

# St. GASPAR BERTONI



## 13 MEDITATIONS

MssB ## 4615 - 4852

transcribed from

# St. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

## 17 HOMILIES ON *GENESIS*

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GENESIS I

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## Translator's Preface

### St. Gaspar Bertoni's Use of St. John Chrysostom

#### [I] In his Early Writings

In his "Catechetical Instructions' as a Priest, perhaps in 1807, Fr. Bertoni treated of the Sacrament of the Eucharist, in these terms"

"...Effects...": and this segment is based on the Latin version of the Catechism of Trent, n. 219, from where Fr. Bertoni obtained a citation from St. John Chrysostom, *In Genesis*, Homily 60. Fr. Bertoni's text reads:

"... that the true Body of Christ is contained in the Eucharist is a dogma of the faith as in the Scriptures [cf. Cat. of Trent, 218]. This is taken from the words of Christ Himself in the Consecration [cf. 1 Co 10:16; 1 Co 11:28, ff.]. It likewise appears from the authority of the Church, interpreting them and from the unanimous consent of all the Fathers [cf. Catechism of Trent, n. 219], among whom are ...Chrysostom, *In Gen*, Hom. 60..."

In these same instructions. St. Gaspar also quotes Chrysostom 's Commentary *On Matthew*, Sermon 82 [cf. Mss B ## 185; 217].

[NB: In addition to these citations from St. John Chrysostom, the following might also be noted in the course of these Catechetical Instructions early in the life of Fr. Bertoni: cf. Mss B ## 150; 151; 189; 198; 217; 239; 320].

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#### [II] Early Parish Sermons [1800-1812]

On June 21st, 1801, for the Vth Sunday of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, Fr. Bertoni delivered **Sermon 6**, entitled **Charity towards our Neighbor** [Mcf. Mss B ## 522, ff.]. For his Conclusion [cf. Mss B # 543], St. Gaspar cites Chrysostom's Commentary on Genesis, Sermon 9, in these words:

"Conclusion: Come now, revered listeners, and most beloved brothers in Christ. I will speak to you more with my heart than with my words. Come now - begin from this moment on to extend that loving care to your neighbor which is so highly recommended to you by God Himself. Resolve to do this at least for your own good, even though you shuld do it out of love for your common and most lovable Father Who commands you to do it. [cf. St. John Chrysostom, *In Gen.*, 9, 2. t. 4, 401/10, f.]. But, just note how this reciprocal care weighs on His paternal and most living affection. Whenever the gentleness of His love does not suffice to lead you to it, He has not hesitated to move you to it by the very necessity of your best interests..."

[NB: In addition to this quote, Fr. Bertoni also cited St. John Chrysostom almost 30 times in these Parish Sermons - cf. Mss B ## 379; 502; 513; 527; 535; 537; 542; 544; 588; 686; 883; 888; 941; 996; 1024; 1048; 1064; 1415; 1419; 1421; 1422; 1466; 1477; 1555; 1595; 1646].

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### [III] Spiritual Director at the Seminary, from September 13, 1810

Over the years in his role as Spiritual Director to the Seminary of Verona, Fr. Bertoni had already preached 73 Meditations on the **First Book of Kings [Samuel]**, based on the Latin Commentary of **St. Gregory the Great**. This was followed, then, by 41 Meditations on **Matthew**, based on the Latin translation of St. John Chrysostom.

Perhaps around **Lent of the year 1815**, Fr. Bertoni returned to this work following extensive illness, beginning his commentary on **Chrysostom's Homilies on Genesis**. Fr. Nello Dalle Vedove, CSS, has traced well this period of the Stigmatine Founder's life. St. Gaspar Bertoni challenged the seminarians of that time with: "...let us imitate the farmers! Whenever they find their fields ready, and free of harmful overgrowth, they plant seeds in abundance." Fr. Bertoni continued, saying that "...now our own spiritual fields are in readiness by the grace of God. He has purified us from disordinate affections. After listening to the dogmas of Sacred Scripture, today let us take up even more subtle matters..." [cf. Mss B # 4615].

In his Third Prelude, St. Gaspar uses the very words of St. John Chrysostom - stating that he would "**not use any of his own words**: "...there will be nothing of ourselves in all this, but only that which by divine grace, will prove helpful to you."

Following this brief introduction, Fr. Bertoni begins his development: "In the beginning, God created heaven and earth" [cf. Gn 1:1. From the outset, God has spoken to human beings - but, once they distanced themselves from Him, He sent them "**Letters of Reconciliation**" so that once again, their friendship would be restored. These "letters" are the Holy Scriptures. The Prophets manifest what is new, while in Genesis, Moses is looking back through history, in that he was personally instructed by God Himself.

In the second meditation of this series, Fr. Bertoni commented on the words: 'And there was darkness over the face of the earth; and the Spirit of God hovered over the waters' [cf. Gn 1:2]. These words were used to refer back to baptism: unless one is born anew of water and the Holy Spirit [cf. Jn 3:5].

A modern Italian author, Divo Barsotti, has noted that in the history of Italian spirituality, it would be difficult to find in spiritual writers, at least those of recent centuries, with a greater dependence on Sacred Scripture, than Fr. Bertoni. St. Gaspar noted in the inspired word not only the sure norm for good actions, but also

the means to reason well. The Divine Scriptures are that "**one and sure School of Good Reasoning.**"

Quoting from St. John Chrysostom, Fr. Bertoni wrote: that the Scriptures well meditated, insinuate not only good ideas, but also well ordered thoughts according to the Divine Wisdom which has dictated these. The Scriptures form the spirit, develop it, educate it, multiply and order its ideas, perfect the reason, rectify judgments, motivate reflection. The attention, the confrontation, the reflection on the words and deeds of God is the font of all knowledge and holiness.

With Chrysostom as his guide, Fr. Bertoni greatly admired the immense beauty of a starry night [cf. Mss B # 4655] - the heavens indeed are the object of our praises, and inspire us to pour forth our sacrifice of praise [cf. Ps 49:14.] He commented that Sacred Scripture leads one to authentic humility. In principle, humility is a reverence of the majesty and greatness of God. It enables one to submit the human will to the divine will: and admonishes diligence in all [cf. Mss B # 4658]. Meditation on the works of creation leads us to order our entire lives into relationship with the Creator. We need to perfect our lives as the Lord God has ordered the entire universe.

Most of these Meditations have followed carefully the text of St. John Chrysostom. Here and there one might find marginal notes of Fr. Bertoni himself, but for the most part, he followed the text he had copied, and commented from it.

Fr. Bertoni's Commentary on Genesis may be found in: **Mss B, Vol. III, ## 4615-4852, pp. 749-850**

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#### **[IV] Fr. Bertoni's Original Constitutions**

This tendency of the Stigmatine Founder of copying verbatim, has been analyzed in another study in this series [cf. J. Henchey, CSS, *St. Gaspar Bertoni and Fr. Francis Suarez, SJ. Reflections and Comparisons.*].

**Part X** of the Stigmatine Founder's Constitutions is the longest, covering ## 187-266, or pages 125-164 of Fr. Stofella's Italian edition. Clearly, this Chapter is the most important, and bears as its title: ***De Unitate, seu Unione Sodalitatis***. As has been pointed out in the study quoted above [cf. J. Henchey, CSS, *St. Gaspar Bertoni and Fr. Francis Suarez, SJ*, p. 18] this has been treated elsewhere:

"... The Trinitarian Ideal: this Part X of Fr. Bertoni's Constitutions, which treats of the Union of the Members, is the longest of all, comprising some 80 of the Original Constitutions. The concluding Constitution of this Part X, once more returns to the intra-Trinitarian Life, as this is meant to move all believers to that harmony and union that would actually make 'all for one and one for all'!

CF # 266      **St. John Chrysostom**, elegantly commenting on the words of Chapter 16 of St. John's Gospel, 'that they may be one, even as we are', says very well: 'Nothing can be compared to the harmony and mutual union of wills: for by it, the individual multiplies himself. If indeed two, or ten persons agree among themselves, there is no longer one individual, but each one has multiplied himself ten times, and in the ten you shall find unity, and the ten in each individual.' Further on he says: 'This is the excellence of charity, and how it brings it about that one can be multiplied and be inseparable; that he can be found in many places at the same time; that he can be in Persia and in Rome: what nature cannot do.'

As Footnote # 95 points out in this place [cf. p. 58] this is taken word for word from Suarez. For the great Jesuit theologian, too, these are the concluding lines of his rich Chapter 8, of Book VIII, entitled: ***De Mediis quibus ad Spiritualem Profectum et Perfectionem suorum Religiosorum utitur.*** Chapter 8: ***De Mediis Positivis, seu quae in actione consistunt.***

Fr. Bertoni either copied, or paraphrased this entire Part X from the words of Fr. Francis Suarez.

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### [C]      **Observations on his Copying**

This matter has been treated above in another study of these Series, as "English Translator's Note" [cf. J. Henchey, CSS, *St. Gaspar Bertoni, The Catechism in the Apostolic Mission. Translations and Reflections*, pp. 10, ff.].

It was pointed out there that the likes of St. Robert Bellarmine was not above copying a good sermon from a recognized authority, in the hopes of leading people to the faith [cf. James Broderick, SJ, *The Life and Work of Blessed Robert Francis Cardinal Bellarmine, SJ.* London: Burns, Oates & Washburne, Ltd. 1928, p. 60]. For this, Bellarmine cited the authority of St. Augustine who writes on the matter:

"... Conclusion [to Book IV]: Those who cannot compose their own sermons should learn by heart and preach those of acknowledged masters.

62.      "There are, of course, some people who can declaim and enunciate well, but cannot think up and compose anything to say and declaim. But, if they take things that have been written eloquently and wisely by others, and proffer them to the people, provided they have that role to play, they are not acting improperly. For in this way, too, we get the useful result of there being many preachers of the truth without there being many masters, if all say the same thing, taught by the one true master, and there are no schisms among them.



"Nor should such men be deterred by the words of the Prophet Jeremiah, through whom God reproves those *who steal his words, each one from his neighbor* [Jr 23:30]. Those who steal, after all, are purloining what does not belong to them; but God's word does belong to those who do what he tells them. In fact, it's the man who speaks well and lives badly that really speaks words that do not belong to him...." [cf. St. Augustine, *Teaching Christianity. De Doctrina Christiana*. Introduction, Translation, and Notes, Edmund Hill, OP, Hyde Park NY: New City Press, pp. 239, ff.]

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**[NB:** The Meditations on Genesis that follow here were delivered by Fr. Bertoni perhaps in the year 1815 - after he had preached the 73 Meditations on the First Book of Kings and the 41 Mediations on the Gospel of St. Matthew. The Stigmatine Founder believed the clerics were ready to take on the Book of Genesis. Let us imitate the farmers, he said to them, quoting St. John Chrysostom - the field is ready, it has been cleared of harmful over-growth and now the young minds and hearts were ready to take on the more subtle truths. [cf. Fr. Nello Dalle Vedove, pp. 606-611].

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## St. John Chrysostom's Eight Sermons On Genesis

**preached by:**

**St. GASPAR BERTONI**

**to the Seminarians of Verona**

## GENESIS I

**4615: Meditation 1** <sup>1</sup>

[cf. Mss B ## 4615-4626]

## Gn 1:1-2

Gn 1:1: *In the beginning, God created heaven and earth...*

**Prelude 1:** Let us imitate the farmers: when they see the land scarified and cleared of the obstruction of the weeds, they sow the seed liberally. It should be the same with ourselves. When by the grace of God the soil which is our spiritual self is cleared of troublesome passions and is relieved of intemperance, so let us try to take up some of the finer details after proposing to you the teachings of the divine Scripture.

## Prelude 2:

**Prelude 3:** Attend carefully, I ask you, to what is said by us; they are not our words that we are uttering, after all, but what divine grace provides for the sake of your salvation.

v. 1: In the beginning God created heaven and earth...

**4616:** Why did Moses expose this. - God, Who spoke personally to humanity from the beginning, after having been absent for a long time, seeking a reconciliation of friendship, sent letters.

**Why did this Prophet, born many generations after the creation of the world, put this to us?**

**4617:** Not idly, or without good reason. You see, when God formed human beings in the beginning, He used to speak to them personally, in a way that it was possible for human beings to understand Him. This was the way, for example, that He came to Adam, the way He upbraided Cain, the way He conversed with Noah, the way He accepted Abraham's hospitality. And even when humanity fell into evil ways, the Creator of all did not abandon the human race. Instead, when they proved unworthy of His converse with them, He wanted to renew His love for them; He sent them letters as you do to people far away from you, and this drew all humankind back again to Him. It was God Who sent them letters. Moses who delivered them.

<sup>1</sup> This Meditation 1 of St. Gaspar Bertoni may be found partially translated in: *St. John Chrysostom. Homilies on Genesis, 1-7.* tr. by Robert C. Hill. Washington DC CUA 1985, The Fathers of the Church. Cf. Homily 2, pp. 29, ff.1.

**4618:** What would the letters contain? Other prophets spoke of what would happen later, or immediately afterwards: this one, reflecting on what had been brought about before him, so that he might be taught by God.

What do the letters say: *In the beginning God created heaven and earth.* Gn 1:1. Notice this remarkable author and how admirable and most outstanding is this prophet. All the other prophets told either what would happen after a long time, or what was going to happen immediately. This blessed author, being born many generations after the event, was guided by the deity on high and judged worthy to narrate what had been created by the Lord of all from the very beginning.

**4619:** *In the beginning God created heaven and earth* Gn 1:1. He well nigh bellows at us all and says: 'Is it by human beings I am taught in uttering these things? It is the one who brought being from nothing who stirred my tongue in narrating them.'

**This is to be listened to, without excessive reasoning.**

Since we, therefore, listen to these words not as the words of Moses but as the words of God of all things coming to us through the tongue of Moses. So, I beg you, let us heed what is said and part company with our own reasoning. Scripture, after all [cf. Ws 9:14] says: *The thoughts of mortals are deceptive and their thinking unreliable.*

When you hear: *He made*, concern yourself no further, but with head bowed, believe what is said. For God it is who makes and transforms all things, and refashions all things according to His will.

**4620: No mention of unseen powers. Motive.**

*In the beginning God created heaven and earth.* Gn 1:1.

See the great extent of the considerateness <sup>2</sup> in this statement. There is no mention of unseen powers, nor does it say, 'in the beginning God made the angels, or the Archangels; it was not idly, or without purpose <sup>3</sup> that he took this line in his teaching. I mean, since he was talking to Jews, people quite wrapped up in the world about them and incapable of forming any spiritual notion, he led them along for the time being from visible realities to the Creator of all thing, so that from created things they might come to learn the Architect of all and adore their Maker, not stopping short at creatures.

You see, despite the creation of the world they had not avoided the error of making gods out of creatures, offering worship to the vilest of brutes; so what madness would they not have fallen into if such considerateness had not been shown them?

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<sup>2</sup> Chrysostom's notion of the 'considerateness' of God in the Scriptures is his most characteristic contribution to patristic thinking on the Word.

<sup>3</sup> This, too, is a characteristic phrase of Chrysostom's stressing the 'precision' of Scripture and arising out of that 'considerateness'. It occurs 39 times in the *Genesis* homilies.

**4621: The Reason for this Motive: from the Example of Paul.**

Do not be surprised if Moses followed this procedure speaking as he was at the beginning in the early stages to very down to earth Jews, when even Paul in the age of grace, when proclamation of the good news had advanced so much, was able, in the speech he was on the point of delivering to the Athenians, to base his teaching to them on visible realities, in these words, *Ac 17:24: God made the world and everything in it; being Lord and Maker of heaven and earth, he does not dwell in man-made temples v. 25, nor can human hands pay him due worship.*

**4622:** I mean, he could see that kind of approach suited them, so he followed that line. He was guided by the spirit to direct his teaching to the ones who would receive what he had to give to them. To learn that his basis for deciding this was the difference in his audience and the materialism of his listeners, listen to his words, *Col 1:16: Since in him were created all things - those in the heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones, dominations, principalities, powers - all were created by him and with him in mind.* Then John put it this way: *Everything was made through him, and without him no single thing was made [Jn 1:3].*

**4623: An Argument from Similarities**

Moses, however, did not speak like that as you would expect: after all, it was not logical that those still requiring to be fed on milk be given solid food instead. To take another example: whereas teachers who have been entrusted by parents with the education of their children give them the fundamentals of learning, those who receive the children from them at the next stage take them through more developed stages of learning. This same pattern was followed by blessed Moses, by the teacher of the Gentiles and by the son of Thunder.

When Moses, remember, in the beginning took on the instruction of the human race, he taught his listeners the elements, whereas Paul and John, taking over from Moses, could at that later stage transmit more developed notions.

