

# **St. GASPAR BERTONI**



## **41 MEDITATIONS**

**Mss B ## 7343 - 8151**

**transcribed from**

# **St. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM**

## **COMMENTARY *ON MATTHEW***

**§§§**

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Christmas, 2004

Electronic Edition:  
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The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.

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The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.

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When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east and are come to worship Him.

<b>Meditation 7</b>	<b>Mt 2:4-10</b>	<b>## 7511 - 7538</b>	<b>54</b>
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<b>Meditation 14</b>	<b>Mt 4:12-25</b>	<b>## 7726 - 7741</b>	<b>108</b>
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<b>Meditation 15</b>	<b>Mt 5:1-13</b>	<b>## 7742 - 7777</b>	<b>114</b>
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Storm on the lake

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## TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

[1] In the early days of November of the year 1810, Fr. Bertoni was assigned to the spiritual care of the Diocesan Seminary. At that time, there were 97 "college seminarians", and 46 who were studying theology. On November 18th, a Sunday, he began with a retreat to the young "Ecclesiastics" as they were called in those days: "The Church to which these young men want to dedicate their lives is a house of God - and the purpose here is that they might come to learn how they ought to converse in God's house." [cf. Fr. Nello, pp. 172, ff.]

[2] For the first year, Fr. Bertoni began with his lengthy commentary on the First Book of Kings [today, "1 S"]. His encouragement was always that the seminarians should study, with commitment, that they might all come to know the Sacred Scripture. The Scriptures are a ladder leading to come to know God through faith. One should not stop at the letter, but should go on to the spirit. The letter is indeed the foundation of the faith - and it is necessary to build on this always with hope in God and charity expressed through works [cf. o.c., pp. 174, ff.].

[3] In a later volume, Fr. Nello teaches us that Fr. Bertoni then passed from the Book of Kings to the Gospel of St. Matthew [cf. pp. 389, ff.]. In the days following the Easter celebrations that year, after the 73rd Meditation, his last on the First Book of Kings [cf. 1 S 16:11-13], Fr. Bertoni took up a new series of Meditations. In a rather long prelude, he offers us this explanation: from this point in Sacred Scripture [where Fr. Bertoni was treating the matter of election in an individual], he goes on to say that with all the Fathers who follow allegory, David was seen now no longer as a Shepherd, but rather attention shifts to the adorable Person of Jesus Christ - Supreme Shepherd and Spouse of the Church. Fr. Bertoni notes, as was his life-long characteristic, that he had "followed faithfully", with St. John Chrysostom, the path laid down for him by St. Gregory the Great [or "Pseudo-Gregory"]. Following this giant **of the early Church Fathers, he leads us to a more sublime path.**

[4] St. Gaspar here passes over the discussing the "type" which David was, to the prototype, Jesus Christ. Thus, leaving St. Gregory the Great and the long Commentary on First Kings attributed to him, Fr. Bertoni now takes up the meditation on the Gospel of St. Matthew, following almost word for word, the Latin translation of St. John Chrysostom's reflections on St. Matthew's Gospel. Fr. Bertoni would continue on for what would be all most 23 Meditations.

[a] The English translation for this may be found in rather antiquated language, in *The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. Matthew*. Translated by Rev. Sir George Prevost, Baronet, M.A., of

Oriel College, revised with Notes by Rev. M.B. Riddle, D.D. Professor of New Testament exegesis in the western Theological Seminary at Allegheny PA.. This is Volume X in the Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Edited by Philip Schaff, D.D., LL.D., pp. 1-164.

**[b]** This volume contains a reprint of the earlier Oxford edition that once formed three volumes, [published in 1843, 1844, and 1851]. There is also included an alphabetical Index of the themes treated find at the back of the volume, the work of a certain Rev. J. E. Tweed, M.A., of Christ Church, Oxford. There will be noted an archaic style in the overall - somewhat touched up by the American edition of this in Allegheny PA in late 1888 - but not changed substantially for the most part. This might in some way reflect Fr. Bertoni's "archaic" Italian style of just over a quarter of a century earlier in Italy. The American Editors maintain that "but in few patristic works do we have better security for the accuracy of the text that in the case of these Homilies on Matthew. This preface to the "American Edition" is signed by M.B. Riddle, Allegheny PA, September 24, 1888 - and this entire series was re-published by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. Grand Rapids Michigan, a few decades ago.

**[c]** In the Original Preface to the Oxford edition, signed by a "C. Marriot", and dated "Oxford, Advent 1851" - some 20 months before St. Gaspar Bertoni's death, we read that these Homilies were most likely delivered by St. John Chrysostom at Antioch, in the latter part of his life as a simple priest. The Oxford scholars note that in his Homilies from 386-388, the saintly exegete drummed home the lessons against swearing - these Homilies on Matthew do not have that concern, so there is less conviction regarding their precise date.

**[d]** St. John Chrysostom's main object here seems to be moral - he is truly eloquent on the matter of almsgiving - he presents the Resurrection as though he were arguing against an objector. The "theaters" become a theme of his frequent criticism, and the monks living in the austere mountains near Antioch win his praise. He frequently attacks an extreme form of the Arian heresy, known as "Anomoean", and also takes up the battle against the Manicheans.

**[e]** In Doctor Riddle's "Introductory Essay", he offers an interesting "critique", both positive and negative, of the work of this great Doctor of the Church. The pre-eminence of Chrysostom remains undisputed - despite many reversals of judgment over the years. Among Chrysostom's weaknesses would be his rather frequent inaccuracy of sources for his citations. Yet, he is still awarded perhaps the first place among the pulpit orators of the Eastern Church. He is known to tradition as "the Golden Tongue" - but this could only be attributed to a "golden man!"



**[f]** As a proponent of the "School of Antioch" in Syria, contrasted with the more southern "School of Alexandria" in Egypt, St. John is free for the most part of the allegorizing tendency that prevailed. Because of this, many still consider him as "the representative of more correct principles than any of the early Fathers." The great saint maintained that prophecy has a moral aspect, that of teaching rather than prediction, all as preparatory to the advent of Jesus Christ in the flesh. This is accomplished not only by informing men's minds, but disciplining their hearts to receive Him.

**[g]** Occasionally topographical and archaeological topics are referred to in terms that are misleading, or positively erroneous. Hence, the Homilies on the Gospels have been estimated by some as less valuable than those of the Epistles. Chrysostom was indeed a genius, and his commentaries are still read by scholars and the faithful alike with much profit.

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**[Translator's Note]**

**For the most part, Fr. Bertoni simply copied St. John Chrysostom's Commentary on Genesis.**

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## 7341 - MEDITATION 1

**St. John Chrysostom's Commentary *On Matthew* preached by  
St. GASPAR BERTONI to the Seminarians of Verona**

**7341: Meditation 1**

**Preparatory Prayer**

Prelude 1: From this point of Sacred History which I touched upon yesterday, all the Fathers who follow the allegorical interpretation are in agreement to represent David no longer as a Shepherd of the Church. Rather, they turn to the adorable Person of Jesus Christ, Shepherd and Spouse of the Church. St. Gregory Himself, who up to this present commentary [i.e., in *First Kings*] had walked along that first path for some time. We felt it as a duty to follow him faithfully, because of his great authority both as an outstanding Doctor and also as one so admired in the Catholic Church for his spiritual sense. He himself encourages us to follow the more sublime path, and after having set us out on our journey for a little way, he leaves the rest up to us. Under the guidance of other Fathers, we will interrupt his interpretation.

**7342:** Of these other Fathers, however, we do not have an extended interpretation that follows verse by verse. There are a few that are rather limited and abbreviated, such as that of St. Jerome, Rabanus Maurus, St. Ephrem and others, in the *Library of the Fathers*. The Venerable Bede is the only one who extends at length his interpretation of this divine book, and we could securely follow after him. We could do this to fill in the gaps where the fragmentary commentaries of the others, or their summaries, do not reach, as we have done up to the present, so that nothing of our own would be said. This is something that I believe is both useful for you, and also it is what you would prefer. The reason is, could anything of good come from us? Furthermore, this procedure being followed frees you from having to balance and weigh the sentences and the words, which you would certainly have to do if I were using my own expressions. With this procedure being followed you will be free to be nourished on a doctrine that is totally celestial.

**7343:** Now, from what has been said, it seems to me that up to the present I have fulfilled my proposal, which is to have you come to know in depth this book, *that you might know how to talk in the house of God* 1 Tm 3:15. From last year, I have brought to your attention this House of God, in which you have expressed the desire to minister, or to serve, and the vocation that is necessary in order to enter upon this. The purpose of all this is that you might know how to discern this in yourselves, and what

would be bad or good conversations for those who are called to such a life, for the sake of avoiding the former and imitating the latter.

**7344:** It is only fitting, then, that we, too, following the Fathers, should raise up from the meditation of the conversation of the servants and the ministers to the conversation of the Master and the Spouse, in order to imitate this. Now, since this conversation is laid out for us in the Holy Gospels, and has been explained by many Fathers and Doctors. Therefore, we need to lay aside the figure in order to place before our eyes He who has been figured Himself.

**7345:** Let us go ahead, then. Since the shadows of the figures have led us only to the Truth, Who is Christ our Lord, let the shadows give way to the Light, the allegory of histories to the Letter of the Gospel.

#### The New Testament: The Holy Gospel according to Matthew

Here we are placed to the very limits: let us invoke the Holy Spirit that He might introduce us into this: *Come O Creator Spirit*.

**7346:** The Holy Gospel according to Matthew.

The Law of the Gospel is essentially the grace of the Holy Spirit [cf. St. Antoninus]. The Gospel, i.e., the "good news", because we read it already written, we do not hear it in the living voice of the grace of the Holy Spirit: *He who bears witness to our Spirit that we are children of God*.

[Here begins the copying of the Commentary of St. John Chrysostom by St. Gaspar Bertoni]

**7347:** It was indeed meet for us not at all to require the aid of the written word, but to exhibit a life to pure that the grace of the Spirit should be instead of books to our souls, and that as these are inscribed with ink, even so should our hearts be with the Spirit. But, since we have utterly put away from us this grace, let us at any rate, embrace the second best course.

**7348:** This procedure will be different from that of certain learned priests, and also from some simple Christians: the former read and understand what is written, while the latter listen to and enjoy the sound of the voice: to the former belong knowledge, but to the latter, wisdom.

For that the former was better, God has made manifest, both by His words, and by His deeds. Since, to Noah, and to Abraham and to his offspring, and to Job and to Moses, too, He spoke not by writings, but Himself by Himself, finding their mind pure. But after the whole people of the Hebrews had fallen into the very pit of wickedness and thereafter was a written word, and tables, and the admonition which is given by

these. And this one may perceive was the case, not of the saints in the Old Testament only, but also those of the New.

**7349:** For neither to the Apostles did God give anything in writing, but instead of written words He promised that He would give them the grace of the Spirit: for, 'He', our Lord said, 'shall bring all things to your remembrance': Jn 14:26: And that you may learn that this was far better, hear what He says by the Prophet: Jr 31:33: 'I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel after those days, the Lord said: putting my laws into their mind, and in their heart I will write them; 'and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.' And Paul, too, pointing out the same superiority, said that they had received a law, 2 Co 3:3, 'not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.' But since in the process of time they made shipwreck to doctrines, others as to life and manners, there was again need that they should be put in remembrance by the written word.

**7350:** Reflect, then, on you great an evil it is for us, who ought to live so purely as not even to need written words, but to yield up our hearts, as books, to the Spirit; now that we have lost that honor, and are come again to have need of these, to fail again in duly employing even this second remedy. Or if it be a blame to stand in need of written words, and not to have brought down on ourselves the grace of the Spirit; consider how heavy the charge of not choosing to profit even after their assistance, but rather treating what is written with neglect, as if it were cast forth without purpose, and at random, and so bringing down upon ourselves our punishment with increase. But, that no such effect may ensue, let us give strict heed to the things that are written; and let us learn how the Old Law was given on the one hand, and how on the other the New Covenant.

**7351:** The Gospel is said to be the "New Testament" as contrasted with the "Old Testament". How was the Old Law given and then how the New Testament.

How, then, was that law given in time past, and when, and where? After the destruction of the Egyptians, in the wilderness, on Mount Sinai when smoke and fire were rising up out of the mountain, a trumpet sounding, thunders and lightnings, and Moses entering into the very depth of the cloud. But in the New Covenant it is not so - neither in the wilderness, nor on a mountain, nor with smoke and darkness and cloud and tempest; but at the beginning of the day, in a house while all were sitting together, with great quietness, all took place.

**7352:** For to those, being more unreasonable, and hard to guide, there was need of outward pomp, as of a wilderness, a mountain, a smoke, a sound of trumpet, and other like things but they who were of a higher character, and submissive, and who had risen above mere corporeal imaginations, required none of these. And if even in their case there was a sound, it was not for the sake of the Apostles, but for the Jews who were present, on whose account also the tongues of fire appeared. For if, even

after this, some said, 'they were filled with new wine'[cf. Ac 2:13] much more would they have said so, had they seen none of these things.

**7353:** And in the Old Testament, it was upon Moses' going up, that God came down; but here, when our nature has been carried up into Heaven, or rather into the royal throne, then the Spirit makes His descent. Now had the Spirit been an inferior being [against the Macedonians] , the results would not have been greater and more wonderful. For indeed these tables are far better, and the achievements more illustrious. Since the Apostles came not down from a mountain, as Moses, but carrying about the Spirit in their mind, and pouring forth a kind of treasure and fountain of doctrines and of gifts and of all things that are good, so they went everywhere around and became, through that grace, living books and laws. Thus, they won over 'the three thousand'. Thus; the five thousand' [cf. Ac 2:41; 4:6], thus the nations of the world; God, by their tongue, discoursing with all that approached them. By whom Matthew also, being filled with the Spirit, wrote, what he did write: 'Matthew, the Publican.' For I am not ashamed to name him by his trade, neither him nor the others. For this in a very special way indicates both the grace of the Spirit and their virtue.

**7354:** The Power of the Gospel.

And he has properly called his work by a name which signified "Good Tidings"; yes, for it was for the removal of punishment, and remission of sins, and 'righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption' [cf. 1 Co 1:30] and adoption and inheritance of Heaven, and a relationship to the Son of God, which He came declaring to all: to enemies, to the perverse, to them that were sitting in darkness. What, then, could ever be equal to these good tidings? God on earth, man in heaven; and all became mingled together, angels joined the choirs of men, men had fellowship with the angels, ad with the other powers above.

**7355:** And one might see the long war brought to an end, and reconciliation made between God and our nature; the devil brought to shame, the demons in flight,, death destroyed, Paradise opened, the curse blotted out, sin put out of the way, error driven off, truth returning, the word of Godliness everywhere sown, and flourishing in its growth, the citizenship of those above planted on the earth, those powers in secure conversation with us, and on earth angels continually haunting, and hope abundant touching things to come.

**7356:** Therefore he called the history 'good tidings', forasmuch as all other things surely are words only without substance; as, for instance, plenty of wealth, greatness of power, kingdoms and glories, and honors, and whatever other things among men are accounted to be good: but those which are published by fishermen would be legitimately and properly called 'good tidings': not only as being sure and immovable blessings, and beyond our deserts, but also as being given to us with all facility. For

not by laboring and sweating, not by fatigue and suffering, but merely by being beloved of God, we received what we received.

**7357:** The Evangelists

- And why can it have been, that when there were so many disciples, two wrote only from among the apostles, and two from among their followers. For one that was a disciple of Paul, and another of Peter, together with Matthew and John wrote the Gospels. It was because they did nothing for vainglory, but all things for us.

- 'What, then? Was not one evangelist sufficient to tell all?'

- One indeed was sufficient; but, if there be four to write, not at the same times, nor in the same places, neither having met together, and conversed with one another, and then they speak all things as it were, out of one mouth, this becomes a very great demonstration of the truth.

- 'But, the contrary,' it might be said, 'has come to pass; for in many places they are convicted of discordance.'

**7358:** - Surely this very matter is a very great evidence of their truth. For if they had agreed in all things exactly even to time, and place, and to the very words, none of our enemies would have believed but that they had met together, and had written what they wrote by some human compact; because such entire agreement as this comes not out of simplicity. But now even that discordance which seems to exist in little matters delivers them from all suspicion and speaks clearly in behalf of the character of the writers. But, if there be anything touching times or places, which they have related differently, this nothing injures the truth of what they have said. And these things, too, so far as God shall enable us, we will endeavor as we proceed, to point out.

**7360:** To know with sobriety

We require you, together with what we have mentioned, to observe, that in the chief heads, those which constitute our life and furnish out our doctrine, nowhere is any of them to be found to have disagreed, no not ever so little. But, what are these points? Such as follow: 'That God became man, that He was crucified, that He was buried, that He rose again, that He ascended, that He will judge, that He has given commandments tending to salvation, that He has brought in a law not contrary to the Old Testament, that He is a Son, that He is only-begotten, that He is a true Son, that He is of the same substance with the Father, and as many things like these: for touching these we shall find that there is in them a full agreement.'

**7361:** And if among the miracles they have not all of them mentioned all, but one of these, the other those, let this not trouble you. For if on the one hand one had spoken all, the number of the rest would have been superfluous; and again if all had written fresh things, and different from one another, the proof of their agreement would not have been manifest. For this cause they have both treated of many in common, and each of them has also received and declared something of his own; that, on the one hand, he might not seem superfluous, and cast on the heap to no purpose; on the other, he might make our test of the truth of their affirmation perfect.

**7362:** That which is proper to each one.

Now Luke tells us the cause wherefore he proceeds to write: 'that you might know', he says, 'the certainty of the words wherein you have been instructed' [cf. Lk 1:4], that is, that being continually reminded you may hold to the certainty and abide in certainty.

**7363:** But, as for John, he has himself kept silence touching the cause; yet, as a tradition says, which has come down to us from the first, even from the Fathers, neither did he come to write without purpose; but forasmuch as it had been the care of the three to dwell upon the account of the dispensation [the *economy*, Christ having assumed flesh], and the doctrines of the Godhead were ear being left in silence, he, moved by Christ, then and not till then set himself to compose his Gospel. And this is manifest both from the history itself, and from the opening of his Gospel. For he does not begin like the rest from beneath, but from above, from the same point at which he was aiming, and it was with a view to this that he composed the whole book. And not in the beginning only, but throughout all the gospel, he is more lofty than the rest.

**7364:** Of Matthew again it is said that when those who among the Jews had believed came to him, and asked him to leave to them in writing these same things, which he had spoken to them by word, he also composed his Gospel in the language of the Hebrews. And Mark, too, in Egypt is said to have done the very same thing at the entreaty of the disciples

**7365:** For this cause, then Matthew, as writing to Hebrews, sought to show nothing more, than that he was from Abraham, and David; but Luke, as discoursing to all in general, traces up the account higher, going on even to Adam. And the one begins with His generation because nothing was so soothing to the Jew as to be told that Christ was the offspring of Abraham and David: the other does not do so, but mentions many other things, and then proceeds to the genealogy.<sup>1</sup>

**7366:** He has become all things to all.

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<sup>1</sup> Fr. Bertoni skips several paragraphs here, adding up to about two thirds of a column on page 4 a, of the Baronet translation.

Now where each on one was aiding when he wrote, it is not right for us to affirm very positively. But that they are not opposed to each other, this we will endeavor to prove, throughout the whole work. And you in accusing them of disagreement, are doing just the same as if you were to insist upon their using the same words and forms of speech. And I do not yet say that those likewise who glory greatly in rhetoric and philosophy, having many of them written many books touching the same matters, have not merely expressed themselves differently, but have even spoken in opposition to one another, for it is one thing to speak differently and another to speak at variance. None of these things do I say; far be it from me to frame our defense from the frenzy of those men, neither am I willing out of falsehood to make recommendations for the truth.

**7367:** But this I would be glad to inquire: how were the differing accounts believed? How did they prevail? How was it that, while saying opposite things, they were admired, were believed, were celebrated everywhere in the world? And yet the witnesses of what they said were many, and many too were the adversaries and enemies thereof. For they did not write these things in one corner and bury them, but everywhere by sea and by land, they unfolded them in the ears of all, and these things were read in the presence of enemies, even as they are now, and none of the things which they said offended any one. And very naturally, for it was a divine power that pervaded all, and made it to prosper with all men.

**7368:** For if it had not been so, how could the publican, the fisherman, and the unlearned, have attained to such philosophy? For these things, which they are, without ever having ever been able to imagine, no - not even in a dream, are by these men with great certainty both published and made convincing, and not in their lives only, but even after death; neither to two men, nor twenty men, nor a hundred, nor a thousand, nor ten thousand, but to cities, nations and people, both to land and sea, in the land both of the Greeks and barbarians, both inhabited and desert; and all concerning things far beyond our nature. For leaving the earth, all their discourse is concerning the things in heaven, while they bring in unto us another principle of life, another manner of living: both wealth and poverty, freedom and slavery, life and death, our world and our civilization, all changed.

**7369:** Not like Plato, who composed that ridiculous republic, or Zeno, or if there be any one else that has written about civilization, or has framed laws. For indeed, touching all these, it has been made manifest by themselves, that an evil spirit, and some cruel demon at war with our race, a foe to modesty, and an enemy of good order, over-setting all things and has been made his voice he heard in their soul. When, for example, they make their women common to all, and stripping virgins naked in the Palestra, bring them into the gaze of men; and when they establish secret marriages, mingling all things together and confounding them, and over-turning the limits of nature, what else is there to say? For that these their sayings are all



inventions of devils, and contrary to nature, even nature herself would testify, not tolerating what we have mentioned.

**7370:** And this, though they write not amidst persecutions, nor dangers, nor fightings, but in all security and freedom, and deck it out with many ornaments from many sources. But these doctrines of the fishermen, chased as they were, scourged and in jeopardy, both learned and unlearned, both bond and free, both kings and private soldiers, both barbarians and Greeks, have received with all good will. And if you cannot say that it was because these things were trifling and low, that they were easily to be received by all men; for indeed these doctrines are far higher than those.

**7371:** For as to virginity they never imagined even the name thereof so much as in a dream, not yet of voluntary poverty, nor of fasting, nor of any other of those things that are sublime. But they that are of our part not only exterminate lust, they chastise not only the act, but even an unchaste look, and insulting language, and disorderly laughter, and dress, and gait, and clamor, and they carry on their exactness even to the smallest things, and have filled the whole earth with the plant of virginity.

