

CHAPTER FIVE.

God's Attributes in Relation to the Way of God's Energy.

God's Majesty reveals itself to the world and has the seal of the Divine Intellect and the Divine Will. The Attributes of All-knowing and All-wisdom are related to the Divine Intellect whereas the Attributes of Almightyness, Holiness, Justice, Kindness or Love, and Truth or Faithfulness are related to the Divine Will.

We must always remember that the differentiation between Intellect and Will of God is only for our limited mind because these two Attributes are inseparable in Him whereas in man the one follows the other. The above Attributes are separable only for the benefit of our human understanding but in reality God's Energy is one and simple.

The first Attribute ascribed to the Divine Intellect is the *All-knowing*. God knows Himself through Absolute Knowledge, as Absolute is His Divine Essence. He knows of everything that exists outside Himself, not only the beings, but everything that occurs both in the visible and invisible world. He knows before all time the activities of all intellectual beings, what they will do and what they might have done. Thus God has All-wisdom, which offers perfect ways to achieve faultless purposes.

As the Absolute Being God is *independent* and *free*. He is not involuntarily good because He always acts

according to His Will, which is an Eternal and pure movement, uninfluenced by anything outside His Divine Existence. In Holy Scripture God seems to act in anger, love and joy. These are all anthropomorphic emotions used for the sake of our understanding. Such differentiations are ascribed to God's Divine Will, which is natural and free, precedent and following, absolute and relative, active and inactive.

God's Almightyness is related to His Will and Freedom and nothing is impossible because "*whatever the Lord pleases He does.*"¹ God did not create everything that He could, but whatever He Willed. The Divine Will does not change from Intellectual Power to an active Energy but is absolutely Unchangeable.

Divine Holiness is relative to the Almightyness of God, according to which He is free from all moral imperfections, spurns wickedness, never uses His Power to perform evil and loves whatever is just and good. God is Absolutely Holy by Nature and the Source of all Holiness.

Related to the Holiness of God is His Justice. Holy Scripture describes God as being a Just Judge² Who loves justice³ and has manifested His Love through the assurance that His "*yoke is easy*" and His "*burden is light.*"⁴ In the New Testament God is described by St.

¹ Psalms 134(135):6; 114(115):3.

² Gen. 18:19. Is. 56:1.

³ Is. 61:8.

⁴ Matth. 11:29. Jer. 6:16.

John the Theologian, Apostle and Evangelist as being the *God of love*.⁵

God's Almightyness is characterized as being *Power of Love*, like His All-knowingness is portrayed as *knowledge and wisdom of virtue and mercy*; and His Justice as *Justice of Love and Blessedness*, which is spread to all by God out of His love towards His Creation. This Absolute Divine Love of God is expressed as "*Goodness*," "*Philanthropy*," "*Forbearance*" and "*Mercifulness*" towards man. Finally, God is "*Truthful*" and "*Faithful*" to His Promises, but alienated from any lies.

1. The Divine All-knowing.

Before we examine in detail the Attributes of the Divine Intellect, we must not forget that the differentiations ascribed to the Divine Essence are the result of man's inability to comprehend the infinite simplicity of God. The first Attribute ascribed to the Divine Intellect is *All-knowing*.⁶ God knows Himself and everything that exists outside Himself through His Absolute Knowledge.⁷ This Truth is witnessed not only by Holy Scripture but by the fact that the Highest Being is a Personal God and as an Absolute Spirit He has Self-consciousness. This Personal Knowledge of God does not restrict Him, neither does it contradict the infinity or

⁵ 1 John 4:16.

⁶ Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, p. 118.

⁷ Plato of Moscow, *Orthodox Teaching*, p. 38.

limitlessness of God because as His Essence and His Existence are infinite so is His Knowledge.

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God, assured us that “*no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.*”⁸ St. Paul teaches of the Holy Spirit that “*no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God*”⁹ as He is not alien to the Deity and Essence of God. Because the Holy Spirit is Supreme and Unlimited when compared to the Father and the Son, He “*searches all things, even the deep things of God.*”¹⁰

God knows everything that exists outside Himself, not only the logical beings, Angels and man, but also everything that occurs in the visible and invisible world. He knows before all time the acts of all intellectual beings, what each and everyone will do and what they might have done. He knows exactly each and every detail from before the creation of time, not having received this knowledge afterwards.¹¹ God’s All-knowing is not as a result of a progressive knowledge, as with men but because of the simplicity of His Essence, He knows all and sees all, the past and the future as being present before Him, even before they are realized.¹²

⁸ Matth. 11:27.

⁹ 1 Corinth. 2:11.

¹⁰ 1 Corinth. 2:10.

¹¹ Clement the Alexandrian, *Stromata*, VI, 17, in **B**, v.8, p. 238.

