

# SAINT J. DAMASCENES' REPORTS RELATIVE TO MEDICINE

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## AIM

of this work is to present reports relatives to Medicine from a Saint Joanne's Damascenes' (680 – 750 CE) writing, constituting them historical witnesses.

## MATERIAL

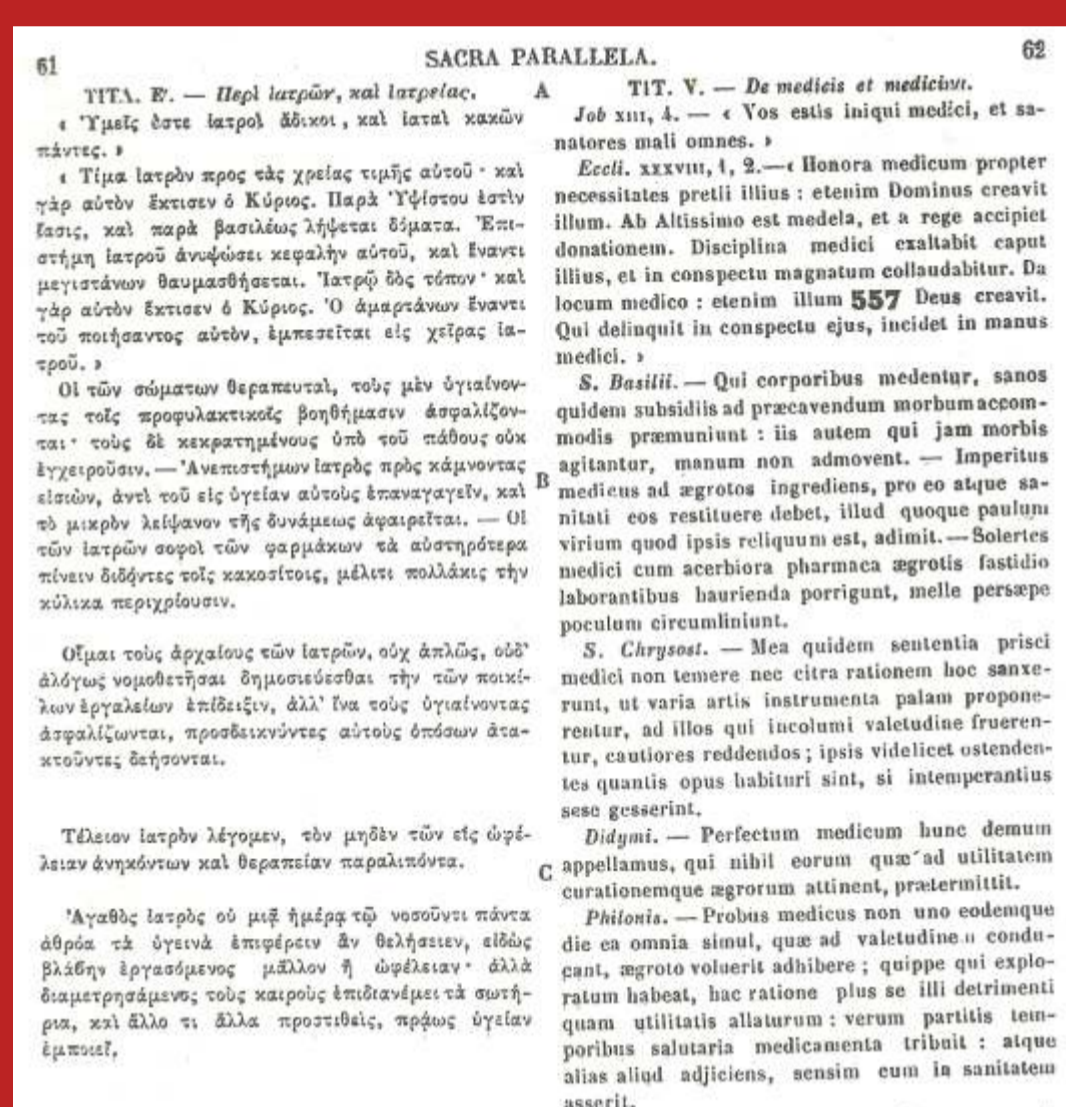
The material is the S. J. Damascene's writing "Sacra Parallela" from the Greek Patristic, with our translation to English in some parts.

## METHOD

The method is the textual criticism in order to validate the research as can be determined from the relative and accessible to us bibliography.

## RESULTS

On the results, S. J. Damascenes in this writing presents reports in relation to medicine from various written sources.