**7372:** And touching God, too, and the things of heaven, they persuade men to be wise with such knowledge as no one of those has at any time been able so much as to conceive in his mind. For how could they, who made for gods images of beasts, and of monsters that crawl on the earth and of other things still more vile? Yet, these sublime doctrines were both accepted and believed, and they flourish every day and increase; but the others have passed away, and perished, having disappeared more easily than spiders' webs.. And very naturally, for they were demons that published these things; wherefore besides their uncleanness, their obscurity is great, and the labor they require the greater. For what could be more ridiculous than that 'republic' in which, besides what I have mentioned, the philosopher, when he has spent lines without number, that he may be able to show what justice is, has over and above this prolixity filled his discourse with much indistinctness? Thus, even if it did contain anything profitable, it would be useless for the life of man.

For if the husbandman and the smith the builder and the pilot.... <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> St. Gaspar Bertoni ends his copying of St. John Chrysostom's Meditation 1, a good 6 columns prior to the finish in the Baronet translation. Meditation 2 picks up again on page 8 of this same translation.

## 7373 - MEDITATION 2

**7373:** Preparatory Prayer.

**Prelude 1:** Mt 1:1: The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.

**Prelude 2:** Yesterday we were at the door; For we are today to set foot within the holy vestibule, wherefore I have also put you in mind of the charge of quiet and silence.

**Prelude 3:** May God render us such [i.e., true sons of Abraham].

**7374:** Since, if the Jews, when they were to approach 'a mountain that burned, and fire and blackness, and darkness and tempest'; [cf. Heb 12:18] - or, rather when they were not so much as to approach, but both to see and to hear these things from afar - were commanded for three days before to abstain from their wives, and to wash their garments, and were in trembling and fear, both themselves and Moses with them Ex 19:10, ff., much more we when we are to hearken to such words and are not to stand far from a smoking mountain, but to enter into Heaven itself, ought to show a greater self-denial ['philosophy'], not washing our garments, but wiping clean the robe of our soul, and ridding ourselves of all mixture of worldly things.

**7375:** For it is not blackness that you shall see, nor smoke, nor tempest, but the King Himself sitting on the throne of that unspeakable glory, and angels, and archangels standing by him, and the tribes of the saints, with those interminable myriads.

For such is the city of God, having 'the Church of the first-born, the spirits of the just, the general assembly of the angels, the blood of sprinkling [cf. Heb 12:22, 23, 44], whereby all are knit into one, and Heaven has received the things of earth, and earth the things of Heaven and that peace has come which was of old longed for both by angels and by saints.

**7376:** Herein stands the trophy of the Cross, glorious and conspicuous, the spoils won by Christ, the first-fruits [cf. Heb 7:4] of our nature, the booty of our Kin: all these, I say, we shall out of the gospels know perfectly.

If you follow in becoming quietness, we shall be able to lead you about everywhere, and show where death is set forth crucified, and where sin is hanged up, and where are the many and wondrous offerings from this war and this battle. You shall see likewise the tyrant here bound, and the multitude of captives following, and the citadel from which that unholy demon overran all things in time past. You will see

the hiding places, and the dens of the robber, broken up now, and laid open for even there also was our King present.<sup>3</sup>

**7377:** For behold, I see the gates opening to us; but let us enter in with all seemly order, and with trembling, setting foot straightway within the vestibule itself. What is this vestibule?

Mt 1:1: 'The Book of the generation of Jesus Christ, son of David, Son of Abraham.'

What are you saying? Did you not promise to speak of the Only-begotten Son of God, and do you make mention of David, a man born after a thousand generations, and say that he is both ancestor and father?

**7378:** Stay, and seek not to learn all at once, but gently and little by little. Why, it is in the vestibule that you are standing, by the very porch; why then do you hasten toward the inner shrine? As yet, you have not well marked all that stands on the outside. For neither for a while do I declare to you that other generation: or rather not even that which comes after, for it is unutterable, unspeakable. And before me the Prophet Isaiah told you this; where, when proclaiming His passion and His great care for the world, and admiring who He was, and what He became, and whither He descended, he cried out loud and clear, saying: 'who shall declare His generation'? Is 53:8.

**7379:** It is not then of that we are now to speak, but of this beneath, that which took place on earth, which was among ten thousand witnesses. And concerning this again we will relate in such wise as it may be possible for us, having received the grace of the Spirit. For not even this may set anyone forth altogether plainly, forasmuch as this too is most awesome. Think not, therefore, it is of small things you are hearing, when you hear of this birth, but rouse up your mind and straightway tremble, being told that God has come upon earth. For so marvelous was this, and beyond expectation, that because of these things the very angels formed a choir, and in behalf of the world offered up their praise for them, and the prophets from the first were amazed at this that He was seen upon earth and conversed with me. Ba 3:38.

**7380:** Indeed it is far beyond all thought to hear that God is the Unspeakable, the Unutterable, the Incomprehensible, that He is equal to the Father, has passed through a Virgin's womb, and has chosen to be born of a woman, and to have Abraham and David as forefathers. But why do I say Abraham and David? For what is even more amazing, there are those women, even prostitutes, whom we have lately mentioned. Hearing these things, arise, and surmise nothing vile: but even because of all this you should greatly marvel that the Son of the Unoriginate God and His true Son, He suffered Himself to be called also Son of David, that He might make you God's son. He

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<sup>3</sup> Fr. Bertoni here skips about one half of column "a" on p. 9 of the Baronet translation of Chrysostom's Homily 2.

suffered a slave to be a father to Him, that He might make the Lord Father a slave to you.

**7381:** Do you see at once from the beginning of what nature are the Gospels? If you doubt the things pertaining to you, from what belongs to Him believe these also. For it is far more difficult, judging by human reason, for God to become man, than for a man to be declared a son of God. When therefore you are told that the Son of God is Son of David, and of Abraham, doubt not any more that you, too, the son of Adam shall be a son of God. For not at random, nor in vain did He abase Himself so greatly, only He was minded to exalt us. thus, He was born after the flesh so that you might be born after the Spirit; He was born of a woman, that you might cease to be the son of a woman.

**7382:** Therefore, the birth was two-fold: both made like unto us, and also surpassing ours. For to be born of a woman indeed was our lot, 't be born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of man' but of the Holy Spirit, Jn 1:13, was to proclaim beforehand the birth surpassing us, the birth to come, which He was about freely to give us of the Spirit. And everything else, too, was like this. Thus His Baptism also was of the same kind, for it partook of the old, and it partook also of the new. To be baptized by the Prophet marked the old, but the coming down of the Spirit shadowed out the new.

**7383:** And like as though anyone were to place himself in the space between any two persons that were standing apart, and stretching forth both his hands were to lay hold on either side, and tie them together; even so has He done, joining the Old Covenant with the New, God's nature with man's, the things that are His with ours. Do you see the flashing brightness of the city with how great a splendor it has dazzled you from the very beginning? how it has straightaway shown the King in your own form, as though in a camp? For neither there does the king always appear bearing his proper dignity, but laying aside the purple and the diadem, he often disguises himself in the garb of a common soldier. But there it is lest by being known he should draw the enemy upon himself; but here on the contrary, lest, if He were known, He should cause the enemy to fly from the conflict with Him and lest He should confound all His own people: for His purpose was to save, not to dismay.

**7384:** For this reason he has also straightway called Him by this title, naming Him His: Jesus Christ.

For this Name, Jesus, is not Greek, but in the Hebrew language it is thus called Jesus, which is, when interpreted into the Greek tongue: *Soter* ['A Savior']. He is called a Savior because He saved His people. Do you see how He has given wings to the hearer, at once speaking things familiar, and at the same time by these indicating to us those things beyond hope? I mean that both these names were well known to the Jews. For because the things that were to happen were beyond

expectation, the types even of the names went before, in order that from the very first all the unsettling power of novelty might be taken away.

**7385:** Thus He is called Jesus, Who after Moses brought the people into the land of promise. Have you seen the type? That led into the land of promise, this into heaven, and to the good things in the heavens; that, after Moses was dead, this after the law had ceased; that as a leader, this as a King. However, lest having heard the word Jesus, you should by reason of the identity of the name be perplexed, he has added: 'Jesus Christ, Son of David.' But that other was not of David, but of another tribe.

**7386:** The reason for the title of the book.

Mt 1:1: But wherefore does he call it a 'Book of the Generation of Jesus Christ', while yet this book has not the birth only, but the whole dispensation? Because this is the sum of the whole dispensation, and is made an origin and root of all our blessings. As then Moses called it the Book of Heaven and Earth [cf. Gn 2:4], although he had not discoursed of heaven and earth only, but also of all things that are in the midst thereof; so also this man has named his book from that which is the sum of all the great things done. For that which teems with astonishment, and is beyond hope and all expectation, is that God should become man. But this having come to pass, all afterwards follows in reasonable consequence.

**7387:** Of the Son of David, of the Son of Abraham 1:1:

- But wherefore did he not say: 'the Son of Abraham', and then "the Son of David"?

- It is not, as some suppose, that he means to proceed upward from the lower point, since then he would have done the same as Luke, but now he has done the contrary.

- Why, then, has he made mention of David?

**7388:** - The man was in the mouths of all, both from his distinction, and from the time, for he had not been so very long dead, like Abraham. And though God made promises to both, yet the one, as old, was passed over in silence - while the other, as fresh and recent, was repeated of all. Themselves, for instance, say: ' Jn 7:42: Does not Christ come out of the seed of David, and out of Bethlehem, the town where David was?

**7389:** And no man called Him Son of Abraham, but all Son of David; and that because this last was more in the recollection of all, both on account of the time, as I have already said, and because of his royalty. On this principle again all the kings whom they had in honor after his time were named from him, both by the people themselves and by God. For both Ezekiel [cf. 34:23, f.; 37:24, f.] and other prophets besides speak of David as coming and rising again; not meaning him that was dead, but them

emulating his virtue. And to Hezekiah He said: 'I will defend this city, for mine own sake and for my servant David's sake' 4 K 19:34. And to Solomon, too, He said that for David's sake He rent not the kingdom during his lifetime, 3 K 2:11-13.

**7390:** For great was the glory of the man, both with God and with man. On account of this he makes the beginning at once from him who was more known, and then runs up to his Father; accounting it superfluous, as far as regards the Jews, to carry the genealogy higher up. For these were principally the persons held in admiration; the one as a prophet and king, the other as a patriarch and a prophet.

**7391:** But whence is it manifest that He is of David? one might say. For if He was not sprung of man, but from a woman only, and the Virgin does not have her genealogy traced, how shall we know that He was of David's race? Thus, there are two things inquired; both why His mother's genealogy is not recited, and wherefore it can be that Joseph is mentioned by them, who has no part in the birth: since the latter seems to be superfluous, and the former a defect.

**7392:** Of which then is it necessary to speak first? How the Virgin is of David. How shall we know that she is of David? Harken unto God, telling Gabriel to go to 'a virgin betrothed to a man whose name is Joseph of the house and the lineage of David' Lk 1:27. What now would you have plainer than this, when you have heard that the Virgin was of the house and lineage of David? Hence, it is evident that Joseph was of the same. There was a law which bade it that it should not be lawful to take a wife from any other stock, but from the same tribe. And the patriarch Jacob also foretold that He should arise out of the tribe of Judah saying on this wise: Gn 49:10 'There shall not fail a ruler out of Judah, nor a governor out of his loins, until He comes for whom it is appointed and He is the expectation of the Gentiles.

**7493:** Surely this prophecy does indeed make it clear that He was of the tribe of Judah, but not also that He was of the family of David. Was there then in the tribe of Judah one family only, even that of David, or were there not also many others? And might it not happen for one to be of the tribe of Judah, but not also of the family of David? So that you should not say this the evangelist has removed this suspicion of yours by saying that He was 'of the house and lineage of David.' And if you wish to learn this from another reason besides, neither shall we be at a loss for another proof. For not only was it not allowed to take a wife out of another tribe, but not even from another lineage, that is, from another kindred. So that if either we connect the Virgin with the words 'of the house and lineage of David', what has been said stands good; or if with Joseph, by that fact this also is proved. For if Joseph is of the house and lineage of David, he would not have taken his wife from another than that whence he himself was sprung.

**7494:** What then, one might say, if he transgressed the law? Why, for this cause he has by anticipation testified that Joseph was just man on purpose so that you would not say this; but having been told his virtue you might also be sure that he would not have transgressed the law. For he who was so benevolent, and free from passion, as not to wish, even when urged by suspicion, to attempt inflicting punishment on the Virgin, how should he have Mt 1:19, transgressed the law for lust? he that showed wisdom and self-restraint beyond the law for to put her away and that privately, was to act with self-restraint beyond the law, how should he having contrary to the law; and this when there was no cause to urge him?

**7395:** Now that the Virgin was of the race of David is indeed from these things evident; but wherefore he gave not her genealogy, but Joseph's, requires explanation. For what cause was it then? It was not the law among the Jews that the genealogy of women should be traced. In order then that he might keep the custom, and not seem to be making alterations from the beginning, and yet might make the Virgin known to us, for this cause he has passed over her ancestors in silence, and traced the genealogy of Joseph. For if he had done this with respect to the Virgin, he would have seemed to be introducing novelties; and if he had passed over Joseph in silence, we should not have known the Virgin's forefathers. In order therefore that we might learn, touching Mary, who she was, and of what origin, and that the laws might remain undisturbed, he has traced the genealogy of her espoused husband and shown him to be of the house of David.

**7396:** For when this has been clearly proved, that other fact is demonstrated with it, namely, that the Virgin likewise is sprung from thence, by reason that this just man, even as I have already said, would not have endured to take a wife from another race...<sup>4</sup>

Resume': 1. Why is mention first made of David? 2. He has called the writing the 'Book of the Generation of Jesus Christ.' 3. What did he say: Of Jesus Christ? 4. Why is the generation common, and uncommon. 5. How is it shown that May is of Davidic origin. 6. Why it is that her forebears are left in silence, and the genealogy of Joseph is presented.

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<sup>4</sup> Fr. Bertoni ends his second Meditation here on p. 12 a of the Baronet translation. He skips, therefore, about 4 columns, and concludes with his own Resume' here. Fr. Bertoni's Meditation 3 begins on p. 14 a of the said translation.

**7397 - MEDITATION 3****7397: Preparatory Prayer**

Prelude 1: Mt 1:

v. 2: Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers.

v. 3: Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar. Perez was the father of Hezron. Hezron the father of Ram.

v. 4: Ram was the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon.

v. 5: Salmon was the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz was the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth. Obed was the father of Jesse,

v. 6: Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been the wife of Uriah.

v. 7: Solomon was the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asa.

v. 8: Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, Joram the father of Uzziah.

v. 9: Uzziah was the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah.

v. 10: Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amos, Amos the father of Josiah.

v. 11: Josiah became the father of Jeconiah and his brothers as the time of the Babylonian exile.

v. 12: And after the Babylonian exile, Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Abiud, Abiud the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor.

v. 14: Azor was the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Achim, Achim the father of Eliud.

v. 15: Eliud was the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob.

V. 16: Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. It was of her that Jesus who is called the Messiah was born.

**7398**: Prelude 2. From the Sunday reading there appears the profound nature of these sentences.



### Prelude 3. Petition.

1. David, 2. Solomon, 3. Rehoboam, 4. Abijah, 5. Asa, 6. Jehoshaphat, 7. Joram, 8. Uzziah, 9. Jotham, 10. Ahaz, 11. Hezekiah, 12. Manasseh, 13. Amos, 14. Josiah.

- 1. Jechooniah, 2. Shealtiel, 3. Zerubbabel, 4. Abiud, 5. Eliakim, 6. Azor, 7. Zadok, 8. Achim, 9. Eliud, 10. Eleazar, 11. Matthan, 12. Jacob, 13. Joseph, 14. Jesus.

**7399:** Come, then, let us speak today what remains. What is it then that is now required? Why Joseph's genealogy is traced, who had no part in the birth.

And one cause we mentioned already; but it is necessary to mention likewise the other, that which is more mystical and secret than the first.

- What then is this?

- He would not that it should be manifest to the Jews, at the time of the birth, that Christ was born of a virgin. Be not troubled at the strangeness of the saying. For it is no statement of mine, but of our fathers, wonderful and illustrious men.

**7400:** For if He disguised many things from the first, calling Himself Son of Man, and has not everywhere clearly unfolded to us even His equality with the Father, why do you wonder at His having for a time disguised this also, taking order as He was for a certain great and marvelous purpose. But what kind of marvel?, it may be asked. That the Virgin should be preserved, and delivered from evil suspicion. For if this had been discovered by the Jews from the beginning, they would have stoned the Virgin, making the report a handle for mischief, and condemned her as an adultery. For if in regard to other matter, for which they had frequent precedents likewise in the Old Testament, they were quite shameless in their obstinacy for so, because He had cast out devils, they called Him possessed; and because He healed on the Sabbath day, they supposed Him to be an adversary of God; and yet oftentimes even before this had the Sabbath been broken, what would they not have said if this had been told to them?

**7401:** Especially as they had all time before this on their side, in that it never had produced any such thing. For if after so many miracles they still called Him son of Joseph, how before the miracles would they have believed that He was born of a virgin? It was then for this reason that both Joseph has his genealogy traced and the Virgin betrothed to him. For even if he who was both a just and wondrous man, required many things, in order that he should receive that which had come to pass; an angel, and the vision in dreams, and the testimony from the prophets; how could the Jews, being both dull and depraved, and of so unfriendly spirit towards Him, have admitted this idea into their minds? For the strangeness and novelty thereof would be sure greatly to disturb them, and the fact that they had never so much as heard of such a thing having happened in the times of their forefathers.

**7402:** For as the man who was once persuaded that He is the Son of God, would after that have no cause to doubt concerning this, too; so he who was accounting Him to be a deceiver and an adversary of God, how could he but have been yet more offended by this, and have been led on unto the opposite notion? For this cause neither to the Apostles at the first directly say this, but while of His resurrection they discourse much and often forasmuch as of this there were examples in the times, although not such as this.

**7403:** That He was born of a Virgin they do not say always: Not even His Mother ventured to say this. See, for instance, what the Virgin says even to Him: 'Behold, Your father and I have sought you sorrowing' Lk 2:48. For if this suspicion had been entertained, neither would He any longer have been accounted to be a Son of David, and this opinion not being held, many other evils besides would have arisen. For this cause neither do the angels say these things to all, but to Mary only, and Joseph; but when showing to the shepherds the glad tidings of that which was come to pass, they no longer added this. Lk 2:10, ff.

**7404:** Mt 1:2 Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac was the father of Jacob, Jacob was the father of Judah and his brothers.

- Why is it, that having mentioned Abraham, and having said that 'he begat Isaac, and Isaac, Jacob' and not having made any mention of his brother; when he is come to Jacob, he remembers both: 'Judah and his brethren'?

- Now there are some that say, it was because of the perverseness of Esau, and of the rest that came before. But I should not say this; for if this were so, how is it that he a little after mentions such women? It being out of contraries, in this place, that His glory is manifested; not by having great forefathers, but low and of little account.

**7405:** For to the lofty One it is a great glory to be able to abase Himself exceedingly. Wherefore then, did He not mention them? Because Saracens, and Ishmaelites, and Arabians, and as many as are sprung from those ancestors, have nothing in common with the race of Israelites. For this cause then he passes over those in silence, and hastens on to His forefathers, and those of the Jewish people. Wherefore he said, 'And Jacob begot Judas and his brethren'. For at this point the race of the Jews begins to have its peculiar mark.

**7406:** Mt 1:3: 'And Judas begot Phares and Zara of Thamar.'

What are you doing, my man, putting us in remembrance of a history that contains an unlawful intercourse? But why is this said. Since, if we were recounting the race of a mere man, one might naturally have been silent touching these things; but if of God incarnate, so far from being silent, one ought to make a glory of them,

showing forth His tender care and His power. Yes, for this cause He came, not to escape our disgraces, but to bear them away. Therefore as He is the more admired, in that He not only died, but was even crucified, though the matter be opprobrious, yet the more opprobrious the more does it show Him full of love for humanity.

**7407:** So likewise may we speak touching his birth; it is not only because He took flesh upon Him and became man that we justly stand amazed at Him, but because He vouchsafed to have also such kinsfolk, being in no respect shamed of our evils. And this He was proclaiming from the very beginnings of His birth, that He is ashamed of none of those things that belong to us; while He teaches us also hereby, never to hide our face at our forefathers' wickedness, but to seek after one thing alone, even virtue. For such a man, though he have an alien for his ancestor, though he have a mother who is a prostitute, or what you will, can take no hurt thereby. For if the whore-monger himself, being changed, is nothing disgraced by his former life, much more will the wickedness of his ancestry have no power to bring to shame him that is sprung of harlot, or an adulteress, if he be virtuous.

**7408:** But he did these things not only to instruct us, but also to bring down the haughtiness of the Jews. For since they, negligent about virtue in their own souls, were parading the name of Abraham, thinking that they had for a plea their forefathers; virtue; he shows from the very beginning that it is not in these things men ought to glory, but in their own good deeds. Besides this, he is establishing another point also, to show that all are under sin, even their forefathers themselves. At least their patriarch and namesake is shown to have committed no small sin, for Tamar stands against him, to accuse his whoredom. And David, too, had Solomon by the wife whom he corrupted. But if by such great ones the law was not fulfilled, much more by the less. And if it was not fulfilled, all have sinned, and Christ's coming is become necessary.

**7409:** For this cause he made mention again of the twelve patriarchs, by this again bringing down their pride at the noble birth of their fathers. Because many of these also were born of women that were slaves; but nevertheless the difference of the parents did not make a difference in the children. For all were equally both patriarchs and heads of tribes. For this is the precedence of the Church, this the prerogative of the nobility that is among us, taking its type from the beginning. So that whether you be bond or free, you have from thence nothing more nor less; but the question is all about one thing only, namely, the mind and the disposition of the soul.

**7410:** But besides what we have said, there is another cause also, wherefore he has mentioned even this history; for to be sure Zara's name was not cast at random on that of Phares. For indeed it was irrelevant and superfluous, when he had mentioned Phares, from whom he was to trace Christ's genealogy, to mention Zara also. Wherefore then did he mention him? When Tamar was on the point of giving birth to them, the pangs having come upon her, Zara put forth his hand first [cf. Gn 37:27].

Then, the midwife, when she saw this, in order that the first should be known, bound his hand with scarlet; but the child, when he was bound, drew in his hand, and when he had drawn it in, Phares came forth first, and then Zara. The midwife when she saw this said Gn 38:29: "Why was the hedge broken up for you?"

