθος καὶ τὸν τρόπον τῆς κοινοβιακῆς ἀναστροφῆς, τὰς τε ἀκριβεῖς αὐτοῦ παραδόσεις καὶ θεοτερπεῖς νομοθεσίας, ἃς ἐκεῖνος τοῖς αὐτοῦ νομοθετήσας καὶ παραδεδωκῶς μαθηταῖς, “ἄλλος τις Βασίλειος” ἐν τοῖς κατ' αὐτὸν ἐφημίζετο χρόνοις.

<sup>4</sup> Ἄλλ' ἐπεὶ τὸ κοινὸν τῆς ἀδελφότητος, καὶ ἡ τῶν πολλῶν διάνοια μικρὰ βλέπουσα ὡς τὰ πολλὰ τὸ πεζὸν καὶ

spiritual plantation of his disciples that had been blessed by God spread out around them, and really luxuriant gardens of souls were established and from them schools of virtue; and there is nowhere at all which the fame of his conduct and his name did not reach.

Immediately after his death, some of his disciples made <sup>2</sup> reference in verse to how that famous teacher and father of our life used to live, summarizing in a few poetic phrases the numerous courageous deeds of his far-reaching and most sublime way of life. After them others of the holy initiates of the Church also compiled very elegantly an extensive record in narrative form and in the style of a panegyric, treasuring up for their old age a remedy for forgetfulness.

Subsequently, those who were industrious and whose <sup>3</sup> minds had not flagged too much through ignorance were able to consult what had already been established and from that could learn all about the all-holy father's mode of life, which surpassed that of most men, culling what was beneficial, if they wished to, and admiring the depth of his wisdom and the manner of his cenobitic life, as well as his strict traditions and precepts that brought delight to God; those which he decreed and handed on to his disciples, gaining the name “second Basil” among his contemporaries.

But since the community of the brethren and most <sup>4</sup> people's understanding (which expects brevity) is known to

ἀπλοϊκώτερον τῆς φράσεως προτιμᾶν ἐπίσταται (ὡς ἀνύστακτον συντηροῦν τὸν ἐπόπτην τῶν λεγομένων νοῦν, καὶ ὄνησιν ἐμποιοῦν ταῖς σφῶν αὐτῶν ὑπὲρ τὸ σκληρὸν καὶ βαθύγλωσσον τῶν νοημάτων ψυχαῖς), φέρε, ταῖς ὑμετέραις πειθαρχήσαντες ἐντολαῖς, πατέρων αἰδεσιμώτατοι, τοὺς περὶ τοῦ θείου τούτου προπάτορος ἡμῶν καὶ πανσόφου διδασκάλου τῆς οἰκουμένης λόγους καὶ ἡμεῖς οἱ ταπεινοὶ καὶ οὐδενὸς λόγου ἄξιοι, ὡς οἶόν τε, καταθώμεθα, πολὺ μὲν κατόπιν τοῦ πρὸς ἄξίαν ἰόντας, ὡς ἐνὸν δὲ τῇ ἀσθενείᾳ ἡμῶν πρὸς τὸ εὐληπτὸν τε καὶ καταφανὲς μεταποιουμένους.

2

Ἦ τὸν μέγαν τοῦτον καὶ ἀκαταγώνιστον τῆς ὀρθοδόξου πίστεως ἀριστέα καὶ τοῦ μοναδικοῦ τάγματος διαβόητον κυβερνήτην ἐνεγκαμένη τε καὶ ἐκθρέψασα Θεόδωρον, ἡ τῶν πανταχοῦ γῆς πόλεων προκαθημένη πέφυκε πόλις, καθ' ἣν ἐκράτει τῆς ἀρχῆς τηνικάδε ὁ ἐξ ἀσεβοῦς ἀσεβέστερος ἐκραγεῖς γόνος, Κωνσταντῖνος ὁ Κοπρώνυμος, καὶ τῆς Χριστομανικῆς αἰρέσεως δευτερωτῆς ἀναφανεῖς γενικώτατος, ἐκθλίβων τὸν νέον Χριστοῦ Ἰσραὴλ, καθάπερ ποτὲ ὁ Αἰγύπτιος νοῦς Φαραῶ, τῷ πηλῷ καὶ τῇ πλινθείᾳ τῆς εἰκονομαχικῆς πυργοποιίας διὰ τῶν πικρῶν τῆς τοιαύτης οἰκοδομίας ἐργοδιωκτῶν, καθ' ὅτι ἔβλεπεν

6

prefer prose and a simpler mode of expression for the most part (as it keeps the mind vigilant in contemplation of what is being said and creates enjoyment in their souls more than does the difficult and verbose expression of ideas), come now, obeying your commands, most reverend fathers, let me too, being humble and of no account, set down to the best of my ability a narrative about this godly forefather of ours and this all-wise teacher of the world, a narrative that falls far short of his due but, as far as my weakness permits, strives after ease of understanding and clarity.

