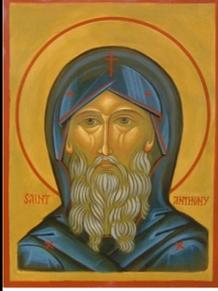


SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH



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FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST 25 September 2016

TONE 5— *Martyr Paphnutius and 546 companions in Egypt (3rd c.). Ven. Euphrosyne of Alexandria (5th c.). Repose of Ven. Sergius of Rádonezh (1392). Translation of the Relics of St. Herman, Archbishop of Kazan' (1595).*

FIRST ANTIPHON

It is good to give praise unto the Lord, and to chant unto Thy Name, O Most High!
Refrain: Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us! *To proclaim in the morning Thy mercy, and Thy truth by night! (R.:) Upright is the Lord our God and there is no unrighteousness in Him (R.:) Glory... Now and ever... (R.:)*

SECOND ANTIPHON

The Lord is King, He is clothed with majesty; the Lord is clothed with strength and has girt Himself! (R.:) Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, as we chant to Thee, "Alleluia"! For He established the world which shall not be shaken! (R.:) Holiness befits Thy house, O Lord, unto length of days! (R.:) Glory... Now and ever... (Only begotten Son and Word of God ...)

LITTLE ENTRANCE

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ! O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, save us who sing to Thee: "Alleluia"!

TROPARION OF THE RESURRECTION (Tone 5): Let us believers praise and worship the Word; coeternal with the Father and the Spirit, born of the Virgin for our salvation. For, He took pleasure in ascending the Cross in the flesh to suffer death; and to raise the dead by His glorious Resurrection.

TROPARION OF SAINT ANTHONY THE GREAT (Tone 4, Russian): Like the zealous Elijah thou didst become, and followed John the Baptist in his upright ways. A dweller in the wilderness, thou didst steady the world by prayer. O Father Anthony, intercede with Christ our God for our souls' salvation.

KONTAKION FOR ORDINARY SUNDAYS (Tone 4): O protection of Christians that cannot be put to shame, mediation unto the Creator most constant, O despise not the suppliant voices of those who have sinned; but be thou quick, O good one, to come unto our aid, who in faith cry unto thee: Hasten to intercession, and speed thou to make supplication, thou who dost ever protect, O Theotokos, them that honor thee.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

*Prokeimenon: Thou, O Lord, wilt keep and preserve us.
Save me, O Lord, for the godly man has failed.*

From Saint Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians

(2 Cor 1:21-2:4) Brethren, it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has commissioned us; He has put his seal upon us and given us His Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. But I call God to witness against me—it was to spare you that I refrained from coming to Corinth. Not that we lord it over your faith; we work with you for your joy, for you stand firm in your faith. For I made up my mind not to make you another painful visit. For if I cause you pain, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have pained? And I wrote as I did, so that when I came I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice, for I felt sure of all of you, that my joy would be the joy of you all. For I wrote you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.

We all know that the Apostles were sent out by the Lord—this is actually what the word “apostle” means in Greek: one who is sent, an emissary, a messenger—and founded churches everywhere they went. Today we get a glimpse into another dimension of the life of the foremost among the Apostles, Saint Paul: he was also a “pastor,” a shepherd to his Christian flock. He taught, he gave advice, he corrected, and oftentimes he struggled against the temptations that assault each and every community.

In Corinth there were a lot of really difficult problems—heretical ideas, to be sure, and questions of Christian morality, but also issues about organization and the flow of money. Saint Paul speaks about the sorrowful letter he wrote them “**with much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears,**” about paying them a “painful visit,” then deciding to *not* visit in order not to inflict more pain on the community; and he also speaks about himself **suffering pain from those who should have made him rejoice.**

In fact, this work of “disciplining” goes back to the Lord himself, who had three years to teach and *reshape* his followers from fishermen into fishers of men. And he did this sometimes tenderly, sometimes more harshly (just read the Gospel of Mark!), sometimes with praise and sometimes with chastisement (“You are the Rock and on this rock I shall build my church!” he tells Peter; a few moments later: “you are a stumbling block, you are not thinking the thoughts of God, get behind me, Satan!”).

