



***Deadly passions in the life of Christians: A comparative study according to Isidore of Pelusium (c. 360-450) and Theodore Stoudites (759-826)***  
***Passions mortals en la vida dels cristians: un estudi comparatiu segons Isidor de Pelúsió (c. 360-450) i Teodor Estudita (759-826)***  
***Pasiones mortales en la vida de los cristianos: un estudio comparativo según Isidoro de Pelusium (c. 360-450) y Theodore Stoudites (759-826)***  
***Paixões mortais na vida dos cristãos: um estudo comparativo segundo Isidoro de Pelúsió (c. 360-450) e Teodoro Estudita (759-826)***

Eirini ARTEMI<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** Adam and Eve served their passion of gastrimargy and their ambition to become gods without the grace of God. The result was their exile from Paradise and death. The incarnation of Logos, His crucifixion, His death on the cross and His resurrection gave a second chance of man's salvation. Unfortunately, people do not put into practice this gift of their reconciliation to God. In this paper, we will compare the opinion of two important Church Fathers, Isidore of Pelusium and Theodore Stoudite. It is important to underline for what kind of passions these Church Fathers speak. Do they relate the passions only with monks or general with Christians? How can we get rid of a passion? Can their teaching be put into practice in nowadays? Which is the worst passion according to them? Are diseases and pandemic a punishment of God for our sins? Of course, we should explain that the passions in the life of a Christian can be proved deadly, but they have no connection with the view that diseases are punishments from God for our passions.

**Keywords:** Isidore of Pelusium – Theodore Stoudite – Diseases – Passions – Salvation – Reconciliation.

**Resumen:** Adán y Eva sirvieron su pasión de gastrimargia y su ambición de convertirse en dioses sin la gracia de Dios. El resultado fue su exilio del Paraíso y la muerte. La encarnación de Logos, Su crucifixión, Su muerte en la cruz y Su resurrección dieron una segunda oportunidad de salvación al hombre. Desgraciadamente, la gente no pone en práctica este don de su reconciliación con

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Dios. En este artículo, compararemos la opinión de dos importantes Padres de la Iglesia, Isidoro de Pelusium y Theodore Stoudite. Es importante subrayar de qué tipo de pasiones hablan estos Padres de la Iglesia. ¿Relacionan las pasiones solo con los monjes o en general con los cristianos? ¿Cómo podemos deshacernos de una pasión? ¿Se puede poner en práctica su enseñanza en la actualidad? ¿Cuál es la peor pasión según ellos? ¿Son las enfermedades y la pandemia un castigo de Dios por nuestros pecados? Por supuesto, debemos explicar que las pasiones en la vida de un cristiano pueden resultar mortales, pero no tienen conexión con la opinión de que las enfermedades son castigos de Dios por nuestras pasiones.

**Palabras clave:** Isidoro de Pelusium – Theodore Stoudite – Enfermedades – Pasiones – Salvación – Reconciliación.

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## Introduction

God created humanity. After God had formed man, the crown of His creation, He saw all that He had made, and without no doubt it was “very good”<sup>2</sup>. Humanity was formed and fashioned by the hand of the omnipotent, good, and loving God; the latter created humankind in His image and instructed them to multiply and to be stewards over everything else that He had made<sup>3</sup>. Only, He knows man’s deepest thoughts, all the places within his heart<sup>4</sup>.

Jesus teaches that God even knows the number of hairs on any man’s head<sup>5</sup>. As it is referred above, God did not create anything evil, so human nature is actually good, even if it is buried beneath generations of wickedness, beginning with Adam and Eve. The true nature of people was created without sin and inclination to passions. Human beings should be free from the passions and free from any sin. The disobedience of

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<sup>2</sup> Gen, 1: 31 (transl. by E. Artemi).

<sup>3</sup> Gen, 1:26.

<sup>4</sup> Rom, 8:27.

<sup>5</sup> Matt, 10:30.