¹² St. John of Damascus, *Catechesis*, I, 14, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 860.
Clement the Alexandrian, *Stromata*, VI, 17, in **B**, v.8, p. 238.

In Holy Scripture we read: “*The Lord tries the hearts, and proves the reins, to give to every one according to his ways, and according to the fruits of his devices*”.¹³ “*And there is no creature hidden from His Sight, but all things are naked and open to the Eyes of Him to Whom we must give account.*”¹⁴ “*I Am a God nigh at hand, said the Lord, and not a God afar off. Shall any one hide himself in secret places, and I not see him? Do I not fill Heaven and earth?*”¹⁵

There is no time in the Deity because everything is revealed to God. Consequently, the use of the term “*foreknowledge*” must be considered as inaccurate although in Holy Scripture this term is used to help our weak minds. For God everything is always present to Him.

It is incomprehensible how God can know everything before all time.¹⁶ He knows all thoughts of men and Angels, even the most secret things of their hearts, not only at present but even before all time began.¹⁷

The differentiation of God’s Attribute of All-knowing into “*Natural Knowledge*” according to which God knows Himself and “*free knowledge*” according to which God knows about everything outside His Existence.

¹³ Jer. 17:10.

¹⁴ **Heb.** 4:13. **Psalms** 33(34):13-15; 90(91):8. **Job** 26:6.

¹⁵ Jer. 23:23-24.

¹⁶ St. Augustine, in migne, *P.L.*, 36, 576.

¹⁷ Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 601.

Some added the “middle” or “hypothetic knowledge” according to which God not only knows those things that will be but also those which under hypothetical circumstances might have been realized, as in the case of the inhabitants of Tyre, Sidon and Sodom who might have repented if they had seen the mighty works that were performed in Chorazin and Bethsaida. “*Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes ... And you, Capernaoum, who are exalted to Heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.*”¹⁸

Although God foreknows men’s actions that are performed by their free-will, He is not responsible for any evil deeds of mankind. Like the doctor who foresees the impending illness of his patient but is not responsible for it, likewise God is not responsible for the actions of men.¹⁹

Even our prayers addressed to God requesting the change of the path of our lives are under God’s All-knowing as He foreknows whose prayers He will hear because they are sincere and whose He will renounce because they are unworthy, not having been addressed correctly.²⁰

¹⁸ Matth. 11:21, 23.

¹⁹ St. John of Damascus, *Against Manichees*, 79, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 1577.

²⁰ Origen, *About prayer*, 6, 4, in *B*, v. 10, p. 244.

In conclusion, God knows His Creation: the irrational, rational and intellectual not indirectly but directly; not imperfectly but perfectly and in all its fullness; not indefinitely and dimly but clearly, accurately and exactly, not to a level that could accept addition but absolutely perfectly. God knows everything, always, simultaneously, by Him and through Him. Everything is completely exposed before Him.²¹ So we can definitely say: “*The Eyes of the Lord behold both the evil and the good in every place.*”²² Thus His Ruling and Providence are extended throughout the entire universe.

2. The Divine All-wisdom

The All-knowing Attribute of God is directly related to His Attribute of *All-wisdom*.²³ This is His Divine Attribute by which He places perfect Goals and uses perfect Ways to achieve perfect Purposes. His All-wisdom is His All-knowing when it is to be seen:

1. in relation to the Aims that God planned when creating the world and

²¹ Trempeles, *Dogmatique*, v. I, p. 211.

²² Prov. 15:3.

²³ Frangopoulos, *Christian Faith*, pp. 54-57. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 121-122.

2. in relation to the Ways used for the fulfillment of “*the Eternal Purposes.*”²⁴

God is the Infinite Intellect Who knows everything. He is the only Wise One. St. Paul proclaims God as the “*Alone Wise;*”²⁵ and the Prophet did not hesitate to acknowledge that he “*was so foolish and ignorant.*”²⁶ God possessing and being the only Source of all Wisdom simply transmits it to those who lack or request it. St. James, the brother of Christ, teaches us that “*if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God Who gives to all liberally and without reproach and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting.*”²⁷ Even those among men who are considered wise, owe their wisdom to God, “*for the Lord gives wisdom; and from His Presence comes knowledge and understanding.*”²⁸ Again, who cannot proclaim with St. Paul: “*Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His Judgments and His Ways past finding out! ‘For who has known the Mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor? Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?’ For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to Whom be glory forever. Amen.*”²⁹

²⁴ Ephes. 3:11.

²⁵ Rom. 16:27. 1 Tim. 1:17.

²⁶ Psalm 72(73):22.

²⁷ James 1:5-6. Prov. 2:3-6.

²⁸ Prov. 2:6.