Saint Paul reminds the Corinthians, first of all, that “being Church” is the work of God in us, and that discipleship simply is *how* this work is moving forward. That it is not about *Paul* forcing his views over them, rather, ***it is God who establishes us, it is God who has commissioned us, He has put his seal upon us, He and given us His Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.*** Secondly, the work of the Apostle is, essentially, for the flourishing of those entrusted to him, and it is a work of cooperation between God, the Apostle, and his flock: ***we work with you***

and for your joy. Thirdly, however, this cooperation will always bring to the surface our estrangement from God and our diseased heart and mind—whence the difficulties, pain, and tears Saint Paul refers to. Any priest, any abbot or abbess in monastery, and any bishop knows just that this portrayal of the struggles in church is absolutely realistic.

What do we learn from today's reading? That "doing Church" is a struggle and that sooner or later it will require uncomfortable changes for the sake of healing; that "doing Church" is the only way to be a Christian; that "doing Church" is not only about "gaining" the blessedness of some distant future, but about a subtle and pure joy here and now which builds little by little as it dawns on us that we are training ourselves in cooperating with God and each other. To encourage us on the way, Saint Paul assures us of the essential: **I wrote you ... not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.**

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

From the Gospel according to Saint Luke

(Luke 5:1-11) At that time, Jesus was standing by the lake of Gennesaret. And he saw two boats by the lake; but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, Jesus asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. And when Jesus had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." And when they had done this, they enclosed a great shoal of fish; and as their nets were breaking, they beckoned to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zeb'edee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men." And when they had brought their boats to land, I they left everything and followed him.

The fishermen kindly allowed Jesus to use one of their boats for his preaching; however, when he asked Simon Peter to go fishing, they must have thought to themselves that this stranger had overstepped the boundaries of his authority and competence. It is apparently easier to fish at night, when the fish move up shallower. "**We toiled all night and took nothing!**": a very polite way of suggesting that the preacher should perhaps confine himself to his preaching, since he obviously didn't know much about fishing.

Nevertheless, Peter is willing to do what the Lord says. And his humility is recompensed beyond expectation. The catch is so rich that the boats are close to sinking. This is when Peter, in a flash of insight, understands that in his poor fishing boat he has come face to face with the Lord—He who commanded and it came to be; the maker and sustainer of all creation.

We can learn quite a few things from this Gospel. First, that we should allow God to "borrow" this and that and the other part of our life, just as Peter allowed Christ to use his boat. Second, that God is always going to ask for increasingly more control over one's life, just as he went from using Peter's boat to telling him when and where and how to do his job. In the end, one comes to realize, as the saying goes, "if God is your copilot, switch seats!" Faith and humility—that is, ceding increasingly more room for God to work in us—is not about some cultish self-annihilation of personality. In small

and in great things, living with God yields rich fruit: in the midst of trials and tribulations, in this our valley of tears, the fruit we are craving: peace, joy, love, and the beauty of knowing that our existence is truly meaningful.

The heart of our Gospel, however, is Saint Peter's word to the Lord: "**Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.**" It is only in this way that our journey can truly begin. The prophet Micah (6:8) wrote in this respect, "He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and *to walk humbly with your God?*" To *walk humbly with God* means that we always remember just *who* it is that stands before us. When we pray, we learn from the very words of prayer: "**with boldness and without condemnation we dare to call upon You, the heavenly God, as Father.**" The more difficult part is to know that at all time it is no less than God, the Lord, who stands in from of us. As for Peter, the presence of the Lord, is overwhelming, awe-inspiring, fearsome. We are all, without a single exception, broken vessels, sinful people, surely not a "fitting" place for the Lord to visit. Yet, this is precisely why our faith is called the Gospel, that is "the Good News": the Lord has come to be with us, has mingled God's holiness with our very lowliness, has truly come to seek us out.

Simon Peter and the others **left everything and followed Him**, and have also brought this Good News to many others. Today, it has reached us. Will we allow our lives to be touched and changed by the Lord's visitation? Will we at least lend him our hearing?

