

Pavlos Evdokimov (1901- 1970)

General Thoughts

About His Life

The eyes of Pavel Nikolaievitch Evdokimov saw the light of this world on August 2, 1901, at the turn of the twentieth century, in St Petersburg, Russia. A century that saw two world wars, the rising up and the falling down of the Bolshevik revolution and many important philosophical and psychological discoveries. After seventy years of fruitful work, he said good-bye to the pleasures of this world and entered the “memory eternal list” on September 16, 1970 in Paris.

Evdokimov studied under Nicolas Berdiaev (1874-1948), a Russian religious and political philosopher and Christian Universalist,¹ and Fr. Sergius Bulgakov (1871-1944), an Orthodox theologian, philosopher and economist,² at Saint Sergius Institute in Paris. He was among the first pioneers that graduated in theology from this Institute.

Through his years, Evdokimov was admired by many people for his gentleness, patience and compassion. His life was an excellent portrait of diaconal service. It was a demonstration of his understanding that every man is a universal priest. The Deacons will learn the true meaning of their ministry in the Church by reading the life of Paul, the lay-deacon. Many of his students who lived in the CIMADE³ attested to his pastoral and paternal love, his ability to listen and to lead others to prayer. But the attestation of his friend Fr. Lev Gillet⁴ (1893-1980) was extraordinary: “Paul Evdokimov was as much at home in the world of the invisible, heavenly beings...perhaps even more so than his lively presence here. He became prayer, as his writings taught, but he never was less than deeply human.”⁵

Surrounded by friends like Olivier Clément⁶ (1921), Elizabeth Behr-Sigel⁷ (1907-2005), Fr. Lev Gillet and the Holy Fathers of the Church, Evdokimov was taught and has taught the Church’s Teachings. He

¹ Copied from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nikolai_Berdyaev. Berdyaev, Nikolai. says in *The Truth of Orthodoxy*: “The greater part of Eastern teachers of the Church, from Clement of Alexandria to Maximus the Confessor, were supporters of Apokatastasis, of universal salvation and resurrection. ... Orthodox thought has never been suppressed by the idea of Divine justice and it never forgot the idea of Divine love. Chiefly - it did not define man from the point of view of Divine justice but from the idea of transfiguration and Deification of man and cosmos.”

² Copied from: http://orthodoxwiki.org/Sergius_Bulgakov Fr. Sergius Bulgakov was one of the founders of Saint Sergius Institute. He was the head of the Dogmatic Theology until his death.

³ Comité inter-Movements pour l’acceuil des évacués.

⁴ Fr. Lev Gillet was born in Saint Marcelin, France. He was converted to Orthodoxy in 1928 after his disappointment of the Catholic Church towards Orthodoxy.

⁵ Paul Evdokimov, *Ages of the Spiritual Life* (SVS Press, Crestwood, New York, 1998), p. 6.

⁶ Copied from: <http://www.lipaonline.org/writer/ae020.htm>. Olivier Clément was born in South France. He was influenced by Vladimir Lossky and Nicolaie Berdiaev and converted to Orthodoxy. He teaches at St Sergius theological Institute.

was inspired and has inspired his neighbor. He ministered to his neighbor and rendered to him his dignity as an image of God commanding him to become into His likeness.

A Chronological Biography

- Paul Evdokimov was born on August 2, 1901 in St Petersburg, Russia. His father, a Lieutenant-colonel, was assassinated by one of his soldiers in 1905.⁸
- He was educated in a military school and served in the cavalry of the White Army.
- He began theological studies just before the Revolution began.
- He escaped from Crimea through Constantinople with his family to the émigré community in Paris.⁹
- He got married to Natasha Brunel in 1927.
- He became a founding member of the Russian Christian Student Movement.
- He completed his doctorate in philosophy at Aix-en-Provence in 1942 for his letter “Dostoyevsky and the Problem of Evil.”
- He worked with the French Resistance during World War II under the auspices of an ecumenical agency CIMADE (see note 3 above, p. 1).
- He remarried in 1954 to Tomoko Sakai, a daughter of a Japanese Diplomat, after his wife Natasha died of cancer at the end of the World War II.
- He completed in 1958 *Woman and the Salvation of the World*, (SVS Press 1995) and *L’Orthodoxie* in 1959.
- In 1962 Evdokimov published a revision of his book *The Sacrament of Love*, (SVS Press, 1985).
- After the war, he served on the board of the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey and taught at the Catholic Graduate Theological Faculty in Paris.
- He was an official observer at the second session of Vatican II in 1964 where the dogmatic constitution on the Church in the world was crafted.
- He fell asleep in the Lord in the hope of Resurrection on Sept 16 1970.