²⁹ Rom. 11:33-36. Is. 40:13-14

Having seen the wonderful Works that God has created, one stands in awe before Him and admires the Works of His Wisdom crying out: *“O Lord, how manifold are Thy Works! In wisdom Thou hast made them all. The earth is full of Thy possessions – This great and wide sea in which are innumerable teeming things, living things both small and great. There the ships sail about; there is that Leviathan which Thou hast made to play there. These all wait for Thee, that Thou may give them their food in due season. What Thou them they gather in; Thou open Thy Hand, they are filled with good. Thou hidest Thy Face, they art troubled; Thou take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. Thou send forth Thy Spirit, they are created; and Thou renewest the face of the earth. May the glory of the Lord endure forever. May the Lord rejoice in His Works. He looks upon the earth and it trembles; He touches the hills and they smoke.”*³⁰

The Wisdom of God found ways to destroy moral evil that entered into the world through Satan, the inventor of evil. This was accomplished through Jesus Christ by the Plan that God the Father had before all time. Consequently mankind has been restored to the righteous condition in which he was created before the Fall and therefore the Wisdom of God finds ways for the Salvation of all humanity.

³⁰ Psalm 103(104):24-32.

3. The Independent and Freewill of God

God Who is Perfect, Absolute Spirit and Personal Being, is ascribed as Independent and Free. God acts independently and by His own free Will that is unlimited.³¹

Christ assured us that God, being the Extreme and Absolute Good,³² does not act by force but acts independently and gives freely to those who ask. He assists those who seek and opens His door to those who knock upon it. *“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives and he who seeks finds and to him who knocks it will be opened.”*³³ God does not act out of sympathy nor out of need nor by force. Neither does He act by blind instinct, as within the animal world but out of True Love for His Creation. Therefore St. Paul the Apostle states that God acts *“according to the Purpose of Him Who works all things according to the counsel of His Will.”*³⁴ *“He has mercy on whom He Wills, and Whom He Wills He hardens,”*³⁵ although He always acts with Justice and without partiality³⁶ because *“the Wisdom that is from Above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield,*

³¹ St. John of Damascus, *Catechesis*, III, 57, in Migne, 94, 1033, 1041. Plato of Moscow, *Orthodox Teaching*, p. 39.

³² Matth. 19:17.

³³ Matth. 7:7-8.

³⁴ Ephes. 1:11.

³⁵ Rom. 9:18-19.

³⁶ 1 Peter 1:17. Acts 10:34.

full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.”³⁷

The Attribute of freedom as an inner Act of His Will can be considered identical to His Essence, which being simple, excludes any divisions. Divine Will and Independence are simple, eternal, unchangeable and independent. In God there is no differentiation of desires as with man, which means that there is no struggle to overcome any obstacles in order to achieve that which He Wills. The Will of God is Eternal, Pure and Absolute, having its foundation within God and not determined by anything that exists outside God. It is unalterable, unchangeable, above all good things and beyond time.

When Holy Scripture speaks of the anger, or love, or joy, or sadness etc. of God, we must understand these terms as anthropomorphic expressions that only serve our limited mind because Divine Will remains always and for all Eternity Simple and Pure Act.³⁸

Although in the Absolute and Simple Essence of God there can be no differentiation or synthesis of Acts from a human point of view, we can distinguish God’s Will in the following:

1. ***The natural or necessary free Will of God.***
God’s Will is inseparable from His All-knowing. The natural or necessary Will of God refers on one hand to the

³⁷ James 3:17.

³⁸ St. John of Damascus, *Catechesis*, I, 11 and 41, in Migne, 94, 841 and 969.

absolute necessity of God's existence whereas on the other hand it refers to the eventuality or possibility, which, being known before all time by God, have their basis within the Divine Essence. The free Will of God refers to whatever He created in the Creation through His Almighty Will.

2. *The foregoing and the following Will of God.* According to these differentiations, God foregoing Wills that “*the world might be saved*”³⁹ and participate in His Kingdom because He did not create us for punishment but to inherit His Kingdom, which He had prepared before all times,⁴⁰ for those who love Him and for them to participate in His Blessedness. However, because man sins willingly and of his own free will, God faces this immorality with Justice and as a Just God He punishes those who remain without repentance.

The *foregoing Will of God* is also called “*good pleasure*” (*ευδοκία*), and the *following Will of God* is called “*concession*” (*παραχώρηση*).⁴¹ The *concession Will of God* is differentiated into the *economia* and the *pedagogic*, according to which it is used as the means of man's Salvation. Man, who turned away from God and received the bitter fruits of sin, learned through his mistakes, repented and returned with humbleness to God; but he who remains in sin will be abandoned by God because he had hardened his heart to the Lord.⁴²

³⁹ John 3:17.

⁴⁰ Matth. 25:34.

⁴¹ Trempeles, *Dogmatique*, v. I, p. 214.