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sunday, October 9, 3:30 pm, Butler Country Club: Retirement Celebration Banquet for Fr. Joseph Wargo, who ends his 40-year ministry as pastor of St. Andrew Orthodox Church. 35 dollars/adult (11 for children). RSVP by September 25 to Nicole Rogos (700 Saxony Dr., Seven Fields, PA 16046); checks should be made out to St Andrew Orthodox Church.

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: Job; Ann; Mary Ann (Jean's daughter); Stelian (Cezar's father); Seba, Lisa, and Sam (Michaels), Norma; George (Georgiades), Christine (Abraham), Marion and Jim Raimondi (relatives of Dollie's), Norma, Richard (Johns), Ed, Peter, Georgia and Scot, Sam, Karen (Joanna's mother), Diane, Sula, Dollie, Karyn, Fr. Ignatius and Amy, John, Jonathan and Joanna, Andrei, John, Janet, Christy (relatives of Jean); John and Julie (Smolen); Dennis, Vincent, Roy and Laura, Danny, Danny, Cathy (relatives of John and Julie); Diane; Shea and Katie (expecting); Christine, Phoebe, Tina. Garrett & Autumn, Benjamin – seeking the true faith.

DEPARTED: Iosif (Cristina's father); Victoria and Susan (mothers of Frank and Stacy); Richard (Minto) from Sts Peter and Paul; Bill; Dolores (Bingham), Diane (Georgia's sister); Gladys (Smolen); David (Steve's father-in-law); Donald (Norma's brother); William (Fr. Paisius's father); Craig (Jean's son-in-law); Abie Abraham; Patrick (Rose's brother); Josephine (Julie's sister); Cristian (Andronic); Rick, Phyllis (Seba's husband and sister), Angeliki, Joe and David Sipos; Glenn (Jean's grandson); Stella, Edmund (Ed's uncle), Richard, Leatrice (Totin), Ed (Joanna's grandfather), Joseph (Rose's father), Fred (Dollie's uncle); Lance; Bob (Diane's father), Michael, Gabriel, Hilda (Chris Abraham's mother), Alfred, Stormy (friend of Ron's).

Theologizing About Divine Truth, Justice, Wrath, and Retribution: Insights from Gregory of Nyssa and Isaac of Niniveh

Sinai is more than a mountain.

Zohar 3:152a (trans. Daniel Matt) Rabbi Shimeon said, "Woe to the human being who says that Torah presents mere stories and ordinary words! If so, we could compose a Torah right now with ordinary words, and better than all of them. To present matters of the world, rulers of the world possess words more sublime. If so, let us follow them and make a Torah out of them. Ah, but all the words of Torah are sublime words, sublime secrets! "Come and see: The world above and the world below are perfectly balanced: Israel below, the angels above. Of the angels it is written: '*He makes his angels spirits.*' But when they descend, they put on the garment of this world. If they did not put on a garment befitting this world, they could not endure in this world and the world could not endure them. If this is so with the angels, how much more so with Torah, who created them and all the worlds, and for whose sake they all exist. In descending to this world, if she did not put on the garments of this world, the world could not endure. So this story of Torah is *the garment* of Torah. ... That is why David said: '*Open my eyes, so I can see wonders out of your Torah,*' (Ps. 119:18) what is under the garment of Torah. Come and see: There is a garment visible to all. When those fools see someone in a good-looking garment they look no further. But the essence of the garment is the body; the essence of the body is the soul. "So it is with Torah. She has a body: the commandments of Torah, called 'the embodiment of Torah.' This body is clothed in garments: the stories of this world. Fools of the world look only at that garment, the story of Torah; they know nothing more. They do not look at what is under that garment. Those who know more do not look at the garment, but rather at the body under that garment. The wise ones, servants of the King on high, those who stood at Mount Sinai, look only at the soul, root of all, real Torah. In the time to come, they are destined to look at the soul of the soul of Torah."

Sinai = image of "Theology"

Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses* 2.158: The knowledge of God is a mountain steep indeed and difficult to climb – the majority of people scarcely reach its base.