⁷ Copied from <http://incommunion.org/articles/previous-issues/issue-40/elisabeth-behr-sigel-1907-2005> by Jerry Ryan
Elizabeth Behr-Sigel was born from a Jewish mother and a Protestant father in Alsace. She was the first woman to preach and exercise a pastoral ministry. She was converted to Orthodoxy at age of 24.

⁸ Most of this chronology is drawn from: Paul Evdokimov, *Ages of the Spiritual Life* (SVS Press, Crestwood, New York, 1998).

⁹ The date of Paul’s arrival to Paris may vary from 1921 to 1927. My guess is around 1923. This is confirmed by Christopher P. Klofft in

<http://www.questia.com/googleScholar.qst;jsessionid=JvJFnr9k12YtF15CScQNNhJKPhGc5nGfYfyDtJj6LcSCMMYLDbbC!731106818?docId=5009563458>

General Introduction

Reading Paul Evdokimov's works, and articles about him, opens a gate of a disclosed garden. Once a person enters this garden, he bewilders of its beauty and each time he smells and meditates upon one of its flowers, he is taken by the unexpected aroma, color and beauty that capture his whole being forcing him to see another flower and meditate upon Beauty Himself.

Expect the unexpected is my personal discovery of Paul Evdokimov. Each flower of his garden is rooted in the soil of the teachings of the Church. The visitor – reader - smells the Holy Fathers, Evdokimov's personal faith and the cloud of witnesses that visited Evdokimov's life either in person or through learning. Evdokimov's garden is the Church's that he cultivates, irrigates and arranges its harmony. He is the gardener who is depicting the work of the Gardener who planted this garden. He wants to render to this garden its original beauty through his beatification.

As such, the co-translators of the book "Ages of Spiritual Life" clarifies on the back cover: "Paul Evdokimov's spirituality is open to God, the world and to the neighbor. It is the spirituality of the Great Tradition of the Church, but refreshingly new, rooted in the Bible and liturgy but entwined with the everyday life of home, school and work, a spirituality that is truly 'for the life of the world.'"¹⁰

Major Themes

In order to grasp the full beauty of Paul Evdokimov's garden, the visitor shall go and visit each flower and meditate upon it. This is a life-long visit. Rather, I will, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, pick and gather a bouquet of flowers that will give a glimpse of this beauty. Although, each theme is a flower, which is individually whole, and this wholeness witnesses to its beauty, but the various flowers share some properties that set the foundation of their realities. So, these properties are the major themes which will highlight the thoughts of Paul Evdokimov.

On the Love of God

For Paul Evdokimov God is the lover of man – The Philanthropist. He had made with His hands and by His breath and placed "next to Him a being who is absolutely other, different from Him."¹¹ He created an image and a likeness of Himself to theophanize the generosity of His love outside His Being - Godhead.

¹⁰ Paul Evdokimov, *Ages of the Spiritual Life* (Crestwood, New York, SVS Press, 1998), back cover.

¹¹ Paul Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World* (Crestwood, New York, SVS Press, 1994), p. 65.

When man decided to be on his own, not in communion with His lover, God out of his mad love for humanity, became “the beggar for love at the door of man’s heart.”¹² God desired to become man and to “make humanity a Theophany, the beloved ground of His presence.”¹³ This desire was His free decision, not in time, nor because of the fall. It was “rooted in His pre-eternal.”¹⁴ “God had His mind’s eye fixed upon Christ as Prototype”¹⁵ from pre-eternal.

But when God lost his lover, he sought man. At the right time, he left his “peaceful silence,”¹⁶ emptied Himself and took the flesh of his love - man. He puts on this flesh in order to stay close to man reminding him of His love and their nuptial relationship – the unconfused unity. So “The transcendence of the Absolute turns into the immanence of God-incarnate: the acting ‘upon’ becomes the acting ‘within’.”¹⁷ He made Himself visible and touchable to heal man and the universe by His presence and existence. He entered the visible world to sanctify it. He “confronted the cosmic elements that conceal dark powers – water, air, the desert”¹⁸ to save the universe and man from all kinds of adultery. He did not leave the “world for evil, but [He] let the spiritual element in the creature come forth.”¹⁹ He made “each of us a high priest.”²⁰ He did come for the salvation of man by reuniting man to Him.

In few words Michael Plekon describes God’s love for man in this way: “God who is absurd in giving of Himself, foolish in emptying Himself, limitless in loving and forgiving us. God makes Himself small and defenseless suffering for us in his weakness...He descends into hell, searches for Adam and Eve and all their children, seeking us to save us.”²¹

On the Human Being

Paul Evdokimov draws from the language of the Church a contemporary language that is revolutionary in its essence. His understanding of man’s life is not new; it is rooted in the teachings of the Fathers. He envelops it with deeper thoughts. He knitted from their sayings a new robe that fit the modern man.