**7411:** Do you see the dark expression of mysteries? For it was not without purpose that these things were recorded for us: since neither was it worth our study to learn, what it might be that the midwife said; nor worth the narrative to know, that he who came out second, put forth his hand first. What, then, is the mysterious lesson? First, from the name of the child we learn what is inquired, for Phares is 'a division', and 'a breach'. And moreover from the thing itself, which took place; for it was not in the order of nature that, having thrust out his hand, he should draw it in again when bound; these things neither belonged to a movement directed by reason, nor did they take place in the way of natural consequence. For after the hand had found its way out, that another child should come forth before was perhaps not unnatural; but that he should draw it back, and give a passage for another, was no longer after the manner of children at birth.

**7412:** But the grace of God was present with the children, ordering these things, and sketching out for us by them a sort of image of the things that were to come. What then? Some of those who have examined these things accurately say, that these children are a type of the two nations. And so in order that you might learn that the polity of the latter people shew forth previously to the origin of the former, the child that has the hand stretched forth does not show itself entire, but draws even it in again; and after his brother had glided forth whole, then, he, too, appears entire. And this took place also with regard to the two nations. I mean, that after the polity of the Church had been manifested in the times of Abraham, and then had been withdrawn in the midst of its course, the Jewish people came, and the legal polity, and then the new people appeared entire with their own laws.

**7413:** Wherefore also the midwife said again: 'Why was the hedge broken up for you?' because the law coming in had broken in upon the freedom of the polity. For indeed the Scripture is ever wont to call the law a hedge; as the prophet said, Ps 79:13: 'You have broken down her hedge, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck off her grapes', and, Is 5:2: 'I have set a hedge about it.' Ep 2:14: 'Having broken down the middle wall of the hedge'. But others say, Why was the hedge broken up for you?. This was spoken touching the new people: for this at its coming put down the law. Do you see that it was not for few nor small causes that he brought to our remembrance the whole history concerning Judah?

**7414:** For this end he has mentioned Ruth and also Rahab.

Mt 1:5: 'Salmon was the father of Boaz of Rahab; Boaz the father of Obed, of Ruth. The one an alien, the other a harlot so that you may learn that He came to do away with all our ills. For He has come as a Physician, not as a Judge. Therefore, in like manner as those of old took harlots for wives, even so God, too, espoused unto Himself the nature which had played the harlot; and this also prophets from the beginning declare to have taken place with respect to the Synagogue. But what spouse was ungrateful towards Him who had been a husband to her, whereas, the Church, when once delivered from the evils received from our fathers, continued to embrace the Bridegroom.

**7415:** See, for instance, what befell Ruth, how like it is to the things which belong to us. For she was both of a strange race, and reduced to the utmost poverty, yet Boaz when he saw her neither despised her poverty nor abhorred her mean birth, as Christ having received the Church, being both an alien and in much poverty, took her to be partaker of the great blessings. But even as Ruth, if she had not before left her father, and renounced household and race, country and kindred, would not have attained unto this alliance; so the Church, too, having forsaken the customs which men had received them from their fathers, then, and not before, became lovely to the Bridegroom. Of this, therefore, the prophet discourses unto her, and said, Ps 44: 11,f.: 'Forget your people, and your father's house, so shall the king have pleasure in your beauty.'

**7416:** This Ruth did, too, and because of this she became a mother of kings, even as the Church did likewise. For of her David himself sprung. So then, to shame them by all these things, and to prevail on them not to be high-minded, he has both composed the genealogy, and brought forward these women. Yes, for this last, through those who intervened, was parent to the great king, and of these David is not ashamed.

**7417:** For it cannot be, it simply cannot be that a man should be good or bad, obscure or glorious, either by the virtue or by the vice of his forefathers; but if one must say somewhat even paradoxical, he shines forth the more, who not being of worthy ancestors, has yet become excellent. Let no one, therefore, be high-minded on account of these matters, but let him consider the forefathers of the Lord, and put away all his haughtiness, and let good actions be his pride; or rather, not even these...<sup>5</sup>.

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MEDITATION 4

<sup>5</sup> Fr. Bertoni stops his Meditation 3 here on p. 17 b, of Chrysostom's Third Homily which continues on then in the Baronet translation to the top of p 20.

## Mt 1:17-21

Prelude 1: Mt 1:17: So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen are fourteen generations, and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.

v. 18: Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the power of the Holy Spirit.

v. 19: Joseph, her husband, an upright man unwilling to expose her to the law, decided to divorce her quietly.

v. 20: Such was his intention when suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream, and said to him: 'Joseph, son of David, have no fear about taking Mary as your wife. It is by the Holy Spirit that she has conceived this child.

v. 21: She is to have a son and you are to name him Jesus because he will save his people from their sins.'

**7419**: Mt 1: 17: 'So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.'

**7420**: He has divided all the generations into three portions, to indicate that not even when their form of government was changed did they become better, but alike under an aristocracy, and under a king, and under an oligarchy, they were in the same evil ways, and whether popular leaders, or priests, or kings controlled them, it was not advantage to them in the way of virtue.

**7421**: But wherefore has he in the middle portion, passed over three kings, and in the last, having set down twelve generations, affirmed them to be fourteen?

(Note): In the Fourth Book of Kings, Joram generated Ochoziah, from whom came Joas, from whom was born Oziah. It is true that the Evangelist had decided to place three lengthy periods of time in the divine state of times, and for the offspring of Joram to get mixed up with the most impious Jezabel. Therefore, up to the third generation this memory is removed so that it would not be placed in the order of the holy nativity.

**7422**: The former question I leave for you to examine, for neither is it needful for me to explain all things to you, lest you should grow indolent: but the second we will explain.

To me, then, he seems in this place to be putting in the place of a generation, both the time of the captivity, and Christ Himself, by every means connecting Him with us. And full well does he put us in mind of that captivity, making it manifest that not even when they went down there, did they become more sober-minded; in order that from everything His coming may be shown to be necessary.

**7423:** - Why, then, one may say, does not Mark do this, nor trace Christ's genealogy, but utter everything briefly?

- It seems to me that Matthew was before the rest in entering on the subject wherefore he both sets down the genealogy with exactness and stops at those things which we require it. But that Mark came after him, which is why he took a short course, as putting his hand to what had been already spoken and made manifest.

**7424:** - How is it, then, that Luke not only traces the genealogy, but does it through a greater number? as was natural, Matthew having led the way, he seeks to teach us something in addition to former statements. And each, too, in like manner, imitated his master; the one Paul, who flows fuller than any river; the other, Peter, who studies brevity.

- And what may be the reason that Matthew said not at the beginning, in the same way as the prophet, 'the vision which I saw' and 'the word which came unto me'?

**7425:** - Because he was writing to men well disposed, and exceedingly attentive to him. For both the miracles that were done cried aloud, and they who received the word were exceeding faithful. But in the case of the prophets, there were neither so many miracles to proclaim them; and besides, the tribe of false prophets, no small one, was ritously breaking in upon them; to whom the people of the Jews gave even more heed. This kind of opening therefore was necessary in their case. And if miracles were done, they were done for the aliens;' sake, to increase the number of the proselytes.

**7426:** They were done also for the manifestation of God's power, if haply their enemies having taken the Jews captives, fancied they prevailed because their own gods were mighty. Like as in Egypt, out of which no small 'mixed multitude' [cf. Ex 12:38; Jr 1:37] went up, and after that, in Babylon, what befell touching the furnace and the dreams. And miracles were wrought also, when they were by themselves in the wilderness; as also in our case: for among us, too, when we had just come out of error, many wonderful works were shown forth; but afterwards they stayed, when in all countries true religion had taken root. And what took place at a later period were few and at intervals; for example, when the sun stood still in its course, and started back in the opposite direction.

**7427:** And this one may see to have occurred in our case also. For so even in our generation, in the instance of him who surpassed all in ungodliness, I mean, Julian,

many strange things happened. Thus, when the Jews were attempting to raise up again the temple at Jerusalem, first burst out from the foundations, and utterly hindered them all. And when both Julian's treasurer, and his uncle and namesake, made the sacred vessels the subject of their open insolence, the one was 'eaten with worms and gave up the ghost', the other 'burst sunder in the midst'. Moreover, the fountains failing, when sacrifices were made there, and the entrance of the famine into the cities together with the emperor himself was a very great sign.

**7428:** For it is usual with God to do such things; when evils are multiplied beyond measure, and he sees His own people afflicted, and their adversaries greatly intoxicated with their dominion over them, then to display His own power; which He did also in Persia with respect to the Jews. Wherefore that he was not acting without an object, or by chance, when he distributed Christ's forefathers into three portions.

**7429:** And mark, too, whence he begins and where he ends. From Abraham to David; from David to the captivity of Babylon; from this unto Christ Himself. For both at the beginning he put the two in close succession, David and Abraham, and also in summing up he mentions both in the same way. And this, because, as I have already said, it was to them that the promises were made.

**7430:** - But why can it be, that as he mentioned the Babylonian Captivity, he did not also mention the descent into Egypt?

- Because they had ceased to be any longer afraid of the Egyptians, but the Babylonians they dreaded still. And the one thing was ancient, but the other fresh, and one had taken place of late. And to the one they were carried down for now sins, but to the other, transgressions were the cause of their being removed..

And also with regard to the very names, if anyone were to attempt to translate their etymologies, etc. ...<sup>6</sup>

**7431:** Having then mentioned all His forefathers, and ending with Joseph, he did not stop at this, but added, 'Joseph, the husband of Mary', 1:16, intimating that it was for her sake that he traced his genealogy also. Then, lest when you heard of the 'husband of Mary', you should suppose that Christ was born after the common law of nature, mark, how he sets it right by that which follows, 'You have heard', he says, 'of a husband, you have heard of a mother, you have heard a name assigned to the child, therefore, hear the manner, too of the birth.

**7432:** Mt 1:18. The birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise.

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<sup>6</sup> Fr. Bertoni skips about a paragraph here of Chrysostom's text [cf. p. 21 b of Baronet translation].



- Of what kind of birth are you telling me, I pray you, since you have already mentioned His ancestors?

- I still wish to tell you the manner also of His birth. Do you see how he wakens up the hearer? For as though he were about to speak of something unusual, he promises to tell also the manner thereof. And observe a most admirable order in the things he has mentioned. For he did not proceed directly to the birth, but puts in mind first, how many generations he was from Abraham, how many from David, and from the Babylonian Captivity; and thus he sets the careful hearer upon considering the times, to show that this is the Christ who was preached by the prophets.

**7433:** For when you have numbered the generations, and have learned by the time that this is He, you will readily receive likewise the miracle which took place in His birth. Thus, being about to tell of a certain great thing, His birth of a Virgin, he first shadows over the statement, until he has numbered the generations, by speaking of 'a husband of Mary', or rather he does even put in short space the narration of the birth itself, and then proceeds to number also the years, reminding the hearer that this is He, of whom the Patriarch Jacob had said, He should then at length come, when the Jewish rulers had come to an end; of whom the prophet Daniel had proclaimed beforehand, that He should come after those many weeks. And if any one, counting the years spoken to Daniel by the angel in a number of weeks, would trace down the time from the building of the city to His birth, by reckoning he will perceive the one to agree with the other.

**7434:** - How then was He born, I pray you?

- When as His mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, 1:18.

He did not say 'virgin' but merely 'mother'; so that his account is easy to be received. And so having beforehand prepared the hearer to look for some ordinary piece of information, and by this laying hold of him, after all he amazes him by adding the marvelous fact, saying:

**7435:** Before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit 1:18.

He did not say: 'before she was brought to the bridegroom's house', for indeed she was therein. It being the way of the ancients for the most part to keep their espoused wives in their house: in those parts, at least, where one may see the same practiced even now. Thus also Lot's sons-in-law were in his house with him. Mary then herself likewise was in the house of Joseph.

(Note) That she was indeed his wife, is the opinion of the other Fathers, which St. Thomas follows, and as is better proven by Benedict XIV.

**7436:** - And wherefore did she not conceive before her espousal?

- It was, as I said at first, that what had been done might be concealed awhile, and that the Virgin might escape every evil suspicion. For when he, who had most right of all to feel jealousy, so far from making her a show, or degrading her, is found even receiving and cherishing her after her conception; it was quite clear that, unless he had fully persuaded himself that what was done was of the operation of the Holy Spirit, he would not have kept her with him, and ministered to her in all other things.

**7437:** And most properly has he said that 'she was found with child in her womb', the sort of expression that is wont to be used with respect to things strange, and such as happen beyond all expectation, and are unlooked for. Proceed, therefore, no further, neither require anything more than what has been said; neither should you say: but how was it that the Spirit wrought this in a virgin? For if, when nature is at work, it is impossible to explain the manner of the formation, how, when the Spirit is working miracles, shall we be able to express these? And lest you should weary the evangelist, or disturb him continually asking these things, he has said who it was that wrought the miracle, and so withdrawn himself. For I know, he says, nothing more, but that what was done was the work of the Holy Spirit.

**7438:** Shame on those who busy themselves touching the generation on high. For if this birth, which has witnesses without number, and had been proclaimed so long a time before, and was manifested and handled with hands, can by no man be explained; of what excess and madness do they come short who make themselves busy and curious touching that unutterable generation? For neither Gabriel nor Matthew was able to say anything more, but only that it was of the Spirit; but how, of the Spirit, or in what manner, neither of them has explained; for neither was it possible.

**7439:** Do not think either that you have learned all by hearing 'of the Spirit'; for indeed we are ignorant of many things, even when we have learned this; as for instance, how the Infinite is in a womb, how He that contains all things is carried, as unborn, by a woman; how the Virgin bears, and continues a virgin. How, I pray you, did the Spirit frame that Temple? How did He take not all the flesh from the womb, but a part thereof, and increased it, and fashioned it? For that He did come forth of the Virgin's flesh, He has declared by speaking of 'that which was conceived in her' Mt 1:20 and Ga 4:4. And Paul, by saying 'made of a woman', whereby he stop the mouths of them that say, Christ came among us as through some conduit. For, if this were so, what need of the womb? If this were so, He has nothing in common with us, but that flesh is of some other kind, and not of the mass which belongs to us. How then was He of the root of Jesse? How was He a rod? how Son of man? how was Mary His mother? how was He of David's seed? how did he 'take the form of a servant'? how was the word made flesh? ...Therefore that He was of us, and of our substance, and of the Virgin's womb is manifest from these things and others beside; but how, is not also manifest. Do not either then inquire; but receive what is revealed, and be not curious about what is kept secret.

**7440:** Mt 1:19: 'And Joseph her husband being a just man and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privately.'

Having said that it was of the Holy Spirit, and without cohabitation, he establishes his statement in another way again. Lest any one should say: Whence does this appear? Who has heard, who has seen any such thing ever to come to pass? - or, lest you should suspect the disciple as inventing these things to favor his Master; - he introduces Joseph as contributing, by what he underwent, to the proof of the things mentioned; and by his narrative all but says: If you doubt me, and if you suspect my testimony, believe her husband.

**7441:** 'Joseph', he says, 'her husband, being a just man'. By 'a just man' in this place he means that is virtuous in all things. For both freedom from covetousness is justice, and universal virtue is also justice; and it is mostly in this latter sense that the Scripture uses the name of justice; as when it says, Job 1:1, 'a man that was just and true', and again: Lk 1:6, 'they were both just'. Being, then, just, that is good and considerate.

**7442:** He was minded to put her away privately 1:19. For this intent he tells what took place before Joseph's being fully informed, that you might not mistrust what was done after he knew. However, such a one was not liable to be made a public example only, but that she should also be punished was the command of the law. Whereas Joseph remitted not only that greater punishment, but the less likewise, namely, the disgrace.

**7443:** For so far from punishing, he was not minded even to make an example of her 1:19. Do you see a man under self-restraint, and freed from the most tyrannical of passions. For you know how great a thing jealousy is: and therefore He said, to whom these things are clearly known. He said: Pr 6:34: 'For full of jealousy is the rage of a husband'; v. 35: 'he will not spare in the day of vengeance'; and 'jealousy is cruel as the grave' Sgs 8:6. And we know too of many that have chosen to give up their lives rather than fall under the suspicion of jealousy; but in this case it was not so little as suspicion, the burden of the womb entirely convicting her. But nevertheless he was so free from passion as to be unwilling to grieve the Virgin even in the least matters.

**7444:** Thus, whereas to keep her in his house seemed like a transgression of the law, but to expose and bring her to trial would constrain him to deliver her to die; he does none of these things, but conducts himself now by a higher rule than the law. For grace being come, there must needs henceforth be many tokens of that exalted citizenship. For as the sun, though as yet he show not his beams, does from afar by his light illumine more than half the world; so, likewise Christ, when about to rise from that womb, even before He came forth, shone over all the world. Wherefore, even before her travail, prophets danced for joy, and women foretold what was to come, and John, when he had not yet come forth from the belly, leaped from the very womb. Hence, also Joseph exhibited great self-command, in that he neither accused nor upbraided, but only set about putting her away.

**7445:** The matter then being in this state, and all at their wits' end, the angel comes to solve all their difficulties. But it is worth inquiring, why the angel did not speak sooner? Before the husband, had such thoughts but, 'when he thought on it' not until then, he came:

For it is said Mt 1:20:, 'While he thought on these things, the Angel' comes. And yet to her he declares the good tidings even before she conceived. And this again contains another difficulty; for even though the angel had not spoken, wherefore was the Virgin silent, who had been informed by the angel; and why, when she saw her betrothed husband in trouble, did she not put an end to his perplexity?

**7446:** Wherefore then did not the Angel speak before Joseph became troubled. For we must needs explain the former difficulty first.

- For what reason then did he not speak?

- Lest Joseph should be unbelieving, and the same happen to him as to Zacharias. For when the things was visible, belief was thenceforth easy; but when it had not yet a beginning, it was not equally easy to receive his saying. For this reason the angel spoke not at the first, and through the same cause the Virgin, too, held her peace. For she did not think to obtain credit with her betrothed husband, in declaring to him a thing unheard of, but rather that she should provoke him the more, as though she were cloaking a sin that had been committed. Since if she herself, who was to receive so great a favor, is affected somewhat after the manner of man, and said: 'How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?' Lk 1:34, much more would he have doubted; and especially when hearing it from the woman who was under suspicion. Wherefore the Virgin said nothing to him, but the Angel, the time demanding it, presents himself to him.

**7447:** - Why, then, it may be asked, did he not so in the Virgin's case also, and declare the good tidings to her after the conception?

- Lest she should be in agitation and great trouble <sup>7</sup>...Therefore to prevent these things, the angel came before conception. Besides that, it was meet that womb should be free from trouble which the Maker of all things entered; and the soul rid of all perturbation, which was thought worthy to become the minister of such mysteries. For these reasons he speaks to the Virgin before the conception, but to Joseph at the time of travail. And this, many of the simpler sort, not understanding, have said that there is a discordance; because Luke says it was Mary to whom he declared the good tidings, but Matthew, that it was Joseph; not knowing that both took place. And this sort of thing it is necessary to bear in mind throughout the whole history. For in this way, we shall solve many seeming discordances.

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<sup>7</sup> Fr. Bertoni skips several lines here filled with rather unusual reasoning of St. John Chrysostom [p. 24 a of the Baronete translation].

**7448:** The angel then comes when Joseph is troubled. For in addition to the causes mentioned, with a view also to the manifestation of his self-command, he defer his coming.. But when the thing was on the point of taking place, then at least he presents himself.

While he thought on these things, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream. 1:20.

**7449:** Do you see the mildness of the husband? So far from punishing, he did not even declare it to any one, no not even to her whom he suspected, but was thinking it over with himself, as aiming to conceal the cause even from the Virgin herself. For neither is it said that he was minded to 'cast her out', but to 'put her away', so very mild and gentle was the man. But while he is thinking on these things, the angel appeared in a dream. 1:20.

**7450:** And why not openly, as to the shepherds, and to Zaccharias, and to the Virgin?

- The man was exceedingly full of faith, and needed not this vision. Whereas the Virgin, as having declared to her very exceeding good tidings, greater than to Zaccharias, and this before the event, needed also a marvelous vision; and the shepherd, as being by disposition rather dull and clownish. But this man, after the conception, when his soul was actually possessed with that evil suspicion, and ready to exchange it for good hopes, if there appeared any one to guide that way, readily receives the revelation.

**7451:** Wherefore he had the good tidings declared to him after his suspicion, that this selfsame thing might be to him a convincing proof of the things spoken. I mean, that the fact of his having mentioned it to no one, and his hearing the angel say the very things which he thought in his mind, this afforded him an unquestionable sign that one had come from God to say it. For to Him alone it belongs to know the secrets of the heart. Mark only, what a number of results are here. The man's self-command is thoroughly shown; the word spoken in season contributes to his faith, and the history is freed from suspicion, in that it shows him to have felt what it was likely a husband would feel.

**7452:** - How, then, did the Angel assure him?

- Hear and marvel at the wisdom of his words.. For coming to him, the Angel said:

Joseph, you son of David, fear not to take to yourself Mary as your wife.' Mt 1:20.

He straightway puts him in mind of David, of whom the Christ was to spring, and he does not suffer him to be greatly perturbed, by the title of his forefathers, reminding him of the promise made to the whole race.

**7453:** - Else wherefore does he call him 'Son of David'?

- 'Fear not': and yet in another case God does not so, but when one was devising about a certain woman, the wife of Abraham, what he ought not, He spoke the word more in a way of rebuke, and with a threat Gn 20:3. And yet, there, too, the act was of ignorance, for not with knowledge did that person take Sarah; yet, nevertheless, He rebuked him: but here mildly. For exceeding great were the mysteries He was dispensing and wide the interval between the two men; wherefore neither was there need of rebuke.

**7454:** But, by saying 'Fear not', he signifies him to have been afraid, lest he should give offense to God, as retaining an adulteress; since, if it had not been this, he would not have even thought of casting her out. In all ways then he points out that the angel came from God, bringing forward and setting before him all, both what he thought to do, and what he felt in his mind. Now having mentioned her name, he stayed not at this, but added also, 'your wife.' <sup>8</sup>.

**7455:** What does it mean: to take to yourself your wife', to retain her in his house. For in intention, she had been now put away by him. Her being put away, he said, as committed to you by God, not by her parents. And He commits her not for marriage; but to dwell with you; and by my voice He does commit her. Much as Christ Himself afterwards committed her to His disciple, so even now unto Joseph.

**7456:** Then having securely signified the matter at hand, he mentioned not the evil suspicion; but, in a manner more reverent and seemly, by telling the cause of travail he removed this also; implying that the very thing which had made him afraid, and for which he would have cast her out - this very thing, I say, was a just cause why he should take her and retain her in his house. Thus, more than entirely doing away with his distress. For she is not only free, he said, from unlawful intercourse, but even above all nature is her conception. Not only, therefore, put away your fear, but even rejoice more exceedingly.