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man brought his separation from God. His existence away from God was the result the human being to remain away from the source of life, God, and to be led to death<sup>6</sup>.

According to the ancestral sin<sup>7</sup> which was presented through the book of Genesis, pride, and disobedience in the presence of God were introduced as a “passive” reaction to the promptings of the serpent.

After the fall, mankind still has the image of God, but it is now “tarnished” or “dimmed”. Human body becomes subject to sickness, corruption, and finally death. The death is not God’s revenge, but it is the result of man’s disobedience to his Creator’s order. The garden with the tree of life is no longer accessible for them. This is the status we inherit from Adam and Eve. This is what we call “ancestral sin”. We do not obtain the blame for the bad choice that Adam made, but we inherit the consequences of his sinfulness, the change of nature he underwent. Since we are all Adam’s and Eve’s descendants, we all acquire their sinful nature that resulted from the fall.

In the Christian East, the state of nature before the fall of Adam and Eve is often called the “primordial state”<sup>8</sup>. In the beginning, human nature was sinless and without passions. Man desired to become God without the help of God. This attempt of man brings pain in his life<sup>9</sup>. Once the man disregarded this one command, not to partake

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<sup>6</sup> MANTZARIDIS, Georges. *Christian Ethic*, vol. 2. Monastery of Vatopedi - Hagio Oros: publ. Pournaras, 2015, p. 654.

<sup>7</sup> Ancestral sin, also described as original sin, is a Christian view of the nature of sin in which humanity has existed since the fall of man. Original sin arose from Adam and Eve's transgression in Eden, the sin of disobedience in eating the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Original sin can be explained as that sin and its guilt that we all possess in God's eyes as a direct result of Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden.

<sup>8</sup> Before the fall, man knew no pain, no sickness. There was no death. He was not subject to old age. He was not subject to the elements; he could not be physically hurt. He knew no decay. He was made potentially immortal. His body, while still material and sensual, was more spiritual than the body we inhabit now. It was not grossly material, like the body we now have. DAMASCENE, Hieromonk. “[What Christ Accomplished on the Cross](#)”. In: *The Orthodox Word*, vol. 235, 2004, p. 57-77. “What Christ Accomplished on the Cross”. In: *The Orthodox Word*, vol. 235, 2004, p. 57-77; SERAPHIM, Rose. *Genesis, Creation and Early Man*. Platina, California: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2000, pp. 156-7, 443-5.

<sup>9</sup> Gen, 3:16-19.



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of this knowledge, sin entered humanity. Human nature, which was full of light, became dim and darkened. About Adam's fall St. Macarius the Egyptian says:

...he clothed himself with darkness in his own soul<sup>10</sup>

and darkness and illness entered humanity. With this fall from perfection followed disconnectedness with God, and thus all forms of illness and brokenness entered humanity.

For us to free our hearts and lives from the passions is to recover our natural state: the true state that God created us to live in<sup>11</sup>.

Finally, because of passions the human life is full of sufferings. Man should continuously struggle against passions. Sometimes, illness and sufferings help him to understand the sinful state where he is and to fight for his spiritual recovery. These are analyzed by Apostle Paul to his Romans' epistle. The Apostle advice Christians to show courage and patient sufferings by pointing out to them that these sufferings will be the means of their sanctification and future glorification, and, finally, he excites them to confidence in God.

Paul desires his readers to realize two important ideas and a practical conclusion that flows from them: First, man must face up sufferings at the present time because of man's fall into sin. Second, the future will be showing the whole glory for believers as God fulfills all His promises to us. The practical conclusion is if Christians remain stable to the promise of God for the future promised glory, then they can endure present sufferings with perseverance and hope and without complaints and feeling any sadness:

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains

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<sup>10</sup> MACARIUS OF EGYPT. *Homiliae Spirituales*, XXX, 7, PG 34, 725C (transl. by E. Artemi); Ps. 18:11 (transl. by E. Artemi).