Evdokimov, simply, renders to human beings their role as universal priests. He sees them as liturgical beings and considers them as monks in the sense that they are living for God and they share nothing else with Him. They live ascetically now - the Pentecostal era - and looking ahead to the end of earthly time

¹² Paul Evdokimov, *Ages of the Spiritual Life* (Crestwood, New York, SVS Press, 1998), p. 51

¹³ Paul Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love* (Crestwood, New York, SVS Press, 2001), p. 50.

¹⁴ Paul Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World* (Crestwood, New York, SVS Press, 1994), p. 37.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁸ Paul Evdokimov, *Ages of the Spiritual Life* (Crestwood, New York, SVS Press, 1998), p. 96

¹⁹ Paul Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love* (Crestwood, New York, SVS Press, 2001), p. 92

²⁰ Paul Evdokimov, *Ages of the Spiritual Life* (Crestwood, New York, SVS Press, 1998), p. 212

²¹ http://www.jacwell.org/Summer_2002/a_theologian_of_god's_beauty.htm

– Eschatology - where this world will become the Kingdom. So human beings are living in an endless progress towards their beginning.

On the Composition of the Human Being

Evdokimov lays down his thoughts by explaining the composites of the human person. He says that man is a composite of body and soul. “The soul vivifies the body and makes of it a living flesh.”²² The spirit, *pneuma, ruh*, “the medium of communion with the transcendent,”²³ “spiritualizes the entire human being, [soul and body], and makes of it a spiritual man. The spirit is not a third element...but a qualifying principle.”²⁴ The conflict in any person is not a conflict between soul and body, but a conflict between “the carnal and the spiritual man.”²⁵ All depends on what there is in and where is the heart of man, “the unfathomable depth, [for] man is worth what the object of his love and the desires of his heart are worth.”²⁶

The Atheist Person

The heart’s dwelling and contents are the criteria that differentiate between human beings. So, an atheist is a person whose heart, and therefore his whole being, does dwell consciously away from God and does not “dependent on any transcendent power.”²⁷ The contents of the atheist’s heart are the produce – fruits - of his own production as the ultimate doer. Atheism is a *de facto* opposition to theism; it is built on negation of the Maker of all things who is the ‘All in All.’

Evdokimov says that the atheist’s conscious negation of God “has thus permitted the affirmation of man.”²⁸ Therefore, the atheist is the one who replaces God with himself and tries to compensate what God should have provided if he existed. He becomes the sole provider, and the distribution of the goods is in accordance to his discretion and thus, his own reason. He feels of himself “the sole maker of [his] destiny and the master of history.”²⁹

The Monotheist

While the atheist’s heart said consciously ‘No’ to God’s existence and His ‘Yes’ to the world, the monotheist’s heart responded with complete consciousness positively to God’s presence, dwelling and actions. Michael Plekon figures this very well by saying: “We can say "no," Evdokimov reminds us,

²² Paul Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love* (Crestwood, New York, SVS Press, 2001), p. 51

²³ Paul Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World* (Crestwood, New York, SVS Press, 1994), p.40

²⁴ Paul Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love* (Crestwood, New York, SVS Press, 2001), p. 51

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 52

²⁷ Paul Evdokimov, *Ages of the Spiritual Life* (Crestwood, New York, SVS Press, 1998), p. 21

²⁸ Ibid., p. 26

²⁹ Ibid., p. 25

pushing the philanthropy of God to the extreme, but there is only "yes" in God. That "yes" awaits the "yes" of others, as that of the patriarchs and prophets, the "yes" of Mary, John the Baptist, apostles, martyrs, teachers and many other holy ones before."³⁰ Therefore the monotheist is a "Person [who] exists only in God and he is in unceasing transcendence...toward the divine Thou [and] our person, our 'me,' does not belong to us in our own right; we receive it in the order of grace that perfects it."³¹

This positive response from man to God's invitation requires from Christians a unique step. According to Evdokimov, this 'yes' of man requires a liturgical, mysterious, entry into God's world. He says that "the encounter with God could not be made in the state of the fallen nature. It presupposes a previous restoration of this nature in the sacrament of Baptism."³² This sacrament 'puts on Christ' – "the wedding garment of the divine espousals"³³ - on the 'garments of skin' of man and as such, the baptized encounters Jesus Christ and becomes a new creation in Him.