⁴² Is. 6:10.

The Prophet Isaiah inspired by the Holy Spirit says: “Wash you, be clean; remove your iniquities from your souls before Mine eyes; cease from your iniquities; learn to do good; diligently seek judgment, deliver him that is suffering wrong, plead for the orphan, and obtain justice for the widow. And come, let us reason together, said the Lord: and though your sins be as purple, I will make them white as snow; and though they be as scarlet, I will make them white as wool. And if you be willing, and hearken unto Me, you shall eat the good of the land: but if you be not willing, nor hearken unto Me, a sword shall devour you: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken this.”⁴³ God is pleased with man’s good deeds but despises his evil works.⁴⁴

3. ***The absolute and relative or under conditions Will of God.*** The *absolute* Will of God is related to the irrational Creation, which He guides to its final and determined perfect destination. The *relative* Will of God is related to the rational creatures whom He also wishes to fulfill their destination; but this depends on the “*synergy*” between God and the use of the free will of the intellectual beings.

4. ***The effective and the inoperative Will of God.*** The *absolute* Will of God is obviously *effective*, while the *inoperative* is not effective since the free will of man does not cooperate (no synergy) with God. In God there is no Will that is deprived of power and effectiveness. Even for those who on the awesome Day of

⁴³ Is. 1:16-20.

⁴⁴ Amos 5:21-24.

the Last Judgment will be condemned by God and who have left the Divine Grace, which was granted to them, inoperative, the Divine Will shall be expressed as an *effective Will*. It was expressed to them as the Will of God before all time, so that they may be saved and that in time, their Calling by the Divine Kindness urged them towards Salvation. Afterwards it was expressed in the realization of the Divine Plan of Salvation, although they themselves refused to accept and resisted the Divine Will.

4. The Almightyness of God

The Almightyness of God is related to the Will and Free Attributes of God. Thus, His Will is an Almighty Will. In Creation three Attributes reign: the Will of God, the Wisdom of God and the Almightyness of God.⁴⁵ The Will of God is pleased with the results; the Wisdom of God directs and the Almightyness of God perfects Creation.⁴⁶ Nothing is impossible for God.⁴⁷ Everything that He Willed He created in Heaven and on earth. As the Great God, “*whatever the Lord pleases He does,*”⁴⁸ “*for He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast*”⁴⁹ and “*by the word of the Lord the Heavens were made; and all the host of them by the breath of His*

⁴⁵ Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 117-118.

⁴⁶ Boulgareos, *Theologicon*, p. 145.

⁴⁷ Luke 1:37. Gen. 18:14. Cf. Frangopoulos, *Christian Faith*, pp. 52-54.

⁴⁸ Psalm 134(135):6. Cf. Plato of Moscow, *Orthodox Teaching*, p. 40.

⁴⁹ Psalm 32(33):9.

Mouth.”⁵⁰ “Who is so great a god as our God”? He is “the God Who does wonders.”⁵¹

God is the One Who calls the non-being into being and merely by His Word creates everything from nothingness and brings them into existence.⁵² In addition, as easy as it is for Him to create anything from nothingness, with the same ease He can return to nothingness everything He has created. God can do even more of whatever He has done through His faithful servants and within His Church.⁵³

Clement the Alexandrian observes that God made everything purely through His Will.⁵⁴ It was enough for God just to Will it and everything came to existence. It is impossible to say that God can do these wondrous things but He is unable to do other things. God creates, joins together and upholds everything within His Might. He moves, activates, supports, provides, rules and gives life because He holds everything within His Hands. Therefore, He is called *Pantocrator*.

Although God can do whatever pleases Him, He cannot act upon or realize something that opposes His Divine Nature and character, simply because it is impossible for Him to will so.⁵⁵ Whatever God Willed He

⁵⁰ Psalm 32(33):6.

⁵¹ Psalm 76(77):13-14.

⁵² Rom. 4:17.

⁵³ John 14:12-14.

⁵⁴ Clement the Alexandrian, *Protrepticus*, IV, in *B*, v. 7, p. 49.

⁵⁵ Heb. 6:18.

created but He does not want everything that He could create. God has the Power to create thousands of worlds like ours but He does not wish to do so.⁵⁶ This indicates the greatness of God's Power, as He is the Father of Truth.⁵⁷

When we say that it is impossible for God to sin, we do not ascribe weakness to God but we proclaim His unspeakable Power⁵⁸ because God cannot do something that is unreasonable or immoral. This does not indicate any weakness within Him. On the contrary, it proves His Almightyness. Only when someone performs something irrational or immoral, does it prove the existence of weakness.⁵⁹ If we say that God could sin, then He cannot be Almighty⁶⁰ because what is Almightyness except to want whatever is good and not to want whatever is evil.⁶¹

Because God's Almightyness has been manifested in many ways, it can be differentiated into *direct* and *indirect*, *absolute* and *ordinate*.