<sup>11</sup> MACARIUS OF EGYPT. *Homiliae Spirituales*, XXX, 9, PG 34, 728B (transl. by E. Artemi).



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until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.<sup>12</sup>

So, the sufferings can be synonyms either to passions or to pain and diseases as results of sins. In the next chapters, we are going to present the teaching of two Church Fathers, Isidore of Pelusium and Theodore Stoudites about the passions that cause us harm. Their results are “decay” of human nature, mental and spiritual sicknesses that can be even translated into physical illness. Because of them, man is cut off from God for the present time and perhaps for the eternity.

Generally, the purpose of all passions is to disorient a person and instead of worshipping real God, he replaces God with his passions.

## **I. Passions in the writings of Isidore of Pelusium**

Isidore of Pelusium (born about 360AD), who had dedicated his life to God as a monk, wrote many letters to other monks, bishops and priests of his era.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, we do not have all of his epistles – over ten thousand. Only two thousand epistles have been “saved”<sup>14</sup>. In these letters, Isidore advises the recipients of the letters to remain away from passions. He warns them about the punishment of God because the passions will drive people to the eternal Hades.

It is important and necessary for any man who has dedicated himself to God to struggle against any passions and at the same time he must try to develop the virtues of human nature. The teaching of Isidore about the passions and how can be faced up by monks, priests, bishops, is the result of prayers and an ascetic life as a monk.

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<sup>12</sup> Rom, 8:18-23, transl. New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised (NRSVA). Paul expresses the same belief concerning sufferings in 1 Thes. 4:13-18 and 2 Cor. 4:16-18,

<sup>13</sup> NIKEPHOROS KALLISTOS XANTHOPOULOS. *Ecclesiasticae Historiae*, XV, 13, PG 146, 1252A.

<sup>14</sup> ARTEMI, Eirini. *The Comparison of the Triadological Teaching of Isidore of Pelusium with Cyril of Alexandria's Teaching*. Doctorate thesis, Athens: National and Kapodostrian University of Athens, 2012, p. 29.





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Isidore does not write a textbook of ethic, but he writes something based on Jesus' and apostles' preaching<sup>15</sup>.

His aim is to lead any clergy man into purification from passions, into apathy and deification. The captivity of man and especially of someone who is dedicated absolutely to God is the worst thing in his life. The enslavement to the passions closes the gate for communion with God and transfers him away from following the example Christ. Any clergy man should fight against the traps of Satan, the passions.

Which are the passions according to Isidore that a Christian and mainly a man who serves God should avoid from his life? Some of them are: gluttony, fornication, love of money – greed – avarice, homosexuality, acedia, anger – wrath, vainglory, pride, despondency and many others. In his letters, Isidore advises the recipients to avoid all of them and he reminds them of the eternal punishment, the hell<sup>16</sup>. He notes that priests should live according to Christ's orders. He must pray, and struggle against any sin. The virtue is conquered with difficulty and myriad struggles and labours and following the laws of Lord<sup>17</sup>.

But why are these passions catastrophic about the soul according to Isidore? The father of Pelusium condemns the pride and vainglory because they lead man away from God. They are opposite to modesty and humility. Vainglory which is the base for pride often is quite difficult to be recognized and therefore is hard someone to protect himself. When monks are humble, the grace of God covers them and brings them near God<sup>18</sup>.

Otherwise without being humble, they imitate to Satan who fell out of Paradise. Arrogance, as Isidore mentions, stands as an obstacle in the way of progress of

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 5. See ARTEMI, Eirini. "The mystery of priesthood in the teaching of Isidore of Pelusium". In: SMITH, Lev. (ed.). *Healing reconciliation and forgiveness in Eastern Orthodox Perspectives*. Theotokos Press, Sophia Studies in Orthodox Theology 5, New York, 2015, p. 21-34.