**7457:** 'For that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 1:20.

A strange thing it was of which he spoke, surpassing man's reason, and above all the laws of nature. How, then, is he to believe, to whom such tidings are altogether new? By the things that are past, he says, by the revelations. For with this intent he laid open all things that were on his mind, what he felt, what he feared, what he was

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<sup>8</sup> Here Fr.Bertoni skips a sentence of Chrysostom, found on p. 25 a of the Baronet translation.

resolved to do - by these he might assure himself on this point. Or rather, not by things past only, but likewise by things to come, he wins him over.

**7458:** Mt 1:21: 'And she shall bring forth a Son and you shall call His name Jesus'

For do not, because He is of the Holy Spirit, imagine that you are an alien to the ministry of this dispensation. Since although in the birth you have no part, but the Virgin abode untouched, nevertheless, what pertains to a father, not injuring the honor of virginity, that do I give you, to set a Name on that which is born: for 'you shall call Him'. For though the offspring be not yours, yet you shall exhibit a father's care towards Him. Wherefore I do straightway, even from the giving of the name, connect you with Him that is born.

**7459:** Then, lest on the other hand anyone should from this suspect him to be the father, hear what follows, with what exact care he states it:

'She shall bring forth a son', 1:21. He does not say: bring forth to you, but merely she shall bring forth, putting it indefinitely, since she not to him did she bring forth, but to the whole world. For this cause, too, the angel came bringing His name from Heaven, hereby again intimating that this is a wondrous birth: it being God Himself who sends the name from above by the angel to Joseph. For neither was this without an object, but a treasure of ten thousand blessings. Wherefore, the Angel also interprets it, and suggests good hopes, in this way again leading him to belief. For to these things we are wont to be more inclined and therefore, also fonder of believing them.

**7460:** So, having established his faith by all, by the past things, by the future, by the present, by the honor given to himself, he rings in the prophet also in good time, to give his suffrage in support of all these. But before introducing him, he proclaims beforehand the good things which were to befall the world through Him.

- And what are these?

- Sins removed and done away with.

**7461:** 'For He shall save His people from their sins' 1:21.

Here again the thing is signified to be beyond all expectation. For not from visible wars, neither from barbarians, but what was far greater than these, from sins, he declares the glad tidings of deliverance; a work which had never been possible to anyone before

-But wherefore, one may ask, did he say "His people", and not add the Gentiles also?

- That he might not startle the hearer yet a while. For to him that listens with understanding he darkly signifies the Gentiles, too. For 'His people' are not the Jews only, but also all that draw nigh and receive the knowledge that is from Him.

**7462:** And mark how he has by the way discovered to us also His dignity, by calling the Jewish nation 'His people'. For this is the word of one implying nought else, but that He who is born is God's child, and that the King of those on high is the subject of his discourse. As neither does forgiving sins belong to any other power, but only to that single essence.

Forasmuch then as we have partaken of so great a gift, let us do everything not to dishonor such a benefit. For if even before this honor, what was done was worthy of punishment, much more now, after this unspeakable benefit <sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> With this exhortation found midway through Chrysostom's long "Homily IV", Fr. Bertoni ends his "Meditation 4" here on p. 26 a of the Baronet translation, to begin Meditation 5 on p. 31 of this same translation. This Meditation 4 is one of Fr. Bertoni's longest in this series.



**7463      -      MEDITATION 5**

**7463:**                      Meditation 5

Preparatory Prayer

Prelude 1. Mt 1:22: Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, saying:

v. 23 : Behold a Virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Emmanuel, a name which means, 'God is with us.'

v. 24: When Joseph awoke he did as the angel of the Lord directed him and received her into his home as his wife.

v. 25: He had no relations with her at any time before she bore a son, whom he named Jesus.

**7464:** <sup>10</sup> For anyone who has received a few coins both puts them into a bag, and sets a seal thereon. <sup>11</sup>

For while the profitable effect of what has been read to us is not yet well fixed, the great force of things that press upon us from without sweeps all entirely away.

**7465:** Pay attention to the reading, and use diligence in retaining it

Blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it. Lk 11:28.

For thus with greater aptness for learning shall we approach what is next to be said; and to us the labor will be less, and to you the profit greater, when, bearing in memory what has been lately spoken, you hearken accordingly to what comes afterwards.

**7466:** For no little does this also contribute towards the understanding of what is said, when you know accurately the connection of the thoughts, which we are busy in weaving together for you. For since it is impossible to set down all in one day, you must by continued remembrance make the things laid before you on many days into a kind of chain, and so wrap it about your soul: that the body of the Scriptures may appear entire. Therefore let us not either today go on to the subjects set before us without first recalling what was lately said to our memory.

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<sup>10</sup> Fr. Bertoni opens his Meditation 5 which is Chrysostom's "Homily V" by omitting almost the entire first column of the Baronet translation, p. 31 a

<sup>11</sup> The sentence that follows here is taken from the first column, 2nd paragraph, on p. 31 a.

**7467:** But what are the things set before us today? Mt 1:22: 'Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled what was spoken of by the prophet, saying: v. 23: Behold the Virgin will conceive in her womb, and will bring forth a son, and they will call His name Emmanuel.

In a tone worthy of the wonder, with all his might he has uttered his voice saying: 'Now all this was done' For when he saw the sea and the abyss of the love of God towards man, and that actually came to pass which never had been looked for, and nature's laws broken, and reconciliations made, Him who is above all come down to him that is lower than all, and 'the middle walls of partition broken' [cf. Ep 2:14] and the impediments removed, and many more things than these done besides; in one word he has put before us the miracle, saying:

**7468:** 'Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord' 1:22.

For, think not, he says, that these things were determined upon; they were prefigured of old. Which same thing, Paul also everywhere labors to prove.

And the Angel proceeds to refer Joseph to Isaiah; in order that even if he should, when awakened, forget his own words, as newly spoken, he might by being reminded of those of the prophet, with which he had been nourished up continually, retain likewise the substance of what he had said.<sup>12</sup> ...An before this he said: 'Mary your wife.' But now, when he has brought the prophet before him, he then trust him with the name of virginity; for Joseph would not have continued thus unshaken, when he heard from him of a virgin, unless he had first heard it from Isaiah.

**7469:** For indeed it was nothing novel that he was to hear out of the Prophet, but what was familiar to him, and had been for a long time the subject of his meditations. For this cause, the Angel, to make what he said easy to be received, brings in Isaiah. And neither here does he stop, but connects the discourse with God. For he does not call the saying Isaiah's, but that of the God of all things. For this cause, he did not say: 'that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of Isaiah', but 'which was spoken of the Lord'. For the mouth indeed was Isaiah's, but the oracle was wafted from above. What does this oracle say? 'Behold a virgin shall be with child (Note: In Isaiah it says: 'in the womb'), and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel.'

**7470:** - How is it, then, one may say, that His name was not called Emmanuel, but Jesus Christ?

- Because he did not say: 'you shall call', but: 'they shall call', that is, the multitude, and the issue of events. For here he puts the event as a name: and this is customary in Scripture, to substitute the events that take the place for names.

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<sup>12</sup> Fr. Bertoni omits a sentence right here referring to Mary as 'unskilled' and Joseph as more studious!

Therefore, to say, 'they shall call' Him 'Emmanuel', means nothing else than that they shall see God among men.

**7471:** This is interpreted: 'God among men.' 1:23. For He has indeed always been among men, but never so manifestly. But if Jews are obstinate, we will ask them, when was the child called, Is 8:3: 'Make speed to the spoil, hasten the prey?' How is it the Prophet said: Call his name: 'Make speed to the spoil, hasten the prey'. Because when he was born, there was a taking and dividing of the spoils, therefore the event that took place in his time is put as his name. <sup>13</sup>

**7472:** Concerning the Virginity of the Blessed Mary, the Prophet does not merely say: 'Behold the Virgin shall be with child', but having said first, 'Behold the Lord Himself shall give you a sign', then he subjoins: 'Behold the Virgin shall be with child'. Whereas if she that was to give birth was not a virgin, but this happened in the way of marriage, what sort of sign would the event be? For that which is a sign must of course be beyond the course of common events, it must be strange and extraordinary; else, how could it be a sign?

**7473:** Mt 1:24: Then Joseph, being raised from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord has bidden him.'

Do you see obedience and a submissive mind? Do you see a soul truly wakened, and in all things corruptible? For neither when he suspected something painful or amiss could he endure to keep the Virgin with him; nor yet, after he was freed from this suspicion, could he bear to cast her out, but he rather keeps her with him, and ministers to the whole Dispensation.

**7474:** Mt 1:24: 'And took unto him Mary his wife.'

Do you see how continually the evangelist uses this word, not willing that that mystery should be disclosed as yet, and annihilating that evil suspicion?

Mt 1:25: And when he had taken her, he knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born Son.'

He has here used the word "until", not that you should suspect that afterwards he did know her, but to inform you that before the birth the Virgin was wholly untouched by man.

**7475:** - But why, then, it may be said, has he used the word "until"?

- Because it is usual in Scripture often to do this, and to use this expression without reference to limited times. For so with respect to the ark, likewise it is said: Gn 8:6: 'The raven returned not till the earth was dried up, v. 7: And yet it did not return

<sup>13</sup> In Fr. Bertoni's use of Chrysostom's Homily V, there is a lapse here of almost a full column, from p. 32 b, to p. 33 a, of the Baronet translation.

even after that time, until the waters had dried up, even though afterwards, it did not return.

**7476:** And when discoursing also of God the Scripture says: Ps 89:2: 'From age until age, You are', not as fixing limits in this case. And again when it is preaching the Gospel beforehand and saying: Ps 71:7: 'In his days hall righteousness flourish, and abundance of peace, till the moon be taken away.' It does not set a limit to this fair part of creation. So then here likewise, it uses the word "Until" to make certain what was before the birth, but as to what follows, it leaves you to make the inference Thus, what it was necessary for you to learn of Him, this He Himself has said; that the Virgin was untouched by man until the birth;.

**7477:** But that which both was seen to be a consequence , and was acknowledged, this in its turn he leaves for you to perceive; namely, that not even after this, she having so become a mother, and having been counted worthy of a new sort of travail and a child-bearing so strange, could that righteous man ever have endured to know her. For if he had known her, and had kept her in the place of a wife, how is it that our Lord commits her, as unprotected, and having no one, to His disciple and commands him to take her to his own home [cf. Jn 19:27].

**7478:** - How then may one say, are Hames and the others called His brethren?

- In the same kind of way as Joseph himself was supposed to be husband of Mary. For many were the veils provided that the birth, being such as it was, might for a time be screened. Wherefore even John so called them, saying Jn 7:5: 'For neither did His brethren believe in Him'. Nevertheless they, who did not believe at first, because afterwards admirable, and illustrious <sup>14</sup>.

**7479:** She brought forth a son, her first-born. 1:25.

It is from this text that some authors most perversely suspect that Mary also had other children, saying that the term 'first-born' would not be used unless he would have had other bothers and sisters. However, it seems to be the custom of the divine Scriptures that the term 'first-born' does not necessarily mean that others followed, but only that this one is the first one born. St. Jerome points this out in his work against Helvidius, t. 7, 14 A. and t. 2, 206, C, ff. We might define it this way: Every Only-born is the First-born: but not every first-born is the Only-born. Hence, 'First-born' implies not only that if there were others, they would have come after him - it simply means that before him, there were none others.

**7480:** Ex 34:19: 'To me belongs every first-born male that opens the womb among all your live-stock, whether in the herd or in the flock.' Nb 18:15: 'Every living thing that

<sup>14</sup> Fr. Bertoni's use of Chrysostom's Homily V seems to end here, even though this Homily continues for another two and one half pages. These next two paragraphs here, which are his last, of Fr. Bertoni's "Meditation 6" have some other source.

opens the womb, whether of man or beast, such as are to be offered to the Lord, shall be yours; but you must let the first-born of man, as well as of unclean animals, be redeemed.' These words of the Lord define what the term 'firstborn' means: 'Every living thing that opens the womb'. Otherwise one is not the 'first-born' only when other brothers and sisters follow, but as long as these first-born are not due to the priests - as long as others are not also procreated, unless perhaps there are no births that follow and then one is the only-begotten and not the first-born.

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**7481 - MEDITATION 6**

**7481:**

Meditation 6

Preparatory Prayer.

Prelude 1. Mt 2:1: After Jesus' birth in Bethlehem of Judea, during the reign of King Herod, the Magi from the east arrived one day in Jerusalem,

v. 2: inquiring, 'Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We observed his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage.

v. 3: At this news, King Herod became greatly disturbed, and with him, all Jerusalem.

**7482:** Mt 2:1: When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem. <sup>15</sup>

We have need of much wakefulness, and many prayers, that we may arrive at the interpretation of the passage now before us, and that we may learn who these wise men were, and whence they came, and how; and at whose persuasion, and what was the star. Or rather, if you will, let us first bring forward what the enemies of the truth say. Because the devil has blown upon them with so violent a blast, as even from this passage to try to arm them against the words of truth.

**7483:** What then to they allege?

1. 'Behold', they say, 'even when Christ was born a star appeared; which is a sign that astrology may be depended on.' <sup>16</sup>

2. And what moreover do the wise men learn from the star of itself? That He was King of the Jews? And yet He was not king of this kingdom; even as He said also to Pilate, Jn 18:36: 'My kingdom is not of this world.' At any rate, He made no display of this kind, for He had neither guards armed with spear or shield, nor horses, nor chariots of mules, nor any other such thing around Him; but He followed this life of meanness and poverty, carrying about with Him twelve men of mean estate.

**7484:** 3. And even if they knew Him to be a king, for what intent are they come? For surely this is not the business of astrology, to know from the stars who are born, but from the hour when men are born to predict what shall befall them.

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<sup>15</sup> Fr. Bertoni begins his Meditation 6, which runs about 6 pages, a copy of Chrysostom's "Homily VI", which runs from pp. 36-43 in the Baronet translation.

<sup>16</sup> Fr. Bertoni skips a sentence here regarding astrology.

But these were neither present with the mother in her pangs, nor did they know the time when He was born, neither did they, beginning at that moment, from the motion of the stars compute what was to happen: but, conversely, having a long time before seen a star appear in their own country, they come to see Him that was born. Which circumstance in itself would afford a still greater difficulty even than the former.

**7485:** 4. For what reason induced them, or the hope of what benefits, to worship one who was king so far off? Why, had He been to reign over themselves, most assuredly not even so would the circumstance be capable of a reasonable account. To be sure, If He had been born in royal courts, and with His father, himself a king, present by him, anyone would naturally say, that they, from a wish to pay court to the father, had worshipped the child that was born, and in this way were laying up for themselves beforehand much ground of patronage But now when they did not so much as expect Him to be their own king, but of a strange nation, far distant from their country, neither seeing Him as yet grown to manhood, wherefore do they set forth on so long a journey.

**7486:** 5. Why would they offer gifts, and this when dangers were sure to beset their whole proceeding? For both Herod, when he heard of it, was exceedingly troubled, and the whole people was confounded on being told of these things by them Mt 2:3.

- But, you say, these men did not foresee this.

Nay, this is not reasonable. For let them have been ever so foolish, of this they could not be ignorant, that when they came to a city under a king, and proclaimed such things as these, and set forth another king besides him who then reigned, they must needs be bringing down upon themselves a thousand deaths.

**7487:** 6. And why did they at all worship one who was in swaddling clothes? For if he had been a grown man, one might say, that in expectation of the succor they should receive from Him, they cast themselves into a danger which they foresaw; a thing however, to the utmost degree unreasonable, that the Persian, the barbarian, and one that had nothing in common with the nation of the Jews, should be willing to depart from his home, to give up country, and kindred, and friends, and that they should subject themselves to another kingdom.

**7488:** 7. But, if this be foolish, what follows is much more foolish.

- Of what nature then is this?

- That after they had entered on so long a journey, and worshipped, and thrown all into confusion, they went away immediately.

**7489:** And what sign at all of royalty did they behold, when they saw a shed, and manger, and a child in swaddling clothes, and a poor mother? And to whom moreover did they offer their gifts, and for what intent? Was it then usual and customary, thus to pay court to the kings that were born in every place? and did they always keep going about the whole world, worshipping them who they knew should become kings out of a low and mean estate, before they ascended the royal throne? No, this no one can say.

**7490:** 9. And for what purpose did they worship Him at all? If for the sake of things present, then what did they expect to receive from an infant, and a mother of mean condition? If for things future, then whence did they know that the child whom they had worshipped in swaddling clothes would remember what was then done? But if His mother were to remind Him, not even so were they worthy of honor, but of punishment, as bringing Him into danger which they must have foreseen. Thence, at any rate it was that Herod was troubled, and sought, and pried, and took in hand to slay Him. And indeed everywhere, he who makes known the future king, supposing him in his earliest age in a private condition, does nothing else than betray him to slaughter, and kindle against him endless warfare.

**7491:** Do you see how manifold the absurdities appear, if we examine these transactions according to the course of human things and ordinary custom? For not these topics only, but more than these might be mentioned, containing more matter for questions than what we have spoken of. But lest, stringing questions upon questions, we should bewilder you, come let us now enter upon the solution of the matters inquired of, making a beginning of our solution with the star itself. For if you can learn what the star was, and of what kind, and whether it were one of the common stars, or new and unlike the rest, and whether it was a star by nature or a star in appearance only, we shall easily know the other things also.

**7492:** - Whence will all these points be manifest?

- From the very things that are written. Thus, that this star was not of the common sort, or rather not a star at all, as it seems at least to me, but some invisible power transformed into this appearance, is in the first place evident from its very course. For there is not, there is not any star that moves this way, but whether it be the sun you mention, or the moon, or all the other stars, we see them going from east to west <sup>17</sup>...and from its appearing and hiding itself again. For along their way as far as Palestine it appeared leading them, but after they set foot in Jerusalem, it hid itself: then again, when they had left Herod, having told him on what account they came, and

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<sup>17</sup> There is about a paragraph here tht Fr. Bertoni skips, noting how this star went from north to south; a star that appears also in the day, and the third reason is contained in Fr. Bertoni's text which follows.



were on the point of departing, it shows itself. All of this is not like the motion of a star, but of some power highly endowed with reason.

**7493:** For it had not even any course of its own, but when they were to move, it moved; when to stand, it stood, dispensing all as need required: in the same kind of way as the pillar of cloud, now halting, and now rousing up the camp of the Jews, when it was needful.

In the second place, one may perceive this clearly, from its mode of pointing Him out. For it did not, remaining on high, point out the place; it not being possible for them so to ascertain it, but it came down and performed this office. For you know that a spot of so small dimensions, being only as much as a shed would occupy, or rather as much as the body of a little infant would take up, could not possibly be marked out by a star. For by reason of its immense height, it could not sufficiently distinguish so confined a spot, and discover it to them that were desiring to see it.

**7494:** And this any one may see by the moon, which being so far superior to the stars, seems to all that dwell in the world, and are scattered over so great an extent an earth, - seems, I say, near to them every one. How then, tell me, did the star point out a spot so confined, just the space of a manger and shed, unless it left that height and came down, and stood over the very head of the young child? And at this the evangelist was hinting when he said, 'Lo, the star went before them, until it came and stood over where the young Child was.' Mt 2>9. So you see by what store of proofs this star is shown not to be one of the many, nor to have shown itself according to the order of the outward creation?

**7495:** - And for what intent did it appear?

- To reprove the Jews for their insensibility, and to cut off from them all occasion of excuse for their willful ignorance. For, since He who came was to put an end to the ancient polity, and to call the world to the worship of Himself, and to be worshipped in all land and sea, straightway, from the beginning, He opens the door to the Gentiles, willing through strangers to admonish His own people.

**7496:** Thus, because the prophets were continually heard speaking of His advent, and they gave no great heed, He made even barbarians come from a far country, to seek after the king that was among them. And they learn from a Persian tongue first of all, what they would not submit to learn from the prophets; that, if on the one hand they were disposed to be candid, they might have the strongest motive for obedience; if, on the other hand, they were contentious, they might henceforth be deprived of all excuse.

**7497:** For what could they have to say, who did not receive Christ after so many prophets, when they saw that wise men, at the sight of a single star, had received this same, and had worshipped Him who was made manifest. Much in the same way then, as He acted in the case of the Ninevites, when He sent Jonas, as in the case of the Samaritan and the Canaanite women; so He did likewise in the instance of the Magi. He also said Mt 12:41: 'The men of Nineveh shall rise up, and shall condemn' and 'the Queen of the South shall rise up, and shall condemn this generation' Lk 11:41.; because these believed the lesser things, but the Jews not even the greater.

**7498:** - And wherefore, one may say, did He attract them by such a vision?

- Why, how should He have done? Sent prophets? But the Magi would not have submitted to prophets. Uttered a voice from above? No, they would not have attended to it. Sent an angel? But even him they would have hurried by. And so for this cause dismissing all these means, God calls them by the things that are familiar, in exceeding condescension; and he shows a large and extraordinary star, so as to astonish them, both at the greatness and beauty of its appearance, and the manner of its course. In imitation of this, Paul also reasons with the Greeks from a heathen altar, and brings forward testimonies from the poets. And not without circumcision does he harangue the Jews. Sacrifices he makes the beginning of his instruction to them that are living under the law. For, since everyone what is familiar is dear, both God, and the men that are sent by Him, manage things on this principle with a view to the salvation of the world.

**7499:** Think it not, therefore, unworthy of Him to have called them by a star; since by the same rule you will find fault with all the Jewish rites also, the sacrifices, and the purifications, and the new moons, and the ark, and the temple too itself. For even these derived their origin from Gentile grossness. Yet for all that, God, for the salvation of them that were in error, endured to be served by these things, whereby those without were used to serve devils; only He slightly altered them; that He might draw them off by degrees from their customs, and lead them towards the highest wisdom. Just so He did in the case of the wise men, also, not disdaining to call them by sight of a star, that He might lift them higher ever after.

**7500:** Therefore He has brought them, leading them by the hand, and has set them by the manger, it is no longer by a star, but by an angel that He now discourses to them. Thus did they little by little become better men. Thus did He also with respect to them of Ascalon and of Gaza. For those five cities too when at the coming of the ark they had been smitten with a deadly plague, and found no deliverance from the ills under which they lay - the men of them called their prophets, and gathered an assembly to discover an escape from this divine scourge 1 K 6:1,ff.