2

The city which produced and reared Theodore, this great and invincible champion of the orthodox faith and famous guide of the monastic order, is the one that presides over cities everywhere on earth. At that time Constantine Kopronymos, the even more impious offspring that burst forth from an impious father, held power there, and had proved to be a most prominent exponent of the heresy raging against Christ. He was oppressing the new Israel of Christ, as once the Egyptian mind of Pharaoh did with clay and brick-making, building the tower of his war against icons with the assistance of the harsh taskmasters of this construction,

7

αὐτὸν πρὸς τὴν γῆν ἐπειγόμενον τῆς Εὐαγγελικῆς πολιτείας, καὶ ἀνυπερθέτως τοῖς Δεσποτικοῖς ἐξακολουθοῦντα θεσμοθετήμασιν.

<sup>2</sup> Γονεῖς δὲ αὐτῷ, εὐσεβεῖς τε καὶ εὐπατρίδαι, καὶ τῆς ἀποκληρωθείσης αὐτοῖς πρὸς τῶν φυσάντων προσηγορίας διὰ πραγμάτων τὰς σημασίας ἐπιδήλους ἔχοντες, ὧν ὁ μὲν πατήρ, φῶς ἀληθῶς—κατὰ τὴν λάλον τῶν Ἀθηναίων γλῶτταν—παρὰ Θεοῦ γεννηθείς, φωτεινὸς τοῖς τρόποις καὶ τῇ κλήσει γεγένηται, καλοκαγαθίας μεταποιοούμενος καὶ σωφροσύνης αἴγλη ἀξίως κατακοσμούμενος, καθὼς καὶ ὁ μετὰ ταῦτά γε πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν καὶ τὰ θεῖα τῆς θεόφρονος αὐτοῦ ψυχῆς ἔδειξεν ἔρωσ. Τὴν γὰρ οὐ πολλοστήν ἀπὸ βασιλέως διέπων ἀρχὴν, καθ' ὅτι ταμίαις ἐχρημάτιζε τῶν βασιλικῶν φόρων, ταύτην τε καὶ τὴν ἄλλην ἅπασαν τοῦ βίου παρ' οὐδὲν λογισάμενος τέρψιν, πανοικεῖ τῷ Θεῷ καὶ παμβασιλεῖ προστρέχει καὶ τὸν ἄζυγα τῆς ἐν βασιλείοις αὐλαῖς <διατριβῆς> ἀνταλλάττεται βίον. Μᾶλλον δὲ τὰ καπνοῦ τρόπον καὶ ὄνειρου διαλυόμενα παριδῶν, τῶν ἐστῶτων καὶ εἰς αἰεὶ τὸ μόνιμον ἐχόντων ἀγαθῶν τὴν μετουσίαν πορίζεται καὶ γίνεται τοῦ καταλόγου τῶν τῷ Θεῷ καθωσιωμένων, ὁ καὶ πρὸ πέντε ἐτῶν τὴν τῆς συνεύνου γυνῶσιν δι' εὐλαβείας περιουσίαν ἀνδρείως ἠθετηκῶς.

<sup>3</sup> Καὶ αὐτὴ δὲ ἡ μήτηρ, ὡς περιφανῆς καὶ ἐπίδοξος, πυκνότητι φρενῶν πυκαζομένη καὶ καλῶς εἰδυῖα τῶν τε ἰδίων τέκνων καὶ τοῦ οἴκου προϊστασθαι, ἅτε “ὑπὸ Θεοῦ κτισθεῖσα,” καὶ τὴν ὁμοίαν προσηγορίαν τοῖς ἔργοις σφραγισθεῖσα· τὸ γὰρ κοινὸν τῆς θεοκτισίας ὄνομα ἰδιάζον αὐτῇ παρυνάρξαν διὰ τῆς κατ' ἀρετὴν εὐζωίας, Θεοκτί-

because he saw the new Israel moving toward the promised land of the Gospel's way of life and following without hesitation the Master's ordinances.