Nevertheless, we must never forget that these differentiations are only for our limited understanding.

⁵⁶ Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 599.

⁵⁷ 2 Tim. 2:13. Clement the Alexandrian, *Stromata*, book IV, in **B**, v. 8, p. 263. St. Isidorus of Pelusion, Book III, *Epistle* 335, in Migne, *P.G.*, 78, 993.

⁵⁸ St. John Chrysostom, *To St. John*, Homily 38, § 4, in Montfaucon, v. 8, p. 255.

⁵⁹ Rhosse, *System*, p. 313.

⁶⁰ Karmeris, *The dogmatics*, v. II, p. 599.

⁶¹ St. Augustine, *Sermo Ad catech. De Symbolo* 2, in migne, *P.L.*, 40, 627.

Only when the Divine Almightyness of God is manifested as an outpouring Energy to the creation and to the governing of the Cosmos, it differentiates from the Divine Essence, remaining always pure Energy and not a Power of the Divine Will, which after decision changes from the dynamic condition to the effective and energetic.⁶²

5. The Holiness of God.

Relative to God's Almightyness is the Attribute of His Holiness. Holiness is the Attribute of God according to which God is free from all moral imperfections, loves whatever is just and good, and despises whatever is evil and bad.⁶³ Thus His Divine Will always elects the good, whereas His Almightyness acts in all Holiness.

The word "*Holy*" has been used in Holy Scripture since the beginning to indicate those things that were separated and offered to God, thereby being considered as Holy. The *Holiness* of God is not a condition whereby God has been cleansed from all moral evil or that He has achieved all virtues progressively. On the contrary we ascribe to God absolute perfection all virtues. For men, holiness is a Gift from Above and the condition according to which they have been cleansed from sin and its impurity. For God He is by His infinite and perfect Nature and Existence the only *Holy One*. He is Absolutely and Truly Holy by Nature, the Source of all Holiness from

⁶² Trempeles, *Dogmatique*, v. I, p. 217.

⁶³ Plato, *Orthodox Teaching*, pp. 39-40. Frangopoulos, *Christian Faith*, pp. 56-57. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 123-124.

Whom everyone is Sanctified, whereas mankind is not by nature holy except by participation in God's Grace, exercised in virtue, struggling against sin and through continuous prayer.⁶⁴

It is impossible for God to sin and there is nothing false in Him,⁶⁵ *“for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.”*⁶⁶ He punishes evil as shown by the Fall of man, the catastrophe of Sodom and Gomorra, and the dire consequences of all who remain without repentance. Thus we describe God as a *“consuming fire”*⁶⁷ in relation to sinners and, to the faithful as a *“Light and in Him there is no darkness at all.”*⁶⁸

Being glorified by the Cherubim and the Seraphim with the Thrice Holy Hymn, *“Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts,”*⁶⁹ God instructs men to become holy, as He is Holy,⁷⁰ offering to them the Holy Law, strengthening them by His Divine Grace, so that they may become holy men, *“a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that they may proclaim the praises of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvelous light”*⁷¹.

⁶⁴ St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis Mystagogic V*, ch. XIII, § 7, in Migne, *P.G.*, 33, 1124.

⁶⁵ Tatianus, in *B*, v. 4, p. 249.

⁶⁶ James 1:13.

⁶⁷ Heb. 12:29.

⁶⁸ 1 John 1:5.

⁶⁹ Is. 6:3.

⁷⁰ Le. 11:44.

⁷¹ 1 Peter 2:9.

Divine Holiness is the perfect agreement with moral law, which in reality is the Will of God Who is the Supreme Law and the Absolute Holy. Thus His Law is Holy and in full agreement with the Law-giver.

In Holy Scripture we find God hardening the hearts of men,⁷² sending evil spirits,⁷³ and hiding the means of Truth “*from the wise and prudent.*”⁷⁴ He hardens their hearts so that they “*hear indeed, but they shall not understand; and they shall see indeed, but they shall not perceive. For the heart of this people has become gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted.*”⁷⁵ However, all these Actions must be considered as God’s condescension because He respects the free will of men.⁷⁶ Since humanity insists on remaining willingly in sin, God allows them to face the consequences of their evil deeds and abandons them.

St. Paul proclaiming God’s Power over man uses the example of the potter’s power over the clay from which he makes “*one vessel for honour and another for dishonour.*” Likewise, God “*wanting to show His Wrath and to make His Power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He*

⁷² Ex. 4:21.

⁷³ Job 1:12. 1 Kings 22:21-23. 2 Thess. 2:11.

⁷⁴ Matth. 11:25.

⁷⁵ Is. 6:9-10.