Hence, we discover the reason for the considerateness shown to date, namely, that under the guidance of the Holy Spirit he was speaking in a manner appropriate to his hearers as he outlined everything

**4624: ... He created heaven and earth...**

Heaven and earth. Notice how the divine nature shines out of the very manner of creation, how he executes his creation in a way contrary to human procedures, first stretching out the heavens and then laying out the earth beneath, first the roof and then the foundation. Who has ever seen the like? Who has ever heard of it? No matter what human beings produce, this could never have happened. Whereas, when God decides, everything yields to his will and becomes possible. So, do not pry too closely with human reasoning into the works of God; instead, let the works lead you to

marvel at their Maker. Scripture says, Rm 1:20: *What the eye cannot see in him has come into view from the creation of the world and are understood through the things he has made.*

**4625: Why did He create the heaven perfect, and the earth lacking all shape?**

Gn 1:2: *... and the earth was void and empty...*

For what reason, tell me, I ask you, has he created the heaven perfect, and the earth he has made without shape? He has not done this without some purpose in mind; but, that you might learn the better and absolute part of creation formed by him, that you might doubt nothing afterwards, nor that you would come to think that was done out of the power of imbecility.

**4626:** For these and other reasons He has created the earth lacking all shape: for the earth is our nurse and mother, and from this we have been made and are trained, this is our home land and our common sepulcher; for this is our point of exit to which we will return again; and we enjoy; and because we enjoy various fruits through it. Therefore, so that men might not cultivate it more than would be fitting on account of their necessities of its use, He thus showed it first as shapeless and without form. This is done furthermore so that you might not credit the benefits of the earth to the nature of the soil, but that you attribute all to Him Who has created it out of nothing so that it would be.. This is why He said: *the earth was void and empty....*

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**Meditation 2**  
**[Mss B ## 4627 - 4646]**  
**Gn 1: 2-5**

**4627: A Preparatory Prayer**

Prelude 1: Gn 1:2: ... *and darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the spirit of God moved over the waters.* v. 3: *And God said: Be light made. And light was made.* v. 4: *And God saw the light that it was good; and he divided the light from the darkness.* v. 5: *And he called the light Day, and the darkness Night; and there was evening morning, one day.*

**4628:** <sup>4</sup> The Word of God is not only like a treasure but it is also like a spring gushing with overflowing waters in a mighty flood. Our forbears drank from these waters to the limit of their capacity, and those who come after us will try to do likewise; without risk of exhausting them, instead the flood will increase and the streams will be multiplied. Such after all, is the nature of spiritual streams, that the more earnestly anyone tries to draw the water, the more they abound and the spiritual grace increases.

**4629:** Gn 1:1. - Jn 7: ... *If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink.* v. 18: *He that believeth in me, as the scripture saith, 'Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water,'* indicating to us the abundance of the waters. So since this is the nature of spiritual waters, come, let us all constantly bring the vessels of our minds to be filled and thus return home. For whenever the Spirit sees an ardent desire and a watchful mind, he freely grants it abundant grace.

**4630:** So, step aside from your daily preoccupations and from things that threaten to suffocate your thinking like thorns, and let us give free rein to spiritual desires so that we may gain great advantage from this consideration and receive much benefit; then we can go home.

**4631: Accuracy - Prevision**

Afterwards he said: ...*and the earth was void and empty.* Gn 1:2. He teaches us precisely how it came to be invisible and lacking all shape, adding: v. 2: ...*and darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the spirit of God moved over the waters.*

Notice in this case, I ask you, the economy of the Blessed Prophet, how he does not describe all created things individually, but teaches us which items were produced together by mentioning heaven and earth and passing over the rest. I mean, he made no mention of the creation of the waters, but then said:

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<sup>4</sup> This Meditation 2 may be found partially in *The Fathers of the Church. Saint John Chrysostom. Homilies on Genesis 1-17.* Washington CUA 1985, pp. 39, ff., as "Homily 2".

**4632: To make known the necessity of the wise Artificer**

*v. 2: And darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the spirit of God moved over the water...*

This, you see, was covering the face of the earth, darkness, I mean, and the depths of water. From this we learned that all that could be seen was depths of water, covered in darkness and having need of the wise Maker to remove all this shapelessness and bring everything to a condition of order.

**4633: God is the Principle of everything, the First Cause of every Generation - Our Baptism is figured. *Unless a man be born again,... of water and the Holy Spirit...* [Jn 3:5].**

*And darkness was upon the face of the earth, and the spirit of God moved over the waters... v. 2.*

It seems to me to mean this, that some life-giving force was present in the waters: it was not simply water that was stationary and immobile, but moving and possessed of some vital power.

**4634: The Prudent Prevision of the Scriptures.**

So that the blessed Prophet might teach us that this water, great and cumbersome as it was, had some vital power, he says: *And the Spirit of God moved over the waters. v. 2.* It is not without reason that Sacred Scripture makes this early comment. Instead, it intends later to describe to us that creatures in these waters were produced by command of the Builder of all things, and so at this point it teaches the listener that water was not idly formed, but so that it might move, shift and flow over everything.

**4635: When, therefore, there was diffused a great informity over the visible universe, at the command of God, that excellent Artificer, He expelled that deformity, and an immense beauty of visible light was produced, that dissipated the sensible darkness, and illustrated all.**

*v. 3: And he said: Be light made. And light was made.*

He said... and it was made. He gave His mandate, and the darkness was dissipated, and light produced. Do you see the ineffable power? Notice: He merely spoke, and the light was created and the darkness dissipated.

**4636: This is a good distribution and ordering. Virtue is necessary for all, but most especially in Ecclesiastics.. *Be ye therefore, imitators of God as most dear children* [Ep 5:1].**

Gn 1:4: *And God saw the light that it was good; and he divided the light from darkness.*

He separated: He gave to each its own place and defined its appropriate time. And when this had been done, he then gave to each its proper name.

v. 5: *And he called the light Day and the darkness Night.*

You see the excelling distinction and the wonderful craftsmanship, surpassing all comment, happening by a single word and command.

**4637**: You see the degree of considerateness <sup>5</sup>, employed by the blessed author, or rather the loving God through the tongue of the author, instructing the race of men to know the plan of created things and who was the creator of all and how each came into being. I mean, since mankind was yet untutored and could not understand more elaborate matters, the Holy Spirit accordingly explained everything to us by moving the author's tongue in such a way as to take account of the limitations of the listeners.

**4638**: To be convinced that it was on account of the incompleteness of our understanding that he employed such considerateness in his explanation, compare the approach of the Son of Thunder: when humankind had advanced along the path to perfection, no longer did he have them move by this lower way, but led his listeners to a loftier teaching. *In the beginning was the Word*, he said Jn 1:1, *the Word was with God, and the Word was God*. Shortly afterwards he added: *He was the true Light which enlightened everyone coming into the world* v. 9.

#### **4639: A Symbol of the Mental Light**

In other words, just as in our text this visible light produced by the command of the Lord removed the darkness from our vision, in like manner, the light coming to our minds dissipated the darkness of error, and led those in error to the truth. So let us receive the teachings of Sacred Scripture with deep gratitude, not resisting the truth nor persisting in darkness, but hastening towards the light and performing actions proper to the light and the day. This is what Paul recommends to us when he says: *Let us walk becomingly as light of day suggests* Rm 13:13: *and not perform actions proper to the dark*.

**4640**: **The Scriptures speak, adapting themselves to our manner of understanding: hence, it is necessary to see to it that we do not fail in our understanding of them.**

v. 5: *And he called the light day, and the darkness Night.*

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<sup>5</sup> Again and again Chrysostom invokes his favorite principle of **synkatabasis**, in reference to the Scriptures and their authors, divine and human. 'Considerateness', let it be noted implies nothing of what could be the patronizing connotation of 'condescension', [as in the Vatican II translation] despite the common mistranslation.



Now, a detail that almost escaped us we need to pick up again.. I mean, when it said: : *Let light be created, and light was created*, then afterwards it said: *Let light be created, and light was created* v. 3: it added: v. 4: *God saw that the light was good*.

**4641**: See there, dearly beloved, the extent of the considerateness in the language. What is the point of the remark? Is it that before the light comes into being he does not it is beautiful, whereas after its appearance the sight of it shows its creator the beauty of what appears? What sort of sense would that make? I mean, if a man works at some piece of craftsmanship, and before he completes the thing, he is making and puts final touches to it he sees the use to which he will put the thing he is making, how much more the Maker of all, who by his word brings into being everything from non-being, sees that the light is good before he creates it.

**4642**: So, why did he use this expression? This blessed author spoke this way out of considerateness for the way human beings speak.. And just as people work on something with great care, and when they bring their efforts to completion, they parade what they have made for scrutiny and commendation, so Sacred Scripture speaks in that way, showing considerateness for the limitations of our hearing.

**4643**: **Perpetuity of the order: the argument of Divine Providence.**

*God saw that the light was good* v. 4, and added: *And he separated the light from darkness. ib. And he called the light Day and he called the darkness, Night*, allotting to each its own particular area. For He established limits for each right from the beginning, so that they could keep to them permanently without interference. Everyone in his right mind can understand this, how from that time till this the light has not surpassed its limits, nor has the darkness exceeded its due order, resulting in confusion and disruption.

**4644**: Really this fact alone should suffice to oblige people obdurate in their lack of response to come to faith and obedience to the words of Sacred Scripture so as to imitate the order in the elements, respecting as they do their course uninterruptedly and not overstep their own limitations but rather recognize the extent of their own nature.

**The reason why He created in successive order: to show us that none of this is by chance.**

Then, when he had assigned to each its own name, he linked the two together in he words: *And he called the light Day, and the darkness Night.* v. 5.

**4645**: He made a point of speaking of the end of the day and of the end of the night as one, so as to grasp a certain order and sequence in visible things and avoid any impression of confusion. Now we are in a position to learn from the Holy Spirit, through the tongue of this blessed Prophet, what things were created on the first day and what things on the other days. This itself is a mark of the considerateness of the loving God.

I mean, His all-powerful hand and boundless wisdom were not at a loss even to create everything in one day. Why say 'one day'? Even in a brief moment. Yet, it was not because of its utility to Him that He produced anything that exists, since being self-sufficient he is in need of nothing. It was rather out of his loving kindness and goodness that He created everything.

**4646:** Accordingly, He created things in sequence and provided us with a clear instruction about created things through the tongue of that blessed Prophet, so that we might learn about them precisely and not fall into the error of those led by purely human reasoning. You see, if there are still those, despite this manner of creation, who say that things get existence from themselves, what would these people not have been rash enough to invent in their anxiety to say and do everything against their own welfare had not God employed such considerateness and instruction?

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**Meditation 3**  
**[Mss B ## 4647 - 4659]**  
**Gn 1: 6-8**<sup>6</sup>

**4647: Preparatory Prayer**

**Prelude 1:** Gn 1:6: *And God said: Let there be a firmament made amidst the waters: and let it divide the waters from the waters.* v. 7: *And God made a firmament, and divided the waters that were under the firmament, from those that were above the firmament, and so it was.* v. 8: *And God called the firmament, Heaven; and evening and morning were the second day.*

**4648:** Just as hunger is a sign of bodily health, so, too, interest in listening to the divine sayings would be taken by anyone as a sure pointer to a spiritual well-being. Mt 5:6: *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill.*

**Prelude 2:** *Brothers, be sober and watch: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour.* Remember that it drives him to distraction to see the spiritual riches you now have. *Therefore, take unto you the armour of God* [Ep 6:13] which is truth, faith, the Word of God.

**4649:** Having thus completed the account of the first day, and having said after the creation of the light: *and there was evening and morning once day.* And again He said:

v. 6: *And God said: Let there be a firmament made amidst the waters: and let it divide the waters from the waters.*

Notice here the sequence of the teaching. What I mean is that He first brought to our attention, after the creation of heaven and earth, the fact that the earth was void [invisible and empty, and supplied the explanation for it - namely, it was void [as if He had said here 'invisible']] because it was concealed by darkness and water - you recall that everything consisted of darkness and water and nothing else<sup>7</sup>. Then, at the command of the Lord, light was created and a separation made between light and darkness; one received the name 'Day' and the other 'Night'. His intention once again is to teach us that just as by producing the light God could cleave the darkness and assigned to each its appropriate name, so by his command he made a division in the mass of water.

**4650:<sup>8</sup> The School of Good Reasoning**

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<sup>6</sup> The partial English translation for this is found in the same book, *The Fathers of the Church. St. John Chrysostom. Homilies on Genesis 1-17.* tr. by Robert C. Hill. Washington DC: CUA 1986, pp. 51, ff.].

<sup>7</sup> As in his Homily 2, Chrysostom is content with this unlikely reading: *invisible*, ignorant as he is of the Hebrew text.

<sup>8</sup> Fr. Bertoni adds a paragraph here in Italian: 'Sacred Scripture: the School of Good Reasoning, where the student comes to know the greatness of God and duties to Him.

The sacred Scriptures, well meditated upon, gradually insert not only the correct ideas of things, but also order them well, according to the order of Divine Wisdom Which has dictated the Scriptures. They form the spirit, they develop it, they educate it, they multiply, ordain its ideas, perfect reason, rectify judgments, open the way for reflections. One learns in the first place to know God, His greatness and omnipotence; one learns to appreciate one's duties as a creature, which is obedience to the Creator.

**4651:** Take note of such ineffable power, which surpasses all human imagining. I mean, he simply commands, and one element comes into being while another gives way to it.

God said: *Let there be a firmament amidst the waters; and let it divide the waters from the waters.* v. 6.

What does it mean: *Let a firmament be made?* As if someone were to say in human language, Let there be some sort of barrier and division to come between them and make a separation.

**4652:** And so that you may learn the extraordinary obedience of the elements and the exceeding power of the Creator, he adds:

v. 7: *And it was so .*

God had only to speak, and the effect followed immediately.

*And God made a firmament, and divided the waters that were under the firmament, from those that were above the firmament...v. 7.*

That is to say, once the firmament existed, He ordered some of the water to go below the firmament and some to be on top of the firmament.

**4653:** <sup>9</sup> **Modest gratitude is important, retaining those truths which we can grasp, but not presuming to know those that are hidden from us and superior to our ideas.**

Now what would one say this means, 'the firmament': water that has congealed, or some air that has been compressed, or some other substance? No sensible person would be rash enough to make a decision on it. Instead it is better to be quite grateful and ready to accept what is told us and not reach beyond the limits of our own nature, by meddling in matters beyond us, but rather to know only the simple fact and keep it within us - namely, that by the Lord's command the firmament was produced, causing division of the waters, keeping some below and being able to carry the rest elevated on top of it.

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<sup>9</sup> Fr. Bertonni adds another paragraph in Italian: 'Modest Gratitude: wish to know only what is within our grasp'.

**4655:** <sup>10</sup> **Creatures are the object of our Lauds. - Doctrine for Prayer: Offer to God the sacrifice of praise... [Ps 49:14].**

Just look out at its immense beauty! I mean who could fail to be utterly amazed that the firmament in all this period has kept its beauty unimpaired, and that the more time passes, so much the more this beauty increases. After all, what could be more beautiful than the thing that gains commendation from the Creator? I mean, if we see a human being's work brought to completion and marvel at its design, its position, its beauty, its proportion, its symmetry, and everything else about it, how could anyone adequately praise what God has produced, particularly when it has won the praise of the Lord Himself?

**4656:** So, whenever you raise your eyes and admire the beauty of heaven, its immensity, its usefulness to us, then move from there to its Maker, s a Wise Man said Ws 13:5: *For by the greatness of the beauty and of the creature, the creator of them may be seen.* See, too, the Lord's power, how great it is, even from the creation of these elements. I mean, any right-minded person who is prepared to scan visible things each day - but why say created things each day? If only you consider carefully your own makeup, you will see through these details God's ineffable power beyond all descriptions.

**4657:** If these visible things suffice to teach us the magnitude of the Maker's power, and if you attain to the unseen powers, and raise your mind to the hosts of the Angels, the Archangels, the Powers above, the Thrones, Dominations, Princes, the Cherubim, the Seraphim - what understanding, what description is of any avail to unfold His greatness? Ps 103:24: *How great are Thy works, O Lord? Thou hast made all things in wisdom: ...* Indeed, a man endowed so generously with the Spirit and deemed worthy to know the obscure and hidden things of the Lord's wisdom - has exclaimed this, what could we say, dust and ashes that we are, obliged constantly to move with head bowed and to gape at the unspeakable love of the Lord of all?

**4658:** <sup>11</sup> **Sacred Scripture conducts one to genuine humility, in its principle, as it is to reverence the majesty and gratdur of God and helps one to submit our will to His : the admonishment is to diligence in all things.**

And why do I quote the Prophet? I mean, blessed Paul, that spirit soaring to heaven, clad in a body, yet contending with disembodied powers, treading the earth, yet scouring the heavens in his enthusiasm, falling in with one part of God's design [I mean that to do with Jews and gentiles, rejected by the former and taken possession of by the latter] - Paul it was who cried out in utter bewilderment and stupor, Rm 11:33: *O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments, and how unsearchable his ways!* Paul says, his planning and government - are inscrutable [he did not say incomprehensible, just

<sup>10</sup> Fr. Bertoni inserts two lines in Italian here: "Creatures are the object of our Lauds!" His Latin text is chosen from scattered lines in Chrysostom's Commentary - cf. Hill translation, pp. 57,58.