**7501:** Then, when their prophets said that they should yoke to the ark heifers untamed, and having their first calves, and let them go their way, with no man to guide them, for so it would be evident whether the plague was from God, or whether it was any accident which brought the disease; for if, it is said, they break the yoke in pieces for want of practice, or turn where their calves are lowing, it is a chance that has happened. But, if they go on right, and err not from the way, and neither the lowing of their young, nor the ignorance of the way, have any effect on them, it is quite plain that it is the hand of God that has visited those cities.

**7502:** When, I say, on these words of their prophets the inhabitants of those cities obeyed and did as they were commanded, God also followed up the counsel of the prophets, showing condescension in that instance also, and counted it not unworthy of Himself to bring to effect the prediction of the prophets, and to make them seem trustworthy in what they had then said. For so the good achieved was greater, in that His very enemies themselves bore witness to the power of God; ; and indeed their own teachers gave their voice concerning Him. And one may see other such things brought about by God. For what took place with respect to the witch is again like this sort of dispensation, 1 K 28:1, ff.; which circumstance also you will now be able to explain from what has been said.

**7503:** With respect to the star, we have said these things, and yet more perhaps may be said by you; for it is said, Pr 9:9, 'Give occasion to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser'. But we must now come to the beginning of what we have read.

- And what is the beginning?

**7504:** Mt 2:1: When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod, the king, behold, there came the wise men from the east to Jerusalem.'

While the Magi followed under the auspices of a star, they believed not, with prophets even sounding in their ears. But wherefore does he mention to us both the time and the place, saying: 'in Bethlehem' and 'in the days of Herod the king'? And for what reason does he add his rank also?. His rank, because there was also another Herod, he who slew John: but that was a tetrarch, this a king.

**7505:** And the place likewise, and the time, he puts down, to bring to our remembrance ancient prophecies; whereof one was uttered by Micah 5:1 saying : 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means the least among the princes of Judah. From you will come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel; whose origin is from old, from ancient times. 'And the other, by the patriarch Jacob, distinctly marking out to us the time, and setting forth the great sign of His coming Gn 49:1: 'For a ruler shall not fall out of Judah, nor a leader out of his loins, until He come for whom it is appointed, and He is the expectation of the Gentiles.'

**7506:** And this again is worthy of inquiry, whence it was that they came to entertain such a thought, and who it was that stirred them up to this. For it does not seem to me to be the work of the star only, but also of God, who moved their soul; which same kind of thing He did also in the case of Cyrus, disposing him to let the Jews go. He did not however so do this as to destroy their free will, since even when He called Paul from above by a voice, He manifested both His own grace and Paul's obedience.

**7507:** - And wherefore, one may ask, did He not reveal this to all the wise men of the East?

- Because all would not have believed, but these were better prepared than the rest; since also there were countless nations that perished, but it was to the Ninevites only that the Prophet was sent; and there were two thieves on the Cross, but one only was saved. See at least the virtue of these men, not only by their coming, but also by their boldness of speech. For so that they may not seem to be a sort of impostors, they tell who showed them the way, and the length of their journey; and being come, they had boldness of speech: 'For we are come', is their statement, 'to worship Him.' 2:2. And they were afraid neither of the people's anger, nor of the tyranny of the king. Whence to me at least they seem to have been at home also teachers of their countrymen. For they who here did not shrink from saying this, much more would they speak boldly in their own country, as having received both the oracle from the angel, and the testimony from the prophet.

**7508:** Mt 2:3: 'But when Herod had heard, he was troubled and all Jerusalem with him.'

- Herod naturally, as being king, and afraid both for himself and for his children; but why Jerusalem? Surely the prophets had foretold Him a Savior and Benefactor, and a Deliverer from above. Wherefore, then, was Jerusalem troubled?

**7509:** From the same feeling which caused them before also to turn away from God when pouring His benefits on them, and to be mindful of the flesh-pots of Egypt, while in the enjoyment of great freedom. But, mark, I pay you, the accuracy of the prophets. For this selfsame thing also had the prophet foretold from the first, saying Is 9:16: 'For every boot that tramped in battle, every cloak rolled in blood, will be burned as fuel for flames ... They would be glad, if they had been burnt with fire; for unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.'<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> This citation for Isaiah 9 is from the Vulgate in which there is mention of violence, tumult, one's garments mixed in blood, and all will be the food for the flames, yet: a child will be born to us a son is given us.'

**7510:** But nevertheless, although troubled, they seek not to see what happened, neither do they follow the wise men, nor make any particular inquiry; to such a degree were they at once both contentious and careless above all men. For when they had reason rather to pride themselves that the king was born among them, and had attracted to Him the land of the Persians, and they were on the point of having all subject to them, as though their affairs had advanced towards improvement, and from the very outset. His empire had become so glorious; nevertheless, they do not even for this become better. And yet they were but just delivered from their captivity there...<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Most likely, due to time constraints at the seminary, once more Fr. Bertoni ends his "Meditation 6" on p. 40 a, about 7 columns prior to Chrysostom's ending of his "Homily VI" which occurs on p. 43 b of the Baronet translation.

**7511 - MEDITATION 7****7511:** Meditation 7

Mt 2:4-10

## Preparatory Prayer

Prelude 1. Mt 2:4: Summoning all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.

v. 5: 'In Bethlehem of Judea', they informed him. 'Here is what the prophet has written:

v. 6: 'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means the least among the princes of Judah, since from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'

v. 7: Herod called the astrologers aside and found out from them the exact time of the star's appearance..

v. 8: Then he sent them to Bethlehem, after having instructed them: 'Go and get detailed information about the child. When you have found him, report it to me so that I may go and offer him homage, too.'

v. 9: After their audience with the king. They set out. The star which they had observed at its rising went ahead of them until it came to a standstill over the place where the child was.

v. 10: They were overjoyed at seeing the star.

**7512:** Mt 2:4: And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together he demanded of them where Christ should be born. v. 5: And they said to him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea.'

Do you see how all these things are done to convict the Jews? how, as long as He was out of their sight, the envy had not yet laid hold of them, and they rehearsed the testimonies of Him with truth; but when they saw the glory that arose from the miracles, a grudging spirit possessed them, and thenceforth, they betrayed the truth.

**7513:** However, the truth was exalted by all things, and strength was the more gathered for it even by its enemies. See, for example, in this very case, how wonderful and beyond expectation are the results secretly provided for. For both the barbarians and the Jews do the same alike learn something more of one another, and teach one another. Thus, the Jews, for their part, heard from the wise men, that a star also had

proclaimed Him in the land of the Persian; the wise men, in their turn, were informed by the Jews that this Man, whom the star proclaimed, prophets had also made known from a long time of old. And the ground of their inquiry was made to both on occasion of setting forth clearer and more perfect instruction.

**7514:** Thus it was written by the Prophet: And you, Bethlehem, etc. 2:5, ff.

And the enemies of the truth are compelled even against their will to read the writings in favor of the truth, and to interpret the prophecy; although not all of it. For having spoken of Bethlehem, and how that out of it He shall come that should rule Israel, they proceed afterwards to add what follows, out of flattery, to the king.

- And what was this?

Mi 5:2: That His goings forth are from old, from everlasting.'

**7515:** - But why, one might ask, if He was to come from thence, did He live in Nazareth, after the birth and obscure the prophecy?

- No, He did not obscure it, but unfolded it the more; for in fact that while His mother had her constant residence in the one place, He was born in the other, shows the thing to have been done by a Divine dispensation [providence; economy]. And for this cause, let me add, neither did He remove from thence straightway after His birth, but abode forty days, giving opportunity to them that were disposed to be inquisitive to examine all things accurately. Because there were in truth many things to move them to such an inquiry, at least if they had been disposed to give heed to them.

**7516:** Diligence in the study of the necessary truths.

Thus at the coming of the wise men the whole city was in a flutter, and together with the city the king, and the prophet was brought forward, and a court of high authority was summoned; and many other things, too, were done there, all which Luke relates minutely. Such were what concerns Anna and Simeon, and Zaccharias, and the angels, and the shepherds; all which things were to the attentive sufficient to give hints for ascertaining what had taken place. For if the wise men, who came from Persia, were not ignorant of the place, much more might they, whose abode it was, acquaint themselves with these things.

**7517:** He manifested Himself then from the beginning by many miracles, but when they would not see, He hid Himself for a while, to be again revealed from another more glorious beginning. For it was no longer the wise men, nor the star, but the Father from above that proclaimed Him at the streams of Jordan; and the Spirit likewise came upon Him, guiding that voice to the head of Him just baptized; and John, with all plainness of speech, cried out everywhere in Judea till inhabited and waste country alike were filled with that kind of doctrine; and the witness, too, of miracles, and earth, and sea, and the

whole creation, uttered in His behalf a distinct voice. But at the time of the birth just so many things happened as were fitted quietly to mark out Him that was come.

**7518:** Thus, in order that the Jews might not say: We know not when He was born, nor whereabouts, both all these events in which the wise men were concerned were brought about by God's providence, and the rest of the things which we have mentioned; so that they would have no excuse to plead, for not having inquired into that which had come to pass. But mark also the exactness of the prophecy. For it does not say, 'He will abide', in Bethlehem, but He will come out thence, His being simply born there.

**7519:** Some of them, however, being past shame, say that these things were spoken of Zerubbabel. But how can they be right? For surely 'his goings forth' were not 'from of old, from everlasting' [cf. Mi 5:2]. And how can that suit him which is said at the beginning, Out of you He shall come forth? Zerubbabel not having been born in Judea, but in Babylon, whence also he was called Zerubbabel, because he had his origin there? And as many as know the Syrians' language know what I say. And together with what has been said, all the time also since these things is sufficient to establish this testimony.

**7520:** For what does he say? You are not the least among the princes of Judah; and he adds the cause of the pre-eminence, saying, 'out of you shall He come'. But no one else has made that place illustrious or eminent excepting Him alone. For example: since that birth, men come from the ends of the earth to see the manger, and the site of the shed. And this the prophet foretold aloud from the first, saying: You are not the least among the princes of Judah: that is, among the heads of tribes. By which expression he comprehended even Jerusalem. But not even so have they given heed, although the advantage passes on to themselves.

**7521:** Yes, and because of this the prophets at the beginning discourse no where so much of His dignity, as touching the benefit which accrued to them by him. For so when the Virgin was bearing the child, he said: You shall call His Name Jesus, and he gives the reason saying, 'for He shall save His people from their sins.' And the wise men, too, said not: Where is the Son of God?, but: He that is born the King of the Jews.

**7522:** And here again it is not affirmed: Out of you shall come forth the Son of God, but a Governor, that shall shepherd my people Israel. For it was needful to converse with them at first, setting out in a tone of very exceeding condescension, lest they should be offended; and to preach what related to their salvation in particular, that hereby they might be the rather won over. At any rate, all the testimonies that are first cited, and for which it was the season immediately at the time of the birth, say nothing great nor lofty concerning Him, nor such as those subsequent to the manifestation of the miracles; for these discourse more distinctly concerning His dignity.



7523: For instance, when after many miracles children were singing hymns unto Him, hear what the Prophet says Ps 8:2: 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings You have perfected praise.' And again, v. 4: 'I will consider the Heavens the works of Your fingers: which signifies Him to be the Maker of the universe. And the testimony, too, which was produced after the ascension, manifests His equality with the Father; thus saying, 'The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit on my right hand' Is 11:10; Rm 15:12. And Isaiah too says: He who rises up to rule over the Gentiles, in Him shall the Gentiles trust.'

7524: - But how does he say that Bethlehem is not the least among the princes of Judah?

- For not in Palestine alone, but in the whole world, the village has become conspicuous. Why, so far as he was speaking to Jews; wherefore he added: He shall shepherd my people Israel. Mt 2:6.

7525: - And yet He shepherded the whole world.

- But, as I have said, He is fain not to offend as yet, by revealing what He has to say touching the Gentiles.

- But how was it, one may say, that He did not rule the Jewish people??

- I answer first that this too is accomplished: for by the term 'Jerusalem' in this place, he figuratively meant such as believed in Him from among the Jews. And Paul interpreting this, says Rm 9:6: 'For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel.'...v. 8:... but as many have been born by faith and promise.

7526 And if He did not shepherd them all, this is their own fault and blame. For when they ought to have worshipped with the wise men, and have glorified God that such a time was come, doing away all their sins, for not a word was spoken to them of judgments set, or of accounts to be given, but of a mild and meek Shepherd; they for their part do just the contrary, and are troubled and make disturbance, and go on continually framing plots without end.

7527: Mt 2:7: 'Then Herod, when he had privately called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.' Attempting to slay that which was born, - an act of extreme idiocy not of madness only; since what had been said and done was enough to have witholden him from any such attempt. For those occurrences were not after the manner of man. A star, I mean, calling the wise men from on high; and barbarians making so long a pilgrimage, to worship Him that lay in swaddling clothes and a manger; and prophets, too, from of old, proclaiming beforehand all this; - these and all the rest were more than human events: but nevertheless, none of these things restrained him. For such a thing is wickedness. It falls foul of itself, and is ever attempting impossibilities.

7528: And mark his utter folly. If on the one hand he believed the prophecy, and accounted it to be unchangeable, it was quite clear that he was attempting impossibilities; if again he disbelieved, and did not expect that those sayings would come to pass, he need not have been in fear and alarm, nor have formed any lot on that behalf. So that in either way his craft was superfluous. And this, too came of the utmost folly, to think that the wise men would make more account of him than of the Child that was born, for the sake of which they had come so long journey. For if, before they saw, they were so inflamed with longing for Him; after they had seen with their eyes, and been confirmed by the prophecy, how hoped he to persuade them to betray the young Child to him?

7529: Nevertheless, many as were the reason to withhold him, he made the attempt; and having privately called the wise men, he inquired of them the appearance of the star, 2:7: because he thought that Jews would be concerned in favor of the Child; and he never could expect that they would fall away into such madness as to be willing to give up to His enemies their Protector and Savior, and Him who was to come for the deliverance of their nation. On account of this he both calls them privately, and seeks the time not of the Child, but of the star, thereby marking out the object of his chase so as to include far more than it <sup>20</sup>. As to his slaying the children 'from two years old and under', let us not marvel; for his wrath and dread, for the sake of a fuller security, added very much to the time, so that not one would escape.

7530: Having therefore called them, he said:

Mt 2:8: Go and search diligently for the young Child; and when you have found Him, bring me word again that I may come and worship Him also.

Do you see this extreme folly? Why, if you say these things in sincerity, wherefore do you inquire privately? But, if intending to plot against Him, how is it that you do not perceive that from the very fact of their being asked secretly the wise men will be able to perceive your craft? But, as I have already said, a soul taken captive by an wickedness becomes more utterly senseless than any thing.

7531: And he did not say: go and learn concerning the King - but, concerning the young Child. For he could not even endure to call Him by the name of His dominion. But the Magi perceive nothing of this, by reason of their exceeding reverence, for they never could have expected that he could have gone on to so great wickedness, and would have attempted to form plots against a dispensation (economy) so marvelous. And they depart suspecting none of these things but, from what was in themselves auguring all that would be in the rest of mankind.

7532: Mt 2:9: And when they heard these things, they departed from the king. And lo! the star, which they saw in the east, went before them.

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<sup>20</sup> Fr. Bertoni skips several sentences here.

For therefore only was it hidden, that having lost their guide, they might come to be obliged to make inquiry of the Jews, and so the matter might be made evident to all. Since after they have made inquiries, and have had His enemies for informants, it appears to them again.

7533: And mark how excellent was the order; how in the first place after the star of the people of the Jews receives them, and the king, and these bring in the prophecy to explain what had appeared: how next, after the prophet, an angel again took them up and taught them all things; but for a time, they journey from Jerusalem to Bethlehem by the guidance of the star, the star again journeying with them from that place also; that hence too, you might learn, that this was not one of the ordinary stars, for there is not so much as one star that has this nature. And it not merely moved, but 'went before them' drawing and guiding them on in mid-day.

7534: - But what need of this star any more, one may ask, when the place was ascertained?

- In order that the Child also might be seen. For there was not anything to make Him manifest, since the house was not conspicuous, neither was His mother glorious, or distinguished; there was need then of the star, to set them by the place. Wherefore, it re-appears on their coming out of Jerusalem, and stays not, before it has reached the manger. And marvel was linked on to marvel; both were strange things, as well the Magi worshipping, as the star going before them; and enough to attract even such as were made all of stone.

7535: For if the Magi had said they had heard the prophets say these things, or that angels had discoursed with them in private, they might have been disbelieved; but now, when the vision of the star appeared on high, even they that were exceeding shameless had their mouths stopped.

Moreover, the star, when it stood over the young Child, stayed its course again: which thing itself also was of a greater power than belongs to a star, now to hide itself, now to appear, and having appeared to stand still. Hence, they too received an increase of faith.

7536: Mt 2:10: When they saw the star, they rejoiced greatly'. For this cause they rejoiced that they had found what they were seeking, that they had proved messengers of truth. That not without fruit they had come so great a journey; so great a longing to speak had they for Christ. For first it came and stood over His very head, showing that what is born is Divine; next standing there, it leads them to worship Him; being not simply barbarians but the wiser sort among them. Do you see with how great fitness the star appeared? Why; because even after the prophecy and after the

interpretation of the chief priests and scribes, they still had their minds turned towards it...<sup>21</sup>.

7537: Let us then also follow the Magi, let us separate ourselves from the barbarian customs, and make our distance therefrom great, that we may see Christ, since they, too, had they not been far from their own country, would have missed seeing Him. Let us depart from the things of earth. For so the wise men, while they were in Persia, saw but the star, but after they had departed from Persia, they beheld the Sun of Righteousness. Or, rather, they would not have seen so much as the star, unless they had readily risen up from thence. Let us then also rise up; though all men be troubled, let us run to the house of the young Child; ; though kings, though nations, though tyrants interrupt this our path, let not our desire pass away.

7538: For so shall we thoroughly repel all the dangers that beset us. Since these, too, except they had seen the young Child, would not have escaped their danger from the king. Before seeing the young Child, fears and dangers and dtroubles pressed upon them from every side; but after their adoration, it is calm and security; and no longer a star but an Angel receives them....<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> Fr. Bertoni here skips about three wuarters of a column on p.47 a of the Baronet translation,. He then icks up a few paragraphs on p. 47 b.

<sup>22</sup> Fr. Bertoni abruptly ends his Meditation 7 - with a fitting paragraph for his conclusion, right here, p. 47 b of Chrysostom's Homily VII which concludes only on p. 50 b of the Baronet translation.

**7539      -      MEDITATION 8**

7539: Meditation 8

Mt 2:11-15

Preparatory Prayer

Prelude 1. Mt 2:11: And on entering the house, found the child with Mary, his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their coffers and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

v. 12: They received a message in a dream not to return to Herod, so they went back to their own country by another route.

v. 13: After they had left, the angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph with the command; Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee into Egypt. Stay there until I tell you otherwise. Herod is searching for the child to destroy him.

v. 14: Joseph got up and took the child and his mother and left that night for Egypt.

v. 15: He stayed there until the death of Herod, to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: Out of Egypt I have called my son.'

7540: Mt 2:11: And on entering the house, they found the child with Mary, his Mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their coffers and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

- How then does Luke saying that He was lying in a manger??

7541: - Because at the birth indeed she presently laid Him there, for, as was not unlikely, in that large assemblage for the taxing, they could find no house; which Luke also signifies by saying: Lk 2:7: Because there was no room, she laid Him there. But afterwards she took Him up, and held Him on her knees. For no sooner was she arrived at Bethlehem than she brought her pangs to an end, that you might learn thence the whole dispensation (economy), and that these things were not done at random, or by chance, but that all were in course of accomplishment, according to some Divine foreknowledge and prophetic order.

7542: - But what was it that induced them to adore the Child? For neither was the Virgin conspicuous, nor the house distinguished, nor was any other of the things which they saw apt to amaze or attract them. Yet they not only worship, but also open their

treasures, and offer gifts, and gifts not as to a man, but as to God. For the frankincense and the myrrh were a symbol of this. What then was their inducement?

- That which wrought upon them to set out from home and to come so long a journey; and this was both the star, and the illumination wrought of God in their mind, guiding them little by little to the more perfect knowledge.

7543: For surely, had it not been so, all that was in sight being ordinary, they would not have shown so great honor. Therefore, none of the outward circumstances was great in that instance, but it was a manger, and a shed, and a mother in poor estate; to set before your eyes, naked and bare, those wise men's love of wisdom, and to prove to you that not as mere man they approached Him, but as a God and Benefactor. Wherefore neither were they offended by ought of what they saw outwardly, but even worshipped, and brought gifts; gifts not only free from Judaical grossness, in that they sacrificed not sheep and calves, but also coming nigh to the self-devotion of the Church, for it was knowledge and obedience and love that they offered unto Him.

7544: Mt 2:12: And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

See from this also their faith, how they were not offended, but are docile and considerate; neither are they troubled, nor reason with themselves, saying: And yet, if this Child be great, and has any might, what need of flight, and of a clandestine retreat? and wherefore can it be that when we have come openly and with boldness, and have stood against so great a people, and against a king's madness, the angel sends us out of the city as runaways and fugitives? But none of these things did they either day, or think. For this most especially belongs to faith, not to seek an account of what is enjoined, but merely to obey the commandments laid upon us.

7545: Mt 2:13: 'And when they had departed, behold an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying: Arise, and take the young Child and His mother and flee into Egypt.'

There is something here worth inquiring into, both touching the Magi, and touching the Child; for if even they were not troubled, but received all with faith, it is worthy of examination on our part, why they and the young Child are not preserved, continuing there, but they as fugitives go into Persia. He with His mother into Egypt. But what? should He have fallen into the hands of Herod, and having fallen, not have been cut off? No, He would not have been thought to have taken flesh upon Him; the greatness of the Economy would not have been believed. For if while these things are taking lace, and many circumstances are being ordered mysteriously after the manner of men, some have dared to say that His assumption of our flesh is a fable; in what degree of impiety would they not have been wrecked had He done all in a manner becoming His Godhead, and according to His own power?

7546: As to the Magi, He sends them off quickly, at once both commissioning them as teachers to the land of the Persians, and at the same time intercepting the madness of the king, that he might learn that he was attempting things impossible, and might quench his wrath, and desist from this his vain labor. For not alone openly to subdue his enemies, but also to deceive them with ease, is worthy of His power. Thus, for example, he deceived the Egyptians also in the case of the Jews, and having power to transfer their wealth openly into the hands of the Hebrews, He bids them to do this secretly and with craft; and this surely not less than the other miracles made Him an object of terror to His enemies.