⁷⁶ St. John of Damascus, *Homily to Presentation of our Lord*, in Migne, 94, 1192.

might make known the riches of His Glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory."⁷⁷

But even when the Apostle uses the term "*vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,*" one must understand the purpose for which each of us was created.⁷⁸ To become useful or not, vessel of honour or dishonour, depends on the free will of each and every individual as St. Paul states: "*If anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honour, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.*"⁷⁹

The sufferings, trials and punishments that God brings upon men must be understood as *pedagogic ways* of correcting sinners who have departed from Him. In certain cases they are used to manifest God's Glory and the virtues of the just as in that of Job and the young man who was born blind.⁸⁰

6. The Righteousness of God

The Divine Attribute of God's Righteousness derives from His Holiness. One can clearly see that God loves righteousness but despises evil and sin.⁸¹ He is the God Who Judges the works of all men with Justice and

⁷⁷ Rom. 9:22-23.

⁷⁸ St. Basil the Great, *That God is not the cause of evil*, Homily 9, in Migne, *P.G.*, 31, 340.

⁷⁹ 2 Tim. 2:20-21.

⁸⁰ Job 1:8, 12. John 9:3.

⁸¹ Psalm 10(11):7, 5. Cf. Frangopoulos, *Christian Faith*, pp. 57-58. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 124-125.

without partiality.⁸² Being the Only True Righteous, He Judges everything according to righteousness that exists in the world.⁸³ Therefore Holy Scripture proclaims God as the God of Justice and Might⁸⁴ Who loves righteousness⁸⁵ and being Righteous in all His Ways,⁸⁶ He will Judge all the nations and all the earth with Righteousness.⁸⁷

Having placed a Law within the Cosmos to keep moral order, God made known His Righteousness because He did not place heavy burdens upon man that cannot be borne nor did He demand the impossible from him. Instead this Law to which He demands obedience is easy and His burden is light.⁸⁸ Hence the Prophet in the Book of Psalms proclaims: *“The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the Testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the Statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the Commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the Judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and honeycomb.”*⁸⁹

God being Righteous as the Law-giver is also Just as the Judge. God will Judge the world through His Son to

⁸² 1 Peter 1:17.

⁸³ Clement the Alexandrian, *Protrepticus*, VI, in **B**, v. 7, pp. 52-53.

⁸⁴ Psalm 7:11.

⁸⁵ Psalm 11(12):7.

⁸⁶ Psalm 145(146):17.

⁸⁷ Psalms 67(68):4; 96(97):10, 13; 9(10):8.

⁸⁸ Matth. 11:30.

⁸⁹ Psalm 19(20):7-10.

Whom He gave “*all Authority in Heaven and on earth to execute Judgment.*”⁹⁰ He will Judge the living and the dead on that Day that God the Father has placed in His own Authority⁹¹ and when the Son comes in His Glory, then He will sit on the Throne of His Glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him and He will separate them one from another; and those who have done good will receive “*Eternal Life,*” but those who have done evil “*Everlasting Punishment.*”⁹²

When we read of the “*anger,*” “*wrath*” or “*hatred*” of God in Holy Scripture, we must understand that He is the Absolute Holy One and thus such expressions are totally alien to Him. However, these expressions show that God has no relation to evil and sin but that He rejects evil and alienates Himself from those who commit evil and sin. Without this Just Anger God would cease being the Absolute Perfect One and we could no longer refer to Him as the Essence of all Holiness or as the Essence of Love.

“*Love*” that reacts in anger against the one who dishonours the loved one but remains indifferent, is not true Love. What would happen to the Gospel of Christ if the Word of God did not become Flesh in order to “*deliver us from the wrath to come?*”⁹³

⁹⁰ John 5:27.

⁹¹ Acts 1:7.

⁹² Matth. 25:31-46. Rom. 2:5-16. Rom. 3:21-26. 2 Tim. 4:8. 2 Corinth. 5:10.

⁹³ 1 Thess. 1:10.

In the Old Testament the Divine Righteousness of God was manifested against evil doers during this earthly life time whereas, according to the New Testament, it will be manifested in the After Life, during the Last Judgment. Nevertheless, we must not forget that the Righteousness of God differs from that of man and that His Judgment is not human but Divine. In His Judgments God is All-knowing and All-wise because He does not see the works of men like a person would, but as Almighty God. For this reason God's Judgments and Ways will always remain "*unsearchable*."⁹⁴

St. Paul teaches us with regard to the condemnation of the ungodly, that the sinners and impenitent are storing up for themselves "*wrath in the Day of Wrath and Revelation of the Righteous Judgment of God*."⁹⁵ This is caused by sin creating a permanent condition in the heart of the impenitent, which in turn makes sin Eternal. In a similar manner the righteous who lived in all righteousness and virtue, struggling against sin and all evil passions, creates the proper conditions in which to inherit God's Kingdom in heart and soul. Thus, the punishment or reward at the Last Day of Judgment shall be continuous, unchangeable and for all Eternity for "*the Lord is Righteous in all His Ways, Gracious in all His Works*."⁹⁶ "*Even so, Lord God Almighty, True and Righteous is Thy Judgments*."⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Rom. 11:33.