<sup>11</sup> Fr. Bertoni adds an introductory three lines in Italian to conclude this 3rd Meditation - and then continues with his copying of the Latin text of Chrysostom - cf. Homily 4, Hill Translation, pp. 59, f.

inscrutable, so that no one could plot them], and God's ways, in his ways, in his words, government, referring to his dispositions and commands as ways, his mandates and precepts.

**4659:** *And God made evening and morning the second day.*

After giving the firmament its name and commending what had been created, he brought the second day to a close. See how he teaches us with precision, calling the end of the light evening, and the end of the night morning: and naming the whole period day, lest we be misled into thinking the evening is the end of the day, instead of having a clear understanding that one day comprises the duration of both parts. Thus, it would be correct to say that evening is the end of the light; but daybreak, that is, the end of the night, is the duration of a day. This, after all, is what Scripture wants to indicate by saying: *Evening came and morning came: a second day.*

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**Meditation 4**  
**[Mss B ## 4660-4679]**  
**Gn 1: 9-13** <sup>12</sup>

**4660: Preparatory Prayer**

**Prelude 1.** Gn 1:9: *God also said: Let the waters that are under heaven, be gathered together into one place: and let the dry land appear. And it was so done. v.10: And the Lord called the dry land, earth; and the gathering together of the waters, he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. v. 11: And he said: Let the earth bring forth the green herb, and such as may seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after its kind, which may have seed in itself upon the earth. And so it was done. v. 12: And the earth brought forth the green herb, and such as yieldeth seed according to its kind, and the tree that beareth fruit, having seed each one according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. v. 13: And the evening and the morning were the third day.*

**4661: Prelude 2:** To begin with an example: men digging in gold-bearing soil, when they spy some seams of gold dust, they do not stop until they have broken the seams open, got right to the very bottom of it and taken from the spot great wealth. So much the more should we, who have no intention of searching for gold dust, but are expecting to find ineffable treasure, seek it daily so as to gain great wealth from the spiritual plenty to be found there, and so return home. <sup>13</sup>

**4662:** It should be exactly like this in our case: forced to live here below like people in a strange land [and in fact we are all strangers and foreigners in that regard]. We should really be on the lookout for the resources that come from spiritual behavior and store them up for the journey, so that whenever the Lord bids us to set out for our true homeland, we may be ready and not perish from hunger along the way, and may bring some of those resources with us and have the rest sent on ahead. Such, after all, is the nature of these resources: what we would wish to store up for ourselves. <sup>14</sup> Our intention is day by day to bring to your mind good deeds so that you may be found perfect and well prepared and conspicuous for virtue in daily living. Thus, you will be above reproach or contamination as blameless children of God, and will 'shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, as our pride and joy, as you await the day of Christ' <sup>15</sup>, so that merely by your comportment we will benefit those with whom we associate.

**4663:** Let us now listen, if you do not mind, to what it is the grace of the Spirit wants to teach us today as well through the tongue of Blessed Moses.

Gn 1:9: *God also said: Let the waters that are under the heaven, be gathered together into one place: and let the dry land appear. And it was so done.*

<sup>12</sup> For his Meditation 4, Fr. Bertoni bases himself on Chrysostom's Homily 5 - [cf. Hill translation, pp. 66, ff.].

<sup>13</sup> For St. John Chrysostom's rich examples, cf. H. DeLubac, *Exegese Medievale* I [Paris 1959] St. John Chrysostom's Teaching on Inspiration in his OT Homilies, pp. 160-169]

<sup>14</sup> Here Fr. Bertoni skips about a page in the text of St. John [cf. Hill, bottom of p. 6, f.]

<sup>15</sup> This is a quote from Ph 2:15, f., not noted in Fr. Bertoni's text.

Notice here, I ask you, dearly beloved, the order and wonderful sequence. I mean, it said in the beginning that *the earth was invisible and lacking all shape* v. 2, for the reason that it was concealed by the darkness and the waters; then, on the second day he ordered the firmament to be made, and caused the separation of the waters, calling the firmament heaven. v. 6, ff.

**4664:** Now He further teaches us that on the third day:

God also said v. 9 He directed that

The waters under heaven ib, that is, under the firmament -

Should come together into one place ib., that it might make one mass, and should make room.

And the dry land should appear. That is what happened.

In other words, since everything was filled with water, He orders the immensity of waters to come together into one mass, so that there would be a way for the dry land to appear. Note how he sets out for us in detail the orderly arrangement and beauty of it all.

**4665:** *And it was so done.* v. 9.

How? In the way the Lord directed. He simply spoke, and the work followed. You see, this is God's way: created things are governed by His will.

*Let the waters that are under heaven be gathered together into one place: and let the dry land appear.* v. 9.

Just as in the case of the light, when darkness was everywhere, He ordered the creation of the light v. 3, and caused a division between the light and darkness v. 4, so as to assign one to the day and the other to the night, v. 5 and likewise in the case of the waters he created the firmament v. 6, and bade one lot take the upper place and the other lot below the firmament, v. 7, so, too, in this case He orders this second lot of water which was under the firmament to run together into one mass so that the dry land may appear into one mass v. 9, so that the dry land may appear and He may then give it its own name, as with the light and darkness v. 10. And God called the dry land: Earth.

**4666:** <sup>16</sup> **God lays bare - manifests - gives the name.**

**God is order. His works are all ordered: *Thou orderest all things in wisdom* [cf. Ws 12:15] - Sinful man is all disordered - the works of this world are disordered.**

**God is truth. *But God is true* [Rm 3:4] - Man is a liar: *and every man is a liar* [ib.]**

**God is omnipotent: *Almighty is his name* [Ex 15:3]. Man is weak. He is nothing. *For if any man think himself to be some thing, whereas he is nothing...* [Ga 6:3].**

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<sup>16</sup> In Fr. Bertoni's original manuscript, there follow here two paragraphs in Italian, with abundant citations - interrupting the copied Latin translation of St. John which Fr. Gaspar picks up again after this insert.



**4667:** If we await on God and order our spirit, our mind, our heart; we will know the truth and in that we will walk as in a great light. We will remain standing, even if the world all around should fall, because God can sustain reality in the air.

If we obey worldly men, seductive philosophers or theologians, but who do not have God as their Father, since they do not have the Church as their Mother [St. Cyprian, *De unitate Ecclesiae*, p. 397 F] - and they do not have the Church as their Mother because they do not recognize, nor obey the Church of Rome, which is the Mother and Teacher of all the Churches [cf. the Council of Trent, *Denz.* 946]. We would then be in a chaos of disorder or aberrations; we would be walking in the darkness of Egypt [cf. *Ex 10: 21, f.*], even of eternal death, we would be lying in the depths in which *the wicked man when he is come into the depth of sins, contemneth* [Pr 18:3].

**4668:** Do you see, dearly beloved, how the earth, which was previously invisible and lacking all shape through being hidden by the waters as though under covers, he unveils, as it were, and shows its face at long last, giving it its own name.

*v. 10: The masses of the waters he called Seas.*

Notice that the waters also got their own name. To make a comparison: when a first-rate craftsman plans to fashion a vessel from his own skill, he does not give it a name until he has brought this creation to completion. Just so, the loving God does not give names to the elements until He assigns them to their own place through his own arrangement.

**4669:** <sup>17</sup> The attention, the comparison, the reflection on the words and on the deeds of God is the font of all science and truth.

*With desolation is all the land made desolate; because there is none that considereth in the heart.* [Jr 12:11]. If some reflect, attend, await, reflect, on everything else, other than the Master of Truth, Who God is; then, they act like children awaiting the make-believe, whereas the Master explains in school. Such as these learn nothing.

**4670:** *The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there be any that understand and seek God. They were all gone aside, they are become unprofitable together: there is none that doth good, no, not one* [Ps 13: 2, ff.] There were once so many flourishing republics, as Athens and Rome - so many philosophers, and how many of these are no longer! They were little more than ants. These, too, seemed to have untellect; but they do not know why they are living.

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<sup>17</sup> There follow here two more paragraphs, for the most part, in Italian - interrupting Fr. Bertoni's copying of the Latin text of St. John Chrysostom - which continues below.

**4671:** So, after the earth received its own name and took its own shape, the waters, too, being now gathered together were in their turn ready to receive their own name.

The text says: *The masses of the waters he called Seas v. 10.*

And then added: *And God saw that it was good ibi.*

You see, because human nature is limited and is not capable of adequately praising God, sacred Scripture anticipates by telling us of the praise given by the Creator himself.

So, when you learn that created things appeared good to the Craftsman Himself, you have further grounds for wonder without being able any better to apply praise and eulogy. This, after all, is the kind of Lord you have: He does the kinds of things that surpass the bounds of praise by us. I mean, how could human nature adequately praise God's works or celebrate them all?

**4672:** <sup>18</sup> **With how much respect and esteem should we look up to the heavens and upon the earth, and the other works of God!**

**The vesture and the ornamentation of creation.**

Recognize further, I ask you, in the evidence assembled here, the ineffable wisdom of God, the Artisan. That is to say, after making visible to us the face of the earth, He further bestows upon it by his own design a pleasing aspect.

*v. 11: God said: Let the earth put forth a crop of vegetation, plants yielding seed, each according to its kind and likeness, and fruit trees bearing fruit, with seed inside, each according to its own kind upon the earth. And this is what happened.*

**4673:** The Lord gave directions and at once the earth went in to labor and adorned itself with its own crop of seeds.

**That which was nourished under the earth, suddenly opens itself up, the soil begins to see the earth in the spring-time or in autumn, adorned with flowers, or fruits - an idea that would be taken from the Wisdom of God! Cicero.**

*v. 12: Let the earth bring forth the green herb, and such as may seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after its kind.*

**4674:** Consider here, I ask you, dearly beloved, how everything came into being on the earth by the word of the Lord. I mean, it was no man who was the cause, or plow, or help from oxen, or effort towards it from any other source - simply that everything heard the command, and at once sprang from the earth into view. From this we learn that at the present likewise what provides us with the harvest of fruits is not the effort

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<sup>18</sup> Fr. Bertoni has inserted three lines of Italian notes of his own before continuing with St. John Chrysostom's Homily 5, Fr. Bertoni's 4th Meditation.

of farmers, or their toil, or the other labors put into farming, but before all these it is the word of God, the same as was directed to it from the beginning. For the particular purpose of correcting later human folly, Sacred Scripture gives us a precise description of everything according to the order of creation so as to offset the absurdities of people speaking idly from their own reasoning in an endeavor to assert that the assistance of the sun is responsible for the germination of crops.

**4675:**<sup>19</sup> **Useful. There are those who ascribe everything to secondary causes, as some do for all practical purposes, through their lack of reflection, or out of ingratitude; others do this through speculative reasoning, due to their lack of religion, or wickedness.**

For this reason the Holy Spirit teaches us that before the creation of these elements the earth heard His word and command and brought forth plants, with no need of anything else by way of assistance: *Let the earth bring forth the green herb v. 11*. So, taking our lead from Sacred Scripture let us never tolerate those who lightly propound contrary views.

**4676:** I mean, even if human beings till the earth, even if they get assistance from brute beasts, and bestow great attention on the earth, even if the weather is kind, and everything goes according to plan, it will be all to no avail unless the Lord wills; all the toil and trouble will be fruitless unless the hand from on high takes part and brings to fruition these efforts.

**4677:** Who could fail to be absolutely astonished at the thought of how the word uttered by the Lord: about the earth bringing forth the green herb, *v. 11*, penetrated to the very bowels of the earth and as though with a veil, adorned the face of the earth with a variety of flowers? In an instant you could see the earth, which just before had been shapeless and unkempt, take on such beauty as almost to defy comparison with heaven. I mean, just as heaven would shortly be adorned with a variety of stars, so, too, the earth was beautified with a range of flowers to such an extent that even the Artificer was moved to commendation:

*And God saw that it was good v. 12.*

**4678: If creatures cannot even be praised as they merit, how can we ever worthily praise the Creator?**

Does it occur to you how in the case of each of the created realities the text shows the Craftsman rendering praise, with the result that later human beings learn from this and pass from the creatures? That is to say, if created things are of such a kind that they overwhelm human beings, and no one could adequately praise them, what could anyone say of the Artisan Himself?

**4670: Useful repetitions to confirm a truth.**

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<sup>19</sup> Once more Fr. Bertoni interrupts his Latin text for these few lines on "secondary causes."

v. 12: ...*And God saw that it was good.* v. 13: *And the evening and the morning were the third day.*

Do you see how by the repetition of the teaching it wants to impress on our understanding the force of the words? You see there was no need to mention: A third day had passed. But see how in the case of each day it speaks this way: *Evening came, and morning came: a third day* - not idly, or to no purpose, but to present our confusing the order, and thinking that with evening falling the day came to an end, instead of realizing that the evening is the end of the night and the completion of the day. This in fact is what the blessed Moses wants to teach us in saying: *And the evening and the morning were the third day.*

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**Meditation 5**  
**[Mss B ## 4680-4688]**  
**Gn 1:14-19** <sup>20</sup>

**Preparatory Prayer**

**Prelude 1:** Gn 1:14: *And God said: Let there be lights made in the firmament of heaven, to divide the day and the night, and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years:*

v. 15: *To shine in the firmament of heaven, and to give light upon the earth. And it was done.*

v. 16: *And God made two great lights: a greater light to rule the day; and a lesser light to rule the night: and the stars.*

v. 17: *And he set them in the firmament of heaven to shine upon the earth.*

v. 18: *And to rule the day and the night and to divide the light and the darkness. And God saw that it was good.*

v. 19: *And the evening and morning were the fourth day.*

**4681: Prelude 2:** *Thy word is a lamp to my feet, an a light to my paths* Ps 118:105 - *By what doth a young man correct his way? by observing thy words.* Ps 118:9. This is accomplished by listening and by doing.

v. 14: *And God said: Let there be lights made in the firmament of heaven, to divide the day and the night, and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years.*

v. 15: *To shine in the firmament of heaven, and to give light upon he earth. And it was so done.*

*[Rich men in virtue] studying beautifulness.* [Si 44:6]. **It is necessary to make progress in perfecting first the moral virtues of our humanity, then the political graces for life on earth; then the theological and divine virtues, perfecting the spirit, for life in heaven.**

**4682:** You see, since the blessed Moses taught us [yesterday] how the Artificer of all beautified the shapelessness of the earth with vegetation, the variety of flowers and the growth of crops, today he switches his description to the arrangement of heaven. In other words, just as the earth was beautified by the things produced from it, in like manner he caused heaven, which was already visible, to be more conspicuous and bright by lending it the variety that comes from a range of stars and from the creation of the two huge lights, namely the sun and moon.

v. 16: *And God made two great lights: a greater light to rule the day and a lesser light, to rule the night; and the stars.*

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<sup>20</sup> For the splendid ornamentation of the heavens, Fr. Bertoni skips over nearly three pages of Chrysostom's text from his Meditation of Homily 5 - and the first three and a half pages of his Homily 6, leaving aside Chrysostom's pastoral concern and strong correction because of in his audience attended horse racing in Lent! Fr. Bertoni remains with the text of Genesis. [cf. Hill translation, pp. 82, ff.]

**4683:** Do you see the wisdom of the Artisan? He merely spoke, and this marvelous body came into being, namely, the sun. You see, it calls this light great and says it was brought into existence for governing the day. In other words, the sun renders the day brighter, shedding its rays like flashing lights and day by day revealing its own beauty in full bloom: as soon as it appears at dawn, it awakes the whole human race to the discharge of their respective duties. This beauty the blessed Author David reveals when he says *Ps 18:5, f.: ...and he, as a Bride-groom coming out of his bride chamber. Hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way. His going out is from the end of heaven, And his circuit to the end thereof...*

**4684:** You see how he revealed to us both the sun's beauty and its speed of movement. That is, in saying: *Its span extends from one corner of heaven, right to the other corner of heaven ibi*, it indicated to us how in one moment of time it traverses the whole world and scatters its rays from end to end, making its great resources available: it not only supplies heat to the earth, but also dries it up, and not only dries it up, but enkindles it, and supplies us with many different resources, so marvelous a body is it, quite beyond one's power to describe it adequately.

**4685: Creatures are as a stairway leading to the knowledge and love of God.**

I mention this to you and sing the praises of this heavenly body so that you may not stop short there, dearly beloved, but proceed further and transfer your admiration to the Artisan of the heavenly body. After all, the greater the sun is shown to be, so much the more marvelous is the revelation of the Craftsman.