This entry - encounter, communion - with Christ is the genius revelation of Christianity, which differs from the other sorts of theisms. "Between a baptized and an unbaptized person there is an abyss, the infinite difference of the two natures"³⁴ (divine and human natures) of Christ – the God-man. The unity of the two natures without confusion, change, division and separation will enable man through his union with Christ to become god by grace.

The Christian Person

Evdokimov, founded on the Church's teaching, sees an abyss between the baptized and the unbaptized. An abyss that is bridgeable only by God's love. The difference is that the baptized is the person who is initiated into "three degrees of mystical life: purification, illumination and perfect union,"³⁵ which they correspond respectively to the three sacraments that were occurred together, one after the other: Baptism, Chrismation and Eucharist, while the unbaptized has no access to this initiation. In Baptism, the baptized "encapsulates the Passion and the Resurrection,"³⁶ in anointing he receives his Pentecost and in his participation of the Eucharist he is in "the eschatological outpouring of the Kingdom of God."³⁷

³⁰ http://www.jacwell.org/Summer_2002/a_theologian_of_god's_beauty.htm

³¹ Paul Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love* (Crestwood, New York, SVS Press, 2001), p. 53.

³² Paul Evdokimov, *Ages of the Spiritual Life* (Crestwood, New York, SVS Press, 1998), p. 72.

³³ Paul Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love* (Crestwood, New York, SVS Press, 2001), p. 56.

³⁴ Paul Evdokimov, *Ages of the Spiritual Life* (Crestwood, New York, SVS Press, 1998), p. 73.

³⁵ Paul Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World* (Crestwood, New York, SVS Press, 1994), p.104.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 105

³⁷ *Ibid.*

Thus the initiation is not a formula for Baptism, it is a “total immersion, or descent into the water, signifies real death to a guilty past, and emerging, or being raised, the definitive victory, the resurrection to a new life,”³⁸ the chrismation is the receiving of the seal of the Holy Spirit and the Eucharist is the revelation of the Beyond – the After – in the Now.

The Christian Person is in the Image and Likeness of God

Evdokimov in taking the sacrament of Baptism, which includes the anointing and the Eucharist for Orthodox Christians, as his focal and crucial departure from all other beliefs, he beautifies man and renders to him his image and likeness’ mission and ministry according to Scripture and therefore, the teachings of the Church.

God created man in “His image and according to His likeness.”³⁹ It means for Evdokimov that “each faculty of the human spirit (intelligence, freedom, love, creation) reflects the image, which is essentially the complete human centered on the spiritual.”⁴⁰ However, this image was distorted and tarnished because of the fall, which created ‘nostalgia,’ ‘unquenchable thirst,’ in man for the original image and likeness. Though, “Christ re-assumes and re-vivifies that which was interrupted by the fall”⁴¹ and provides the fallen image the possibility “to go beyond himself in order to cast himself into the infinity of God and to find there the alleviation of his nostalgia.”⁴²

It is only through Christ that this deification – being in the infinity of God - is made possible because the absolute pure image of God is Christ Himself. Evdokimov says: “in its absolute purity, this image is Christ Himself, whom the Fathers call the divine-human Archetype.”⁴³ He is “the imprint of the Father and Christ the *Ecce Homo* (Behold the man) unites in Himself the image of God and the image of man,”⁴⁴ and through such, man can become god. Hence “in the beginning...the creation of man ‘in the image’ of God took place in view of the Incarnation-deification, and is therefore of an essentially *theandric* ‘inspiration’ (*in-spirare*, “in-breathing’).”⁴⁵ Then man as a decipherer “moves beyond choice and creates good. He produces his own reasons, instead of submitting to them [and] freely creates his destiny.”⁴⁶

³⁸ Paul Evdokimov, *Ages of the Spiritual Life* (Crestwood, New York, SVS Press, 1998), p. 73.

³⁹ Genesis 2: 26.

⁴⁰ Paul Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love* (Crestwood, New York, SVS Press, 2001), p. 58.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁴³ Paul Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World* (Crestwood, New York, SVS Press, 1994), p. 56.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Paul Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love* (Crestwood, New York, SVS Press, 2001), p. 55.

A Christian Person is a Royal Priest – Universal Priesthood

“Man always seeks the absolute, but outside Christ the ‘likeness’ remains inoperative.”⁴⁷ ‘Likeness’ becomes operative when a person “participates in the Priesthood of Christ, not through his sacred functions but by virtue of his sanctified being.”⁴⁸ The sanctification of the being has been initiated to the person through the sacrament of the anointing by chrism, which is the sacrament of universal priesthood. This anointing with the seal of the gifts of the Holy Spirit gives every person a mission because “the human being comes into this world, not for him – or herself, but for a specific mission, ‘that the world may believe’ (the priestly prayer of Christ, Jn 17:21).⁴⁹ In order to do so, he has to fulfill his priestly ministry by going and teaching all nations and serving God in every act and word.