"Truth": Paradoxical Requirements

Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses* 2.23, 234, 235: [23] In my view the definition of truth is this: ... truth is the sure apprehension of real Being; [235]: True Being is true life. This Being is inaccessible to knowledge. [234] He who thinks God is something to be known does not have life, because he has turned from true Being to what he considers by sense perception to have being. [165] every concept which comes from some comprehensible image by an approximate understanding and by guessing at the divine nature constitutes an idol of God and does not proclaim God.

"Knowledge" a Matter of Perpetual Ascent and Renunciation of Conceptual Idolatry

Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses* 2.227, 163: [227] the great Moses, as he was becoming ever greater, *at no time stopped in his ascent*, nor did he set a limit for himself in his upward course. Once having set foot on the ladder which God set up (as Jacob says), he continually climbed to the step above and never ceased to rise higher ... [163] For leaving behind everything that is observed, not only what sense comprehends but also what the intelligence *thinks* it sees, it keeps on penetrating deeper until by the intelligence's yearning for understanding it gains access to the invisible and the incomprehensible, and there it sees God.

Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses* 2.230, 232, 235, 163: [230] He shone with glory. And although lifted up through such lofty experiences, he is still unsatisfied in his desire for more. He still thirsts for that with which he constantly filled himself to capacity, and he asks to attain as if he had never partaken, beseeching God to appear to him, not according to his capacity to partake, but according to God's true being. ... [232] And the bold request which goes up the mountains of desire asks this: to enjoy the Beauty not in mirrors and reflections, but face to face. The divine voice granted what was requested in what was denied, showing in a few words an immeasurable depth of thought. ... [235] Thus, what Moses yearned for is satisfied by the very things which leave his desire unsatisfied. ... [163] This is the true knowledge of what is sought; this is the seeing that consists in not seeing, because that which is sought transcends all knowledge, being separated on all sides by incomprehensibility as by a kind of darkness.

AN ORTHODOX APPROACH OF BIBLICAL EXEGESIS

Fr. Bogdan Bucur, St. Antony Orthodox Church (Butler, PA)

- Christ as Supreme Interpreter of God
- Bible as “Garments of Christ” (Origen, Maximus; cf. Zohar): pedagogy, accomodation, iconic language
- Exegesis as Perpetually Dynamic Approach to God (“upward” on Sinai; “inward” into mysteries)

I. Christ as Supreme Interpreter of God

- Christ, who is the **image** of God (2 Cor 4:4); the Son is the **image** of the invisible God (Col 1:15); [God] has in these last days spoken to us by His Son ... the **exact impression** of Himself (Heb 1:3); He who has seen Me has seen the Father (John 14:9).
- Isaac Syrus, *Hom.* I.51: **“None other but His very Son said these things concerning Him, and thus bore witness concerning Him, lest we doubt it.”**

“God so loved the world ...”

Isaac Syrus, II.38.2, 22: In love did He bring the world into existence; in love is He going to bring it to that wondrous transformed state, and in love will the world be swallowed up in the great mystery of Him who has performed all these things; in love will the whole course of the governance of creation be finally comprised ... Among all His actions there is none which is not entirely a matter of mercy, love and compassion: this constitutes the beginning and the end of His dealings with us.

II. Bible as “Garments of Christ”: Pedagogy, Accomodation, Iconic Language. *The Truth of Scripture is not in its letter.*

Isaac Syrus, II.39.2 That we should imagine that anger, wrath, jealousy or the such like have anything to do with the divine Nature is something utterly abhorrent for us: no one in their right mind, no one who has any understanding at all can possibly come to such madness as to think anything of the sort about God. Nor again can we possibly say that He acts thus out of retribution, **even though the Scriptures may on the outer surface posit this..** ...

Isaac Syrus, II.39.3 For it would be most odious and utterly blasphemous to think that hate or resentment exists with God, even against demonic beings; or to imagine any other weakness, or passibility, or whatever else might be involved in the course of retribution of good or evil

Isaac Syrus, II.39.17 according to the resulting **childish view** the Creator will prove to be weak, for after what He had established had become corrupted against His will, He devised some other plan, preparing ills in return for its corruption. Such are the **feeble ways of understanding** the Creator!

