

No, son. Where did you get that from?

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)

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(Discussion with Elder Iosif Vatopaidinos)

Question: Why can't we follow the path of sacrifice by ourselves, when Christ did it by Himself?



Elder: He did it by Himself, because he was actually God, the incarnate Word of God. The person we saw was Jesus the man. But Jesus the man also had within Him Jesus the Word and God. Being God and man together, He had divine grace dwelling within him. He Who is the Lord of Life, is one of us, He's the head of our body. Because we're clad in Him. "As many as have been baptized into Christ have been clothed in Christ". We've "been clothed" in Him with baptism and we bear Him within us by partaking of the sacraments every day. He shares the same body and blood as we do. He's not somewhere far away so that we have to summon Him to make a start and come to us. He's already within us. We invoke the support of His grace: "we can overcome all things in Christ who gives us the strength to do

so” as Paul says. But I did say that that would be the basis. That this would be the basis and that Satan will try to threaten you in difficult times. Don’t be discouraged, because all his threats are in vain. “He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world”.

Question: The Son offered Himself as a ransom for people’s sins. To whom, though? The Father doesn’t want that, because He loves the Son. To whom did He offer Himself?

Elder: No, son. Where did you get that from? He didn’t offer Himself as a ransom, nor is there any difference between Father and Son. That’s to say a difference in wills between the persons of the Holy Trinity. What the Father wants, the Son wants, as well. Even though they’re self-sufficient persons, there’s no difference of will or opinion. The nature is one, but the persons are three, self-sufficient. But all are of the same opinion. The salvation of humankind occurred “through the goodwill of the Father, the self-emptying of the Word and the synergy of the Holy Spirit”. The Word of God didn’t serve anyone. But, moved by great love, He became a re-creator, having already been the creator. And there’s another reason, as well. Because the Word of God was going to take upon Himself another nature, in order that the capacity of the three persons should not be moved- the Father should remain forever the Father, the Son forever the Son and the Holy Spirit forever the Comforter- it was necessary for that person, Who was the Son of God, to be incarnate and become the Son of Man. Not that He acted submissively or paid a ransom. That’s what the Protestants and Catholics say. He was moved by love and only by love. Just as He was moved by love to create all things in order to pass on His love to His created things, not by necessity, as the ancient Greeks believed. The Word of God is the means by which creation was made. So this Word, “when the fullness of time had come”, as ordained by the King of the ages, came, “emptying Himself, without having received any command, not to become a sacrifice, but moved only by love. The Father and the Holy Spirit also participated in the same love. “The Father was pleased for the Son to become flesh”. The Word of God was always in the bosom of the Father. If we describe the Father as nous, He always had the Word. There never was a nous without the Word. The Word was also, at the same time eternally existent. He was to be found in the boundless tranquility of Godly majesty. When God wanted to make created things, His lever for creation was the Word. “He spoke and they were born”. At the same time, the Word appeared with the created things, though He had been invisible until then. “Everything was made through Him”, says John, “and without Him nothing was made that was made”. When the time came for Him to return to balance the creation that had revolted, the Word Himself appeared and “emptied Himself”.

What does “emptied” mean? He contracted, so as to be able to approach creation, as Abba Isaac says in a beautiful discourse. He was humbled and contracted so that creation would not vanish at His appearance and so that He could converse with it. The more profound meaning is this: so that He could take creation upon Himself and transmit hypostatic sanctification to it. Through human nature, He clad Himself in the created world and brought to it all the Godly energies of His grace, so that He could sanctify creation hypostatically. Not of necessity. So He’s not a victim.

So now we come to another view. In the Gospel, it says that, when the seventy disciples returned from their mission of preaching, they joyfully told the Lord: “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name” And Christ says: “I saw Satan falling from heaven like lightning”. Naturally we’ll transform that. It shouldn’t have been said like that. But our Jesus, who was “sober and humble in heart” always avoided showing off. He could have said: “he whom you saw now subjected to you in my name is the one whom I cast down from heaven and I was present when he fell like lightning”. But the Lord avoided the word “I”.

We’re now getting into a more profound theological meaning and are interpreting how the fall occurred. The fall occurred, according to the Lord, like lightning, in a flash. In a flash, the billions of fallen angels underwent two transfigurations. First, God took away from them the illumination, the dignity and the perfection they had. And at the same time, he altered their form. According to the Fathers, the ranks of Lucifer were the most beautiful. In a flash, He cast them down, took away their sanctity, their light, and altered their shape.

Now we come to the second form of the revelation. As the Lord tells us we await “the resurrection of the dead and life in the age to come”. How does our Church describe the question of regeneration, of the second coming? Doesn’t it say that the coming of the Word of God will be “like lightning entering from the east and visible to the west”? And that in that period of time, everyone will arise and present themselves before Him.