John Damascenes begins with a report to Job's book in old testament where Job says to his friends : ...you are iniquitous physicians and curers harmful... (Sacra Parallela Littera I, fit V), P.62

**Job xiii, 4. — « Vos estis iniqui medici, et sanatores mali omnes. »**

He continues with an exhortation from the Hebraic (Deuterocanonical) Book entitled "Sirach" (2<sup>nd</sup> c. BC) of the Old Testament (Greek Translation) to the people for the physicians which says:

**Ecclesi. xxxviii, 1, 2. — « Honora medicum propter necessitates pretii illius : etenim Dominus creavit illum. Ab Altissimo est medela, et a rego accipit donationem. Disciplina medici exaltabit caput illius, et in conspectu magnatum collaudabitur. Da locum medico : etenim illum 557 Deus creavit. Qui delinquit in conspectu ejus, incidit in manus medici. »**

"...Honor physicians for their services, for the Lord created them...The skill of physician makes him distinguished, and in the presence of the king he is admired... Then give the physician his place, for the Lord created him...He who sins against his Maker, will be defiant toward the physician..." (Sacra Parallela, 10. 5A) Damascenes continues with some Saint Basil's (4<sup>th</sup> c. AD) phrases, in relation to physicians, which says:

**S. Basilii. — Qui corporibus medentur, sanos quidem subsidiis ad præcavendum morbum accommodis præmuniunt : iis autem qui jam morbis agitantur, manum non admovent. — Imperitus medicus ad ægrotos ingrediens, pro eo atque sanitati eos restituere debet, illud quoque paulum virium quod ipsis reliquum est, adimit. — Solertes medici cum acerbiora pharmaca ægrotis fastidio laborantibus haurienda porrigunt, melle persæpe poculum circumliniunt.**

"...The healers of the bodies secure the healthy human with protecting assistance, however the seized patient of a grave disease do not operate him... ...unscientific physician visiting sick instead of health, remove the minimum of his well – being too... The excellent of the physicians give at patients with malnutrition, the more severe of the medicaments, smearing with honey the cup..." (Sacra Parallela, 10. 5B) S. Damascenes, going on, presents a S. Chrysostom's (4<sup>th</sup> c. CE) phrase saying: "...I think the ancient of the physicians did not legislated intrepidly, nor irrationally, to publish the medical instruments

**S. Chrysost. — Mea quidem sententia prisci medici non temere nec citra rationem hoc sanxerunt, ut varia artis instrumenta palam proponerentur, ad illos qui incolumi valetudine fruerebantur, cautiore reddendos ; ipsis videlicet ostendentes quantis opus habituri sint, si intemperantius sese gesserint.**

but in order to secure the healthy people, showing them what will take place if they will go astray..." (Sacra Parallela, 10. 5B) Continuing, S. Damascenes presents a Didymi's Alexandrinis (4<sup>th</sup> c. CE) report in regards to physicians, which says: "...We define perfect physician him who omits nothing of them, which appertain to benefit and therapy..." (Sacra Parallela, 10. 5C). Additionally, S. Damascenes brings a Philonis' (5<sup>th</sup> c. CE) report saying:

**Philonis. — Probus medicus non uno eodemque die ea omnia simul, quæ ad valetudinem conducant, ægrotis voluerit adhibere ; quippe qui exploratum habeat, hac ratione plus se illi detrimenti quam utilitatis allaturum : verum partitis temporibus salutaria medicamenta tribuit : atque alias aliqd adjiciens, sensim eum in sanitatem asserit.**

"...Excellent physician is who does not give or make to the patient all of the therapy plenty and at once, due to the fact that he knows that he will provoke damage than benefit; nevertheless, he estimates the time and distributes the beneficial proportionally, adding others and making thus the health by a meek manner..." (Sacra Parallela, 10. 5C). In addition, J. Damascenes mentions Didymi's report:

**Didymi. — Perfectum medicum hunc demum appellamus, qui nihil eorum quæ ad utilitatem curationemque ægrotorum attinent, prætermittit.**

Perfect physician is who do not omit anything which belong to therapy and to benefit. (Sacra Parallela 10.5) Moreover, S.J. Damascenis says "The physicians when they are sick need other physicians, due to, the disease infests the medical art "

propheta, inquam, ad prophetam vadit. At enim David propheta cum esset, cur non sibi ipse medebatur? Nimirum quemadmodum ægrotantes medici aliorum medicorum opera indigent, quia morbus artem labefactat; sic etiam hoc loco ille

Finally, St.J. Damascenes says about the manners of medical therapy of his era (cutting, burning, medicaments ).

...καὶ, ἐὰν ὁ θεὸς ἐπιπέσῃ ἐπὶ τὸν ἄνθρωπον, οὐδὲν ἔστιν ἃ οὐ δύναται ἰατρικὴ ἐπιθεῖν. ὁ θεὸς ἐπιπέσας μὴ ἀνατινέτω ἰατρικὴ ἐπιθεῖν, ἀλλὰ μὴ ἀπογίνωσκει. Ἐστὶν γὰρ ἰατρικὴ, κείμενοι, καί, μὴ μὴ ἐπάγει φάρμακα, καὶ οὐ λέγει, πῶς θεραπεύσεις; ἀλλὰ παραγγέλλει τὴν τέχνην τοῦ συνδουλίου, καὶ τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ φιλανθρωπίας οὐ παραχωρεῖς; μὴ λέγει, πῶς; ἀλλὰ θαύμαζε. Ἐπερωτῶ οὖν σε· πῶς

## CONCLUSION

Taking everything in consideration of the mentioned above, S. Damascenes presents reports of other writers and himself, indispensable to the history and useful to medical training.