Pagan peoples, however, in their wonder and stupor at this heavenly body were unable to look beyond it to praise its Maker. Instead, they sang its praises and treated it as a deity. Hence, the reason for the blessed Paul's saying: *... they worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator Rm 1:25.*

**4686:** What could be more stupid than people failing to recognize the Creator from the creature and being caught up in such error as to put creature and artifact on the same level as their Creator? So, then, foreseeing the inclination of slothful people to error, Sacred Scripture teaches us that the creation of this heavenly body took place three days later, after the growth of all the plants from the earth, and after earth's taking its own form, so that afterwards no one could say that without this force these things would not have been brought forth from the earth. Hence, it shows you everything completed before the creation of this body lest you attribute the production of the crops to it instead of to the Creator of all things, the one who said from the beginning: *... let the earth bring forth the green herb... Gn 1:11.*

**4687: Against those who attribute all to nature.**

But if they were to say that the sun's virtue also contributes to the ripening of the crops, I would not gainsay them. After all, it is similar to the case of the farmer: in saying he contributes to the processes of the soil, I do not ascribe everything to him: even if six hundred farmers did their best, their efforts would be fruitless unless the

One initiating the process through his own design from the beginning willed to put in train the very creation of the crops.

**4688:** In exactly the same way, I say, even if after the farmer's work there is assistance from the work of the sun, and the moon and the mildness of the climate, this would likewise be to no effect unless the hand from above did not play its part; once, however, this mighty hand is ready, the work of the elements makes its most efficacious contribution. Give close attention to this so as to bridle those still intent on deceiving themselves, and have nothing to do with assigning to creatures the honor due to the Creator.

**4689:** Accordingly Sacred Scripture not only shows us the sun's beauty, and immensity and usefulness in the words: *...as a bridegroom coming out of his bride chamber, He rejoiced as a giant to run this way, Ps 18:5, f.:* but, also its limitations and powerlessness: listen to what it says elsewhere: *Si 17:30: what is brighter than the sun; yet, it shall be eclipsed.* Do not be deceived by appearances, it tells us: unless the Creator willed so to direct, it would disappear as though it had never existed. If pagan peoples had understood this, they would not have fallen victim to such deception, but would properly have seen that from contemplation of created things one should move on to the Creator.

**4690:** Accordingly, he created it on the fourth day lest you think it is the cause of the day. In other words, what we said about the plants we will say also about the day, namely, that three days occurred before the creation of the sun. The Lord wanted to make daylight more brilliant by means of this heavenly body also - something we would say is true in the case of the lesser light as well, by which I mean the moon; after all, three nights occurred before its creation.

**4691: The usefulness of the stars.**

Still, once created, the moon makes its own contribution, banishing the gloom of the night and accomplishing [you could almost say] the same things the sun does in other respects. I mean the sun was designed for governing the day, the moon for governing the night Gn 1:16. What is meant 'for governing the day' and 'for governing the night'. The text implies that the sun took control of the day and the moon of the night, so that the sun should render the day brighter with its rays, and the moon should dissipate the gloom and with its light provide the human race with the possibility of discharging their duties. I mean, by this arrangement the traveler travels the path in confidence, the sailor steers the boat and navigates the seas, and everyone conducting personal affairs can without any concern follow the dictates of individual intuition.

**4692:** Then, after teaching us the usefulness of these lights, the text goes on:

v. 16: *...and the stars. v. 17: And he set them in the firmament of heaven to shine upon the earth. v. 18: And to rule the day and the night, and to divide the light and the darkness.*

Notice how he made clear to us their usefulness also: ibi: *and he set them in the firmament, v. 17.*

*And he set them. ibi.* What is the meaning of: 'He placed?' As though to say: 'He fixed?' By no means at all; after all we can see them traverse a mighty span in the twinkling of an eye, never standing still in one place but following their own course which they have been directed to run by the Lord. So what does: 'He placed' ibi, mean? It is equivalent to saying that He directed them to be in heaven. You can, in fact, see Scripture leading up to this when it says elsewhere: ... *wherein He placed man He had formed...* [cf. Gn 2: 8 & 15]. This was not because he had fixed him in paradise, but because He directed him to remain in paradise. By the same token, about the stars we would say that He directed them to be in the firmament of heaven and shed their light on the earth.

#### **4693: The joyous vision of the sky.**

I mean, dearly beloved, consider this: would it not be more pleasing to see heaven studded with stars at midnight than any number of fields and gardens, the sky adorned with a range of stars as though with flowers, and the stars themselves shedding light on the earth? This, after all, is what they were designed for, shining on earth and governing the day and the night, which is generally true of the great lights also. Remember, when it taught us the creation of the two lights and the stars, it used these words in common about them all: For governing the day and the night, and separating the light from darkness.

#### **4694: Order**

You see, just as you cannot spy the stars moving in the sky during the day [the sun, of course, concealing their strength with its great brilliance], so, too, during the night the sun would never be visible, since the moon is sufficient with its light to dispel the gloom of the night; each of the heavenly bodies keeps to its own boundaries and never oversteps its due measure, but rather maintains the Lord's design and fulfills its proper purpose.

#### **4695: Use**

'Let them act as signs, and indicate days, seasons, and years. v. 14. What is meant by act as signs and indicate days, season and years? Sacred Scripture wants to teach us that the movement of these bodies conveys to us the knowledge of times, the changing of solstices, the number of the days and the course of the year, and from these facts we can fathom everything. The navigator, for example, with his eyes on the path of these bodies, gazing intently at the sky and studying all these signs carefully, is thus able to hold his course and cross the sea; though the night is often black, he can steer by the sight of the stars, and through his own skill, bring safety to his companions.

**4696:** The farmer, too, knows how to learn from these signs when he must sow the seed, till the soil, do the ploughing, and when sharpen the sickle and set about harvesting the crops.



Not a few aids for our daily living are contributed to us by the knowledge of times, the number of the days, and the cycle of the year; and you would find many advantages for human existence stemming from these created things, which it would be impossible to enumerate fully in a precise manner. Hence, the need to learn from these few details how to estimate the usefulness of the heavenly bodies, to marvel at their creation, and adore and praise their Maker.

**4697: All is done for human beings.**

One is aghast at his ineffable love shown to human beings; for humanity alone and for no other reason did he create everything, intending a little later to place them like some kind of ruler over other things, created by him.

**4698: The goodness of creatures.**

'And God saw that it was good' v. 18.

Do you see how each day Sacred Scripture shows Him satisfied with His creatures so as to undercut a pretext of people daring to find fault with the things created by Him? I mean, for the reason that sacred Scripture with this purpose in mind registers the same point in every case, it becomes clear by dint of repetition.

**4699**: After all, it would have been enough following all the acts of creation to say once that everything He had made was very good; but, knowing the extent of the limitations of our reasoning, He repeats the process each time, to teach us that everything was created with a certain inventive wisdom and ineffable love.

When he had completed the arrangement of heaven, beautifying it with the stars and creating those two great lights, he brought the day to a close: Evening came, and morning: a fourth day. v. 19.

Notice how it speaks in this way in the case of each day, wanting to rivet the sacred truths in our mind by the repetition in the teaching <sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> This is the original author's 'theology of the divine Word' - the divine precision needed because of human limitations - this is the divine condescension, a mark of love.

It should be noted that Fr. Bertoni's presentation of his Meditation 5 ends 2 pages early on Chrysostom's Homily 6 [cf. Hill Translation, p 88].

**Meditation 6**  
**[Mss B ## 4700-4725]**  
**Gn 1: 20-25** <sup>22</sup>

**4700:**

**Preparatory Prayer**

**Prelude 1.** Gn 1:20: *God also said: Let the waters bring forth the creeping creatures having life, and the fowl may fly over the earth under the firmament of heaven.* v. 21: *And God created the great whales, and every living and moving creature, which the waters brought forth, according to their kinds, and every winged fowl according to its kind. And God saw that it was good..* v. 22: *And he blessed them, saying: Increase and multiply, and fill the waters of the sea: and let the birds be multiplied on the earth..* v. 23: *And the evening and morning were the fifth day..* v. 24: *And God said: Let the earth bring forth the living creature in its kind, cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth, according to their kinds. And it was do done..* v. 25: *And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds, and cattle, and every thing that creepeth on the earth after its kind. And God saw that it was good.*

**4701:** **Prelude 2.** *Blessed is the man whom thou shalt instruct, O Lord: and shalt teach him out of thy law. Ps 93:12. Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God. Mt. 4:4.*

Gn 1:20: *God also said: Let the waters bring forth the creeping creature having life, and the fowl that may fly over the earth under the firmament of heaven.*

**4702:** **Order**

See the Lord's loving kindness, how by a certain order and sequence he teaches us about every created thing. First He taught us how at His command He excited the earth to produce fruits; then, He taught us about the creation of the two lights; He added also the range of stars, through which the beauty of heaven was made more brilliant. Today, finally He switches to the waters and shows us from them living beings coming at His word and command.

**4703:** **Uniformity of Precepts**

Let the waters produce reptiles with living souls, and on earth winged creatures flying across the firmament of heaven. v. 20.

What words, tell us, can do justice to that marvel? What tongue can measure up to the praise of the Maker? He simply said: 'Let the earth put forth' - and immediately excited it to birth pangs; now v. 20, He says: 'Let the waters produce the reptiles having life. See how His directions correspond: in one case, the text says 'Let it put forth. 'v. 11. Here in this case: 'Let the waters produce reptiles with living souls' v. 20.

**4704:** You see, just as in the case of the earth He simply said, 'Let it put forth' v. 11, and there appeared a wide-ranging variety of flowers and seeds, all created by one

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<sup>22</sup> For his Meditation 6, Fr. Bertoni skips over 6 and one half pages of Chrysostom's commentary of his Homily 7. He picks up Hill's Translation on p. 95, ff.

word, so, too, in this case, He said: 'Let the waters produce reptiles with living souls, and fowl that may fly over the earth under the firmament of heaven' v. 20. And so it was done. And all of a sudden such kinds of reptiles and such variety of birds as to beggar counting. While it was one word, and a short one, the kinds of living things were many and varied.

**4705:** But do not be astonished, dearly beloved; after all, it was God's Word, and His Word endowed those creatures with life.

Do you see how He brings everything from non-being to being? Did you see the precision and how far He demonstrates it in regard to our human race?

**4706:** I mean, how would we have been able to know these things precisely had not He in His really unspeakable love deemed it proper to teach humanity through the tongue of the prophet, so that we might know the order of created things and the power of the Creator, and how His word took effect, and His utterance endowed creatures with life and the way to existence?

**4707: God's benignity keeps us from being seduced by error.**

Yet there are some stupid people who, despite this kind of teaching, are rash enough to withhold belief, and do not admit that these visible things have a Maker. Some of them hold they came into existence by themselves, others that they were formed from some underlying matter.

**4708:** See the extent of the devil's wiles, how he exploits the facile thinking of people in the thrall of error. For that reason, the blessed Moses, inspired by the divine Spirit, teaches us with great precision, lest we fall victim to the same things as they, instead of being able to know clearly both the sequence of created things and how each thing was created. You see if God in His care for our salvation <sup>23</sup> had not directed the tongue of the biblical author in this way, it would have been sufficient to say that God made heaven and earth, the sea and living things, and not add the order of the days, nor what was created first and what later. But, lest He leave any grounds for excuse to those bent on folly, He explains in this way both the order of created things and the number of days, and He teaches us everything with great considerateness so that we may learn the whole truth and not turn our minds to the error of those uttering all these ideas from their own reasoning. But we are able to know the ineffable power of our Maker. And this is what happened

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<sup>23</sup> This passage is another conspicuous instance of the synthesis of Chrysostom's basic principles on Scripture: inspiration, love, considerateness, precision - all 'for our salvation', as he repeats over and over again.

**4709:** Obedience of the element to such varied and diverse reality. This teaches obedience to the Voice of God in every undertaking.

He said: 'Let the waters produce reptiles with living souls and on earth winged creatures flying across the firmament of heaven.' v. 20.

And the elements obeyed, and carried out what was commanded. 'It happened', the text goes on, just as the Lord commanded.

**4710:** v. 21: *And God created the great whales, and every living and moving creature, which the waters brought forth, according to their kinds, and every winged fowl according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.* v. 22: *And he blessed them saying: Increase and multiply, and fill the waters of the sea: and let the birds be multiplied on the earth.*

**4711: Power and Benignity.**

Notice here again, I ask you, the extent of the Spirit's wisdom. I mean, the blessed Moses, after saying: 'This is what happened', teaches us by adding one detail at a time in the words, v. 21: 'God made the huge sea monsters and every single living reptile which the waters produced in a range of kinds, and every winged creature according to kind. 'God saw they were good.'

**4712:** Here once more he takes the ground from under those rash enough to speak always heedlessly. That is, lest anyone be able to say, Why did He make the sea monsters? What good are they to us? What is the advantage of their creation? Of set purpose, He said: God made the huge sea monsters, and every single living reptile and the birds', and immediately added, 'God saw that they were good.' In other words, He is saying, although you stand in ignorance of the reason for the created things, do not presume to find fault with their creation. Having heard the Lord give His approval and declare them good, how can you be so demented as to dare to ask, Why were they made? Are you scorning their creation as pointless?

**4713:** If you were well disposed you would be able from the creation of these thing to get an insight into the power of your Lord and His ineffable love. You would understand better His power for the reason that He caused living things like this to be created from the waters by His word and command. and His love, for the reason that in creating them He gave each of them a particular place, and assigned them a boundless area of the sea so that they might not hinder one another but dwell in the water and provide an example to teach us the Artisan's extraordinary power and cause no harm to the human race.

**4714:** Do you think that it is an insignificant mark of love that a two-fold benefit comes to you from these creatures? They do, after all, lead those of us willing to think aright, to the knowledge of God and cause us to be amazed at the greatness of His loving kindness in freeing the human race from the harm brought on itself. You see, it was not simply for our use that everything was created by him, but on account of His great

prodigality: while some things were created for our use, others had this purpose - that the power of their Maker might be proclaimed.

**4715: Omnipotence in conserving all the species of animals.**

So when you hear: 'God saw that it was good' v. 21, presume no longer to contradict the Sacred Scripture, nor bury your head in idle speculation with questions why this or that was made.

v. 22: 'God blessed them saying to them: Increase and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds multiply on earth.'

**4716:** This is the blessing, that they should grow to a great number. You see, since the creatures He made had life in them, He wanted their life to be lasting. Hence, the text added: 'God blessed them and said: Increase and multiply'. v. 22.

That word, you know, influences them right up to the present, and has spanned such an extent of time without one of those species being diminished. After all, God's blessing and the form of words: 'Increase and multiply' bestowed on them life and permanence.

**4747: v. 23: *And the evening and morning were the fifth day.***

Do you see how Sacred Scripture taught us also the living things created on the fifth day? Well, just wait a while and you will see once again the loving kindness of your Lord. I mean, He not merely made the waters fertile for the birth of living things, but also directed land creatures in their turn to be produced from the earth. In other words, today it is hardly inappropriate to arrive at the things made on the sixth day as well.

**4718: v. 24:** God said: Let the earth bring forth living things in their various kinds, four-footed creatures, reptiles, wild beasts on the earth, cattle and all the reptiles of the earth in the various kinds. And it was done.

See the earth also for a second time producing two-fold fruit, and doing the Lord's bidding. On the first occasion remember, it brought forth a crop of seeds, but on this occasion living beings, four-footed creatures, reptiles, wild beasts and cattle. Notice that this instance demonstrates what I told you in advance, that it was not simply for our use that He produced all these things, but also it was for our benefit, in the sense that we might see the overflowing abundance of His creatures and be overwhelmed at the power of the Maker, and be in a position to know that all these things were produced by a certain wisdom and ineffable love out of regard for the human being that was destined to come into being.

**4719: v. 25:** God made the wild beasts of the earth in their various kinds, cattle in their various kinds, and all the reptiles in their various kinds. God saw they were good.

Where now are those people rash enough to ask: What's the point of wild beasts, of reptiles? Let them listen to the words of Sacred Scripture, ibi: God saw that

they were good. Tell me, I beg you: the Creator Himself commends the created things, and do you dare to call them into question? Would this attitude stop short at any madness? Admittedly, in the case of the seeds and the plants the earth has produced not only fruit-bearing trees, but also those giving no fruit, and brings forth not only crops that are profitless but some that are strange to us and ones that are in many cases, harmful.

**4720:** But no one will presume to find fault with their creation on that account: after all, they have not been produced without rhyme or reason. I mean, they would not have received commendation from the Lord had they not been created to serve some need. So, the comparison is clear: in the case of the trees, not all are fruit-bearing; many bear no fruit and yet even they provide no less a remarkable service to us and contribute to our well-being; we make our houses from them and gain many other advantages contributing to our well-being. So, by and large, there is nothing which has been created without some reason, even if human nature is incapable of knowing precisely the reason for them all. In like manner, therefore, as with the trees, so, too, with the wild beasts: some are useful for our food, others for serving us.