This sacred and priestly character is to each member of the people of God. In our Baptism and anointment by chrism, “the One and only Christ is spread through the whole Body.” We all become priests. “From this equality, some are chosen, set apart and established by a divine act, as bishops and presbyters. A functional difference of ministries suppresses all ontological difference of nature and makes all separation between clerics and laymen impossible⁵⁰...Thus, if a bishop participates in the priestly of Christ by his sacred function, every lay person does so by his very being.”⁵¹

Two Ways for Deification, but One Tool

Therefore “a lay person is an eyewitness of the resurrection of Christ.”⁵² “He is above all a person of prayer”⁵³ and as an eyewitness he has “to become a temple, to continue the liturgy in his existence, to present to those without faith a liturgical countenance and smile.”⁵⁴ His role “to verify and to testify”⁵⁵ can be practiced either in the monastery or in his matrimonial house.

Both ways are ways leading to salvation. They require same ascetical efforts because it is the requirement for each person to either dwell in the desert, or in the warmth and comfort of his own home. The life of the eyewitness is unceasingly in progress in order to grasp the grace that is bestowed from above, which “unlocks everyday time, the moments lived within history, into the dimension of the age to come.”⁵⁶

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 60.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 85.

⁴⁹ Paul Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World* (Crestwood, New York, SVS Press, 1994), p.107.

⁵⁰ Paul Evdokimov, *Ages of the Spiritual Life* (Crestwood, New York, SVS Press, 1998), p. 231.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 232.

⁵² Ibid., p. 241.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 240.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 240.

⁵⁵ 1 Thess. 5:19–21.

⁵⁶ Paul Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World* (Crestwood, New York, SVS Press, 1994), p.106.

The ascetical life is not alien to the human nature. It is embedded in him and it is part of his human particles. However, those who are “anointed with the heavenly oil, become Christs according to grace, so that they too are kings, priests, and prophets of heavenly mysteries.”⁵⁷ They are kings by mastering over their love to the material – their passions. They are priests by offering themselves as endless sacrifices because “each one carries his sacrifice with himself, and he himself puts the fire on the altar.”⁵⁸ And they are prophets because each one “is aware of the designs of God in the world, and places himself in the inexorable progression of His grace.”⁵⁹

“Christian hope and the ultimatum Christian ministry of the Last Days are the concern of the priesthood of the believers.”⁶⁰ It is “the vocation of the masculine and the feminine,”⁶¹ and of the monk and of the married. They all have one ascetic way of spiritual life, the life in Christ. They all live in the Pentecostal age looking towards the *parousia*.

The two states are not in competing mood, but both are ascetical ways to man’s destiny in God. Evdokimov says that “the Gospel in its totality is addressed to each person [and] the requirements of the Gospel are the same for everyone”⁶²...Chastity signifies that one belongs totally to Christ, undividedly. For monks, it is an engagement of the soul in unmediated relationship, and for the spouses, engagement through the *hypostasis* of matrimony.”⁶³ The two who become sacramentally one, monk, are called to live the three monastic vows: Poverty, chastity (virginity) and obedience. “One becomes a spouse to belong in nuptial love only to the Lord (vow of chastity), to be led only by the Lord (vow of obedience), and to have recourse only to God (vow of poverty)...Thus, marriage includes within itself the monastic state, and that is why the latter is not a sacrament.”⁶⁴

The best person that can understand the state of marriage is the monk. The monk has known martyrdom, the *kenosis*, the emptying of one self for the other. The crowns of the married couple are a symbol of this martyrdom, the sacrifice. They both, “monastic holiness and married holiness, are the two faces of Tabor; the Holy Spirit is the limit of the one and the other.”⁶⁵

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 108.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 109.

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 109, 110.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 110

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 111.

⁶² Paul Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love* (Crestwood, New York, SVS Press, 2001), p. 65.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 67.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 68.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 73.