<sup>16</sup> MITSOPOULOS, Nikolaos. *Topics of Orthodox Ethical Theology*, vol. 1, Athens: Organization of Publishing Books for Education, 1992, pp. 110-133.

<sup>17</sup> ISIDORE OF PELUSIUM, *Epist. V*, 179 - *Dorotheo Clarissimo viro*, PG 78, 1553C; ARTEMI, Eirini. "The Mystery of the Priesthood in the teaching of Isidore of Pelusium", *op. cit.*, p. 131.

<sup>18</sup> ISIDORE OF PELUSIUM, *Epist. I*, 17 - *Paulo*, PG 78, 192.



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theosis. So men must get rid of arrogance and then the wisdom that comes from God will return to their soul<sup>19</sup>.

Additionally, Isidore advises bishops, priests, and monks to be careful to what they teach their congregation and even to eliminate arrogance from their sermons. It is not right for ecclesiastical ministers, who are responsible for proclaiming the optimistic message of Christianity, who should speak about humility, love, and self-denial of their egoism, to use arrogant words and to applaud the love of materials when they should teach the love for the things in heaven. They should reject the vain words which reveal an arrogant attitude to the others<sup>20</sup>.

Because of the passion of gluttony and gastrimargy, the first people lost the paradise. This sinful gluttonous desire led to disobedience and the fall of Adam and Eve. Isidore warns that if the belly is inflamed by luxurious foods and becomes the master of the soul and body, the mind loses all power to conceive what is good and is paralyzed in its spiritual efforts.

So, if the belly becomes the lord of a man, it drives out self-control, moderation, courage, fortitude and all the other virtues. The man destroys his body, his ethic way of life<sup>21</sup> and becomes slave to his appetite. The only remedy in order a priest or a monk to get rid of the passion of gastronomy is prayer, fasting, self-sufficiency and to avoid delicious meals<sup>22</sup>. Gastrimargy can be the cause for a man to commit all kinds of sins and can introduce him to moral disasters and diseases as a result<sup>23</sup>.

One more passion which has relation to gluttony is the drunkenness. This is the cause of such great calamities, and one should not despise this great disease as small. Even the entertainment is accompanied by wine; it stimulates the love of pleasures, turns dinner into ugly theater and charms those who drink. So, the drunkenness traps them into vicious desires and brings people who are in these symposiums away from Paradise<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> *Idem*, *Epist.* III, 68 - *Theognosto Priest*, PG 78, 778. *IDEM*, *Epist.* III, 69-Nilo, PG 78, 780.

<sup>20</sup> *Idem*, *Epist.* I, 227 - *Florentio*, PG 78, 324.

<sup>21</sup> *Idem*, *Epist.* I, 353 - *Symphoro*, PG 78, 384.

<sup>22</sup> *Idem*, *Epist.* IV, 2, *Zosimo*, PG 78, 1049, 1052. Cf *Idem*, *Epist.* IV, 3, *Zosimo*, PG 78, 1052.

<sup>23</sup> *Idem*, *Epist.* I, 384 - *Filagrino*, PG 78, 400.

<sup>24</sup> *Idem*, *Epist.* I, 456 - *Palladio diacono*, PG 78, 433.



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As far as the passion of greed about money, the avarice does not have to do only about the love of money, but the insatiable desire for possessions:

The desire for possessions is dangerous and terrible, knowing no satiety; it drives the soul which it controls to the heights of evil. Therefore let us drive it away vigorously from the beginning. For once it has become master it cannot be overcome<sup>25</sup>.

