

**A**ND FROM THAT TIME [*when Abba Isidore had counselled him, Abba Moses the Ethiopian*] was exceedingly constant in his work of spiritual excellence. He ate nothing whatsoever except ten ounces of dry bread [*daily*] when he was doing work, and he would recite from beginning to end fifty prayers during the day; but the more he dried up his body, the more he was vexed and consumed by dreams. And again he went to one of the old men, and said unto him, “What shall I do? For thoughts of lust which arise from [*my*] former habits attack me;” and the old man said unto him, “These lead thee into error because thou hast not turned away thy heart from the similitudes of them, but give thy heart to watching and careful prayer, and thou wilt be free from them.”

*Paradise of the Holy Fathers*, tr. Budge,  
Vol. I, pp. 216–17



**J**UST AS IT IS IMPOSSIBLE for fire and water to pass through the same pipe together, so it is impossible for sin to enter the heart without first knocking at its door in the form of a fantasy provoked by the devil.

The provocation comes first, then our coupling with it, or the mingling of our thoughts with those of the wicked demons. Third comes our assent to the provocation, with both sets of intermingling thoughts contriving how to commit the sin in actual deed. Fourth comes the concrete action – that is, the sin itself. If, however, the mind is attentive and watchful, and at once repulses the provocation by counter-attacking and gain-saying it and invoking the Lord Jesus, its consequences remain inoperative; for the devil, being an incorporeal mind, can deceive our souls only by means of fantasies and thoughts. David was speaking about these provocations of the devil when he said, ‘Early in the morning I destroyed all the wicked of the earth, that I might cut off all evildoers from the city of the Lord’ (Ps. 101:8); and Moses was referring to the act of assent to a provocation in his words: ‘You shall make no covenant with them, nor with their gods’ (Exod. 23:32).

St Hesychius the Priest, *On Watchfulness and Holiness*,  
Philokalia, Faber & Faber, Vol. I, pp. 171–7

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