“The world to come will know neither the twin world of couples nor such as the ‘man’ faced by such a ‘woman’ as woman, but will know the unity of the masculine and the feminine in their totality, Adam-Eve restored to the spiritual dimension.”⁶⁶

Spiritual Life – The One Tool

The spiritual life of every person, Christian or atheist, comes to the person suddenly. It is a conversion of the status of the self. “With rare exceptions, the spiritual life comes into being in an event that is called *conversion*. Its precise content is of little importance. It is a remarkable event, a shock followed by a sharply defined passage from one state to another.”⁶⁷

It is a passage from loneliness to a “nuptial mystery – the soul’s union with God.”⁶⁸ Each baptized person has to convert himself towards God and to meet Him in a nuptial mystery. “God comes from himself towards us, and we have to leave our solitude to meet his Otherness.”⁶⁹ Therefore, the spiritual life has a goal to attain or it can be empty of meaning and content. It is an unceasing process, a continuous movement for the acquisition of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and seeking the one thing needful – the Kingdom of God – “God’s destiny in the world.”⁷⁰ It is an “incessant and invisible combat,”⁷¹ rather it should become a gradual ascent and transcendence.

But first, we should have a realistic vision of the status of our soul in order to purify it. The spiritual life is not an emotional love. “Its point of departure is humility.”⁷² With humility the one finds his own place and confess his realistic state that he is a sinner, he is not worthy of God’s grace – the dwelling of the Holy Spirit. His humility becomes an “exact replica of the divine humility, of the *kenosis*, the self-emptying.”⁷³ Then the conversion – *metanoia* – begins.

Evdokimov warns and reminds us that ascetic efforts are only means to attain the acquisition of the Holy Spirit. We should not make a passion out of our struggle against passion. The ascetic efforts are not the aim, the final destiny, but only the means, the tools, the vehicles that will take us to our destination.

- **Discernment**

Then the spiritual life is an ascetic effort. It is a positive response, primarily, to the grace of God – His yes to us - and thereafter to the words of Christ: “get up and walk.” Our ascetic effort is the ‘sweat’ of

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 102.

⁶⁷ Paul Evdokimov, *Ages of the Spiritual Life* (Crestwood, New York, SVS Press, 1998), p. 76.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 67.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 67.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 164.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 167.

⁷² Ibid., p. 168.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 169.

getting up and walking in a pleasing way to God. It is our awareness of the others and our nuptial union with them. It is the *askesis* to capture discernment and being “capable of distinguishing and of making decisive choices”⁷⁴ and “how not to confuse the end with the means.”⁷⁵

- **Impassibility**

It is also our sweat to obtain the spirit of impassibility, which is not insensitivity. It is not a detachment from passions. It is not passionless, but it is a passion directed toward God; a passion that it “receives its value from the goal to be attained (Holy Spirit).”⁷⁶ The impassibility becomes full of love. Love reigns and controls it. The one will have no desire but to venerate and love without distinction.

- **Contemplative Prayer and Silence**

It is the attempt to receive the charisms of contemplative prayer and silence. Contemplative prayer allows the “heart opens itself in silence before God,”⁷⁷ while silence renders the soul its true and correct dynamism. During contemplative prayer the unceasing oral prayers will cease because the soul recognizes the Spirit and it stops from every mental and spiritual movement. It bows down with awesome, piety, wonder and worship and nothing can be said or is worthy of this majestic moment. But during this silence the person becomes more watchful and aware of his sluggishness. He becomes more attentive because he is in the presence of His Creator. This “attention develops sensitivity to signs and warnings.”⁷⁸ The soul becomes vigilant and ready to repent because it is not a perfect soul as it is required by the Heavenly Father.

- **Repentance**

Our ascetic life through the charism of repentance “meditates constantly on our rejection of the one who is crucified love. It is a question here of tears, not of the soul, but of the spirit.”⁷⁹ These tears purify us. But the charism of humility requires “the most arduous and constant effort.”⁸⁰ It is the one charism that “puts us in our place.”⁸¹

- **Prayer**

Through this gradual ascent the state of prayer is crucial because this is the new state that we want to attain in this world. Evdokimov tells the person “enter into yourself, your heart, and make a sanctuary

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 190.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 189.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 195.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 196.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 198.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 198.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 199.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 199.

there.”⁸² He asks him to learn how to listen to silence in order to listen to the voice of the Word, and to pray unceasingly in public places. Then, God’s “voice comes to me [him] in every human voice.”⁸³ We have to remember that a “single word of the Publican touched the mercy of God, and a single word, full of faith, saved the good thief.”⁸⁴

In our prayers, we ascend from having prayers and praying, to become a prayer. We become “living realities created by each word of our prayer.”⁸⁵ We must become “prayer incarnate” and “liturgical beings.” So our life can become a pattern of the Lords’ Prayer in its three forms: request, offering and praise. In the morning, we request our daily bread, forgiveness of sins and deliverance from temptations. Then during the day, we offer our daily work, our sweat, as an offering on behalf of all and for all and our “pardon of others and make us thy servants and witnesses.”⁸⁶ And at the end of the day we praise God for His grace, love and mercy because to Him is due all glory.