The avarice is totaling catastrophic for Christians and mainly for priests<sup>26</sup>. The latter should not succumb to greed, because they make sins without really gaining anything since with man's death all they are going to leave behind all their material goods and at the same time they will have lost the heavenly kingdom. So, Isidore teaches that

If the priest wants to free him from the eternal fire and not have to face the accusations of the hungry, let him throw the flame of money over him, thus inheriting the eternal kingdom. And with them you will inherit the eternal rest and peace in the green pastures of the eternal life.<sup>27</sup>

The Pelousiote Father goes on to say that the greedy people be obsessed with the disease of the love for money. They are so ill that they cannot realize who ill they are. On the opposite hand, "heavenly" monks who live on the mountains, they do not even know what greed is because they do not have any property. The monks are far from passion; ignore the disease, while the greedy do not believe that it is a disease because this passion has conquered their own existence. So, the evil has pushed away any virtue and is presented as something logic and good.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *The sayings of the Desert Fathers* (trans. Benedicta Ward). Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publication, 1984, p. 99.

<sup>26</sup> Isidore writes to *Martinianus Presbyter*: "Do not, my excellent friend, strive after wealth, which is the parent of pride and arrogance, brings upon us a band of destructive pleasures, is the architect and fabricator of every evil, and alienates us from the love of God; but cultivate virtue, which turns us away from all the evils of the world. If it demands of us much sweat and labor, do not avoid it on that account; but embrace it for that very reason; for remember, that in other things, that which is the fruit of sweat and labor, even where it is little in itself, becomes the object of our ardent desire; whereas that which is easily acquired, or comes of its own accord, is despised by us, however great in itself".

<sup>27</sup> *Idem*, *Epist.* I, 215 - *Eusebio Episcopo*, PG 78, 317.

<sup>28</sup> *Idem*, *Epist.* III, 234 - *Alypio Episcopo*, PG 78, 916.





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Later, Isidore speaks about the wrath which makes man like a wild animal and can lead any man to the murder<sup>29</sup>. Additionally, one more important passion is the passion of too much pride and arrogance. Isidore's position on arrogance was firm. Whoever is arrogant and wants to reach God will not succeed. For the believer and a bishop, a monk to climb spiritually to Lord, get close to God, he must be humbled. In other words, he must live a life full of modesty and humility, values to which the divine law refers for his exaltation.

Isidore urges the recipients of his letters to reject any arrogant elements that have flooded their lives and to remember the promise that God has given him. For Isidore, arrogance can only bring evil into the life of one who wants to know God and also refers to Lucifer who was expelled from heaven because of his arrogance. The same will happen to any arrogant person who puts humility aside and raises his head higher than he should to be in God<sup>30</sup>. Through the writings of Isidore it is underlined that the Vainglory disperses the treasures of righteousness, but humility scatters the multitude of passions.

Also, rapture is a steppingstone to the destruction of the monk's soul. Because of indolence, monks and priests do not care about the improvement of his spiritual situation. They do not pray; they do not read any religious book. They abandon the care of their soul and forget its goal to be united with God<sup>31</sup>.

To sum up the passions put man into the jail of hell, away from God's view for temporary life and of course for the eternity. Isidore speaks about the purification of every man who has isolated his life to priesthood and service of God.

## **II. Theodore the Stoudites and his teaching about the sinful passions and the struggle for man's purification**

Theodore the Stoudites (759-826) was a Byzantine Greek monk and abbot of the Stoudios Monastery in Constantinople and also, he was theologian and monastic

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<sup>29</sup> *Idem, Epist. V, 180 - Leontio Episcopo*, PG 78, 1432.

<sup>30</sup> *Idem, Epist. IV, 6 - Epimacho Anagnosto* PG 78, 1053, 1056.

<sup>31</sup> *Idem, Epist. II, 5 - Timotheo Anagnosto*, PG 78, 460, 461.



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reformer<sup>32</sup>. He wrote numerous apologetic works on the theology against iconoclasm. He combined his inclination to the poetry with the mystical inspiration, and he created writings that the theology is expressed with a lyric way. Besides his dogmatic works, he wrote the Catecheseos, the longer and the shorter one, which are a combination of ethic and spiritual theology, with anthropological and sacramental presuppositions.