**4721:** The species of wild beasts and reptiles, too, are of no little help to us, and if somebody is prepared to study them in a right mind, he will find even now, when control over them has been wrested from us owing to the disobedience of the first human creature, that the benefit is great that comes to us from them. I mean, physicians get from them many things, which they employ as medications capable of promoting the health of our bodies. Otherwise, what great harm would have come from the creation of the wild beasts at a time when they, like domestic animals, were intended to come under the control of the creature soon to be created. In fact, it is time that I spoke about this.

**4722:** Now with a view to your learning the surpassing love of the Lord of all displayed in regard to our human race, consider the way he stretched out heaven, unfolded the earth, created the firmament like a dividing wall making a separation in the waters, then directed the joining of the waters to happen, called one part seas and the dry part earth, next he beautified the latter with the proliferation of seeds and later with crops.

**4723:** Further, He went on to the creation of the two great lights and the variety of stars through which He added to the beauty of heaven. Then, He produced from the waters the living beings and on the earth winged creatures flying across the firmament of heaven; and after completing the number of five days, since it was necessary for living beings to be created from the earth, He directed these to be brought forth, some suitable for food, others useful for our service, as well as wild beasts and reptiles.

**4724:** Then, finally, after arranging everything in order, by imposing an appropriate order and design on all visible things, preparing a lavish table filled with rich and varied viands, laden with wealth and abundance, and making what might be called kingdoms above and below, conspicuous from all points and gleaming with variety - then finally He creates the being meant to enjoy all these things giving this creature power over all

these visible things. And as a demonstration of the degree to which this creature about to be fashioned is more elevated than all the other creatures, He bids everything He has made come under this creature's authority and supervision.

**4725:** Lest, however, we draw out the sermon to a great length, let us be content with what we have said and postpone to the next occasion what has to do with the fashioning of this wonderful being graced with reason and spirit - I mean, the human being. Now we will address to you the customary exhortation, so as to preserve the remembrance of the things said, and also, through all the things seen, to stir ourselves to praise of the Lord <sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Notwithstanding these words of apparent closure of his 7th Homily, St. John Chrysostom continues on for another three pages! For Fr. Bertoni, however, this is the end of his Meditation 6.

**Meditation 7**  
**[Mss B ## 4726-4751]**  
**Gn 1:26**<sup>25</sup>

**4726: Preparatory Prayer**

**Prelude 1.** Gn 1:26: *And he said: Let us make man to our own image and likeness: and let him have dominion over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and the beasts, and the whole earth, and every creeping creature that moveth upon the earth.*

**Prelude 2.** *Blessed is the man whom thou shalt instruct, O Lord: and shalt teach out of thy Law.*

Every teacher, on seeing the disciples taking care to rivet in their mind the memory of the earliest lessons and showing something for it in practice, more readily entrusts them with the knowledge of the following lessons.

**4727:** v. 26: And He said: Let us make man to our own image and likeness.

**Let us not imitate some modern philosophers, who study with all diligence everything and anything other than themselves, in order to know themselves and direct themselves to their end. - The philosophy of the ancients was almost all reduced to morality.**

**4728:** <sup>26</sup> Let us not rush idly by what is said, dearly beloved; instead, let us investigate each expression, get right to the depth of its meaning, and divine the force concealed in these brief phrases. I mean, although the words may be few, immense is the treasure concealed in them; we must remain alert and vigilant and not stop at the surface. Likewise with people endeavoring to dig up this material treasure, they do not simply dig around on the ground or study the surface; instead, they go right to the bottom and penetrate to the bowels of the earth, and thus separate the gold from the soil through their own skill, and despite much toil and sweat manage to find just a few nuggets.

**4729:** In our case, it is nothing like that: the effort is small, the yield beyond telling. Such, you see, are all spiritual realities. Accordingly, let us not be found wanting by comparison with those who get excited about material things' let us in our turn search diligently for this spiritual treasure stored up in these words. Let us first see what is the new and surprising element in the words, and why the blessed Prophet employed such a novel turn of phrase - or rather, the loving God through the speech of the Prophet.

**4730:** The text says: 'Let us make a human being our image and likeness. v. 26. A little time before, remember, we heard Him saying after the creation of heaven and earth: Let light be made, v. 3, and 'Let a firmament be made in the middle of the

<sup>25</sup> Fr. Bertoni skips the first half page, or so, from Chrysostom's 8th Homily, and picks it up again [in the Hill Translation, pp. 105, ff.] - Fr. Gaspar will dedicate this Meditation 7 to one verse only, that most important Gn 1:26, a text that is the basis of all Christian anthropology.

<sup>26</sup> Fr. Bertoni skips about another page of the Saint's Homily 8, contrasting spiritual things - that increase by sharing; and material things, which diminish in their use [cf. Hill, o.c., pp. 106, ff.].



water', v. 6. And again: 'Let the water be gathered together into one mass, and let the dry land appear', v. 9. 'Let lights be made', v. 14. And "Let the waters produce reptiles with living souls', v. 20. - Did you see the whole of creation made in those five days merely by word and command? Notice today how great the difference in the words. That is, no longer does it say, Let a human being be created. Instead, what?

**4731:** 'Let us make a human being in our image and likeness, Gn 1:26.

What is new in this? What is strange? Who on earth is this creature now being made whose making required in the Maker such planning and care? Do not be surprised, dearly beloved, I mean, the human being is the creature more important than all the other visible beings, and for this creature all the others have been produced - sky, earth, sea, sun, moon, stars, the reptiles, the cattle, all the brute beasts.

**4732:** **And should this work be in our hands, would we not ruin it? If we would have made it with great care, and would others ruin it?**

**Albert the Great, a statue, and St. Thomas.**

**And what if it should cost blood?**

- Why is it, you ask, that if this creature is more important than all these, it is brought forth after them?

- A good question. Let me draw a comparison with a king on the point of entering a city on his visit: his bodyguard has to be sent on ahead to have the palace in readiness, and thus the king may enter his palace. Well, now, in just the same way in this case, the Creator, as though on the point of installing some king and ruler over everything on earth, first erected the whole of this scenery, and then brought forth the one destined to preside over it, showing us through the created things themselves what importance He gave to this creature.

**4733:** **O, goodness of God! How could we not love Him and serve Him with every diligence, as He has so honored us?**

But, let us put a question to a Jew, and see what he says to that verse:

'Let us make a human being in our image' v. 26. The words, after all, are from Moses, whom they claim to believe, but in fact, do not believe. As Christ says, Jn 4:46, *For if you did believe Moses, you would perhaps believe me also*. While the words remain with them, their true meaning remains with us.

**4734:** - So, to whom is the phrase addressed: Let us make a human being', v. 26, and to whom does the Lord propose this plan? Not because He has need of plan and consideration - perish the thought! Instead He intends through the pretext of words to indicate the surpassing importance which He demonstrates in regard to the human race.

What, then, do they say, these people who still have a veil lying over their hearts<sup>27</sup> and refuse to understand what is contained in these words?

**4735:** - O, what stupidity! what idiocy!

- What reason do you have for saying, human being that you are, that an angel is party to the counsels of the Lord, creatures sharing the Creator's thought? Not for angels is it to be party to the counsels of the Lord, but to stand in waiting and fulfill sacred ministry.. To grasp this, listen to Isaiah, most articulate among the prophets, when he says about the angelic powers above that *Is 6:1: I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and elevated: and his train filled the temple. v. 2: Upon it stood the seraphims: the one had six wings, and the other had six wings: with two they covered his face, with two they covered his feet, and with two they flew.*

**4736:** From which it is obvious that they could not bear the radiance beaming from that source, but stood in great fear and trembling. To stand in waiting before the Lord is, after all, proper to creatures. These people, however, who understand nothing of what is contained in the words, idly say the first things that comes into their heard. Hence, it falls to us to refute their stupidity and teach the children of the Church the truth of the words.

**4737:** So, who is this to whom He says: 'Let us make a human being?' *v. 26*. Who else is it than the Angel of Great Counsel, Wonderful Counsellor, Figure of Authority, Prince of Peace, Father of the age to come *Is 9:6*, Only-Begotten Son of God, like the Father in being, through whom all things were created?. This text also deals a mortal blow to those entertaining the position of Arius. I mean, he did not say by way of command, Make such a creature, as though to a subordinate, or to one inferior in being, but 'Let us make' with great deference to an equal<sup>28</sup>.

**4738: And what follows once more shows the similitude of substance:**

You see, in saying: 'Let us make a human being in our image and likeness' *v. 26*, He did not stop there, but through the following verse made clear to us what was the reason for choosing the word 'image.' What in fact does He go on to say: 'Let them have control of the fish of the sea the birds of heaven, and all the reptiles creeping on the earth.' *v. 26*. So, 'image' refers to the matter of control, not anything else, in other words, God created the human being as having control of everything on earth, and nothing on earth is greater than the human being, under whose authority everything falls.

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<sup>27</sup> cf. 2 Co 3:15.

<sup>28</sup> Here Fr. Bertoni skips an entire page in the Chrysostom text, to the next page of the Hill translation, p. 110.

**4739:<sup>29</sup> Dominion over the beasts, against the objection - comparison to thieves.**

Now on this matter pagans make a rejoinder to us with the claim that the truth of the sentence is not confirmed in practice; we do not, in fact, control the wild beasts, as was promised, but they control us.

- But, this is not true, either. Whenever a human being comes on the scene, at once the wild animals take to flight. On the other hand, if at some time we are harmed by them when they are under the pressure of starvation, or we attack them, this evidently happens not because of their control over us, but from some fault of ours. Likewise when brigands attack us and find us not slothful, but armed to the teeth, it is not an example of their power but of our care for our own welfare.

**4740:** Meantime, let us listen again to the words of the text:

'Let us make a human being in our image and likeness.'

As the word 'image' indicated a similitude of command, so, too, 'likeness, with the result that we become like God to the extent of our human power<sup>30</sup> - that is to say, we resemble Him in our gentleness and mildness and in regard to virtue, as Christ also says: *'Be you, therefore, perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Mt 5:48.*

**4741:** You see, just as on this wide and spacious earth some animals are tamer and others more ferocious, so, too, in the wide spaces of our soul, some of our ideas are more lethargic and resemble brute beasts, and others more ferocious and savage. So, there is need to control and tame them and submit them to the rule of reason.

**4742:** - How do you get control of the wildness of thought, you ask?

- What are you saying, human being that you are? We subdue lions and tame their spirit, and do you doubt if you are able to transform the ferocity of your thinking into mildness? Further, ferocity is naturally proper to wild beasts and mildness unnatural, whereas the opposite is true in your case: mildness is natural, ferocity and savagery unnatural. Are you, then, who expel the natural and induce the unnatural in wild animals, unable yourself to maintain what is natural? What great condemnation this brings against you!

**4743:** Something in fact that is more remarkable and surprising still is this: Although in a lion's nature there is the added difficulty that the lion is a wild beast deprived of reason, we still often see lions led meekly through the market place, and many people often throw money from their shops to the person getting some reward for skill and cunning in taming the wild beast. However, in a person reason is present, and the fear of God and many other advantages from other sources - so, do not adduce excuses and pretexts. It is, after all, quite within your capabilities to be meek and mild and

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<sup>29</sup> Without any indication in his text, Fr. Bertoni skips ten full pages of Hill's English translation [cf. pp. 111-120]. Keeping in mind that he was addressing seminarians, the sections on Chrysostom's sexism are omitted, as are other matters. Fr. Bertoni picks up again well into Chrysostom's Homily 9, in Hill's translation, pp. 120, ff.

<sup>30</sup> Chrysostom seems quite modern here: 'image' is by nature; 'likeness' for some exegetes, is one's spiritual moral endeavor.

gentle, if you have the good will. The text says: 'Let us make a human being in our image and likeness.' Gn 1:26.

**4744: In the beginning they were subject. Adam imposed names on them.**

But, let us return to the question proposed before. It emerges, you know, from what we have said that the human being from the very beginning had complete control of the wild beasts; the text says:

'Let them have control of the fish of the sea and the birds of heaven, the wild beasts and the reptiles of the earth v. 26.

The fact that now we have fear and dread of the wild animals and have lost control of them, I personally do not dispute; but this does not betray a false promise on God's part.

**4745:** From the beginning, you see, things were not like this. Instead, the wild beasts were in fear and trembling, and responded to direction. But, when through disobedience human beings forfeited their position of trust, their control was also lost. As evidence, after all, that everything was placed under the human beings' control, listen to Scripture: 'He brought the wild animals and all the brute beasts to Adam to see what he would call them' Gn 2:19. And seeing the animals near him, he did not shrink back, but like a master giving names to slaves in his service, he gave them all names, ibi, this being a symbol of his dominion. Hence, God was wanting to teach him through this the dignity of his authority, so he entrusted to him the giving of names. So this insistence suffices to demonstrate the fact that from the beginning the wild beasts were not an object of terror to the human being.

**4746: The Conversation of the snake with the woman.**

Yet, there is another instance no less significant and much clearer. Namely? The serpent's conversation with the woman. You see, had the animals been frightening to human beings, the woman at the sight of the serpent would not have stood her ground, would not have taken its advice, would not have conversed with it so comfortably; instead, she would have been terrified by its appearance and taken flight. In fact, however, she both converses with it and shows no fear; this fear, after all, is not yet to the fore.

**4747:** But once sin came onto the scene, there was evidently a loss both of esteem and of authority. Just as in the case of servants, those that enjoy a good name are held in fear by their fellow servants, whereas those that have given offense fear the others - so, too, in the case of the human being. While they enjoyed God's trust, they were an object of fear even to the animals, but when they fell they eventually had to fear even the least of their fellow slaves.

If you do not hold with what we have said, show me that before sin the beasts were an object of fear to the human being. But, you could not.

**4748: Fear of the beasts and the withdrawal of dominion after sin, useful.**

If, however, fear came on the scene afterwards, this is also an extraordinary token of God's loving kindness. I mean, if after the commandment had been broken by the human beings the esteem accorded them had remained unimpaired, they would not easily have risen from their fall.. You see, when obedient and disobedient people enjoy the same esteem, they are more inclined to evil and do not quickly receive from evil. After all, if under pressure of fear, retribution and punishment they do not come to their senses, what condition would they be in if they suffered nothing for the terrible mistakes they made?

**4749:** So it is out of His providential care for us that He has removed us from our position of control. Consider now, I ask you, dearly beloved, in this instance, God's ineffable love as well, how, on the one hand, Adam infringed the whole commandment and completely broke the law - while, on the other hand, God in His loving kindness proved His goodness superior to our transgressions and did not cancel all our esteem, nor remove the human being from all control. Instead, He withdrew from their control only those beings that did not have the greatest contribution to make to their livelihood, whereas the most necessary and useful creatures which performed great service to our living He allowed to remain in subjection and servitude.

**4750:** He left to us, at any rate, herds of cattle to draw the plough, to till the soil, to sow the seed; He left the beasts of burden to assist our efforts in transporting heavy loads; He left the flocks of sheep so that we might have sufficient supply of garments for clothing; and He left other kinds of animals to supply us with plenty of resources. You see, though in punishing the human being for disobedience, He said: *In the sweat of your brow may you eat bread Gn 3:19*. He took care lest this sweat and toil be unbearable, to lighten the pressure and burden of work with the multitude of beasts sharing with us the labor and distress.

**4751:** He acted in precisely the way a loving and caring master would in punishing his servant, following the punishing with some healing; in just this way, God brings condemnation to the sinner and then wants to render this condemnation lighter in every way, condemning us to ceaseless toil and sweat, on the one hand - and providing many kinds of brute beasts to share the labor with us on the other. The result is that you have the bestowal of esteem, and its being taken back, the implanting of fear of wild beasts - all done, if you study it precisely and in a spirit of gratitude, with an abundance of wisdom, of care, of love <sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> Fr. Bertoni draws his Meditation 7 to a close here, with two and one half more pages to go in Hill's translation from Chrysostom's "Homilies 8 & 9" - cf. p. 124.

**Meditation 8**  
**[Mss B 4752-4770]**  
**Gn 1:27-31; 2:1-2** <sup>32</sup>

**4754: Preparatory Prayer**

**Prelude 1. Gn 1:27:** *And God created man to his own image: to the image of God he created him: male and female he created them* v. 28: *And God blessed them, saying: Increase and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it, and rule over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and all living creatures that move upon the earth.* v. 29: *And God said: Behold I have given you every herb bearing seed upon earth, and all trees that have in themselves seed of their own kind, to be your meat.* v. 30: *And to all beasts of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to all that move upon the earth, and wherein there is life, that they may have to feed upon. And it was so done.* v. 31: *And God saw all the things that he had made, and they were very good. And evening and morning were the sixth day.* Caput 2:1: *So the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the furniture of them..* v. 2: *And on the seventh day, God ended...*

**4753:** 'And God created man to his own image: to the image of God he created him: male and female he created them.' v. 28: 'And God blessed them, saying: Increase and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it, and rule over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and all living creatures that move upon the earth.'