Isaac Syrus, II.39.15: This is what the Scriptures bring to our attention and remind us of, that God is not one who requites evil, but He sets aright evil: the former is the characteristic of evil people, while the latter is characteristic of a father. **Scripture shows Him as if He is bringing good and evil by way of requital**, whereas His purpose is not in fact this, but to instill in us love and awe.

Isaac Syrus, II.39.19: Just because (the terms) wrath, anger, hatred, and the rest are used of the Creator, we should not imagine that He (actually) does anything in anger or hatred or zeal. Many **figurative terms are employed in the Scriptures about God, terms which are far removed from His (true) nature.** And just as (our) rational nature has (already) become gradually more illuminated and wise in a holy understanding of the mysteries which are hidden in (Scripture’s) discourse about God – that we should not understand everything (literally) as it is written, but rather that we should see, (concealed) inside the bodily exterior of the narratives, the hidden providence and eternal knowledge which guides all – so too we shall in the future come to know and be aware of many things for which our present understanding will be seen as contrary to what it will be then; and the whole ordering of things yonder will **undo any precise opinion we possess now in (our) supposition about Truth.**

- **Scripture exegesis, like the ascent, is a progressive “shedding” of conceptual idolatry;**
- **it is linked with the fulness of God revealed in Christ and approximate, to different degrees, in the saints**
- *The Truth of Scripture is not in its letter.*

DOCTRINAL IMPLICATIONS

Not Retribution, But Loving Pedagogy

II.39.17 let us not attribute to God's actions and His dealings with us any idea of requital. Rather, we should speak of fatherly provision, a wise dispensation, a perfect will which is concerned with our good, and complete love. If it is a case of love, then it is not one of requital; and if it is a case of requital, then it is not one of love.

II.39.22 That we should further say or think that the matter is not full of love and mingled with compassion would be an opinion full of blasphemy and insult to our Lord God. By saying that He will even hand us over to burning for the sake of sufferings, torment and all sorts of ills, we are attributing to the divine Nature an enmity towards the very rational being which He created through grace; the same is true if we say that He acts or thinks with spite and with a vengeful purpose, as though He was avenging Himself.

II.39.3, 5 [3] He acts towards us in ways He knows will be advantageous to us, whether by way of things that cause suffering, or by way of things that cause relief, whether they cause joy or grief, whether they are insignificant or glorious: all are directed towards the single eternal good, whether each receives judgement or something of glory from Him – not by way of retribution, far from it! – but with a view to the advantage that is going to come from all these things. ... [5] That is how everything works with Him, even though things may seem otherwise to us: with Him it is not a matter of retribution, but He is always looking beyond to the advantage that will come from His dealing with humanity. And one such thing is this matter of Gehenna. ... the Kingdom and Gehenna are matters belonging to mercy, which were conceived of in their essence by God as a result of His eternal goodness. It was not a matter of requiting, even though He gave them the name of requital.

The Incarnation is not a response to sin, but a revelation of God's Eternal Intention for us

Isaac Syrus, Kephalaia 4.78) The entire purpose of our Lord's death was not to redeem us from sins, or for any other reason, but solely in order that the world might become aware of the love which God has for creation. Had all this astounding affair taken place solely for the purpose of the forgiveness of sin, it would have been sufficient to redeem us by some other means ... If zeal had been appropriate for putting humanity right, why did God the Word clothe Himself in the body in order to bring the world back to His Father using gentleness and humility? And why was He stretched out on the Cross for the sake of sinners, handing over His sacred body to suffering on behalf of the world? I myself say that God did all this for no other reason, except to make known to the world the love that He has, His aim being that we, as a result of our greater love arising from an awareness of this, might be captivated by His love when He provided the occasion of this manifestation of the kingdom of heaven's mighty power - which consists in love - by means of the death of His Son

IMPLICATIONS FOR ORTHODOX ETHICS

God is not just.

Isaac Syrus, Hom. I.51 How can you call God just when you come across the Scriptural passage on the wage given to the workers? ... How can a man call God just when he comes across the passage on the prodigal son who wasted his wealth with riotous living, how for the compunction alone which he showed the father ran and fell upon his neck and gave him authority over his wealth? None other but His very Son said these things concerning Him, lest we doubt it, and thus bore witness concerning Him. Where, then, is God's justice? – for while we are sinners Christ died for us! But if here He is merciful, we may believe that He will not change. ... Do not call God just, for His justice is not manifest in the things concerning you. ...