Another way of becoming a prayer is the Jesus prayer. “The invocation of the Name of God is accompanied with immediate manifestation, for the name is a form of his presence.”⁸⁷ So the invocation of the Name of Jesus Christ requesting from Him to save us is a theophany that is revealing. This Publican prayer is “the passage from Jesus before the eyes to Jesus in the heart.”⁸⁸ It is turning the heart into a temple where the liturgy, the divine presence, is in action.

While the individual prayers are necessary *askeskeses* to the Christian person where he can turn his house and himself to a church, Liturgical prayers “introduce us into a collegial consciousness.”⁸⁹ They call us to beyond ourselves, to the neighbor and to the enemy. “Liturgical prayer embraces the city, nations, humanity, and asks for peace and unity of all.”⁹⁰ He can “hear the voice of St. John Chrysostom, St. Basil, St. Symeon, and so many others who have prayed the same prayers” and they left their “imprint of their prayers, offerings and intercessions.”⁹¹

The Two Ways: The Marriage State and the Monastic State

- **The Marriage State**

⁸² Ibid., p. 206.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 207.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 208.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 208.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 210.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 212.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 211.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 215.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 215.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 216.

Evdokimov sees the marriage state in its monad: husband-wife. The sacramental union makes of them one *hypostasis*. The relationship of this *hypostasis* with God is in the likeness of the relationship of the monk with God. But the husband-wife relationship is consubstantial it is like “the Trinity [where] each of the terms exists only in relation to the others. Each achieves its own unity only in the overall unity with the other. Such is the miracle of love: each person signifies the two others.”⁹² This understanding is true, as well, for the whole community.

“Marriage is eschatological...and love is precisely this crucial point where the original fullness invokes the fullness to come.”⁹³ Therefore, the Nuptial Priesthood is based on love. Evdokimov takes the saying of Ramuz “one and one cease to be two, and remain one” as his basis and comments saying: “they do not become but remain one, which means that they rediscover and restore their initial mysterious unity.”⁹⁴ He continues to say: It is where “the love of two creates of itself a personality.”⁹⁵ Loving is to know. Love is a prophetic revelation. The lovers recognize one another suddenly. “Love wells up at the precise moment when ‘some hidden hand unveils to him the loveliness that others cannot understand’⁹⁶...One is loved for what one is, which allows one to accept oneself and to receive one’s own being as a gift.”⁹⁷

This marital unity is between male and female. The female, for Evdokimov and the Church, is not a subordinate to the male. She is as the Hebraic words of Scripture “*Ezer-Kenegdo* (Gen 2: 18), “a helper turned toward him”⁹⁸ – man. Man and woman are in movement toward one another. They are in a face to face relationship. Each one is recognized by his own *hypostasis* and fulfills his special role according to his characteristics.

Therefore, the woman’s charisma manifests itself inwardly while that of man is expressed outwardly. She is, the mother, the wife, the sister, the betrothed – she is the protector – while “man is interested in only his own cause.”⁹⁹ She was given the gift of “giving birth to the hidden man of the heart.”¹⁰⁰ She, “virgin or spouse, is a mother for all eternity” while man “makes his outer body in order to reach the height of his power and fill the world with it, imposing himself as lord and master.”¹⁰¹ Both complement

⁹² Paul Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World* (Crestwood, New York, SVS Press, 1994), p.11.

⁹³ Paul Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love* (Crestwood, New York, SVS Press, 2001), p. 47.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 111. Coventry Patmore, *the angel in the house* (Boston. 1960), p. 54.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

⁹⁸ Paul Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love* (Crestwood, New York, SVS Press, 2001), p. 32.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

¹⁰¹ Paul Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World* (Crestwood, New York, SVS Press, 1994), p. 258.

one another and keep harmony in the family and the world. They are the two poles of the society; man for productivity and the woman for receptivity. This is the relationship's foundation of the husband-wife monad.

But what is the purpose of marriage – “the Nuptial Priesthood?”¹⁰² Evdokimov says that the purpose of marriage is in its “*telos* – end, plenitude.”¹⁰³ It is not in the common good of society, but that the love of the two lovers will “receive the gift of the Holy Spirit; the nuptial Pentecost...The meaning of marriage is taken precisely in the dual and direct relationship to God.”¹⁰⁴ So, the sexual attraction and reproduction are not the aim of the two lovers, but their aim is to become whole. “Between the two lovers there is only God who is the third term¹⁰⁵ ...Married people are considered as forming an order,”¹⁰⁶ a church. They unite sacramentally to create freely, out of the abundance of love, a reflection of the self in the world, “a new face that is called to become an icon of God.”¹⁰⁷ It is to keep the Theophany of love present on earth, though God has many ways to do so. It is for fatherhood and motherhood to continue revealing the Trinity - Love in action - among His images.