**4754:** The words are brief, but the treasure concealed in the brief words is great. You see, speaking through the Spirit, this blessed Prophet wants at this point to teach us something kept from human learning. When he said, remember: 'Let us make a human being', the Maker of all applied His will, as it were, and His thought in demonstrating through this shape the importance given to the creature in process of formation, something He began to teach us before the process began. He also demonstrated the greatness of the control He was entrusting to the being in process of creation; hence, to the words, 'Let us make a human being in our image and likeness', He added, 'Let them have control of the fish of the sea.'

**4755:** See how He reveals to us from the beginning the treasure hidden there. I mean the Prophet, speaking through the divine Spirit, sees as subsisting and brought into being things not yet subsisting. So, why, tell me, after His words: 'Let us make a human being' v. 26, does He now say: 'Let *them* have control?' Evidently He is already revealing some mystery lying hidden. *Who* are to have control? ...<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Fr. Bertoni's 9th Meditation is taken from St. John Chrysostom's 10th Homily - Fr. Bertoni skips over the first 5 and one half pages, and begins on pp. 132, ff. of Hill's English translation.

<sup>33</sup> Fr. Bertoni skips about one half a page here from Chrysostom's text [cf. Hill translation, pp. 133, ff.].

Then, going on, he says further in a clearer way: v. 27: God made the human being; in God's image He made them; male and female He made them.'

**4756:** Notice how much precision He employs, saying the same thing once and again so that the words could be riveted in the minds of the listeners. you see, if this had not been an object of concern for Him, it would have been enough to say: 'God made the human being' - but, He adds as well: 'In God's image He made them' ibi. In other words, after teaching us through the previous verses what was the meaning 'in God's image', accordingly again at this point He repeats the very same notion, by saying: 'In God's image, He made them' ibi. Lest He should leave some brazen pretext of controversy to those intent on contesting the Church's dogmas, He presses on a little further and teaches the same things again, that God employed the word 'image' in the sense of controlling and having all creatures under subjection.

**4757:** Finally, let us see what He is saying.

'God made the human being; in God's image He made them, male and female He made them. v. 27.

What He hinted at above when saying; 'Let them have control', v. 26, here He says more clearly, though He still teaches us this cryptically, since after all He has not yet taught us about the manner of formation or told us where woman comes from.. He says: 'Male and female he made them', v. 27,<sup>34</sup>, as though to bestow a blessing on each of them. He goes on:

**4758:** v. 28: God blessed them in the words; 'Increase and multiply, fill the earth and gain dominion over it, and have control of the fish of the sea.' and the birds of the air, and all living things which move on the face of the earth.

Behold the remarkable character of the blessing. I mean, those words: 'Increase and multiply and fill the earth'. Anyone could see that these words are said of the brute beasts and the reptiles alike, v. 22, whereas: 'Gain dominion and have control': are directed to the man and woman. See the Lord's loving kindness: even before creating her He makes her sharer in this control and bestows on her the blessing.

**4759:** 'Have control, the text says, of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven and all the cattle, the whole earth and all the reptiles creeping on the earth' v. 28.

Did you notice the ineffable authority? Did you notice all created things placed under this being's control? No longer entertain casual impressions of this rational being, but rather realize the extent of the esteem and the Lord's benignity towards it, and be amazed at His love beyond all telling.

**4760:** v. 29: 'God said: Lo, I have given you every crop upon all the earth bearing seed fit for sowing, and every tree containing fruit with seed for sowing; they are for your food v. 30. And for all the beasts of the earth, all the birds of heaven and every reptile

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<sup>34</sup> Fr. Bertonni skips a paragraph here of Chrysostom's Homily 10 - and picks up again in the Hill translation, on p. 134.

creeping on earth - whatever has a spirit of life in it - I have given every green crop for food.' This is what happened.

See, I ask you, dearly beloved, the precision of the words and the Lord's ineffable love, and do not pass heedlessly by anything of what is said.

**4761:** 'God said, the text reads, Lo, I have given you every crop for sowing', as though the remark - even this one - is addressed to two people, despite the fact that the woman is not yet produced, but also to the brute beasts. Then, in order that you may learn His surpassing goodness, see how the signs of His love do not stop short at the man and woman, still to be produced, but reach to the very beasts. He said to the human beings: They are for your food, v. 29, and then added: 'And for all the beasts of the earth, v. 30.

See again further depths of His loving kindness: He showed concern not only for these that meet our needs for food and service, but also for wild beasts.

**4762:** Who could adequately arrive at the extent of this boundless goodness?

They are for your food, the text says. And for all the beasts of the earth, all the birds of heaven and every reptile creeping on the earth - whatever has a spirit of life in it - I have given every green crop for food v. 29.

The Lord's care for the human being created by Him emerges in all its fullness. I mean, after producing him and entrusting him with complete control of creation, the good Lord took steps to prevent his being distressed at once from the outset by the sight of the vast number of beasts through a feeling of being powerless to provide adequately for the nourishment of so many animals: before any such thought came to him about this, the Lord comforted him, so to say, by showing him that he along with all the brute animals had plenty to eat, as the earth provided for their nourishment thanks to the Lord's direction. So, after saying: 'They are for your food', v. 29, He immediately added: 'And for all the beasts of the earth, all the birds of heaven and every reptile creeping on the earth - whatever has a spirit of life in it, I have given every green crop for food.' This is what happened. v.30.

**4763:** Whatever the Lord commanded, the text says, took effect, and He established everything in proper order - hence, He immediately added:

v. 31: 'God saw everything He had made and behold it was very good. And the evening and morning were the sixth day.

Who could adequately extol the precision of Sacred Scripture? I mean, behold here, too, how by speaking one phrase: 'God saw everything He had made' ibi, it curbed the tongue of all those endeavoring despite all this evidence, to gainsay it..

**4764:** 'God saw everything he had made', the text says, 'and behold it was very good. And the evening and morning were the sixth day' v. 31.



You see, after saying in the case of each of the created things: 'God saw that it was good', ibi, at this point when everything was completed, and the works of the sixth day had reached finality, and being destined to enjoy all created things had been brought forth in their midst, the text says: 'God saw everything he had made, and behold, it was very good.' ibi.

**4765:** Notice how by gathering all the created things together under this one word, 'everything', it confers commendation on each of them. I mean it did not just say 'everything' and stop there, but added: 'that was made', ibi; nor did it conclude at that point, but said: 'And behold it was good', even 'very good', ibi, that is to say 'completely good'. So, when the Lord, the one bringing things from non-being to being, declares creatures to be good and completely good, who would dare, even if bursting with arrogant folly, to pen his mouth and gainsay the words uttered by God?

**4766:** After all, amongst the visible creatures it was not only light that was created but also darkness in opposition to light, and not only day, but also night in opposition to day. Amongst the growth springing up from the earth it was not only plants that are useful but also those that are harmful, and not only trees that bear fruit but also those that bear none; and not only tame animals but also wild and unruly ones. Amongst the creatures emerging from the waters it was not only fish but also sea monsters and other fierce creatures. It was not only inhabited land but also the unpeopled; not only level plains but also mountains and woods. Amongst birds it was not only tame ones, and those suitable for our food but also wild and unclean ones, hawks and vultures, and many others of that kind. Amongst the creatures produced from the earth it was not only tame animals but also snakes, vipers, serpents, lions and leopards. In the sky it was not only showers and kindly breezes, but also hail and snow.

**4767:** And if anyone had a mind to examine the list in detail, you would find in each case not only things considered not useful to us but even harmful, so that no one would be free after this to survey created things and find fault with their origins, saying: what is the purpose of this one? What is the use of this one? this one is well made, but this other one not so. Hence, Sacred Scripture checks those people endeavoring to show ingratitude, you might say, by adding after the creation of everything on the sixth day: v. 31: 'God saw everything he had made, and behold, it was very good. 'What could match this for reliable comment, when the Creator of all gives the verdict in person and says that everything is created good, and even very good?

**4768:** So, whenever you see someone moved by his own reasoning, and intent on gainsaying Sacred Scripture, shun him like a lunatic; or better, do not shun him, but out of pity for his ignorance quote the words from sacred Scripture and say that 'God saw everything he had made', and said, 'behold, it is very good' - and perhaps you will be able to check his unruly tongue.

**4769:** After all, take the case of human affairs. When we see people of good reputation giving their opinion of things that happen, we do not contradict them, but rather fall in with their opinion and often prefer their opinion to our own. So much the

more in the case of the God of all things, the Creator of everything we can see, should we do likewise: we should learn his judgment on things, subdue our own reasonings, and instead of presuming further we should be content with the knowledge that everything has been produced by a word coming from Him and by His loving kindness, and that nothing has been created idly or to no purpose. even if, through the limitations of our own reasoning, we should be in ignorance of created things, He Himself in His own wisdom and thoughtful love produced all things.

**4770:** 'Evening came and morning came: a sixth day' v. 31.

At the close of the sixth day, He also brought to a close all His creating - hence, the addition of the words:

Gn 2:1: 'Heaven and earth and all their array were completed' <sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Fr. Bertoni concludes his Meditation 8, as well as his commentary on Genesis, Chapter 1, by introducing Gn 2:1 - and will pick up his Meditation 9 right here - cf. Hill translation, pp. 137, ff.

## GENESIS II

### Meditation 9

[Mss B ## 4771-4781]

Gn 2:1-3 <sup>36</sup>

#### **4771: Preparatory Prayer**

**Prelude 1.** Gn 2:1: *So the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the furniture of them. v. 2: And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made: and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done. v. 3: And he blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because he had rested from all his work which God created and made.*

**4772:** v. 1: So, the heavens and the earth were finished and all the furniture of them. Notice the character of Sacred Scripture, nothing superfluous, nothing idle. Having mentioned the elements that were brought forth together, it goes into no further detail in mentioning the rest but simply says: Heaven and earth were completed, v. 1, and all their array, ibi; referring by this means to everything on earth and in heaven.

**4773:** The earth's array, you see, is what is produced from it, the growth of plants, the harvest of fruits, the fruits of the trees, and all other things with which the Creator arrayed it; likewise, the heaven's array is sun, moon, the variety of the stars, and everything else created in its midst. Hence, Sacred Scripture in mentioning heaven and earth included the whole of creation under those elements.

**4774:** v. 2: God completed on the sixth day, the text says, 'the works He had done'. Notice how it says the same thing twice over so that we might learn all the works of creation were done up to the sixth day. The text says, remember He completed on the sixth day the works he had done, and on the seventh day he rested from all the works he had done, v. 2.

What is the meaning of that verse: 'On the seventh day he rested from all the works that he had done'? v. 2.

**4775:** Notice how Sacred Scripture narrates everything in human fashion, even out of considerateness to us. I mean, it would not have been possible for us in any other way to understand anything of what was said had not such considerateness been thought fitting.

v. 2: On the seventh day, God rested from all the works he had done.'

It says He stopped creating and bringing from non-being into being; He had produced everything He had to, after all, and had created the being destined to enjoy it.

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<sup>36</sup> As already noted, Fr. Bertonni begins his Meditation 9, continuing his rendition of Homily 10, of St. John Chrysostom - continuing where he left off with the citation of Gn 2:1. The break seems to have been artificial.

**4776:** v. 3: God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it for the reason that on that day He rested from all the works God had begun to do.

You see, when He stopped creating, He had out of His own loving kindness brought forth at His own command everything He had intended, and had brought creation to a close on the sixth day; there was nothing else He intended to produce on the seventh day, for the reason that everything had been fulfilled. Hence, in order that this day, too, might have some distinction, and not seem to bear some inferiority through the fact that nothing was created then, He conferred a blessing on it.

**4777:** God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it. v. 3.

So what does that mean - the rest were not blessed? Of course they were, the text says, but for them it was enough, instead of any blessing, to have created things brought forth each time; hence, whereas in their case it did not say: 'He blessed them' - in the case of the seventh alone it did say so and added:

'And sanctified it' ibi. What is the meaning of He sanctified it? ibi. That is, He set it apart.

**4778:** Then, to teach us the reason for saying: 'He sanctified it' ibi, Sacred Scripture added:

'For the reason that on that day He rested from all the works God had begun to do.' v. 3.

Already at this point from the outset God provides us with instruction in a cryptic manner, teaching us that He set aside the whole of one day in the cycle of the week and marked it off for the performance of spiritual works.

**4779:** But once again at this stage, I detect a mighty swell of ideas overwhelming you, and I have no wish to pass them by thoughtlessly. Instead, I want to make you too sharers in these spiritual riches. What, then, is the question that arises for us at this point? While Sacred Scripture in this passage says that God rested from His works, Gn 2:2, in the Gospels Christ says, Jn 5:17: *My Father worketh until now, and I work*. Does there not seem from the sequence of the expressions to be some contradiction in what is said?

**4780:** Perish the thought: there is nothing contradictory in the contents of Sacred Scripture. You see in saying at this point that God rested from His works, Scripture teaches us that He ceased creating and bringing from non-being into being on the seventh day, whereas Christ in saying, 'My Father is at work up until now and I am at work', Jn 5:17 reveals His unceasing care for us: He calls 'work' the maintenance of created things, bestowal of permanence on them, and governance of them through all time. If this was not so, after all how would everything have subsisted, without the guiding hand above directing all visible things and the human race as well?

**4781:** If anyone in a spirit of great gratitude has a mind to survey everything, detail by detail, done for our benefit each day by the Creator of all things, you would find an

abyss of loving kindness. I mean, what reasoning or what imagination would arrive at the unspeakable goodness which He displays for the race of human beings, making the sun rise on the evil and the good, sending rain upon just and unjust, Mt 5:45, and bestowing every kind of good? <sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Fr. Bertoni ends his Meditation 9 here, rather abruptly - leaving still another two full pages of Chrysostom's Homily 10 untouched [cf. the Hill translation, pp. 140-142].

**Meditation 10**<sup>38</sup>  
**[Mss B ## 4762-4801]**  
**Gn 2:4-6**

**4782: Preparatory Prayer.**

**Prelude 1.** Gn 2:4: *These are the generations of the heaven and the earth, when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the heaven and the earth: v. 5: And every plant of the field before it sprung up in the earth, and every herb of the ground before it grew: for the Lord God had not rained upon the earth; and there was not a man to till the soil. v. 6: But, a spring rose out of the earth, watering all the surface of the earth.*

**4783: Wisdom and Doctrine**

v. 4: These are the generations of the heaven and the earth, when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the heaven and the earth: v. 5: and every plant of the field, etc.

Notice again, I ask you, the insight of this remarkable Prophet, or rather, the teaching of the Holy Spirit. I mean, after narrating to us detail by detail all the items of creation and going through the works of the six days, the creation of human beings and the authority granted them over all visible things, now He sums them all up in the words:

**4784:** 'This is the book about the origins of heaven and earth when they were created' v. 4.

It is worth inquiring at this point why He calls it the book of heaven and earth.

The book contains many other things and teaches us about a greater number of matters - about the virtue of good people, about God's loving kindness and the considerateness He demonstrated in regard both to the first-formed human being and to the whole human race, and about a lot of other things, it would be impossible to list right now.

**4785:** Do not be surprised, dearly beloved; after all, it is the custom with Holy Scripture not to describe everything to us in detail in every case but rather to begin with a summary of related items and to leave further detail to be considered by right-minded listeners as they take in what is said. So that you may learn this is the case, I will make it clear from the very verses just now read.

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<sup>38</sup> Fr. Bertoni does not take up St. John Chrysostom's Homily 11, "On the Theme that it is necessary to place great store by virtue and to imitate the saints, who while being of the same nature as ourselves live up to its precise obligations; and that sloth on our part will have no excuse". [cf. Hill translation, pp. 143-155].

For his Meditation 10, Fr. Bertoni begins nearly two full pages into St. John Chrysostom's Homily 12, "On the sequel to Creation": 'This is the book about the origins of heaven and earth when they were created, on the day God made heaven and earth' [cf. Hill translation, pp. 156, f.].

St. John Chrysostom is accused of Anti-Semitism - his biographers defend him by highlighting the influence of some Jews in Antioch at the time. St. John also follows St. Paul closely, 2 Co 3.

**4786:** What I refer to is this: notice Sacred Scripture taught us in detail in the preceding verses the creation of everything, but now, instead of mentioning them all, it says: 'This is the book about the origins of heaven and earth when they were created, on the day God made heaven and earth', v. 4. Do you see how it confines the whole account to heaven and earth, leaving us to get from them a sweeping view of all the other things? I mean, when it said 'heaven and earth' it included everything together in those words, both things on earth and things in heaven.