In his Catecheseos, Theodore analyses the passions and the virtues that exist in a life of a Christian and mainly in monks'. He explains the bad results of passions in the life of a Christian and how hard someone must struggle against them in order to succeed the flourishing of the virtues which are the fruits of "divine, holy pothos. Passions are the source for demonic thoughts of mortals. The catechetical writings of Theodore are full of warning about the destructive power of these evil passions.<sup>33</sup>

Theodore underlines that a person who is ruled by passions, is not healthy but sick and he needs treatment. He knows that passions lead to the decay of spiritual life. They are those that tarnish the divine image of man, obscure his mind, conquer his heart with evil thoughts, which turn him away from God.<sup>34</sup> The healing from the passions is based on the purification of the soul and it is painful and requires an intense struggle for the dedication to the goods of the life according to Christ, "the receptive theory of the good".<sup>35</sup>

Patience is the cure for the healing and redemption of human nature from passions. Man who struggles against passions must endure the difficulties with joy and euphoria in order to conquer the apathy.

Theodore emphasizes that mainly monks and generally Christians should avoid the alienation of the mind. The alienation of "nous" – mind brings decay in the internal

<sup>32</sup> CHOLI, Roman. *Theodore the Stoudite: The Ordering of Holiness*. Oxford Scholarship Online: October 2011, p. 7-13.

<sup>33</sup> THORNE, Gary Wayne Alfred. *The ascending prayer to Christ: theodore Stoudite's defence of the Christ-ikon against ninth century iconoclasm*. Durham theses, Durham University, 2003, p. 35.

<sup>34</sup> CHOLI, Roman. *Theodore the Stoudite: The Ordering of Holiness, op. cit.*, p. 7-13.

<sup>35</sup> ORIGEN OF ALEXANDRIA. In *Johannes*, fragm. XLV, VEPES 12, p. 362, lines 25-26.



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world of human being and puts his soul away from the communion with God<sup>36</sup>. So soon man will forget God<sup>37</sup> in this life and in the eternity, he will be in Hades, eternally away from the light of God<sup>38</sup>.

The purification of the monks and Christians will be accomplished if they remain faithful to the dogmatic truths of the orthodox ecclesiastical and theological tradition, even if they face persecutions and other barrels. Their weapons will be virtues such as wisdom, courage, faith but justice, too<sup>39</sup>. Theodore presents in his Catecheseos for the passions and virtues that monks should have. He writes the Catecheseos for the monks who would not stay only in the monastery.

For Theodore the most important passions are egoism, vainglory with too much pride and arrogance. These passions are the source for all the others, and they became the cause for the fall of Satan and the first created people<sup>40</sup>. The egoism and arrogance led Cain to kill his own brother Abel<sup>41</sup>. Outpourings of egoism and avarice are considered the passions of gastrimargy, the greed of vanity and all the other passions. Because of these, man lives away from the love of God. The latter is replaced by the egoism, the love of man for himself.

As for the passion of gluttony, it is noted that is the obstacle for the monks to live with few things and to make charities. If they eat a lot, instead of sharing their food with the poor, they will act against God's rules. God wants charities and to feed the poor<sup>42</sup>. Gluttony not only in food but in drink too is a sign of weakness of character and promiscuity. The consumption of a large quantity of food and drink leads the person to become rash, to show satiety and sleepiness, and they will behave with bad way<sup>43</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> THEODORE THE STOUDITES. *Shorter Catechesis*, X (Auvray 1891), p. 37, lines 41; *Idem*, *Longer Catechesis*, 4, p. 320, lines 25-30.

<sup>37</sup> THEODORE THE STOUDITES. *Shorter Catechesis*, X (Auvray 1891), p. 37, lines 41-42.

<sup>38</sup> THEODORE THE STOUDITES. *Longer Catechesis*, I, vol. 1, p. 310, lines 2-10.

<sup>39</sup> THEODORE THE STOUDITES. *Shorter Catechesis*, LI, p. 185, lines 25-26.