It’s not proper for serious people to accept theories of every Tom, Dick and Harry. We don’t want indications, we want proof. We believe in a particular God, not an abstract one, with Whom we are united hypostatically through His voluntary diminution. And behold the sanctification. But don’t forget that there’s Satan, as well, and he’s fighting. Remember the slave-girl in the days of the Apostles who “had a spirit of divination” (Acts 16,16), who was forever soothsaying and foretelling things. How does Satan foretell? Satan exists as a supernatural phenomenon and has supernatural abilities, because of the delicacy of his nature

and his movements. He moves like the *nous*. Think about the movement of our *nous*, what it's like. Now you're here; then you're thinking about New York, London, or the place you come from. In how many fractions of a second did that occur? This is how angels and demons move. People and angels see by participation in the grace of the Holy Spirit, as God sees. The demons, as the spirits they are, "speculate". From their many years of extended life they've acquired a lot of experiences. They see someone, for example, setting out from London to come here. If we were acquaintances I might see him coming here in a dream. They'd show me. Because they see him packing his case, his passport. They move instantaneously. And then there are other symbols within creation which assist them. They're these. Just as here in society there's the police, the army, the various authorities and there's order and we see and understand, for example, from their distinctive uniforms who belongs to the navy, the air force and so on, so the demons can tell who are marked out for salvation. Paul says that "God chose us from the beginning of the world", so those who are going to be saved have about them symbols of the grace of God and the demons, as spirits, see them and understand. In the *Life of Saint Theodore the Recruit* we see that, when the saint was martyred, and he scourged them, the demons cried out: "Didn't we know that he'd burn us? From his birth, didn't we see he'd turn out like this?". From his birth, the signs were upon him and they knew that he'd become a man of God. From that point of view, not prophecy. They don't have the gift of prophecy, because they lost that grace and are darkened and dusky. But from their ease of movement, their experience and their closeness to the angels, who mix with them, they understand. The whole of creation is maintained by the angels. By the orders of God, the angels keep creation in harmony. The demons see the angels and draw their conclusions. There'll be an act of God here, or an earthquake. God tells the guardian angels to leave. Then the demons see that something's going on. They know from what's happened before. Through the soothsayers, the witches and the mediums they say the same things. Most times they get it all confused and other times they're shown to be wrong. Because He changes the decision. God decides to destroy a certain place. Then either those who are alive and here begin to pray or those who have died and have boldness pray and God changes His plan. The demons saw and the witches said that it would be destroyed, but it wasn't. Because people changed God's mind and He changed His decision. Didn't He say about Nineveh? That's why Jonah didn't want to go there to preach. He knew they'd repent, that God would change His mind and that he would look like a liar. That's why he left and God had to make him go there.

Question: The feeling that's somebody's coming. Couldn't it be explained by telepathy?

Elder: There's no such thing as telepathy. It's what we were saying. Either there's the grace of God or the deception of the demons. When people begin to live as Christians, after they've emerged from the margins of their unnatural, sinful lives, they begin to live naturally. From the natural, they proceed to the supra-natural, towards sanctification. Then their intuition starts to come into play, a gift that they had before the fall. After intuition, there follows insight which, in turn, is followed by foresight. Then comes prophecy, increased by grace. When God-fearing people with intuition, insight, foresight and prophecy find themselves in these positions, they'll see all that, if they see it. Only in this way. What does telepathy mean? "Fallen" people are fallen. Sinful people are deprived of everything. They're left with nothing. What you're saying about thought transference can only happen by the action of Satan.

Question: We see it in scientific books!

Elder: Magic is a scientific term. Saint Katherine was adept at magic, as were how many other Fathers, before they entered the Grace of God.

Question: I would like to ask something more practical, which the kids often ask. Saint Paul says that men and women are equal before God. So why is the priesthood barred to women? A woman became the Mother of God.

Elder: The Mother of God was an exception, one of a kind. She was chosen to facilitate the "self-emptying" of the Word of God. That can never be repeated. The cause of the fall was activated by a woman. It was shown that she was the weaker of the two. As the weaker, she never enjoyed the confidence to be a genuine representative. Proof of that is that she was the cause of the fall. Now, if a maiden was chosen to facilitate God's dispensation, then she was an exception, one and only, because it couldn't be otherwise. He had to become a human and had to be born in natural terms. A maiden had to be found who would do that. And of course, women enter into the life of the blessed. In reality, God didn't create woman, he created man. He foresaw the fall and created woman to be a helpmeet. A helpmeet in the conditions of the post-fall situation. In the future, feminine nature will again be abolished. There'll be a return to the first creation: "for God created a man". So she doesn't come here as a rounded personality. Though she was given a personality by the grace of maternity. And she wasn't given the right to facilitate divine dispensations because of physical reasons, which you know about. Because

of the impossibility of being in a state of purity and because of human sickness. Initially, the Church allowed the practice of embracing as equals. But it wasn't long before scandals and passions arose. Because of their human weakness, the two sexes can't work together without passions. And since there's a risk, the Church, "having no spot or wrinkle" can't accept such things. The Church certainly accords respect to women and exalts them over any other anthropic theory or ideology. Only the Church considered women equal to men. No, they weren't allowed to become priests, but they are able to become saints.

But it seems that the woman didn't really understand things too clearly at the beginning of creation and that's why there won't be any in the future. [The Jews] believed marriage was the absolute aim for people and they asked our Lord what would happen in the future. He told them: "You're mistaken and don't know the Scriptures. There's nothing like that in eternity". And even though sex has existed since the beginning of creation, it's not always an active factor. When a little girl's born, she's potentially a woman, but not actively so. She has to be fifteen before she's active. And when she's passed fifty, again she can't be a woman. Because she serves the purpose of maternity just for a time. These are passing conditions brought about by the fall. This is why, in the future there won't be "male and female". In reality, they won't exist after sanctification. Before the life of the blessed, they do. Many Fathers say that there will only be Our Lady the Mother of God in the form of the first Eve, the impassionate Eve, because she has been glorified by having the Word of God reside within her. But how this is to happen, we don't know.

(Discussion recorded in July 1987)