**4787:** So, just as in its account of created things it does not mention them all one by one, but gives a summary of related items and makes no further attempt to describe them to us, so too, it called the whole book the book about the origins of heaven and earth, even though it contains many other things, evidently leaving us to work out from the reference to these two that all visible things are of necessity contained in this book, both those in heaven and those on earth.

**4788: Untamed Tongues held in check.**

v. 4: 'On the day God made heaven and earth', the text goes on, v. 5: 'before any grass of the field appeared on the earth or any crop of the field sprouted, since God, you see, had not sent rain on the earth, and there was no human being to till the soil; v. 6: 'But a spring used to flow out of the ground and water the whole face of the earth.' Great is the treasure contained in these brief words - hence, the need for us to unfold the meaning of the text with great sagacity, under the guidance of God's grace, and to lead you to this spiritual wealth.

**4789:** The Holy Spirit, after all, in His foreknowledge of future events, wishes to prevent anyone's being able to engage in controversy later on, and in opposition to Sacred Scripture to set notions from their own reasoning against the dogmas of the Church; so, now again, after teaching us the order of created things - what was created first and what second - and the fact that from the earth in compliance with the Lord's word and direction the earth produced plants and was stirred into pangs of fertility, without depending on the sun for assistance [how could it, after all, the sun not yet being created?], nor on the moisture from showers, nor on human labor [human beings, after all, not have been brought forth], accordingly once again He makes mention of all the items one by one so as to stop the unbridled tongue of people spoiling to make a show of their shamelessness.<sup>39</sup>

**4790:** What in fact does He say? 'On the day God made..., v. 4, heaven and earth before any grass of the field appeared on the earth or any crop of the field sprouted...<sup>40</sup>.

'Crop', v. 5: this means what springs from the soil. When it says 'crop' it means plants of all kinds.

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<sup>39</sup> A later age would suggest a source criticism theory, giving some explanation for two separate accounts of creation. Here Chrysostom is in some difficulty uncritically striving to defend apparent challenges from what seems to be a "second account of creation."

<sup>40</sup> Here Fr. Bertoni skips a few lines in Chrysostom's commentary of Homily 12 and icks up again - [cf. Hill translation, p. 140].

**4791:** And in teaching us about showers, against Sacred Scripture added:

v. 5: 'God, you see, had not sent rain on the earth ' - that is to say, no showers had so far been sent from on high. And after this it finally shows us that there was no dependence on human labor either: 'There was no human being', it says, remember 'to till the soil' - ibi, as if to shout aloud and tell everyone coming later: Listen to this and learn how everything springing from the earth was produced, and do not think it was all due to the care of people working the soil, nor attribute birth pangs of fertility to them, but to the word and direction given it from the beginning by the Creator.

**4792:** All this happens that you may learn that there was no dependence on the assistance of the other elements for the growth of the plants; instead, what was required was the direction of the Creator. What is really remarkable and surprising is that the one who now by His own word awakens the earth to the germination of so many plants and demonstrates His own power surpassing human reasoning, this same earth, heavy as it is, and supporting such a huge universe on its back, He rested on the waters as foundation, as the inspired Prophet says: Ps 135:5, *He established the earth above the waters*: What human reasoning could arrive at this design?

**4793:** I mean when people build their houses and have in mind to sink foundations, they first dig a hole; if on reaching some depth, they see a trace of dampness, they take every step to remove it all and only then sink the foundations. By comparison with this, the Maker of all creates everything in a way contrary to humankind so that you may learn even from this His ineffable power and the fact that, when He wishes, the very elements can be seen to perform in a way contrary to their own abilities in compliance with the Creator's wishes.

**4794:** To make this subject clearer to you let us make you familiar with the preceding point and then pass on to the next. You see, it is contrary to the nature of the waters to carry a heavy body in this way; and again, it is foreign to the earth to take its position on such a foundation. Why do you marvel at this? After all, if you take it into your head to study each created thing, you will encounter the infinite power of the Creator and the fact that by His own will He governs all visible things.

**4795:** This, in fact, can be seen happening also in the case of fire: though it has the capacity to burn up, and it prevails over everything, consuming all material of stone, wood, iron and other bodies with ease, yet when the Creator so directed, it left untouched the delicate and perishable bodies and, in fact, kept the children unharmed in the middle of the furnace [Dn 3]. Do not be surprised if it left these bodies untouched and, in fact, this irrational element demonstrated the kind of restraint that cannot be described. You see, it did not so much as harm their hair; instead, it formed a circle around them and kept them inside it.

**4796:** The substance of fire, as it were, responded in obedience, and in compliance with the Lord's direction it kept those excellent children safe and sound, so that they moved about in the furnace with such ease as though strolling through a meadow or



garden. And, lest anyone think that what they saw was not a fire at work, the loving Lord for that purpose did not hamper its efficacy; instead, He allowed its burning qualities to remain active, rendering His servants proof against its harmful effect but ensuring those who thrust them in might learn the extent of the power of the Lord of all: the first showed its force against them, burning and consuming them as they stood outside the furnace while at the same time encircling the children inside.

**4797:** Do you see how, whenever the Lord wishes, each of the elements changes its properties into the very opposite? The Lord you see is also Creator, and He governs everything according to His own will.

Do you want to see this very thing happening in the case of the waters? Well, just as in the present case the fire refrained from harming the people right inside it, on the one hand, neglecting to exercise its own power, while, on the other hand, it exercised that power in the case of those who happened to be outside it, in like manner, we will see the waters drowning some but giving way before others so that they crossed over in safety [cf. Ex 14].

**4798:** Remember in this connection, I ask you, Pharaoh and the Egyptians, and the people of the Hebrews, how the latter by the Lord's command and under the leadership of the great Moses, crossed the Red Sea in this way as though across dry land, whereas the Egyptians with Pharaoh wanted to go the same way as the Hebrews, but were submerged and drowned. Thus, even the elements know how to respect the Lord's servants and to keep in check their own impulse.

**4779:** Let us hear an account of the number of times we have betrayed our own salvation through being hot-tempered, and angry, and a prey to the other passions, through our indifference, and let us imitate the great obedience of these elements, irrational though they are, while we are endowed with the gift of reason. After all, if fire which has such capacity to burn, which is so fierce, left untouched in that fashion delicate and perishable bodies, what allowance can be made for human beings not prepared to check their own rage despite the Lord's command and eliminate resentment against their neighbor? what is even worse is the fact that fire, while having this property - I mean, to burn - did not demonstrate this capacity, whereas the human being, a creature gentle, and rational and mild, behaves in like manner contrary to its nature and through indifference casts itself in the mold of the wild beasts.

**4880:** Hence, even Sacred Scripture, with these sorts of disturbing passions in mind, in many places applies the names of brutes and wild beasts to those gifted with reason: sometimes it calls them dogs on account of their shameful and headstrong behavior, saying Is 56:10: Dumb dogs are they! Unable even to bark!. At other times, horses on account of their unbridled appetites: Jr 5:8: 'They turned into rutting horses, each neighing after his neighbor's wife' - at other times, asses for their folly and stupidity: Ps 48:13: He has resembled the monsters that lack all intelligence and has become like them. At other times, lions and leopards on account of their greed and rapacity.

**4881:** At other times, they are called serpents because of their deceit: Ps 139: 4: Poison of serpents on their lips. Whereas at other times it called them snakes and vipers on account of their venom and malice, as blessed John cried aloud in these words, Mt 3:7: 'Snakes, brood of vipers, who has shown you how to flee from the wrath to come?' And it adds other names appropriate to the various passions in the hope that eventually they may feel ashamed of this behavior and turn back to their true nobility, coming to terms with their true nature and giving the laws of God pride of place before their own passions to which through sloth they have given themselves up. <sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Fr. Bertoni ends his Meditation 10 right here, with still about five more pages to go in Chrysostom's Homily 12 [cf. Hill translation, pp. 163-168].. Fr. Bertoni picks right up in the next paragraph for his Meditation 11.

**Meditation 11**  
**[Mss B ## 4802-4819]**  
**Gn 2:7**

**4802: Preparatory Prayer.**

**Prelude 1.** Gn 2:7: *And the Lord formed man of the slime of the earth: and breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul.*

Come now, let us return at this late stage to the preceding point, and let us see what else this blessed Prophet wants to teach us today.

**4803:** v. 7: 'God shaped the human being from the dust of the earth and breathed into him a breath of life; the human being became alive'

After saying: 'This is the book about the origins of heaven and earth', Gn 2:4, He presses on and describes further for us with great detail the creation of the human being.

**Thus we should learn to study ourselves, and then teach others.**

**After having grasped the over-view of the entire framework, it is necessary to return and to remain with the principal concerns, leaving aside those less useful matters. After this whole effort has made the entire matter useful, especially by having us understand what is principal - if the lesser matters then impede the principal undertaking, it becomes useless, and even harmful.**

**4804:** Since He had briefly said above, 'God made the human being; in God's image He created him, 1:27, now He says: v. 7: God shaped the human being from the dust of the earth, and breathed into him a breath of life; the human being became alive.'

A mighty saying, giving rise to great wonderment, and beyond the limits of human understanding.

**4805:** 'God shaped the human being, taking dust from the earth', v. 7, it says, 'taking dust from the earth.'

Just as in the case of all the visible creatures I kept saying that the Creator of all performs everything in a manner contrary to human nature, so as to demonstrate everything his ineffable power through this as well, so, too, in the case of the formation of the human being we will find this taking place. I mean, notice how He rested the earth on the waters, something human reasoning does not without faith succeed in accepting, and that whenever He wishes He succeeds converting the properties of all times to their opposite, as we have shown.

**4806:** Well, this very same thing Sacred Scripture now reveals to us happening in the case of the formation of the human being as well:

v. 7: 'God shaped the human being from the slime of the earth.'

- What is that you say? That by taking dust from the earth He shaped the human being?

- Yes, it says: it did not simply say 'earth', but 'slime, dust'.

Concerning this. It is as though one were saying something more lowly and base than even than the earth, so to say. You think the saying amazing and incredible; but, if you recall who is the Artisan in all this, you will no longer withhold faith in the event but marvel at the Creator's power and bow your knee to it.

**4807**: If, on the other hand, you chanced to put your mind to these matters in light of the limitations of your powers of reason, you would likely get this strange idea into your head, namely, that a body could never be made from earth - a brick, or a pot, yes, but never could such a body be made. Do you see that unless we take into account the Creator's power and suppress our own reasoning which betrays such limitations, we will be unable to accept the sublimity of the message? After all, the words require the eyes of faith, spoken as they are with such great considerateness and with our limitations in mind.

**4808**: You see, that very remark: 'God...shaped the human being ...and breathed, v. 7, is properly inapplicable to God. Yet, because of us and our limitations, Sacred Scripture expresses it in that way, showing considerateness to us, so that, having been thought worthy of the considerateness, we might be enabled to arrive at that sublime level of thought <sup>42</sup>.

**4809**: 'God shaped the human being taking dust from the earth', v. 7.

Finally, from these words spring no little instruction in humility, as long as we are prepared to be alert to it. I mean when we consider where our nature derived the beginning of its subsistence, even if we put our brains to it thousands of times, we are humbled and chastened, and in our efforts to plumb our being we learn to respect proper limits. For this reason, God, caring for our salvation, thus directed the tongue of the sacred writer for our instruction.

**4810**: You see, when Sacred Scripture said in its previous statement: 'God made the human being in God's image He made them,' He gave him complete control of visible things lest out of ignorance of the composition of his own being he might conjure up inflated notions of his own importance and transgress the limits proper to him. Hence, when Sacred Scripture comes back to the point it teaches us also the manner of our composition and the beginning of our creation, and whence the first human being was produced and how it was produced.

**4811**: After all, into what depths of madness would we not have tumbled if, despite this teaching and despite the knowledge that the human being takes the beginning of

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<sup>42</sup> Chrysostom's insistence on God's **considerateness** ['marvelous condescension' of Vatican II] is in view of our limitations - for the saint, this never undermines the correlative notion of divine transcendence. This activity is meant to elevate our thinking, and heighten our reverence, and never lower it.

its composition from the earth as do the plants and the irrational beings [though its formation and the bodiless being of the soul has given it a marked superiority, thanks to God's loving kindness, this constituting after all the basis of its rationality and its endowment with control over all creation] - if then with this knowledge this creature shaped from the earth had conjured up the notion of its equality with God owing to the serpent's deceit, and if the blessed Prophet had been content with his first account and had not repeated himself in teaching us everything with precision, into what depths of madness would we not have tumbled! The result is that we gain the greatest possible degree of instruction in philosophy from the learning whence we derive the composition of our being from the very outset.

**4812:** 'God shaped the human being taking dust from the earth and breathed into him a breath of life' v. 7.

Since it was explaining to human beings who were unable to understand in any way other than we ourselves can understand, it employs this kind of concreteness of expression, and intends also to teach us the Lord's loving kindness intended that this creature shaped from the earth should have also a rational being by reason of a soul, by means of which this living thing emerged complete and perfect.

**4813:** 'He breathed into him a breath of life, v. 7.

The creature shaped from the earth, it means, was endowed with this breath as a vital force, and this became the origin of the soul's being...Then, it adds:

'The human being became alive; v. 7.

That shaped thing, that creature from the dust, received the breathing of the breath of life, and 'it became alive', ibi. What is the meaning of 'became alive'? Enjoying vital force, having limbs to its body that respond to this vital force and obey its will.

**4814:** But, I have no idea how we upset that arrangement, and how such an onset of evil occurred as to oblige it to follow the bidding of the flesh, so that what should in the manner of a queen have presided and exercised rule we have unseated from her throne and forced to obey the pleasures of the flesh, ignorant as we are of its nobility and the degree of pre-eminence it has the good fortune to be accorded.

**4815:** Lest you think this happened from things already created at that time instead of from something that happens each day at the present time, consider, I ask you, how after the departure of the soul this body appears odious and unpleasant? How repulsive, how much reeking with stench, how marked by complete deformity this creature that previously when it had the soul to conduct it was bright, graceful, marked by beauty of form, abounding with intelligence, enjoying great aptitude for the performance of good deeds.

**4816:** Lest you think this happened from things already created at that time instead of from something that happens each day at the present time, consider, I ask you, how after the departure of the soul this body appears odious and unpleasant? How

repulsive, how much reeking with stench, how marked by complete deformity this creature that previously when it had the soul to conduct it was bright, graceful, marked by beauty of form, abounding with intelligence, enjoying great aptitude for the performance of good deeds.

**4817:** So, with this in mind, and realizing the nobility of our soul, let us be guilty of no behavior unworthy of it, nor defile it with unfitting actions, subjecting it to the thrall of the flesh and showing so little appreciation and regard for what is so noble and endowed with such pre-eminence. After all, because of the soul's being, we who are inter-twined with a body can, if we wish, and under the influence of God's grace, strive against disembodied powers, can walk on earth as though coursing across heaven, and pass our lives in this manner, suffering no inferiority. How can that be, I will tell you. You see, when people prove, despite entanglement with a mortal body, to live the same life as those supernal powers, how will they not be deemed worthy of grace from God for keeping untarnished the soul's nobility, though subject to the body's necessities.

**4818:** - Who could possibly prove, someone says, to be of such character?

- Quite likely this thing is thought unlikely by us because of the extreme paucity of our virtue. But, if you are prepared to learn that this is not out of the question, consider, I ask you, those who have been pleasing to the Lord from the beginning up to the present time the mighty John, son of infertility, citizen of the desert; Paul, the world's teacher; and the whole series of saints, who happened to have the same nature as ourselves, subject to the same necessities of the body - and no longer consider the thing to be impossible, nor be apathetic where virtue is concerned, but accept such opportunities as the Lord leaves for laying hold of virtue with ease.

**4819:** Our loving Lord, you see, knowing the weakness of our purpose and our tendency to fall, has left us great remedies in the reading of the Scriptures so that we might constantly apply them to ourselves and recall the lives of those great and wonderful men. Thus we may be led to imitation and not neglect virtue, but rather avoid evil and do everything so as not to prove ourselves unworthy of those unspeakably good people <sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> Fr. Bertoni concludes here his Meditation 11, omitting only the final doxology of St. John Chrysostom's Homily 13, which reads thus: "May this be the good fortune of all of us, thanks to the grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom the Father and the Holy Spirit be glory, power and honor, now and forever, for ages of ages. Amen." [cf. Hill translation, p. 168].

**Meditation 12**  
**[Mss B ## 4820-4834]**  
**Gn 2:8-14** <sup>44</sup>

**4820: Preparatory Prayer.**

**Prelude 1.** Gn 2:8: *And the Lord had planted a paradise of pleasure from the beginning: wherein he placed man whom he had formed.*

v. 8: The text goes on: The Lord God planted a garden in Eden in the east from the beginning, and placed in it the human being he had formed.'

**4821:** When the Lord of all had demonstrated His characteristic loving kindness in creating the one for whom everything had been provided, and setting him in its midst, immediately, He began to bestow on this human person deeds of kindness.

God, it says, planted a garden in Eden in the east.