7547: At least, they of Ascalon, and all the rest, when they had taken the ark, and being smitten, did after that devise their countrymen not to fight, nor to set themselves against Him, with the other miracles brought this also forward, saying: 1 K 6:6 Wherefore, harden your hearts as Egypt and Pharaoh hardened? When He had mocked them, did He not after that send for His people and they departed? Now this they said as accounting this fresh one interior to those other signs that had been done openly, towards the demonstration of His power and of His greatness. And the like ensued on this occasion, too; a thing sufficient to astonish the tyrant. For consider what it was natural for Herod to feel, and how his very breath would be stopped, deceived as he was by the wise men, and thus laughed to scorn.

7548: - For what, if he did not become better?

- It is not His fault, who marvelously ordered all this, but it is the excess of Herod's madness, not yielding even to those things which had virtue to have persuaded him, and deterred him from his wickedness, but going on still further to receive a yet sharper punishment for folly so great.

7549: - But wherefore, it may be said, is the young Child sent into Egypt?

- In the first place, the Evangelist himself has mentioned the cause, saying: that it might be fulfilled that which was said by the Lord through His prophet: Out of Egypt I have called my son, 2:15,. And at the same time beginnings of fair hopes were thenceforth proclaimed before to the world. That is, since Babylon and Egypt, most in the whole earth were burnt up with the flame of ungodliness. He, signifying from the first that He means to correct and amend both, and inducing men hereby to expect His bounties in regard of the whole world likewise, sent to the one the wise men, the other He himself visited with His mother.

7550: And besides what I have said, there is another lesson also which we are hereby taught tending not slightly to true self-command in us.

- Of what kind then is it?

- To look from the beginning for temptations and plots. See, for instance, how this was the case even at once from His swaddling clothes. Thus, you see at His birth, first a tyrant raging, then flight ensuing, and departure beyond the border; and for no crime His mother is exiled into the land of the barbarians: that you, hearing these things [supposing you thought worthy to minister in any spiritual matter, and then to see yourself suffering incurable ills, and enduring countless dangers], should not be greatly troubled, nor say, What can this be? Yet, surely I ought to be crowned and celebrated, and be glorious and illustrious for fulfilling the Lord's commandment; but that having this example, you might bear all things nobly, knowing that this especially is the order of all things spiritual, to have everywhere temptations in the same lot with them.

7551: See at least how this is the case not only with regard to the mother of the young Child, but also of those barbarians; since they for their part retire secretly in the condition of fugitive; and she again, who had never passed over the threshold of her house, is commanded to undergo so long a journey of affliction, on account of this wonderful birth, and her spiritual travail.

7552: And behold a wonder again. Palestine plots, and Egypt receives and preserves Him that is the object of the plots. For, as it appears, not only in the instance of the sons of the patriarch did types take place, but also in our Lord's own case. In many instances, we are sure, His doings at that time were prophetic declarations of what was to happen afterwards; as, for example, in the matter of the ass and the colt. Mt21:2.

7553: Now the Angel having thus appeared, talks not with Mary, but with Joseph; and what does he say? Arise, and take the young Child and His mother' 2:13: Here he does not say any more, 'your wife', but 'His mother. 'For after that the birth had taken place, and the suspicion was done away, and the husband appeased, thenceforth the angel talks openly calling neither child nor wife his, but 'take the young Child and His mother, and flee into Egypt.'; and he mentions the cause of the flight: 'For Herod', he says, 'will seek the young Child's life' 2:13. Joseph, when he had heard these things, was not offended, neither did he say; The thing is hard to understand. Did you not say just now that he should 'save His people from their sins?' and now He saves not even Himself: but we must flee and go far from home, and be a long time away? The facts are contrary to the Promise/

7554: No, he says none of these things; for the man was faithful; neither is he curious about the time of his return, even though the Angel had put it indefinitely, thus:

Stay there until I tell you, 2:13.

But, nevertheless, not even at this did he shudder, but submits and obeys, undergoing all the trials with joy. and this because God, who is full of love to man, did



with these hardships mingle things pleasant also; which indeed is His way with regard to all the saints, making neither their dangers nor their refreshment continual, but weaving the life of all righteous men out of both the one and the other. This very thing He did here also: for consider

7555: Joseph saw the Virgin with child: this cast him into agitation and the utmost trouble <sup>23</sup>. But straightway the angel was at hand to do away with his suspicion, and remove his fears; and seeing the young child born, he reaped the greatest joy. Again, this joy no trifling danger succeeds, the city being troubled, and the king in his madness seeking after Him that was born. But this trouble was again succeeded by another joy; the star, and the adoration of the wise men. Again after this pleasure, fear and danger.

7556: For Herod, he said, is seeking the young child's life, 2:13. Further the Angel indicated that He must needs flee and withdraw Himself as any mortal might: the working of miracles not being reasonable as yet. For if from His earliest infancy He had shown forth wonders, He would not have been accounted a Man. Because of this, let me add, neither is a temple framed at once; but a regular conception takes place, and a time of nine months, [and pangs, ] and a delivery, and giving suck, and silence for so long a space, and He awaits the age proper to manhood; that by all means acceptance might be won for the mystery of His Economy.

7557: - But wherefore, then, one may say, were even these signs wrought at the beginning?

- For His mother's sake; for the sake of Joseph and of Simeon, who was presently to depart; for the sake of the shepherds and of the wise men; for the sake of the Jews. Since they, had they been willing to mind diligently what was taking place, would from this event also have reaped no small advantage in regard of what was to come. But, if the prophets do not mention what relates to the Magi, be not troubled; for they neither foretold all things, nor were they silent touching all. For as without any warning to see those things coming to pass, would naturally occasion much astonishment and trouble; so also to have been informed of all would dispose the hearer to sleep, and would have left nothing for the evangelists to add.

7558: And if the Jews should raise a question touching the prophecy, and say, that the words: 'Out of Egypt have I called My Son', were uttered concerning themselves; we would tell them, this is a law of prophecy, that in many cases much that is spoken of one set of persons is fulfilled in another; of which kind is that which is said touching Simeon and Levi, 'I will divide them', He said, Gn 49:7, 'in Jacob and scatter them in Israel.' And yet not themselves did this come to pass, but in their descendants; and Noah's saying again about Canaan, came to pass in the Gibeonites, Canaan's

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<sup>23</sup> Fr. Bertoni eliminates here a harsh sounding sentence whereby St. Joseph is presented as 'suspecting the damsel of adultery.'

descendants. And that concerning Jacob one may see to have so come to pass; for these blessings, Gn 27:29, which say: 'Be lord over your brother and let your father's sons worship you' had no accomplishment in himself. How could they, he being in fear and trembling, and worshipping his brother over and over again [cf. Gn 33:3] but in his offspring they had.

7559: The very same may be said in this case also. For which may be called the truer son of God, he that worships a calf, and is joined to Baalpeor [cf. Nb 25:3] and sacrifices his sons to devils? or, He that is son by nature, and honors Him that fathered Him? So that, except this man had come, the prophecy would not have received its due fulfillment. It is worth observing, too, that the evangelist intimates the same by the phrase: 'that it might be fulfilled', implying that it would not have been fulfilled unless He had come. And this makes the Virgin also no common degree glorious and distinguished; that the very thing which was the whole people's special endowment in the way of praise, she also might thenceforth have for her own. I mean, that whereas they were proud of their coming up from Egypt, and used to boast of it [which indeed the prophet also was hinting at, when he said, Am 9:7, 'Have I not brought up the Palestinians from Cappadocia and the Assyrians from the pit, Cyrene? He makes this pre-eminence belong to the virgin likewise.

7560: Rather, however, both the people and the patriarch, going down thither, and coming up thence, were together competing the type of this *His* return. Thus, as they went down to avoid death by famine, so His death was by conspiracy. But whereas they on their arrival were for the time delivered from the famine, this man, when He had gone down sanctified the whole land by setting His foot thereon.

7561: At least it is observable how, in the midst of His humiliations, the tokens of His Godhead are disclosed. Thus, first of all, the Angel saying: 'Flee into Egypt' did not promise to journey with them, either in their descent or return; intimating that they have a great fellow-traveler, the Child that had been born; such a one actually changed all things immediately on His appearing, and wrought so that His enemies should minister in many ways to this economy. Thus Magi and barbarians, leaving the superstition of their fathers, are come to worship: thus Augustus ministers to the birth at Bethlehem by the decree for taxing... <sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Fr. Bertoni ends on this note of the Roman Emperor being employed by Providence to serve the mystery of the Incarnation. This ending is midway through page 53 b of the Baronet translation of Chrysostom's Homily VIII which does not terminate until page 55 b near the top. Fr. Bertoni's Meditation 9 picks up Homily IX on p. 55 an ear the bottom.

**7562 - MEDITATION 9****7562:****Meditation 9****Mt 2:16- 23****Preparatory Prayer.**

Prelude 1. Mt 2:16: Once Herod realized that he had been deceived by the astrologers, he became furious. He ordered the massacre of all the boys two years old and under in Bethlehem and its environs, making his calculations on the basis of the date he had learned from the astrologers.

v. 17: What was said through Jeremiah the prophet was then fulfilled:

v. 18: 'A cry was heard at Ramah, sobbing and loud lamentation: Rachel bewailing her children; no comfort for her, since they are no more.'

v. 19: But after Herod's death, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt

v. 20: with the command: 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and get out for the land of Israel. Those who had designs on the life of the child are dead.'

v. 21: He got up, took the child and his mother, and returned to the land of Israel.

v. 22: He heard, however, that Archelaus had succeeded his father Herod as king of Judea, and he was afraid to go back there. Instead because of a warning received in a dream, Joseph went to the region of Galilee.

v. 23: There he settled in a town called Nazareth. In this way what was said through the prophets was fulfilled: He shall be called a Nazorean.'

7563: Mt 2:16: Once Herod realized that he had been deceived by the astrologers, he became furious. He ordered the massacre of all the boys two years old and under in Bethlehem and its environs, making his calculations on the basis of the date he had learned from the astrologers.

Yet surely it was not a case for anger, but for fear and awe: he ought to have perceived that he was attempting impossible things. But he is not refrained. For when a soul is insensible and incurable, it yields to none of the medicines given by God.

7564: And setting to it, he killed all the boys: See for example this man following up his former efforts, and adding many murders to one, and hurried down the steep any whither. For driven wild by his anger, and envy as by some demon, he takes account of nothing, but rages even against nature herself, and his anger against the Magi who had mocked him he vents upon the children that had done no wrong: venturing then in Palestine upon a deed akin to the things that had been done in Egypt. For it says he 'sent forth and slew all the children then were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.'

7565: Here attend to me carefully. Because many thing are uttered by many very idly touching these children, and the course of evens is charged with injustice, and some of these express their perplexity about it in a more moderate way, others with more of audaciousness and frenzy. In order then that we may free these of their madness and those of their perplexity, suffer us to discourse a little upon this topic.

7566: Plainly, then, if this be their charge, that the children were left to be slain, they should find fault likewise with the slaughter of the soldiers that kept Peter [cf. Ac 12:19]. For as here, when the young Child had fled, other children are massacred in the place of Him who was sought; even so then, too, Peter having been delivered from his prison and chains by the angel, one of like name with this tyrant, and like temper, too, when he had sought him, and found him not, slew instead of him the soldiers that kept him.

7567: - And what is this? you ask: why, this is no solution, but an enhancement of our difficulty. <sup>25</sup>.

- What, then, is the solution of these things? or what fair account of them can we give?

7568: - That Christ was not the cause of their slaughter, but the king's cruelty; as indeed neither was Peter to those others, but the madness of Herod. For if he had seen the wall broken through, or the doors overthrown, he might, perhaps, have had ground to accuse the soldiers that kept the apostle of neglect; but now when all things continued in due form, and the doors were thrown wide open, and the chains fastened to the hands of them that kept him, for in fact they were bound unto him, he might have inferred from these things, that is, if he had been strictly doing a judge's office on the matters before him, that the event was not of human power, or craft, but of some divine and wonder-working power; he might have adored the doer of these things, instead of waging war with the sentinels.

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<sup>25</sup> Fr. Bertoni skips one sentence in the text here, p. 55 b of the Baronet translation

7569: For God had done all that he did, that so far from exposing the keepers, He was by their means leading the king into the truth. But if he proved senseless, what would this mean to that skillful Physician of Souls, managing all things to do good, the insubordination of him that is diseased?

7570: And just this one may say in the present case likewise. For wherefore are you, Herod, so angry at the Magi who deceived you? Did you not know that the birth was divine? Or did you not summon the chief priests? Did you not gather together the scribes? Did they not, being called, bring the prophet also with them into your court of judgment, proclaiming these things before hand from of old? Did you not see how the old things agreed with the new? Did you not hear that a star also ministered to these men? Did you not reverence the zeal of the barbarians? Did you not marvel at their boldness? Were you not horror-struck at the truth of the prophet? Did you not from former things perceive the very last also? Wherefore, did you not reason with yourself from all these things, that this event was not of the craft of the wise men, but of a Divine Power, duly dispensing all things? And even if you were deceived by the wise men, what is that to the young children who have done no wrong?

7571: - Indeed, said one, Herod, you are full well deprived of excuse, and proved him blood-thirsty; but you have not yet solved the question about the injustice of what took place. For if he did unjustly, wherefore did God permit it?

- Now what should we say to this? That which I do not cease to say continually, in church, in the market-place, and everywhere; that which I also wish you carefully to keep in mind, for it is a sort of rule for us, suited to every such perplexity.

- What then is our rule, and what our saying?

- That although there be many that injure, yet is there not so much as one that is injured. And in order that the riddle may not disturb you too much, I add the solution with all speed.

7572: I mean, that what we may suffer unjustly from any one, it tells either to the doing away of our sins, God so putting that wrong to our account; or unto the recompense of rewards. And that what I may say be clearer, let us conduct our argument in the way of illustration. As thus: suppose a certain servant who owes much money to his master, and then that this servant has been despitefully used by unjust men, and robbed of some of his goods. If then, the master, in whose power it was to stay the plunderer and wrong doer, should not indeed restore that same property, but should reckon what was taken away towards what was owed him by his servant, is the servant then injured? By no means. But what if he should repay him even more? Has he not then even gained more than he lost? Everyone, I suppose, perceives it.

7573: For this same reckoning we are to make in regard of our own sufferings. For as to the fact, that in consideration of what we may suffer wrongfully, we either have sins done away, or receive more glorious crowns, if the amount of our sins be not so great: hear what Paul says concerning him that had committed fornication, 1 Co 5:5: 'Deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that the spirit may be saved.'

7574: - But what is this? for the discourse was about them that were injured by others, not about them that are corrected by their teachers.

- I might answer that there is no difference; for the question was, whether to suffer evil or not an indignity to the sufferer.

7575: But, to bring my argument nearer the very point inquired of; remember David, how when he saw Shimei at a certain time assailing him, and trampling on his affliction, and pouring on him revilings without end, his captains desiring to slay him, he utterly forbade them, saying 2 K 16:11:...Let him curse, that the Lord may look upon mine abasement, and that He may requite me good for this cursing this day.' v. 12. And the Psalms, too, in his chanting, too, he said Ps 24:18: 'Consider mine enemies, that they are multiplied, and they hate me with unjust hatred. For give all my sins v. 19. And Lazarus again for the same cause enjoyed remission, having in this life suffered innumerable evils.

7576: They, therefore, who are wronged, are not wronged if they bear nobly all that they suffer, indeed, rather they gain even more abundantly whether they be smitten of God, or scourged by the devil.

- But what kind of sin had these children, it may be said, 'that they should do it away? For touching those who are of full age, and have been guilty of negligences, one might with show of reason speak thus: but they who underwent so premature death, what sort of sins did they by their sufferings put away?

7577: - Did you not hear me say, that though there were no sins, there is a recompense of rewards hereafter for them that suffer ill here?. Wherein then were the young children hurt in being slain for such a cause, and borne away speedily into that waveless harbor?

- Because, you might say, they would in many instances have achieved, had they lived, many and great deeds of goodness.

- Why, for this cause He lays up for them beforehand no small reward, the ending their lives for such a cause. Besides, if the children were to have been any great persons, He would not have suffered them to be snatched away beforehand. For if they that eventually will live in continual wickedness are endured by him with so great long-sufferings, much more would He not have suffered these to be taken off had He foreknown they would accomplish any great things.

7578: And these are the reasons we have to give; yet these are not all; but there are also others more mysterious than these, which He knows perfectly, who Himself ordered these things. Let us then give up to Him the more perfect understanding of this matter, and apply ourselves to what follows, and in the calamities of others let us learn to bear all things nobly.

7579: Indeed, for it was no little scene of woe, which then befell Bethlehem, the children were snatched from their mother's breast, and dragged to this unjust slaughter.. And if you are still faint-hearted, and not equal to controlling yourself in these things, learn the end of him who dared all this, and recover yourself a little. For very quickly was he overtaken by punishment for these things; and he paid the due penalty of such an abominable act ending his life by a grievous death, and more pitiable than that which he now dared inflict; suffering also countless additional ills, which you may know of by perusing Josephus' account of these events. But, lest we should make our discourse long, and interrupt its continuity, we have not thought it necessary to insert that account in what we are saying.

7580: Mt 2:17: 'Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet saying, v. 18: In Rama was there a voice heard, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.'

Thus having filled the hearer with horror by relating these things; the slaughter so violent and unjust, so extremely cruel and lawless; he comforts him again, by saying, Not from God's wanting power to prevent it did all this take place, nor from any ignorance of His, but when He both knew it, and foretold it, and that loudly by His prophet. Be not troubled then, neither despond, looking unto His unspeakable providence, which one may most clearly see, alike by what He works, and by He permits. And this He intimated in another place also, when discoursing to His disciples.

7581: I mean where, having forewarned them of the judgment seats, and executions, and of the wars of the world, and of the battle that knows no truce, to uphold their spirit and to comfort them He said, Mt 10:29: 'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing. and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father who is in Heaven.' These things He said signifying that nothing is done without His knowledge, but while He knows all, yet not in all does He act. Be not troubled, He said, neither be disturbed. For if He knows what you suffer and has power to hinder it, it is quite clear that it is in His providence an care for you that He does not hinder it. And this we ought to bear in mind in our own temptations also, and great will be the consolation we will thence receive.

7582: - But what, it may be said, has Rachel to do with Bethlehem? For it says: 'Rachel is weeping for her children.' And what has Rama to do with Rachel?

- Rachel was the mother of Benjamin, and on his death, they buried her in the horse-course that was near this place [cf. Gn 35:19;48:17 - LXX]. The tomb then being near, and the portion pertaining to Benjamin, her infant, for Rama was of the tribe of Benjamin, from the head of the tribe first, and next from the place of her burial, He naturally denominates her young children who were massacred. Then to show that the wound that befell her was incurable and cruel, He said 'she would not be comforted because they are not.'2:18.

7583: Hence again we are taught this, which I mentioned before, never to be confounded when what is happening is contrary to the promise of God. Behold, for instance, when He was come for the salvation of the people, or rather for the salvation of the world, of what kind were His beginnings. his mother, first, in flight; His birth-place is involved in irremediable calamities, and a murder is perpetrated of all murders the bitterest, and there is lamentation and great mourning, and wailings everywhere. But be not troubled; for He is wont ever to accomplish His own dispensations by their contraries, affording us from thence a very great demonstration. Thus did He lead His own disciples also, and prepared them to do all their duty, bringing about things by their contraries, that the marvel might be the greater. They, at any rate, being scourged and persecuted, and suffering terrors without end, did in this way get the better of them that were beating and persecuting them.

7584: Mt 2:19: 'But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph, v. 20: saying, Arise, and take the young Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel.'

He did not say: 'flee', but 'go'. Do you see again after the temptation, refreshment? then after the refreshment, danger again? In that he was freed from his banishment, and came back again to his own county; and behold the murderer of the children brought to the slaughter; but when he set foot in his own country, he finds again a remnant of the former perils, the son of the tyrant now living and being king.

7585: - But how long did Archelaus reign over Judea, when Pontius Pilate was governor?

- Herod's death had recently taken place, and the kingdom had not yet been divided into many parts; but as he had only just ended his life, the son for a while kept possession of the kingdom, in the room of his father, Herod. His brother also bearing his name, which is the reason why the evangelist added : in the room of his father, Herod. 2:22. It may be said, however, if he was afraid to settle in Judea on account of Archelaus, he had cause to fear Galilee, also on account of Herod. I answer, by changing the place, the whole matter was thenceforward thrown into shade.



7586: For the whole assault was upon 'Bethlehem and the coasts thereof. 'Therefore, now that the slaughter had taken place, the youth Archelaus had not other thought but that the whole was come to an end, and that among the many, He that was sought had been destroyed. And besides, his father having come to such an end of his life before his eyes, he became for the future more cautious about farther proceedings, and about urging on that course of iniquity.

'Instead, because of a warning received in a dream, Joseph went to the region of Galilee. There he settled in a town called Nazareth. In this way what was said through the prophets, etc. 2:22, f.

7587: Joseph therefore comes to Nazareth, partly to avoid the danger, partly also delighting to abide in his native place. To give him the more courage, he receives also an oracle from the angel touching this matter. Luke, however, does not say that he came there by Divine warning, but that when they had fulfilled all the purification, they returned to Nazareth. What then may one say? That Luke is giving an account of the time before the going down to Egypt, when he said these things. For He would not have brought them down thither before the purification, in order that nothing should be done contrary to the law, but he waited for her to be purified, and to go to Nazareth and that then they should do down to Egypt.

7588: Then after their return, He bids them go to Nazareth. But before this they were not warned of God to go thither, but yearning after their native place, they did so of their own accord. For since they had gone up for no other cause but on account of the taxing, and had not so much as a place where to stay, when they had fulfilled that for which they had come up, they went to Nazareth. We see here the cause why the angel also, putting them at ease for the future, restores them to their home.

And not even this simply, but he adds to it a prophecy, 'that it might be fulfilled', he says, 'which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.'

7589: - And what manner of prophet said this?

- Be not curious, nor over-busy. For many of the prophetic writings have been lost and this one may see from the history of the Chronicles, 2 Ch 9:29; 12:15; 13:22, etc. For being negligent, and continually falling into ungodliness, some they suffered to perish, others themselves burnt up and cut to pieces

7590: The latter fact Jeremiah relates, 36:23, the former, he who composed the Fourth Book of Kings, 22:8, f., saying that after a long time the Book of Deuteronomy was hardly found, buried somewhere and lost. But if, when there was no barbarian there, they so betrayed their books, much more when the barbarians had overrun them. For as to the fact, that the prophet had foretold it, the apostles themselves in many places call Him the Nazarene [cf. Ac 3:22; 4:10; 6:14, etc.].