Avoid Zeal for God, in the name of Truth and Justice

Isaac Syrus, Kephalaia 4.77: Someone who has actually tasted truth is not contentious for truth. Someone who is considered by people to be zealous for truth has not yet learnt what truth is really like; once he has truly learnt it, he will cease from zealousness on its behalf.

Isaac Syrus, I.51: A zealous man never achieves peace of mind. ... Though you presume, O man, to send forth your zeal against the infirmities of other men, you have expelled the health of your own soul; be assiduous, rather, in labouring for your own soul's health. ... you do not help others, you expend labour to bring grievous illness upon yourself. Zeal is not ... a form of wisdom, but one of the illnesses of the soul, namely narrow-mindedness and deep ignorance. ... Mercy and justice in one soul is like a man who worships God and the idols in one house. Mercy is opposed to justice. ... As grass and fire cannot coexist in one place, so justice and mercy cannot abide in one soul. ... The beginning of divine wisdom is clemency and gentleness ... Have clemency, not zeal, with respect to evil. Lay hold of goodness, not justice. Justice does not belong to the Christian way of life and there is no mention of it in Christ's teaching.

extra materials

(Isaac Syrus, Hom. I.51) Mercy is opposed to justice. Justice is the equality of the even scale, for it gives to each as he deserves; and when it makes recompense, it does not incline to one side or show respect of persons. Mercy, on the other hand, is a sorrow and pity stirred up by goodness, and it compassionately inclines a man in the direction of all; it does not requite a man who is deserving of evil, and to him who is deserving of good it gives a double portion. If, therefore, it is evident that mercy belongs to the portion of righteousness, then justice belongs to the portion of wickedness. As grass and fire cannot co-exist in one place, so justice and mercy cannot abide in one soul. As a grain of sand cannot counterbalance a great quantity of gold, so in comparison God's use of justice cannot counterbalance His mercy.

(II.39.2) That we should imagine that anger, wrath, jealousy or the such like have anything to do with the divine Nature is something utterly abhorrent for us: no one in their right mind, no one who has any understanding at all can possibly come to such madness as to think anything of the sort about God. Nor again can we possibly say that He acts thus out of retribution, **even though the Scriptures may on the outer surface posit this**. Even to think this of God and to suppose that retribution for evil acts is to be found with Him is abominable. ... We cannot even believe such a thing can be found in those human beings who live a virtuous and upright life and whose thoughts are entirely in accord with the divine will let alone believe it of God, that He has done something out of retribution for anticipated evil acts in connection with those whose nature He had brought into being with honour and great love. Knowing them and all their conduct, the flow of His grace did not dry up from them: not even after they started living amid many evil deeds did He withhold His care for them, even for a moment. If someone says that He has put up with them here on earth in order that His patience may be known with the idea that He would punish them there mercilessly, such a person thinks in an unspeakably blasphemous way about God, due to his infantile way of thinking: he is removing from God His kindness, goodness and compassion, all the things because of which He truly bears with sinners and wicked men. Such a person is attributing to God enslavement to passion, supposing that He has not consented to their being chastised here, seeing that He has prepared them for a much greater misfortune, in exchange for a shortlived patience. Not only does such a person fail to attribute something praiseworthy to God, but he also calumniates Him.

II.39.3 A right way of thinking about God would be the following: the kind Lord, who in everything He does looks to ways of assisting rational beings, directs thought concerning judgement to the advantage of those who accept this difficult matter. For it would be most odious and utterly blasphemous to think that hate or resentment exists with God, even against demonic beings; or to imagine any other weakness, or passibility, or whatever else might be involved in the course of retribution of good or bad as applying, in a retributive way, to that glorious divine Nature. Rather, He acts towards us in ways He knows will be advantageous to us, whether by way of things that cause suffering, or by way of things that cause relief, whether they cause joy or grief, whether they are insignificant or glorious: all are directed towards the single eternal good, whether each receives judgement or something of glory from Him not by way of retribution, far from it! but with a view to the advantage that is going to come from all these things.