⁹⁵ Rom. 2:5.

⁹⁶ Psalm 145(146):17.

⁹⁷ Rev. 16:7.

7. The Love and Kindness of God

Who can speak of God's Love and who can find words to describe the greatness of His Kindness and Mercies?⁹⁸

God's Love is considered to be the Attribute that unites all the other Attributes. Thus, all Qualifications of God can be considered as Qualifications of God's Love. His Almightyness is considered as the Almightyness of Love. His All-knowing and All-wisdom is Knowledge, Wisdom of Virtue and Mercies that leads all men to their final destination and for the intellectual creatures this final cause is to inherit Divine Blessedness. God's Righteousness is Righteousness of Love that desires the return to the Path of Joy and Peace of all those who went astray. His All-presence joins and governs everything with Love and Kindness. His infinite Blessedness grants Eternal Blessedness to those who will inherit His Kingdom. In other words God is the Supreme Good Who does not restrict His Love to Himself but disperses it from His own Richness and Blessed Life to all His Creation.

God's Love can be compared to the rain and the light of the sun. Just like the rain falls and the sun sends its radiance out upon the earth without distinguishing who is good and who is evil, likewise the Love of God is shown to all His Creation.⁹⁹ St. John the Apostle and

⁹⁸ Cf. Frangopoulos, *Christian Faith*, pp. 58-59. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 125-126. Bryennios, *Paralipomena*, ch. II, v. III, p. 74.

⁹⁹ Matth. 5:45. St. Dionysios, *About Divine Names*, ch. IV, 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 3, 694.

Evangelist, more than any other Apostle, proclaimed God as Love. “*God is Love, and he who abides in Love abides in God and God in him.*”¹⁰⁰

When we speak of God being Love or the Supreme Good, we must understand that God is Good in a unique and absolute way, which can be referred only to Him alone. He is the first and only Good One¹⁰¹ Who is Good by Nature.¹⁰² Also, by using the terms “*Goodness,*” “*Kindness,*” “*Compassion,*” and generally speaking about “*Love*” when we refer to God, we must not understand them as emotional moods but as pure Acts of God.

The Love of God is expressed primarily towards Himself – the three Persons of the Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit - as being the Centre and the Source of His infinite Perfection and Moral Beauty. For this reason, the Only Begotten Son of God is the Subject of the Love of God the Father, even “*before the foundation of the world.*”¹⁰³ God the Father loves the Son because the Son is Born - not created - from the Father before all ages, of the same Substance (*Omoousios*) and equal to the Father and the Holy Spirit.

God’s Love is expressed towards Creation accordingly: to Creation as Kindness and to creatures as

¹⁰⁰ 1 John 4:16.rIN

¹⁰¹ Matth. 19:17.

¹⁰² St. Gregory of Nyssa, *About the life of Moses*, in Migne, P.G., 44, 301. Theophylactus of Bulgaria, *To Romans*, in Migne, P.G., 124, 353.

¹⁰³ John 17:24, 26; 15:10. Matth. 3:17. Mark 1:11. Luke 3:22.

providing them with every good thing.¹⁰⁴ God shows especially to the intellectual beings the richness and abundance of His Kindness. He does not neglect the helpless and the humble in heart but as a caring Father shows *“His tender mercies to all”*¹⁰⁵ and satisfies *“the desire of every living thing.”*¹⁰⁶ God does not neglect the sinners either, nor does He abandon those who have fallen. Instead He is Merciful towards them and raises them up thereby revealing His great Mercy and Longsuffering. And to those who prove to be ungrateful, He does not immediately send His Divine Wrath upon them but offers them His Tolerance, Forbearance and Longsuffering in order to lead them to repentance¹⁰⁷ because He desires that *“all men be saved and come to the knowledge of Truth.”*¹⁰⁸

God loved us first¹⁰⁹ and for this exact reason He *“did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.”*¹¹⁰ *“God so loved the world that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have Everlasting Life.”*¹¹¹ *“In this the Love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His Only Begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation*

¹⁰⁴ Psalm 104(105):21, 27-30. Matth. 5:25-34.

¹⁰⁵ Psalm 146(147):9.

¹⁰⁶ Psalm 146(147):16.

¹⁰⁷ Rom. 2:4.

¹⁰⁸ 1 Tim. 2:4.

¹⁰⁹ 1 John 4:19.