7591: - Was not this, then, one may say, casting a shade over the prophecy touching Bethlehem?

- By no means: rather this very fact was sure greatly to stir up men, and to awaken them to the search of what was said of Him. Thus, for example, Nathaniel too enters on the inquiry concerning Him, saying, Jn 1:46: 'Can there anything good come out of Nazareth?' For the place was of little esteem; or, rather not that place only, but also the whole district of Galilee. Therefore, the Pharisees said, Jn 7:15: 'Search and look, for out of Galilee arises no prophet.'

7592: Nevertheless, He is not ashamed to be named even from thence, signifying that He needs not ought of the things of men; and His disciples also He chooses out of Galilee; everywhere cutting off the pretexts of them who are disposed to be remiss, and giving tokens that we have no need of outward things, if we practice virtue. For this cause He does not choose for Himself so much as a house; Lk 9:58: 'For the Son of Man, ' He says, has nowhere to lay his head. 'And when Herod is plotting against Him, He flees and at His birth is laid in a manger, and abides in an inn, and takes a mother of low estate; teaching to think no such thing a disgrace ... <sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> Fr. Bertoni ends his Meditation 9, on p. 59 a of the Baronet translation, about four columns earlier than Chrysostom ends his Homily IX, on p. 61 b of said translation.

## 7341 - MEDITATION 10

**7593: Meditation 10****Mt 3:1, 2****Preparatory Prayer**

Prelude 1. Mt 3:1: When John the Baptizer made his appearance as a preacher in the desert of Judea, this was his theme:

v. 2: Reform your lives! The reign of God is at hand!

v. 3: It was of him that the prophet Isaiah had spoken when he said: 'A herald's voice in the desert: Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.'

v. 4: John was clothed in a garment of camel's hair, and wore a leather belt around his waist. Grasshoppers and wild honey were his food.

v. 5: At that time Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him.

v. 6: They were being baptized by him in the Jordan river as they confessed their sins.

7594: 'In those days', 3:1.

- How 'in those days'? For not then, surely, when He was a child and came to Nazareth, but thirty years after, John comes as Luke also testifies. How then is it said: 'In those days'?

7595: The Scripture is always wont to use this manner of speech, not only when it is mentioning what occurs in the time immediately after, but also of things which are to come to pass many year later. Thus also, for example, when His disciples came unto Him as He sat on the Mount of Olives, and sought to learn about His coming, and the taking of Jerusalem [cf. Mt 24:3]: [and yet you know how great is the interval between those several periods]. I mean, that having spoken of the subversion of the mother city, and having completed His discourse on that subject, and being about to pass to that on the consummation, he inserted: Then these things also come to pass. Not bringing together the times by the word *then*, but indicating that time only in which these things were to happen.

7596: And this sort of thing he does now also, saying: 'In those days'. For this is not put to signify the days that come immediately after, but those in which these things were to take place, which he was preparing to relate.

- But why was it after thirty years it may be said that Jesus came to His baptism?

- After this baptism, He was thenceforth to do away with the law: wherefore, even until this age, which admits of all sins, He continues fulfilling it all; that no one might say, that because He Himself could not fulfill it, He did it away. For neither do all passions assail us at all times; but while in the first age of life there is much thoughtlessness and timidity, in that which comes after it, pleasure is more vehement, and after this again, the desire of wealth. For this cause he awaits the fullness of His adult age, and throughout it all fulfills the law, and so comes to His baptism, adding it as something which follows upon the complete keeping of all other commandments.

7597: To prove that this was to Him the last good work of those enjoined by the law, hear His own words: 'For thus it comes us to fulfill all righteousness' Mt 3:15] Now what He said is like this: We have performed all the duties of the law, we have not transgressed so much as one commandment. Since, therefore, this only remains, this, too, must be added, and so shall we 'fulfill all righteousness.' For He here calls by the name of 'righteousness' the full performance of all the commandments. Now that on this account Christ came to His baptism, is evident.

7598: But wherefore was this baptism devised for Him? For that not of himself did the son of Zaccharias proceed to this, but of God who moved him - this Luke also declares, when he said: Lk 3:2: '... The Word of the Lord came unto John,; that is, His commandment. And he himself too said: Jn 1:33: '... He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said to me, upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending like a dove, and remaining on him, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'

- Wherefore was he sent to baptize?

- The Baptist again makes this plain to us, saying: Jn 1:31: '...I knew Him not, but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.'

7599: - And if this was the only cause, how does Luke say 3:1 that: He came into the country about the Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins? And yet it had not remission, but this gift pertained to the baptism that was given afterwards; for in this 'we are buried with Him', Rm 6:4, ff., and our old man was then crucified with him, and before the cross there does not appear remission anywhere; for everywhere this is imputed to His blood.

7600: And Paul says, 1 Co 6:11: But you are washed, but you are sanctified, not by the baptism of John, but 'in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God,' Ac 19:4. And elsewhere it says John truly preached a baptism of repentance [he does not say of 'remission'], 'that they should believe in Him that should come

after him'. For when the sacrifice was not yet offered, neither had the spirit come down, nor sin was put away, nor the enmity removed, nor the curse destroyed; how was remission to take place?

7601: - What does it mean, then: 'for the remission of sins'?

- The Jews were senseless, and had never any feeling of their own sins, but while they were justly accountable for the worst evil, they were justifying themselves in every respect; and this more than anything caused their destruction, and led them away from the faith. This, for example, Paul himself was laying to their charge when he said that Rm 10: 3: 'they being ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish their own, had not submitted themselves into the righteousness of God.' And again: Rm 9:30: 'What shall we say, then? That the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness have attained to righteousness; but Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, has not attained unto the law of righteousness v.32.' Why? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by works, v. 31.

7602: Since therefore this was the cause of their evils, John comes, doing nothing else but bringing them to a sense of their own sins. This, among other things, his very garb declared, being that of repentance and confession. this was indicated also by what he preached, for nothing else did he say, but, 'brings forth fruits meet for repentance' [cf. Mt 3:8] <sup>27</sup>. Forasmuch the as their not condemning their own sins, as Paul has also explained, made them start off from Christ, while their coming to a sense thereof would set them upon longing to seek after their redeemer, and to desire remission; this John came to bring about, and to persuade them to repent, not in order that they might be punished, but that having become by repentance more humble, and condemning themselves, they might hasten to receive remission.

7603: But let us see how exactly he has expressed it; how, having said, that he 'came preaching the baptism of repentance in the wilderness of Judea', Mt 3:1: added: 'for remission', Lk 3:3; as though he said, For this end he exhorted them to confess and repent of their sins; not that they should be punished, but that they might more easily receive the subsequent remission. For had they not condemned themselves, they could not have sought after His grace: and not seeking, they could not have obtained remission. thus that baptism led the way for this: 'they should believe in Him which should come after him', Ac 19:4, together with that which has been mentioned setting forth this other cause of His baptism.

7604: For neither would it have been as much for him to have gone about to their houses, and to have led Christ around taking Him by the hand, and to have said, 'Believe in this Man', as for that blessed voice to be uttered, and all those other things performed in the presence and sight of all. On account of this He comes to the baptism. Since in fact both the credit of him that was baptizing, and the purport of the

<sup>27</sup> Fr. Bertoni quotes Lk 3:6 here.

thing itself, was attracting the whole city, and calling it unto Jordan; and it became a great spectacle. Therefore he humbles them also when they are come, and persuades them to have no high fancies about themselves; showing them liable to the utmost evils, unless they would repent, and leaving their forefathers, and all vaunting in them, would receive Him that was coming.

7605: Because in fact the things concerning Christ had been up to that time veiled, and many thought He was dead, owing to the massacre which took place at Bethlehem. For though at twelve years old He discover Himself, yet did He also quickly veil Himself again. And for this cause there was need of that splendid exordium and of a loftier beginning. Wherefore also then for the first time he with clear voice proclaims things which the Jews had never heard, neither from prophets, nor from any besides; making mention of Heaven, and of the kingdom there, and no longer saying anything touching the earth. But by the kingdom in this place he means His former and His last advent.

7606: The Kingdom.

- But what is this to the Jews?, one may see, for they know not what you save.'

- Why, for this cause, said he , do I speak, in order that being roused by the obscurity of my words, they may proceed to seek Him, whom I preach. In point of fact, he so excited them with good hopes when they came near, that even many publicans and soldiers inquired what they should do, and how they should direct their own life; which was a sign of being thenceforth set free from all worldly things, and of looking to other objects, and of foreboding things to come. Yes, for all, both the sights and the words of that time, led them unto lofty thoughts.

7607: Conceive, for example, how great a thing it was to see a man after thirty years coming down from the wilderness, being the son of a chief priest, who had never known the common wants of men, and was on every account venerable, and had Isaiah with him. For he, too, was present, proclaiming him, and saying: This is he who I said should come crying, and preaching throughout the whole wilderness with a clear voice. For so great was the earnestness of the prophets touching these things, that not their own Lord only, but him also who was to minister unto Him, they proclaimed a long time beforehand, and they not only mentioned him, but the place too, in which he was to abide, and the manner of the doctrine which he had to teach when he came and the good effect that was produced in him.

7608: See, at least, how both the prophet and the Baptist go upon the same ideas, although not upon the same words.. Thus the Prophet says that he shall come saying: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight' [cf. Is 11:3]. And he himself when he was come, said Mt 3:3: 'Bring forth fruits meet for repentance' , which corresponds with: Prepare the way of the Lord. Mt 3:8.

7609: Do you see that both by the words of the prophet and by his own preaching, this one thing is manifested alone; that he was come making a way and preparing beforehand, not bestowing the gift, which was the remission, but ordering in good time the souls of such as should receive the gift of all?

7610: But Luke, 3:5, f. expresses somewhat further: not repeating the exordium, and so passing on, but setting down likewise all the prophecy, saying, Is 40: 4: 'For every valley shall be filled; and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.' Do you perceive how the prophet has anticipated all by his words; the concourse of the people, the change of things for the better, the easiness of that which was preached, the first cause of all that was occurring, even if he has expressed it rather as in figure, it being in truth a prophecy which he was uttering?

7611: Thus, when he said; 'Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the rough ways shall be made smooth', he is signifying the exaltation of the lowly, the humiliation of the self-willed, the hardness of the law changed into easiness of faith. For it is no longer toils and labors, he said, but grace, and forgiveness of sins, affording great facility of salvation. Next he states the cause of these things, saying: 'All flesh shall see the salvation of God' Lk 3:6.

7612: No longer Jews and proselytes only, but also all earth and sea, and the whole race of men. Because by 'the crooked things' he signified our whole corrupt life, publicans, harlots, robbers, magicians, as many as having been perverted before, afterwards walked in the right way: much as He Himself likewise said: 'publicans and harlots to into the kingdom of God before you, Mt 21:31, because they believed.

7613: And in other words also again the prophet declared the self-same thing, thus saying, Is 65:25: 'Then wolves and lambs shall feed together.' For like as here by the hills and valleys he meant the incongruities of character are blended into one and the same evenness of self-restraint, so also there, by the characters of the brute animals indicating the different dispositions of men, he again spoke of their being linked in one and the same harmony of godliness. Here also, as before, stating the cause. That cause is, Is 11:10, 'There shall be He that rises to reign over the Gentiles, in Him shall the Gentiles trust' - much as the same as here, too, he said: 'All flesh shall see the salvation of God', and everywhere declaring that the power and knowledge of these our Gospels would be poured out to the ends of the world, converting the human race, from a brutish disposition and a fierce temper to something very gentle and mild.

7614: Mt 3:4: 'And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins'.

Observe how the prophets foretold some things, others they left to the evangelists. Wherefore also Matthew both sets down the prophecies, and adds his own part, not counting even this superfluous, to speak of the dress of the righteous man. For indeed it was a marvelous and strange thing to behold so great austerity in a human frame: which thing also particularly attracted the Jews, seeing in him the great Elijah, and guided by what they then beheld, to the memory of that blessed man; or rather, even to a greater astonishment. For the one indeed was brought up in cities and in houses, the other dwelt entirely in the wilderness from his very swaddling clothes.

7615: For it became the forerunner of Him who was to put away all the ancient ills, the labor, for example, the curse, the sorrow, the sweat; himself also to have certain tokens of such a gift, and to come at once to be above that condemnation. thus he neither ploughed land, nor opened furrow, he ate not his bread by the sweat of his face, but his table was hastily supplied and his clothing more easily furnished than his table, and his lodging yet less troublesome than his clothing.

7616: For he needed neither roof, nor bed, nor table, nor any other of these things, but a kind of angel's life in this our flesh did he exhibit. For this cause his very garment was of camels' hair, that by his dress he might instruct men to separate themselves from all things human, and to have nothing in common with the earth, but to hasten back to their earlier nobleness, wherein Adam was before he wanted garments or robe.

7617: Thus that garb bore tokens of nothing less than a kingdom, and of repentance. And do not say to me:

- Whence had he a garment of hair and a girdle, dwelling as he did in the wilderness? For if you are to make a difficulty of this, you will also inquire into more things besides; how in the winters, and how in the heats of summer, he continued in the wilderness, and this with a delicate body, and at an immature age? how the nature of his infant flesh endured such great inconstancy of weather, and a diet so uncommon, and all the other hardships arising from the wilderness? Where now are the philosophers of the Greeks, who at random and for naught enumerated the shamelessness of the Cynics? For what is the profit of being shut up in a tub and afterwards running into such wantonness? they who encompassed themselves with rings and cups, and men servants and maid servants, and with much pomp besides falling into either extreme.

7618: But this man was not so; but he dwelt in the wilderness as in Heaven, showing forth all strictness of self-restraint. And from thence, like some angel from Heaven, he went down into the cities, being a champion of godliness, and a crowned victor over



the world, and a philosopher of that philosophy which is worthy of the heavens. And these things were, when sin was not yet put away, when the law had not yet ceased, when death was not yet bound, when the brazen gages were not yet broken up, but while the ancient polity still was in force. Such is the nature of a noble and thoroughly vigilant soul, for it is everywhere springing forward, and passing beyond the limits set to it; as Paul also did with respect to the New Testament.

7619: - But why, it may be asked, did he use a girdle with his raiment?

- This was customary with them of old time, before men passed into this soft and loose kind of dress. Thus, for instance, both Peter appears to have been 'girded', and Paul, for Ac 21:11 states: the man that owns this girdle. And Elijah, too [cf. 2 K 1:8], was thus arrayed, and every one of the saints, because they were at work continually laboring and busying themselves either in journeyings, or about some other necessary matter; and not for this cause only, but also with a view to trampling under foot all ornaments, and practicing all austerity. This very kind of thing accordingly Christ declares to be the greatest praise of virtue, thus saying: 'What did not go out to see? a man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in the houses of kings' Mt 11:8.

7620: But if he, who was so pure, and more glorious than the heaven, and above all prophets, than whom none greater was born, and who had such great boldness of speech, thus exercised himself in austerity, scorning so exceedingly all dissolute delicacy, and training himself to this hard life; what excuse shall we have, who after so great a benefit, and the unnumbered burdens of our sins, do not show forth so much as the least part of his penance, but are drinking and surfeiting, and smelling of perfumes, and in no better trim than the harlot women on the stage, and are by all means softening ourselves, and making ourselves an easy prey to the devil?

7621: Mt 3:5: 'Then went out to him all Judea, and Jerusalem, and all the region round about Jordan, v. 6 : and were baptized of him, confessing their sins.'

Do you see how great power was in the coming of the prophet? how he stirred up all the people; how he led them to a consideration of their own sins? For it was indeed worthy of wonder to behold him in human form showing forth such things and using so great freedom of speech, and rising up in condemnation of all as children, and having his great grace beaming out from his countenance. And, moreover, the appearance of prophet after the great interval of time contributed to their amazement, because the gift had failed them, and returned to them after a long time.

7622: And the nature of his preaching too was strange and unusual. For they heard of none of those things to which they were accustomed; such as wars and battles and

victories below, and famine and pestilence, and Baylonians and Persians, and the taking of the city, and the other things with which they were familiar, but of Heaven and of the kingdom there, and of the punishment in hell. And it was for this cause, let me add, that although they that committed revolt in the wilderness, those in the company of Judas, and of Theudas [cf. Ac 5:36, f.], had been all of them slain no greater while before, yet they were not the more backward to go out thither. For neither was it for the same objects that he summoned them, as for dominion, or revolt, or revolution; but, in order to lead them by the hand to the kingdom on high. Wherefore neither did he keep them in the wilderness to take them about with him, but baptizing them, and teaching them the rules concerning self-denial, he dismissed them; by all means instructing them to scorn whatever things are on earth, and to raise themselves up to the things to come, and press on every day....<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> Fr. Bertoni ends his Meditation 10 here in Chrysostom's Homily X on p. 65 b, two full pages early. Fr. Gaspar begins his Meditation 11 with Chrysostom's Homily XI, on p. 67 a of the Baronet translation.

**7623      -      MEDITATION 11**

**7623: Meditation 11**

**Mt 3:7**

Preparatory Prayer.

Prelude 1. Mt 3:7: When he saw that many of the Pharisees and Sadducees were stepping forward for this bath, he said to them: 'You brood of vipers! Who told you to flee from the wrath to come?

v. 8: Give some evidence that you mean to reform.

v. 9: Do not pride yourselves on the claim: 'Abraham is our father.' I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these very stones.

v. 10: Even now the ax is laid to the root of the tree. Every tree that is not fruitful will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

v. 11: I baptize you in water for the sake of reform, but the one who will follow me is more powerful than I. I am not even fit to carry his sandals. He it is who will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire.

v. 12: His winnowing-fan is in his hand. He will clear the threshing floor and gather his grain into the barn, but the chaff he will burn in unquenchable fire.

7624: Mt 3:7: When he saw that many of the Pharisees and Sadducees were stepping forward for this bath, he said to them: 'You brood of vipers! Who told you to flee from the wrath to come?

- How then does Christ say that they did not believe in John? Mt 11:18; 21:25 [cf. Lk 20:5].

- Because this was not believing, to decline from receiving Him whom he preached; for so they thought they regarded their prophets and their lawgiver, nevertheless He said they had not regarded them, forasmuch as they received not Him that was foretold by them. Jn 5:46: 'For if you had believed Moses', He said, ' you would have believed Me.'

7525: And after this again, being asked by Christ, Mt 21:25: 'The baptism of John, whence is it?' From heaven, or from men? They pondered within themselves and said, v. 26: If we shall say: of heaven, he will say to us: How then did you not believe him?' So that from all these things it is manifest that they came indeed and were baptized, yet they did not abide in the belief of that which was preached. For John also points

out their wickedness, by their sending unto the Baptist, and saying:, Jn 1:21: 'Are you Elias?...are you the Christ? Wherefore, he also added, v. 24: they which were sent were of the Pharisees.'

7626: - What then? were not the multitudes also of this same mind?

- - No, the multitudes in simplicity of mind had this suspicion, but the Pharisees, wishing to lay hold of Him. For since it was acknowledged that Christ comes out of the village of David, and this man was of the tribe of Levi, they laid a snare by the question, in order that if he should say any such thing they might quickly come upon him. this at any rate he has declared by what follows; for on his not acknowledging any of the things which they expected, even so they take hold of him, saying: Why do you baptize, if you are not the Christ?' Jn 1:25. And to convince you that the Pharisees came with one mind, and the people with another, hear how the evangelist declared this, too.

7627: Saying this of the people: that they came and were baptized of him, confessing their sins [cf. Mt 3:6]; but concerning the Pharisees, no longer like that,

- But that when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming, he said: O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Mt 3:7. O greatness of mind! How does he discourse to men ever thirsting after the blood of the prophets, and in disposition no better than serpents! How does he disparage both themselves and their progenitors with all plainness!

7628: - Indeed, said one, he speaks plainly enough, but the question is if there be any reason in this plainness. For he did not see them sinning, but in the act of change; wherefore they did not deserve blame, but rather praise and approbation, for having left city and houses, and making haste to hear his preaching.

7629: What, then, shall we say? That he had not things present, and even now doing, in his view, but he knew the secrets of their mind, God having revealed this. Since then they were priding themselves on their forefathers, and this was like to prove the cause of their destruction, and was casting them into a state of carelessness, he cuts away the roots of their pride. For this cause Isaiah also calls them 'rulers of Sodom' and 'people of Gomorrah', Is 1:10: and another prophet says: 'Are you not as children of the Ethiopians', Am 9:7: and all withdraw them from this way of thinking, bringing them down their pride, which had caused them unnumbered evils.

7630: - But, you will say, the prophets naturally did so; for they saw them sinning: but in this case, with what view and for what cause does he do the same, seeing them obey him?

- To make them yet more tender-hearted.. But if one accurately mark his words, he has also tempered his rebuke with commendation. For he spoke these things, as

marveling at them, that they were become able, however late, to do what seemed almost an impossibility for them. His rebuke, you see, is rather that of one bringing them over, and working upon them to arouse themselves. For in that he appears amazed, he implies both their former wickedness to be great, and their conversion marvelous and beyond expectation.

7631: Thus, what has come to pass, he said, that being children of those men, and brought up so badly, they have repented? Whence has come so great a change? Who has softened down the harshness of their spirit? Who corrected that which was incurable? And see how straightway from the beginning he alarmed them, by laying first, for a foundation, his words concerning hell. For he spoke not of the usual topics: 'Who has warned you to flee from wars, from the in-roads of the barbarians, from captivities, from famines, from pestilences?' but concerning another sort of punishment, never before made manifest to them, he was striking the first preparatory note, saying this: 'Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?'

7632: And full well did he likewise call them, 3:7: generation of vipers. 'For that animal, too, is said to destroy the mother that is in travail with her, and eating through her belly, thus to come forth into light; which kind of thing these men also did, being 'murderers of fathers, and murderers of mothers' [cf. 1 Tm 1:9] and destroying their instructors with their own hands. However, he stops not at the rebuke, but introduces advice, also:

Mt 3:8: 'Bring forth', he says, 'fruits meet for repentance.' For to flee from wickedness is not enough, but you must show forth also great virtue. For let me not have that contradictory yet ordinary case, that refraining yourselves for a little while, you return unto the same wickedness.

7633: For we are not come for the same objects as the prophets before, No, the things that now are changed, and are more exalted, forasmuch as the Judge henceforth is coming, His very self, the very Lord of the kingdom, leading unto greater self-restraint, calling us to heaven, and drawing us upward to those abodes. For this cause do I unfold the doctrine also touching hell, because both the good things and the painful are forever. Do not therefore abide as you are, neither bring forward the accustomed pleas. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the noble race of your ancestors.