<sup>40</sup> *Idem*, *Longer Catechesis*, XC, vol. 2, p. 304, lines 31-33; *Ibidem*, 117, p. 474, lines 30-32; *Idem*, *Longer Catechesis*, III, vol. 1, p. 316, lines 17-25.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*. Gen., 4:8-16.

<sup>42</sup> THEODORE THE STOUDITES. *Longer Catechesis*, L, vol. 1, p. 472, lines 5-12.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, XXIX, vol. 1, p. 462, lines 15-16.



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The mind will not be sufficient to help a man to resist against any enemy. Theodore the Stoudites invokes as examples virtuous people who were seduced by the excessive consumption of wine and acted without shame and fear of God. Characteristically he refers to the example of Lot who attacked his own daughters under the influence of the drink, and Noah, who, undressed because of his drunkenness<sup>44</sup>.

Another terrible passion for Theodore is the gossip and the babble. So, monks who speak a lot, accuse of other people and make gossips do not show the wisdom which is the fear of God<sup>45</sup>. These monks do not put into practice the words of the apostle James:

Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?<sup>46</sup>

To sum up, the passions isolate man away from God and bring him near devil. Theodore the Stoudites spoke about the passions that bring suffering to the life of a Christian monk. The latter should exercise all the Christian virtues according to the preaching of Christ, of apostles and of the teaching of Church Fathers. The presupposition for beginning of building the virtues is the fear of God, as the Divine Scriptures say, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”<sup>47</sup>.

### **III. Comparing the teaching of these two Church Fathers for Passions in the life of Christians**

Isidore of Pelusium and Theodore the Stoudites write about the passions and their catastrophic role in the life of Christians and mainly in the life of monks, priests, and bishops. Although, these two fathers have lived in quite different centuries – Isidore lived between fourth and fifth century and Theodore lived in 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries – show care about the ethic and morality of monks based on a life near Christ.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, XXIX, vol. 1, p. 462, lines 13-18. Gen. 9:20-25; 19:30-35

<sup>45</sup> WISDOM OF SIRACH, 19:20.

<sup>46</sup> JAMES, 4:11-12. transl. New International Version (NIV).

<sup>47</sup> Ps, 110:9.



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First, Theodore the Stoudites tries to define the word *passions* and *sufferings*. These words come from the verb “suffer”, and it is connected to passions that mean the pain of a person during the time he suffers<sup>48</sup>. The development of passions causes sin. Thus, man becomes “passionate”, addicted, and this “empathy”, that is, depended on passions, turns man away from God. That is why the struggle of the Christian aims at the cure – healing of the passions, so that we become, as much as possible, “apathetic”, without passions, not without emotions.

Isidore of Pelusium and Theodore Stoudites both refer to the passions that can torture monks and to lead them to deadly sins. For this reason, they support that monks should remain in their monasteries. There were many monks who did not live into a monastery, but they lived in different places outside the monastery. Many of them were trapped into passions. In their writings both Fathers urge them to avoid passions and to try to have the virtues in their life. By this way, the monks will manage to have salvation near God in the afterlife from death.

These two Christian Fathers underline the deadly passions in man’s life through the Scriptures’ texts, writings of the Church Fathers. All these show that the real life is only near Christ and the presupposition for someone to be united to Christ is a life free from the passions. Other presuppositions for the theosis a Christian is the participation of the Church life, to the sacraments.

Both Isidore and Theodore underline that egoism and arrogance are the sources for many other passions. The arrogant violates the divine law which speaks of humiliation. A monk and general a Christian must have humility to be able to increase his virtues. In addition, he must live and work having as an example God himself and not the arrogant devil. They advise bishops, priests, and monks to become themselves the example for Christians to become humbles.

They know that it is not right for church ministers who have proclaim the gospel message of Christianity which includes humility, love, and self-denial of their ego, to do opposite things in their daily life. Unnecessary gossip increases the risk of blasphemy of the masses; the question is the restraint and the limitation of the vanity and the arrogant language. After all, arrogance can only bring death and millions of

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<sup>48</sup> THEODORE STOUDITES. *Longer Catecheses* CX, vol.1, p. 432, lines 30-32.