¹¹⁰ Rom. 8:32.

¹¹¹ John 3:16-17.

*for our sins.*¹¹² God's Love "has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit Who was given to us. For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly ... But God demonstrated His own Love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."¹¹³

Thus God's Mercy has been exalted even above the Heavens¹¹⁴ and "every good Gift and every perfect Gift is from Above, and comes down from the Father of Lights"¹¹⁵ in such a way that all the earth has been filled with His Mercies.

Truly, there can be no father, mother, brother, sister, kinsman or friend who loved us as much as God Who created us. God's Love is evident also in that, although we have sinned, He gives us the means to confess and repent, in order to reserve forgiveness of our innumerable sins.¹¹⁶ God never abandons us but we abandon Him all the time.

God's Love and Goodness is beyond any measure being infinite and unsearchable to man's mind. One must be careful not to place the Love of God in opposition to His Righteousness. Men are called to forgive all the debts of their fellowmen¹¹⁷ but with God Mercy and Justice are

¹¹² 1 John 4:9-10.

¹¹³ Rom. 5:5-6, 8.

¹¹⁴ Psalm 108(109):4.

¹¹⁵ James 1:17.

¹¹⁶ Matth. 16:19; 18:18. John 20:23.

¹¹⁷ Matth. 6:12; 18:33, 35.

joined together in a perfect harmony. This perfect union is manifested clearly in the Sacrifice that was offered by Christ, the Son of God, on the Cross. The Divine Love of God delivers the Only Begotten Son to death for the Salvation of all mankind and at the same time, through Christ's obedience,¹¹⁸ the Divine Righteousness and Holiness of God were satisfied, after He had been insulted by man at the time of the Fall (man blamed God for his own Fall).¹¹⁹

8. The Truthfulness and Faithfulness of God

Another Attribute of God is His Truthfulness and Faithfulness.¹²⁰ According to St. John the Apostle and Evangelist, God "*is True*" and "*His words are True.*"¹²¹

In the Old Testament God is proclaimed as the God of Truth Who seeks the Truth and whose Ways are Merciful and Truthful and His words are Pure.¹²² "*God is not as man to waver, nor as the son of man to be threatened; shall He say and not perform? Shall He speak and not keep to His word?*"¹²³ In the New Testament God "*cannot lie,*"¹²⁴ He "*remains faithful*" and "*He cannot*

¹¹⁸ Phil. 2:8.

¹¹⁹ Gen. 3:13.

¹²⁰ Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, p. 123.

¹²¹ John 3:33; 17:17. Rev. 3:7. Cf. Frangopoulos, *Christian Faith*, pp. 59-60.

¹²² Psalms 33(34):4-5; 25(26):10; 12(13):6. Heb. 6:18.

¹²³ Nu. 23:19.

¹²⁴ Tit. 1:2.

deny Himself.”¹²⁵ The Divine Promises, as well as the Threats remain undeniable because God is Faithful and He will never violate His words.

Since God’s Power is unlimited, His Kindness infinite and His All-knowing unsearchable, He knows all that He has Promised, and has not only the Will but also the Power to fulfill them in the proper time. His Promises are the Promises of the Divine Kindness and Wisdom, the Promises by Whom the “*yes*”¹²⁶ and the “*Amen*”¹²⁷ have assurance and are immoveable.

God is faithful in His words and it is impossible for Him to lie. It is utterly impossible for God to lie, not only because He gave the Commandment “*not to bear false witness,*”¹²⁸ but because He Himself is the Holy and Just One Who cannot lie. Nothing is impossible for God except to lie. His words are pure and free of lies, as molten gold and silver are cleansed of all false metals. Thus, the Lord assured us that “*Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.*”¹²⁹

In Holy Scripture we see God using “*false spirits*” to deceive the prophets of Achaab, King of Israel,¹³⁰ and He also on occasion sends “*delusion*” to those who remain in lies and error, “*that they all may be condemned who did*

¹²⁵ 2 Tim. 2:13.

¹²⁶ Rev. 14:13. 2 Corinth. 1:19.

¹²⁷ 2 Corinth. 1:20. Rev. 1:7; 3:14; 22:20.

¹²⁸ Ex. 20:16. Matth. 5:37.

¹²⁹ Matth. 24:35.

¹³⁰ 1 Kings (3 Kings) 22:20-23.

not believe the Truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness."¹³¹ However, these refer to the partial Judgment of God against human misconduct according to which men put off Truth and Virtue resulting in the abandonment by God in order to reveal their errors and thus receive their punishment with all Justice.¹³²

¹³¹ 2 Corinth. 2:10-12.

¹³² Theodoretus of Cyrus, *To 2 Thessalonians*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 82, 668. Theodorus Mospuestias, *To 1 Timothy*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 66, 936.