Theodore's parents were pious and came from a noble family, showing in their actions clear indications of the names assigned to them by their parents. His father, truly created—in the eloquent language of the Athenians—by God as a light, became one who was luminous in his character and name, striving after goodness and worthily adorned by the radiance of his abstinence, as later, at least, the love of his godly-minded soul for God and divine things also showed. For although the position he held was not far from that of the emperor in that he was administrator of the imperial accounts, he counted this and every other pleasure in life as nothing and with his whole household sought out God the King of all instead, exchanging the imperial court for this unfettered life. Rather, disregarding things which dissipate like smoke and dreams, he secured his participation in the good things which are stable and eternal and came to be enrolled among those who have dedicated themselves to God, since five years earlier, in an abundance of piety, he had also nobly renounced carnal knowledge of his wife.

Theodore's mother was herself of very distinguished and famous stock and, since she was endowed with a shrewd mind and good sense, she took charge of her own children and household, seeing that she had been “created by God” and was confirmed in the same name by her deeds. Since the common name of God's creation suited her because of her good and virtuous way of life, she both was and had been



στη καὶ ἦν καὶ ὠνόμαστο, τὸν ἐξ ἀμφοῖν ἔπαινον διὰ τῆς σεμνῆς κερδαίνουσα πολιτείας. Ἄλλ' ὅποιον δὴ τὸν τοῦ βίου δρόμον ἢ ἀεισέβαστος αὐτὴ πεποιήται, αὐτὸς ἐκεῖνος ὁ θεοδώρητος αὐτῆς καρπὸς τοῖς ὑπ' αὐτὸν ἀδελφοῖς ἐν κατηχήσεως εἶδει τηνικαῦτα ὑπηγόρευσε εὐηγορίας γλῶτταν θεόθεν πεπλουτηκῶς· ὅθεν τοὺς βουλομένους τὰ κατ' αὐτὴν εἰδέναι ἐκεῖσε παραπέμποντες, ἡμεῖς τῶν περὶ τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν λόγων ὀφειλομένως ἐχόμεθα.

## 3

Τὴν μὲν οὖν πρώτην τῆς ἡλικίας ἑπταετηρίδα ἀρμοζόντως τῆς φύσεως διηνηκῶς, ταῖς εἰσαγωγικαῖς καὶ στοιχειώδεσι τῶν μαθημάτων ἐνασχολεῖσθαι προάγεται τέχναις· αἱ γὰρ ἐκ παιδῶν μαθήσεις συναύξουσαι τῇ ψυχῇ, ἐνοῦνται αὐτῇ καὶ παράμονοι τῷ κεκτημένῳ γίνονται. Ἐπεὶ δὲ προβάς καθ' ἡλικίαν καὶ γραμματικῆς ἔμπειρος ἐγεγόνει τέχνης, εἶτα καὶ διαλεκτικῆς, ἦν δὴ φιλοσοφίαν καλεῖν οἱ ταῦτα δεινοὶ γινώσκουσιν· πρὸς δὲ τοῖς εἰρημένοις καὶ τῆς ἐν ῥήτορι φράσεως τὸ κάλλος, ὡς οἶός τε ἦν, ἀπηνθίσαστο φύσεως τάχει, καὶ γνώμης φιλοπονία τοῖς πᾶσι περίπυστος ὦν ἐγνωρίζετο.

<sup>2</sup> Οὐ μόνον δὲ διὰ ταῦτα αἰδέσιμος ἦν τοῖς ἡλιξί καὶ τοῖς ἡδὴ προβεβηκόσιν, ἀλλὰ γὰρ καὶ ἐκ τοῦ τρόπου τῆς ἀγωγῆς μᾶλλον οὐκ ἀθαύμαστος αὐτοῖς ἐνομιζέτο, ἀρετῆς

named Theoktiste, gaining praise in both respects through her chaste way of life. Her God-given offspring himself, whose tongue was enriched by God with noble language, compiled at that time, in the form of a catechesis for the brethren under him, an account of the life this ever-revered lady had adopted; so I refer those who want to know about her to that discourse, and focus, as I ought, on an account of our father.

## 3

So then, after spending the first seven years of his life in a way appropriate to his nature, he advanced to occupy himself in the preliminary and elementary skills of learning; *for the lessons of childhood, developing along with the soul, are united with it* and become ingrained in the one who acquires them. As he advanced in age, he also became practiced in the skill of grammar, then of dialectic as well, which those who are adept at these things like to call philosophy. In addition to the things already mentioned, he also plucked for himself, as far as he was able, the beauty of rhetorical expression by means of his natural quickness, and as the industriousness of his intellect became widely known, he was recognized by each and every one.

He was respected by his peers and those who were older <sup>2</sup> than him not only for these qualities, but they were also full of admiration for the way he behaved, seeing that he had a

# Animal Fables of the Courtly Mediterranean

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