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other evils. The only weapon to deal with arrogance is modesty. Monks must curb arrogance with the help of modesty.

Another horrible passion who leads people away from Paradise is the gastrimargy. The latter create slaves because monks and Christians must follow their belly which becomes their tyrant. Gastrimargy was the cause for the fall of Adam and Eve from Paradise.

Isidore refers to the passions as drunkenness, anger, laziness, and jealousy. All these passions become the cause for man to stay away from God and to become hostile with friends, relatives, and neighbors. On the hand, Theodore concentrates to the general results of passions and he does not analyze analytically all the passions as Isidore does. Both Fathers teach that monks and general Christians should make many efforts to acquire virtues. This task is painful and requires constant vigilance, hard work, practice, physical and spiritual effort. A Christian must constantly fight against any passions and sufferings, to acquire apathy and constantly strive for the cultivation of virtues. The gateway to the Kingdom of Heaven is the culmination of all this effort, a difficult struggle, and a narrow gate.

In conclusion, the fight against evil is not easy. It needs ascetic and spiritual way of life, and someone should fight against devil all the time. This is the purpose of the ascetic life, but it must also play a leading role in the daily life of the faithful in Christ. Instead of the believer struggling for his passions and sinking into thoughts of pessimism, he should increase his love for Christ for Triune God.

To sum up, one interesting aspect of Christian spirituality is what the desert fathers describe as “apathy”. The word has its origin in stoic philosophy. But in the Eastern Christian spiritual tradition “apathy” has nothing to do with stoic one, or what might be considered a state of indifference. It is a positive state of self-control, or rather, Christ-control or Spirit-control. It is the stilling of all the passionate thoughts through ascetic way of life, purity of heart, and the gift of tears.

## Conclusions

The fall and the exile of Adam and Eve from Paradise were caused because of pride. Evil did not exist ontologically; it was created after the fall of first people. The devil



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seduced humans into sin, by trying to disrupt God's plan for salvation of people. The first people had fallen away from God through their free decision. Adam's and Eve's disobedience and transgression of against the divine law brought evil into the universe. So, evil entered the universe by our ancestors' primordial sin not by the will of God. Adam and Eve chose diabolical deceit to divine commandment instead of the trust and verity to God.

The failure of Adam and Eve to obey in God's order had as result the entire material creation to fall into disorder. The consequences of the human's fall had as result that no longer would people live in harmony with the world. They would have to face great problems as the painful childbearing, the social conflictions, the destruction of the nature and many others<sup>49</sup>.

The Passion of Christ, a Divine Passion, brought to mankind life and restoration of the human nature to its previous unblemished state. Our human passions, on the opposite, lead us to death and degradation. Historically pride and gastrimargy was the first passions which were the cause for the fall of the man. Generally, the presence of passions in men's life has tragic consequences for human body and soul, for his existence.

Based on the text of Isidore and Theodore we should resume that:

- a)** Passions capture and enslave the man, who loses his freedom and becomes a slave of the passions;
- b)** Man's soul becomes sick;
- c)** Passions stand like a bulkhead and a partition wall in front of the hidden virtues of the soul. And if these walls of virtue are not torn down, the spiritual gifts behind them cannot be seen;
- d)** Passions prevent the various spiritual gifts from working in man. Thus, man is constantly in darkness and cannot enter the land of life and light which is life near God.

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<sup>49</sup> Rom, 8:19-22.



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Awareness of sins and passions is followed by repentance. With repentance man comes into the realm of the freedom of the children of the glory of God. Repentance is not a transient crushing of the consciousness of committing a sin, but a permanent spiritual state, which means a steady direction of man towards God. It is the dynamic transition of man from the unnatural to the natural. From the realm of sin to the realm of virtue; abhorrence of sin, return to God.

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