

## Who is the Devil and how does he act? (Elder Joseph of Vatopaidi)

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The Holy Scriptures say that the devil is the “Fallen Lucifer” (Translator’s note: Eosforos: the angel of light). The Lord says of him: “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (Luke 10, 18). He is the head of the angelic regiment of those fallen from heaven when they wished to defect from God’s will. Then, they were

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horrific monsters  
olic nature which



The devil, which

once was the instrument of the glow of justice and sanctification, suddenly became – by his rebellion against God- the absolute instrument of darkness, of hatred, of deception, of complete wickedness and of all those things which contribute towards the calamity of perversion and death. He has become and will eternally remain the blackness and the deception and the destruction- with an additional aim- to thwart whatever belongs to God and whatever God provides for, particularly man. He has become and will remain like this forever, the heir of death and resident of Hades. His main goal is to deceive and drag down with him as many as he can.

He particularly targets man who is trying to unite with God. The devil cannot stand seeing him rise higher than his initial value, the value he had before his fall. For this reason he catapults his most fuming arrows towards him. He became and has consciously remained a man-killer.

Because he is the personification of deceit and wickedness, he does not come out clearly. He only incites the mind and the senses by deceptive pretexts, in order to mislead the thoughts and the will, to draw the rational to consent and thus supplant the victim by deception, hypocrisy and delusion. Man more often than not moves and acts by the inclination of his senses and emotions. The enemy knows this. Therefore, he inflames the senses with seemingly logical pretexts and thus he is more easily able to steal man's consent. You see, he pushes forward man's biological needs. The same thing happens with the body and the soul.

If man is free from passions and bad habits, he can easily be released from demonic assault and incitement. If, however, he is enslaved to wicked habits the battle is tough and desperate. In any case, our resistance is feasible with the alliance of grace which coexists with us, if we keep in mind our goal and the divine commandments.

The Apostle's suggestion that "Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4, 7) is correct and certain. Also "if the anger of the ruler rises against you, do not leave your place" (Ecclesiastes 10, 4).The devil does not have the authority to tempt man directly or clearly. He can only do it with the use of the imagination; with images he projects on the mind and by thoughts with which he incites man. Then, it is up to man to decide whether he is to accept the provocation (the attack) or to reject it. This is the main method which the devil uses to come into contact with man. The outcome depends on man's will; either to succumb or to stand up and fight.

The most direct way with which we may defend ourselves and resist him, is by calling on God's name (by prayer) and by remembering our goal and our

destination. Our Lord's example in the desert, has drawn up for us the practical method of the battle with the enemy, as well as with everything which goes with it.

The devil does not possess the gift of foresight; neither does he know what man is



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victim.

The Devil is by

nature similar to the nature of the mind. He is very fast, tireless, sleepless and unscrupulous as well as unchangeable towards wickedness and evil. He changes and transforms himself into various forms and shapes to promote his evil purpose. He always moves swiftly from place to place and uses any means to prevent God's will.

***Translated from the Greek:*** Γέροντος Ιωσήφ Βατοπαιδινού, Συζητήσεις στον Άθωνα, Ψυχοφελή Βατοπαιδινά 13, Ιερά Μεγίστη Μονή Βατοπαιδίου, Έκδοσις Α', Άγιον Όρος 2003, by Olga Konari Kokkinou