The union on the altar aims to allow Christ to be present in the wedding and initiates the eternity of the domestic Church, the ‘House of God.’ The presence of Christ at the wedding of Cana – every wedding – is a manifestation of His glory. He “bestows a sacramental gift upon the betrothed.”¹⁰⁸ “The more the spouses are united in Christ the more their common cup, the measure of their life, is filled with the wine of Cana and becomes miraculous... Every moment of their life rises up like a royal doxology, like an unending liturgical chant.”¹⁰⁹

This union is established from the beginning in Paradise: “The love of Christ for the Church becomes the archetype of marriage, and in this wise it exists before the couple, for Adam is created in the image of Christ and Eve in the image of the Church.”¹¹⁰

- **The Monastic State**

While spouses establish domestic churches – monasteries – in the ‘Nuptial Community’ where civilization rules, the monks extend this community to the desert, mountains and caves. They place

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 41.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 42.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 42.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 42.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 44.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 121.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 122.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 123.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 126.

themselves at the edge of the world, the “intermediary zone between the profane world and the Kingdom.”¹¹¹ So, they may receive the *parousia*, the second coming, and they may live in the *eschatological time*. They took back on themselves the struggles of the first centuries – the Martyrs - by replacing the arenas of persecution by the desert where they became “athletes of exile”¹¹² drinking from the same ‘Eucharistic Cup’ that Christ and the martyrs have drunk.” In thus, they transformed these non-humanized places into heaven and made them places of God’s dwellings. They become, and as such they are venerated, as “earthly angels and heavenly men.”¹¹³

Thus, “the monastery is an earthly heaven.”¹¹⁴ It is where monks live on “the rule of the angel”¹¹⁵ and speak “the languages of the angels.”¹¹⁶ It is where the wild beasts, the sands of the desert, and the forests become sanctified by the invocation of the Name of Jesus Christ day and night. It is where the vegetal, animal and human states live in harmony. It is where man reigns his state with the Mind of Christ as it was in paradisiacal time.

So, the monk is this anointed person who chooses to expand himself in total and unceasing devotion to God. He puts himself in a very positive state of mind, which is to bring the Kingdom of God into his milieu to radiate it to others. Evdokimov pushes away the ill negative conceptions of withdrawal of monks from the world. He renders to them their true positive meanings; the expansion of the self into the wilderness, “the call to perfection, the total renunciation of the self, the oblation of the self, the offering of one’s being and life, the naked following of the naked Christ...and the eschatological vision of a treasure in the heaven, the passionate nostalgia of the Kingdom of God.”¹¹⁷

So the monk is the one who enters willingly and creatively a “second baptism, the baptism of asceticism.”¹¹⁸ He “is not someone who diminishes his being, but one who expands it, who truly exists in the image of the existing”¹¹⁹...True monasticism, however, never leads to isolation, since its task is not to unite man to the Holy Trinity, but to express its human truth among men.”¹²⁰

¹¹¹ Paul Evdokimov, *Ages of the Spiritual Life* (Crestwood, New York, SVS Press, 1998), p. 114.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 114.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

¹¹⁷ Paul Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love* (Crestwood, New York, SVS Press, 2001), p. 73.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

The Monastic State is a way of self-expression that needs no pre-requirements but devotion. It is, therefore, for every believer. It is the “normative value of every believer.”¹²¹ Every believer is called to exercise the calling to perfection of the Gospel. He is required to sell everything, offer himself and follow the Lord Jesus Christ. He becomes the “beggar of grace, who discovers the One who is still miserable, more of a beggar, God Himself, begging for love at the door of man’s heart.”¹²² His soul longs to the awaiting other, to the lover. His desire – passion – “*Eros* [the ecstatic aspect of agape] flowers into agape and into love of neighbor.”¹²³

Ending Note

“Evdokimov was both within and beyond the various worlds in which he lived: the Church and modern society, Orthodoxy and the West, theology and culture. His belonging ‘within’ is easier to understand, his being ‘beyond’ somewhat more mysterious, because it is eschatological.”¹²⁴ This was his garden of flowers from which I was challenged to pick from.

This presentation is just a glimpse of beauty from “the witness of beauty as Clément characterizes him.”¹²⁵ It is a collection of few flowers that can direct the royal priest to the Way, Life and Truth. But the field is full and in its plenitude witness to God’s Grace and Glory is yet to be discovered.

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¹²¹ Ibid., p. 81.

¹²² Ibid., p. 82.

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With God's Grace,

Submitted by Deacon Jean El-Murr.