Notice here, dearly beloved, that unless we take the words in a manner appropriate to God, we will inevitably be trapped in a deep pitfall. I mean, what would be likely to be said about this sentence, too, by those rash enough to interpret in human fashion everything said about God?

**4822:** 'God planted a garden', it says. v. 8.

- What does that mean, pray? did He have need of tools, and gardening, and every other skill to beautify the garden??

- Not at all. Rather, in this case, too, we need to understand the word 'planted' in this sense - namely, that He commanded a garden to be created on the earth so that the human being He had produced should live in the garden. I mean, to prove that He created the garden for human beings, listen to Scripture itself, saying: 'God planted a garden in Eden from the beginning, in the east, and placed in it the human being He had formed. v. 8.

**4823:** The reason that blessed Moses inserted the name of the place in the text was that it would not be possible for those inclined to take things lightly to deceive the ears of the simple and say the garden was not on earth, but in heaven, and dream up wild theories of that kind. You see, despite the use of such precision by Sacred Scripture, some people have not questioned the glib words of arrogant commentators and far-fetched philosophy, even to the extent of denying Holy Writ and saying the garden was not on earth, giving contrary view on many other passages, taking a direction opposed to a literal understanding of the text, and thinking that what is said on the question of things has to do with things in heaven. And, if blessed Moses had not used such simplicity of expression and such considerateness, the Holy Spirit directing his tongue where would we not have come to grief?

**4824:** Sacred Scripture, though, whenever it wants to teach us something like this, gives its own interpretation, and does not let the listener go astray. On the other hand,

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<sup>44</sup> Fr. Bertoni begins his Meditation 12 based on St. John Chrysostom's "Homily 13" [cf. Hill translation, pp. 169-179], on the "Garden in Eden." However, Fr. Bertoni skips over the first five and one half pages, and begins well into Chrysostom's Homily, [on p. 174 of the Hill translation,] about half way through the original.

since the majority of listeners apply their ears to the narrative, not for the sake of gaining some profit but for enjoyment, they are at pains to take note of things able to bring enjoyment rather than those that bring profit. So, I beg you, block your ears against all distractions of that kind and let us follow the norm of sacred Scripture.

**4825:** And when, dearly beloved, you hear that 'God planted a garden in Eden in the east' v. 8, take the word 'planted' in a sense appropriate to God, namely, that He commanded that this happen; and about the next phrase, believe that a garden came into being, and in that place that Scripture indicated. Not to believe in the contents of sacred Scripture, and introduce instead other views from one's own reasoning, is in my opinion to bring great peril to those rash enough to attempt it.

**4826:** 'He placed in it', the text says, 'the human being he had formed. v. 8.

Notice at once the regard He shows towards him. Having created him outside the garden, He immediately brought him in so as to provide him with an experience of His kindness through the things in the garden; he was introduced into the garden so that he might know the regard God had for him through the actions done there.

In which God placed the human being he had formed v. 8.

The word 'placed' let us interpret this way" He ordered him to live there in order that what he saw and his way of life should give him much pleasure, and should awaken him to an expression of thanks in consideration of all the kindness he had received without ever doing anything to deserve it.

**4827:** So, do not let the reading 'placed' disturb you; it is, after all, the unfailing custom of Scripture to employ human ways of speaking for our sake and for our benefit. To be convinced of this, notice how previously, in the case of creation of the stars, it used the same term in saying, 'He placed them in the firmament of heaven' 1:17, not that we should think of them fixed in heaven [for each of them pursues its own path moving from place to place] but to teach us that He commanded them to be in heaven just as He commanded the human being to live in the garden.

**4828:** v. 9: 'God also produced from the earth every tree beautiful to behold and good to eat, the tree of life in the middle of the garden, and the tree for knowing good and evil,'

Behold still another form of kindness out of regard for this creature. You see, since He wanted him to live in the garden, He ordered various trees to come forth from the earth, that could both delight him with their appearance and be pleasing to taste.

**4829:** 'Every tree', it says, 'beautiful to behold', v. 9, - that is, in appearance - 'and good to eat', ibi; in short, they had the ability to please him through their appearance and to provide much pleasure through their taste, and by their great abundance offered considerable good cheer to the one in a position to enjoy them. You see, it says: 'Every tree', ibi, whatever name you give it, He made it come forth.

Do you recognize here a life free of any care? Do you see a wonderful existence? Like some angel, in fact, man lived this way on earth, wearing a body, yet



being fortunately rid of any bodily needs, like a king adorned with scepter and crown and wearing his purple robe, he reveled in this life of freedom and great affluence in the garden.

**4830:** 'The tree of life in the middle of the garden', the text goes on to say, 'and the tree for knowing good and evil'. v. 9.

After teaching us that, according to the Lord's command, the earth produced every tree, lovely to behold and good to taste, it says next:

'The tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree for knowing good and evil. ibi.

**4831:** The good Lord, you see, knowing as Creator the harm that would in due time be likely to arise from this condition of great freedom brought forth the tree of life in the middle of the garden, and the tree for knowing good and evil, since before long He would be imposing on him abstinence from the tree so that man might realize that he owed enjoyment of them to divine love and goodness, and that God was Lord and Creator of his nature as of all visible things.

**4832:** Beforehand, therefore, He made mention of the tree, and next He tells us the names of the rivers and their division, so to say, and that from that source, which irrigated the garden others led off in four directions and thus marked out the regions of the earth.

v. 10: *And a river went out of the place of pleasure to water paradise, which from thence is divided into four heads. v. 11:* *The name of the one is Phison: that is it which compasseth all the land of Hevilath, where gold groweth. v. 12:* *And the gold of that land is very good: there is found bdellium, and the onyx stone. v. 13:* *And the name of the second river is Gehon: the same is it that compasseth all the land of Ethiopia. v. 14:* *And the name of the third river is Tigris: the same passeth along by the Assyrians. And the fourth river is Euphrates.*

**4833:** Perhaps, however, these people who like to talk from their own wisdom do not concede again that these rivers are rivers, or these waters really waters, but propound some different interpretation to people ready to lend them their ears <sup>45</sup>. Let us, however, I beg you, not be convinced by them, but block our ears against them; let us instead place our credence in Sacred Scripture and heed what is told us there; let it be our concern to lay its sound teachings in our soul and be scrupulously careful about them and about our life, so that our life may witness to the teachings and the teachings may declare the integrity of our life. After all, it will be of no avail for us to get teachings right if we neglect life.

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<sup>45</sup> Some scholars hint that there seems to be something strange here with this rapid movement to a close of the Homily, in place of Chrysostom's usual lengthy parenetic conclusion. In place of it, we have the barest exegesis of the tree for knowing good and evil - an obvious gem for Chrysostom with his moral style of commentary - and the briefest of references to the four rivers of vv. 10-14. Something seems to have happened to the homilist, or the text of the original homily.

**4834:** Nor will we be able to gain any value for our salvation if we have life but neglect right teachings. It is necessary, you see, if we would wish to avoid hell and reach heaven, to be distinguished for both - correctness of doctrine and attention to life. What good, after all, tell me, is a tree reaching to the sky and bearing leaves aplenty if it is devoid of fruit?

So, too, with the Christian: correct doctrine is of no benefit unless one attends to the business of living. Accordingly Christ declared such people blessed: 'Blessed is one who does and teaches' <sup>46</sup>. I mean, far more dependable and trustworthy than the teaching of words is teaching in action<sup>47</sup>.

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<sup>46</sup> A *precis* of Mt 5:19

<sup>47</sup> Fr. Bertoni's Meditation 12 ends about three quarters of a page prior to the end of St. John Chrysostom's Homily 13 - cf. Hill translation, p. 178.

**Meditation 13****[Mss B 4835-4852]****Gn 2:15-17** <sup>48</sup>**4835: Preparatory Prayer**

**Prelude 1.** Gn 2:15: *And the Lord God took man, and put him into the paradise of pleasure, to dress it, and to keep it. v. 16: And He commanded him, saying: Of every tree of paradise thou shalt eat: For in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death...*

**Prelude 2.**

**Prelude 3.** Ps 18:11: *More to be desired than gold and many precious stones: and sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.*

**4836:** v. 15: 'And the Lord God took man and put him into the paradise of pleasure, to dress it and to keep it.

'The Lord God took man.' He did not just say, "The Lord" and stop there, but added "God", teaching us something that had escaped our notice and lain concealed in the text, so that we might realize that whether we heard 'Lord', or 'God', there is no difference in our names. This point, however, I am not making without reason: my purpose is that when you hear Paul saying: 1 Co 8:6: [*There is one God the Father, from whom all things come, and one Lord Jesus Christ for whom all things exist* ] <sup>49</sup>.

**4837:** See the extent of the providence He employs with regard to the human being He has created. I mean, after blessed Moses taught us [yesterday] that, to quote him, 'God planted the garden and placed in it the human creature, v. 8 - in other words, He wanted him to have his dwelling place there and pass his days in enjoyment of the garden - today He goes on to show us God's unspeakable love manifested in his regard.

**4838:** 'The Lord God took the human being he had formed and placed him in the garden of delights' v. 15. He did not simply say, 'In the garden', but added 'of delights', so as to reveal to us the exceeding pleasure he enjoyed from living there. And after saying, 'He placed him in the garden of delights', v. 15, He added: 'to till it and watch over it', ibi. A mark, this, of great solicitude. I mean, since life there was filled with every delight, was a pleasure to behold and a thrill to enjoy, He arranged accordingly that the human being should till the garden and watch over it lest he be unsettled by the exceeding indulgence. [Si 33:29: *Idleness has been the teacher of every evil* ] - therefore God commanded that he dress it and kept it, v. 15.

**4839:** - Well, why, do you ask, did the garden require attention by him?

<sup>48</sup> For Fr. Bertoni's last "Meditation" *On Genesis*, which has come down to us, he follows rather carefully, St. John Chrysostom's "Homily 14" [cf. Hill Translation, pp. 180- 193], beginning, however, a page into the "Homily" [cf. Hill, p. 181 and finishing almost four pages prior to the end, [cf. *ib.*, p.189].

<sup>49</sup> In Fr. Bertoni's manuscript, these words of the text, as well as the precise text citation [v. 6] are missing but included in Chrysostom's text.

- I am not telling you that, but in fact God wanted him for a while to take some slight care that was appropriate in both watching and tiling. If, after all, he had been relieved of all need to work, he would have fallen a victim to great indulgence and at once have slipped into sloth; whereas, in fact, by performing some work that was painless and without difficulty he would be brought to a better frame of mind.

**4840:** That phrase, 'to watch over it', is not idly added: it is an instance of considerateness in expression to the effect that he might be fully aware that he was subject to a Master Who had regaled him with such enjoyment, and along with that enjoyment entrusted him with its protection. God, you see, creates everything and arranges it for our salvation, and as well as that presents us with enjoyment and relaxation.

**4841:** If, on account of His exceeding love, He prepared those ineffable goods before creating us - as He Himself says Mt 25:34, *Come, you blessed of My Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world* - much more will He provide us with everything in this world in generous measure.

**4842:** So, He conferred such favors on this creature, first bringing him from non-being to being, then deeming it proper to shape his body from dust, and after that as the supreme gesture bestowing on him his incorporeal soul through the action of breathing, then bidding the garden to be created and directing him to spend his life there, later, like a loving father, who prevents his young child from being unsettled by great relaxation and freedom from care by devising some slight responsibility appropriate to the situation, the Lord God in like manner ordered the task of tilling and guarding for Adam so that along with all those delights, relaxation and freedom from care he might have, by way of a stabilizing influence, those two tasks to prevent him from overstepping the limit.

**4843:** So these things had already happened to the newly created being, whereas what happened in addition makes clear to us again the great and unsurpassed love for him, as well as the considerateness He displays on account of His own goodness. What in fact does the Scripture say?

v. 16: The Lord instructed Adam, saying: -

In this case also notice Him once more following the same habit so that we might receive a precise statement of the teaching through the repetition of the terms, and no longer tolerate those people presuming to make distinctions in assigning names...<sup>50</sup>

**4844:** At this were very properly are astonished at God's loving kindness beyond all telling, which He reveals to us through this brief sentence: 'He instructed', v. 16. Notice from the outset how much esteem He evidences for the human being. I mean, it did not say: He commanded, or ordered, but 'He instructed'. Just as one friend is said to

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<sup>50</sup> Fr. Bertoni omits here in his Meditation 13 about five lines from Chrysostom's Homily 14, and picks up in the same paragraph a bit below [cf. Hill translation, p. 186].

instruct another about some pressing needs, God, too, in like manner conducts His relationship with Adam, just as if He wants to win him over through this attitude of esteem to obedience to His instructions.

**4845:** The Lord instructed Adam in these words: 'From all the trees in the garden you are to eat your fill, but from the tree of the knowledge of Good and evil, do not eat. On that day that you eat from it you will truly die', v 16, ff.

No great difficulty in this instruction. Yet, dearly beloved, sloth is a terrible fault<sup>51</sup>: just as it makes easy things seem hard to us, so enthusiasm and alertness render even hard things easy for us.

**4846:** I mean, what, I ask you, could be simpler than this instruction? What could be greater than the esteem shown here? Provision had been made for his spending life in the garden and for enjoying the beauty of visible things, for gladdening the eye from that experience, and gaining much pleasure from that enjoyment. Consider, after all, how great a thrill it was to see the trees groaning under the weight of their fruit, to see the variety of flowers, the different kinds of plants, the leaves on the branches, and all the other things you would be likely to chance upon in a garden, especially a garden planted by God.

**4847:** On that account, you see, Sacred Scripture had said previously that 2:9: 'He produced from the earth every tree fair to behold and good to eat', so that we might know that, despite his enjoyment of such plenty, the human being trampled underfoot the instruction given him, out of his great intemperance and sloth. I mean, consider, I ask you, dearly beloved, the high degree of esteem He had lavished upon him, laying for him in the garden a table set apart for him to suit his tastes, in case you might think the same good was supplied for him as for the brute beasts: instead, passing his time in that garden like a king he could revel in its enjoyment, and like a master he had no occasion to mix with those ministering to him but had a life all to himself.

**4848:** v. 16, f.: 'The Lord instructed Adam in these words: 'From every tree in the garden you are to eat your fill; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, do not eat. On the day you eat from it, you will truly die.'

It was as if to say to him, Surely it is not something harsh and burdensome I am demanding of you. While entrusting you with enjoyment of everything, only this one thing I am instructing you not to touch; but I also decree a severe penalty so that fear of it may help you keep your balance, and you may observe the direction given you by Me.

**4849:** He did this in the manner of a kindly master entrusting his huge residence to someone and prescribing some humble coin to be given by him as a pledge for keeping ownership intact for himself. Well, in quite the same way our loving Lord lavished on the human being the enjoyment of everything in the garden and bade him

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<sup>51</sup> This is Chrysostom's 'pet peeve', sloth! Here he seems to 'promote' this vice, making it the original sin!

abstain from one tree only, so as to be in a position to know that he is subject to the Lord, Whom he should obey and to Whose commands he should submit.

**4850:** With great kindness He regales the creature who has not yet anything to show for himself! I mean He did not confine the half the garden the enjoyment He permitted, nor bid him abstain from most things and retain the enjoyment of the remainder; instead, He wanted him to partake of everything in the garden and ordered him to abstain from the one tree only, showing through these things He had no other purpose in His actions that he should be able to recognize the One responsible for such acts of kindness.

**4851:** And notice in this case as well as others, God's goodness, how much regard He demonstrates also for the woman due to be formed from man. I mean, though she is yet to be created, he gives instruction as though to two people in the words: [Do not eat...On the day you eat from it, you will truly die...' <sup>52</sup>.

I am aware that this question about the tree is commonly debated, and that many people inclined to speak incautiously endeavor to shift the blame from human beings to God, presuming to ask: Why on earth did He give him the instruction in the knowledge that he would infringe it? and again, Why did He order the tree to be in the garden?, and many other such queries.

**4852:** In case, however, at this stage before the right time for discussion of the Fall we should seem to be rushing into exegesis about such matters, we ought to wait for blessed Moses' account so as to reach that passage by this means at the appropriate stage and raise with you in that regard whatever matters God's grace has communicated, and thus teach you, dear people, the true mind of Scripture. Thus, in your knowledge of the truth of the sacred writings you may both offer to the Lord due praise and also escape at the hands of the guiltless God a share in the sinner's guilt through neglect of Him.... <sup>53</sup>

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**The End**

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<sup>52</sup> Fr. Bertoni does not include these words from Gn 2: 17. Furthermore he then skips about a paragraph, and picks up again in a new paragraph about 6 lines down - [cf. Hill translation, p. 188].

<sup>53</sup> With this line of Chrysostom's Homily 14, as is customary, Fr. Bertoni stops his Meditation 13 about four pages from the end [cf. Hill translation, p. 189 - this Homily 14 ends on p. 193 of the said translation].