7634: And these things he said, not as forbidding them to say that they were sprung from those holy men, but as forbidding them to put confidence in this, while they were neglecting the virtue of the soul; at once bringing forward publicly what was in their minds, and foretelling things to come. Because after this they are fond to say, Jn 8:33: 'We have Abraham to our father, and were never in bondage to any man.'

7635: Since then it was this, which most of all lifted them up with pride and ruined them, he first puts it down. And see how with his honor paid to the patriarch he combines his correction touching on these things. Namely, having said:

Mt 3:9: 'Think not to say, We have Abraham to our father.' He said not: for the patriarch shall not be able to profit you anything, but somehow in a more gentle and acceptable manner he intimated the self-same thing, by saying: 'For God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham.;

Now some say, that concerning the Gentiles he said these things, calling them *stones* , metaphorically; but I say that the expression has also another meaning.

- But of what kind is this?

7636: - Think not, he says, that if you should perish, you would make the patriarch childless. This is not, this is not so. For with God it is possible, both out of stones, to give him men, and to bring them to that relationship; since at the beginning also it was so done. For it was like the birth of men out of stones, when a child came forth from that hardened womb.

7637: This accordingly the prophet was also intimating, when he said, Is 51:1:... Look unto the hard rock, whence you are hewn, and to the hole of the pit, whence you are dug: v. 2: look into Abraham, your father, and unto Sarah, that bore you.' Now of this prophecy, you see, he reminds them, showing that if at the beginning he made him a father, as marvelously as if he had made him so out of stones, it was possible for this now also to come to pass. and see how he both alarms them, and cuts them off: in that he aid not: He had already raised up', lest they should despair of themselves, but that 'He is able out of stones to make men', but what was a much greater thing, 'kinsmen and children of Abraham.'

7638: See how for the time he drew them off from their vain imagination about things of the body, and from their refuge in their forefathers; in order that they might rest the hope of their salvation in their own repentance and continence? So you see how by casting out their carnal relationship, he is bringing in that which is of faith?? Mark then how by what follows also he increase their alarm, and adds intensity to their agonizing fear.

7639: For having said that 'God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham,' 3:9, he added:

3:10: And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees', by all means making his speech alarming. For as he from his way of life had much freedom of speech, so they needed his severe rebuke, having been left barren now for a long time. For why do I say, such are his words, that you are on the point of falling away from your relationship to the patriarch and of seeing others, even those that are of

stones, brought in to your pre-eminence? No, not to this point only will your penalty reach, but your punishment will proceed further. 'For now the ax is laid to the root of the tree.' 3:10.

7640: There is nothing more terrible than this turn of his discourse. For it is no longer a flying sickle [cf. Zc 5:1 - LXX], nor the taking down of a hedge, nor the treading under foot of the vineyard [Is 5:5]; but an axe exceeding sharp, and what is worse, it is even at the doors. For inasmuch as they continually disbelieved the prophets, and used to say, 'Where is the day of the Lord?'. and 'let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel come that we may know it', Is 5:19, by reason that it was many years before what they said came to pass; to lead them off from this encouragement also, he sets the terrors close to them. And this he declared by saying, 'now' .

7641: and by his putting it to the root. For the space between us is nothing now, he said, but it is laid to the very root. And he said not: to the branches, nor to the fruits, but 'to the root.' Signifying, that if they were negligent, they would have incurable horrors to endure, and not have so much as a hope of remedy. It being no servant who is now come, as those before Him were, but the very Lord of all, bringing on them His fierce and most effectual vengeance.

7642: Yet, though he has terrified them again, he suffers them not to fall into despair; but as before he said not, 'He has raised up', but 'He is able to raise up children to Abraham', at once both alarming and comforting them. Even so here also he did not say that it has touched the root, but 'it is laid to the root, and is now hard by it, and shows signs of no delay.

7643: However, even though He has brought it so near, he makes its cutting depend on you. For if you change and become better men, this ax will depart without doing anything; but if you continue in the same ways, He will tear up the tree by the roots. And therefore, observe, it is neither removed from the root, nor applied as it does it cut at all: the one, that you may not grow supine, the other to let you know that it is possible even in a short time to be changed and saved. Wherefore he does also from all topics heighten their fear, thoroughly awakening and pressing them on to repentance. Thus, first their falling away from their forefathers; next, others being introduced instead; lastly, those terrors being at their doors, the certainty of suffering incurable evils, both which he declared by the root and the ax, was sufficient to rouse thoroughly those even that were very supine and to make them full of anxiety.

7644: I may add that Paul, too was setting forth the same when he said, Rm 9:28: 'A short word will the Lord make upon the whole world.' Be not afraid; or rather, be afraid, but despair not. For you have still a hope of change; the sentence is not quite absolute, neither did the ax come to cut, else what hindered it from cutting, close as it was to the root? But, in purpose by this fear to make you a better man, and to prepare you to bring forth fruit. For this cause, he added:'

'Therefore, every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire', Mt 3:10.

7645: Now, by the word 'every' he rejects again the privilege which they had from their noble descent; Why if you be Abraham's own descendant, said he, if you have thousands of patriarchs to enumerate, you will be undergo a double punishment, abiding unfruitful. By these words he alarmed even publicans, the soldiers' mind was startled by him, not casting them into despair, yet ridding them of all security. For along with the terror, there is also much encouragement in what he said; since by the expression, 'which brings forth not good fruit', he signified that what bears fruit is delivered from all vengeance.

7646: - And how, you might ask, shall we be able to bring forth fruit, when the edge is being applied, and the time is so strait, and the appointed season cut short.

- 'You will be able', he said, 'for this fruit is not of the same kind as that of common tree, waiting a long time, and in bondage to the necessities of season, requiring much other management; but it is enough to be willing, and the tree at once has put forth its fruit. For not the nature of the root only, but also the skill of the husbandman contributes the most to that kind of fruit bearing. For, let me add, on account of this - lest they should say, 'You are alarming, and pressing, and constraining us, applying an ax, and threatening us with being cut down, yet requiring produce n time of punishment - he has added to signify the ease of bearing that fruit.

7647: Mt 3:11: 'In indeed baptize you with water, but He that comes after me is mightier than I, the latchet of whose show I am not worthy to unloose; He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.'

Implying hereby that consideration only is needed and faith, not labors and toils; and as it is easy to be baptized, so is it easy to be converted, and to become better men.

7648: So having stirred their mind by the fear of god's judgment, and the execution of His punishment, and by the mention of the ax, and by the loss of their ancestors, and by the bringing in of those other children, and by the double vengeance of cutting off and burning, and having by all means softened their hardness, and brought them to desire deliverance from so great evils; then he brings in what he has to say touching Christ; and not simply, but with a declaration of His great superiority. then in setting forth the difference between himself and Him, lest he should seem to say this out of favor, he establishes the fact by comparison of the gifts bestowed by each of them.

7649: For he did not at once say, I am not worthy to unloose the latchet of His show; but when he had first set forth the little value of his own baptism, and had shown that it



has nothing more than to lead them to repentance, for he did not say with water of remission, but of repentance, he sets forth Christ's also, which is full of the unspeakable gift.

7650: Thus, he seems to say, Lest on being told that He comes after me, you should despise Him as having come later; learn the virtue of His gift, and you will clearly know that I uttered nothing worthy nor great, when I said: 'I am not worthy to unloose the latchet of His shoe.' So, too, when you are told, 'He is mightier than I', do not think I said this in the way of making a comparison. For I am not worthy to be ranked so much as among His servants, no, not even the lowest of His servants, nor to receive the least honored portion of His ministry.

7651: Therefore, he did not merely say, 'his shoes', but not even 'the latchet,' which kind of office was counted the least of all. Then to hinder your attributing what he had said to humility, he adds the proof from the facts, Mt 3:11:

'For he shall baptize you', he said, 'with the Holy Spirit and with fire.'

7652: Do you see how great is the wisdom of the Baptist? How, when he himself is preaching, he said everything to alarm, and fill them with anxiety; but when he is sending men to Him, whatever was mild and apt to recover them: not bringing forward the ax, nor the tree that is cut down and burnt, and cast into the fire, nor the wrath to come, but remission of sins, and removing of punishment, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, and adoption, and brotherhood, and a partaking of the inheritance, and an abundant supply of the Holy Spirit.

7653: For all these things he obscurely denoted when he said: 'He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire' and by the specification of fire on the other hand, indicating the vehement and uncontrollable quality of His grace. Imagine only what sort of men it was meet for the hearers to become, when they considered that they were at once to be like the prophets, and like those great ones. For it was on this account, you see, that he made mention at all of fire; that he might lead them to reflect on the memory of those men. Because of all the visions that appeared unto them, I had almost said, the more part appeared in fire; thus God discoursed with Moses in the bush, thus with all the people in the Mount Sinai, thus with Ezekiel on the cherubim [cf. Ezk 1:27].

7654: And mark again how he rouses the hearer, by putting that first which was to take place after all. For the Lamb was to be slain, and sin to be blotted out, and the enmity to be destroyed, and the burial to take place, and the resurrection, and then the Spirit to come. But none of these things does he mention as yet, but that first which was last, and for the sake of which all the former were done, and which was fittest to proclaim his dignity; so that when the hearer should be told that he was to receive so great a Spirit, he might search with himself, how and in what manner this shall be,

while sin so prevails; that finding him full of thought and prepared for that lesson, he might thereupon introduce what he had to say touching the Passion, no man being any more offended, under the expectation of such a gift.

7655: Wherefore, he again cried out, saying: 'Behold the Lamb of God who bears away the sin of the world', Jn 1:29.

He did not say, 'who remits', but that which implies a more guardian care, 'which bears away'. For it is not all one, simply to remit, and to take it upon Himself. For the one was to be done without peril, the other with death. And again he said: that He is the Son of God[cf. Jn 1:34]. But not even this declared His rank openly to the hearers, for they did not so much as know yet how to conceive of Him as a true Son: but by so great a gift of the Spirit that was also established. therefore the father also in sending John gave him, as you know, this as a first token of the dignity of Him that was come, saying, Jn 1:33: 'Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending and remaining, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'

7656: Wherefore himself, too, said, ibi, v. 34: 'saw and bare record that this is the Son of God,' as though the one were to all time the clear evidence of the other. Then as having uttered the gentler part of his message, and soothed and relaxed the hearer, he again binds him up, that he may not become remiss. For such was the nature of the Jewish nation; by all encouraging things they were easily puffed up, and corrupted. Wherefore he again adduces his terrors saying, Mt 3:12: 'Whose fan is in his hand'. And he will clear the area.

7657: Thus, as before he had spoken of the punishment, so here he points out the Judge likewise, and introduces the eternal vengeance. 'For He will burn the chaff', he said, 'with unquenchable fire.', ibi.

You see that He is Lord of all things, and that He is Himself the Husbandman; albeit in another place He calls His Father the same. For 'My Father', He says, 'is the Husbandman.' Jn 15:1.

7658: Thus, inasmuch as He had spoken of an ax, lest you should suppose that the thing needed labor, and the separation was hard to make; by another comparison he suggests the easiness of it, implying that all the world is His; since He would not punish those who were not His own. For the present, it is true, all are mingled together, for though the wheat appears gleaming through, yet it lies with the chaff, as on a threshing floor, not as in a garner, but then, great will be the separation. Where now are they by whom hell-fire is disbelieved? Since surely here are two-points laid down, one, that He will baptize with the Holy Spirit, the other, that He will burn up the disobedient.

7659: If then that is credible, so is this, too, assuredly. Yes, this is why the two predictions are put by him in immediate connection, that by that which has taken place already, he might accredit the other, as yet unaccomplished. For Christ too Himself in many places does so, often of the same things, and often of opposites, setting down two prophecies; the one of which He performs here, the other He promises in the future; that such as are too contentious may, from the one which has already come to pass, believe the other also, which is not yet accomplished.

7660: For instance, to them that strip themselves of all that they have for His sake, He promised to give a hundred fold, Mt 19:29 [cf. Mk 10:30; Lk 18:30] and eternal life in that which is to come; by the things already given making the future also credible. Which, as we see, John likewise has done in this place; laying down two things, that He shall both baptize with the Holy Spirit, and burn up with unquenchable fire.

7661: Now, then, if He had not baptized with the Spirit the apostles, and all every day who are willing, you might have doubts concerning those other things, too; but if that which seems to be greater and more difficult, and which transcends all reason, has been done, and is done every day; how do you deny that to be true, which is easy, and comes to pass according to reason?

7662: Thus, having said: 'He shall baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire', and having thence promised great blessings; lest you, released wholly from the former things, grow supine, he has added the fan, and the judgment thereby declared. Thus, 'think not at all', he said, that your baptism suffices, if you become ordinary persons hereafter', for we need both virtue, and plenty of that known self-restraint.

7663: Therefore, as by the ax he urges them unto grace, and unto the font, so after grace he terrifies them by the fan, and the unquenchable fire. And of the one sort, those yet unbaptized, he makes no distinction, but said in general, Lk 3:9: 'Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down' punishing all the unbelievers. Whereas after baptism He works out a kind of division, because many of them that believed would exhibit a life unworthy of their faith.

7664: Let no man, then, become chaff, let no one be tossed to and fro, nor lie exposed to wicked desires, blown about by them easily every way. For if you continue wheat, though temptation be brought on you, you will suffer nothing dreadful; no, for in the threshing floor, the wheels of the car, that are like saws [cf. Is 40:35], do not cut in pieces the wheat; but if you fall away into weakness of chaff, you will both here suffer incurable ills, being smitten of all men, and there you will undergo the eternal punishment. For all such persons both before that furnace became food for the irrational passions here, as chaff is for the brute animals" and there again they are material and food for the flame.

7665: Now to have said directly, that He will judge men's doings, would not so effectually procure acceptance for His doctrine: but to blend with it the parable, and so to establish it all, was more apt to persuade the hearer, and attract him by a more ample encouragement. Wherefore also Christ Himself for the most part so discourses with them; threshing floor and harvest, and vineyard, and wine-press, and field, and net, and fishing, and all things familiar, and among which they were busied He makes ingredients in His discourses. This kind of thing then the Baptist likewise did here, and offered an exceeding great demonstration of his words, the giving of the Spirit. For 'He who has so great power, as both to forgive sins, and to give the Spirit, much more will these things also be within His power, ' so he speaks.

2666: Do you see how in due order the mystery came to be laid as a foundation, before the resurrection and judgment?

- And wherefore, it may be said, did he not mention the signs and wonders which were straightway to be done by him?

- Because this was greater than all, and for its sake all those were done. Thus, in his mention of the chief thing, he comprehended all; death dissolved, sins abolished, the curse blotted out, those long wars done away; our entrance into paradise, our ascent into heaven, our citizenship with the angels, our partaking of the good things to come: for in truth this is the earnest of them all. So that in mentioning this, he has mentioned also the resurrection of our bodies, and the manifestation of His miracles here, and our partaking of His kingdom, and the good things, which 'eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man', 1 Co 2:9.

7667: For all these things He bestowed on us by that gift. It was therefore superfluous to speak of the signs that were immediately to ensue, and which sight can judge of; but those we meet to be discoursed on, whereof they doubted; as for instance, that He is the Son of God; that He exceeds John beyond comparison; that He 'bears' the sin of the world'; that He will require an account of all that we do; that our interests are not limited to the present, but elsewhere every one will undergo the due penalty. For these things were not as yet provable by sight...<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> For Fr. Bertoni, this is among his longest Meditations so far, except for meditation 4, cf. above pp. 17-23. However, Fr. Gaspar ends his Meditation 11 on what is p. 73 a of the Baronet translation. Chrysostom's Homily XI ends on p. 75 b, near the top, of the said translation.

**7668 - MEDITATION 12****7668: Meditation 12****Mt 3:13**

Preparatory Prayer.

Prelude 1. Mt 3:13: Later Jesus, coming from Galilee, appeared before John at the Jordan to be baptized by him.

v. 14: John tried to refuse him with the protest, 'I should be baptized by you, yet you come to me!'

v. 15: Jesus answered; 'Give in for now. We must do this if we would fulfill all of God's demands.' So, John gave in.

v. 16: After Jesus was baptized, he came directly out of the water. Suddenly the sky opened and he saw the Spirit of God descend like a dove and hover over him.

v. 17: With that a voice from the heavens said, 'This is my beloved Son. My favor rests on him.'

7569: Later Jesus, coming from Galilee, appeared before John at the Jordan to be baptized by him

With the servants the Lord, with the criminals, the Judge, comes to be baptized. But, be not troubled; for in these humiliations, His exaltation does most shine forth. For He who vouchsafed to be borne so long in a Virgin's womb, and to come forth thence with our nature, and to suffer all the rest which He suffered, why do you marvel if He also chose to be baptized, and to come with the rest to His servant? For the amazement lay in that one thing, that being God, He would be made Man; but the rest after this all follows in course of reason.

7670: For this cause, let me add, John also by way of anticipation said all that he had said before that he 'was not worthy to unloose the latchet of His shoe'; and all the rest, as for instance, that He is Judge, and rewards every man according to his desert, and that He will bestow His Spirit abundantly on all; in order that when you should see Him coming to the baptism, you might not suspect anything mean. Therefore he forbids Him, even when he was come, saying:

7671: 'I have need to be baptized of You, and You come to me'? - For because the baptism was 'of repentance' and led men to accuse themselves for their offenses, lest any one should suppose that He to 'comes to the Jordan' in this sort of mind. John sets

it right beforehand, by calling Him both Lam and Redeemer, from all the sin that is in the world.

7672: Since He was able to take away the sins of the whole race of men, much more was He Himself without sin. For this cause then he said not: Behold, He that is without sin, but what was much more, He 'that bears away the sin of the world' in order that together with this truth you might receive that other with all assurance, and having received it might perceive that in the conduct of some further economy, He comes to the baptism. Wherefore also he said to Him when He came, 'I have need to be baptized of You, and You come to me?' 3:14. And he did not say, And are you baptized of me? For this he feared to say: but what, And You come to me?

7673: What then does Christ do? What he did afterwards with respect to Peter, Jn 13:6, ff., this did He then also. For so too he would have forbidden Him to wash his feet, but when he had heard, 'What I do you do not know now, but you shall know hereafter', and 'you have no part with me', he speedily withdrew from his determination and went over to the contrary.

7674: And this man again in like manner when he heard:

Mt 3:15: Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness,' straightway obeyed. <sup>30</sup>.

And mark how He urges him on that very ground which chiefly caused him to look doubtfully on what was taking place; in that He did not say: thus it is just, but 'thus it becomes us'. For in as much as the point unworthy of Him was in his mind chiefly this, His being baptized by His servant, He stated this rather than anything else, which is directly opposed to that impression: as though He had said, Is it not as unbecoming that you avoid and forbid this? For this very cause I bid you suffer it, that is becoming, and that in the highest degree. And He did not merely say: 'suffer', but He added 'now'. For it will not be so forever, He said, but you shall see me such as you desire; for the present, however, endure this. Next He shows how this 'becomes' Him.

7675: - How, then, is this so?

- In that we fulfill the whole Law, and to express this He said, 'all righteousness.' For righteousness is the fulfilling of the commandments. Since then we have performed all the rest of the commandments, He said, and this alone remains, it also must be added:

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<sup>30</sup> Fr. Bertonni skips a sentence here in which Chrysostom states that all made it their study to obey Him in all things.

7676: Because I am come to do away with the curse that is appointed for the transgression of the law: I must therefore first fulfill it all, and having delivered you from its condemnation, in this way bring it to an end. It becomes me, therefore, to fulfill the whole law, by the same rule that it becomes me to do away the curse that is written against you in the law: this being the very purpose of my assuming flesh, and coming hither.

7677: Mt 3:15: Then he suffered Him. v. 16: And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and he I saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting on Him.'

For inasmuch as many supposed that John was greater than He, because John had been brought up all his time in the wilderness, and was son of a chief priest, and was clothed with such raiment, and was calling all men unto his baptism, and had been born of a barren mother; while Jesus, first of all, was, was of a damsel of ordinary rank, for the virgin birth was not yet manifest to all; and besides, he had been brought up in a house and held converse with all men, and wore this common raiment; they suspected Him to be less than John, knowing as yet nothing of those secret things.

7678: And it fell out moreover that He was baptized of John, which thing added support to this surmise, even if none of those mentioned before had existed; for it would come into their mind that this man was one of the many, for were He not one of the many, He would not have come with the many to the baptism, but that John was greater than He and far more admirable: - in order therefore that this opinion might not prevail over the multitude,

The very heavens are opened, when He is baptized, and the Spirit comes down, and a voice with the Spirit, proclaiming the dignity of the Only Begotten. And lo, the voice from the heavens, saying: 3:16.

7679: For since the voice that said: 'this is My beloved Son' would seem to the multitude to belong to John, for It added not, This that is baptized, but simply, *This*, and every hearer would conceive it to be said concerning the baptizer, rather than the baptized, partly on account of the Baptist's own dignity, partly for all that has been mentioned; the Spirit came in the form of a dove, drawing the voice towards Jesus, and making it evident to all, that *This* was not spoken of John that baptized, but of Jesus who was baptized.

7680: - And how was it, one may ask, that they did not believe when these things came to pass?

- Because in the days of Moses also many wonderful works were done, albeit not such as these; and after all those, the voices, and the trumpets, and the lightnings,

they both forged a calf and were 'joined unto Baal-peor'. And those very persons, too, who were present at the time, and saw Lazarus arise, so far from believing in Him, who had wrought these things, repeatedly attempted even to slay Him.

7681: Now if seeing before their eyes one rise from the dead, they were so wicked, why marvel at their not receiving a voice wafted from above? Since when a soul is uncandid and perverse, and possessed by the disease of envy, it yields to none of these things; even as when it is candid it receives all with faith, and has not great need of these.

7682: Speak not therefore thus: They believed not, but rather inquire, Did not all things take place which ought to have made them believe? For by the prophet also God frames this kind of defense of His own ways in general. that is, the Jews being on the point of ruin and of being given over to extreme punishment; lest any from the wickedness should calumniate His providence, He said, Is 5:4: 'What ought I have done to this vineyard that I have not done?' Just so here likewise you should reflect; what ought to have been done and was not done? And indeed whensoever arguments arise on God's Providence, do make use of this kind of defense, against those who from the wickedness of the many try to raise a prejudice against it.

7683: See, for instance, what astonishing things are done, preludes of those which were to come; for it is no more paradise, but Heaven that is opened. But let our argument with the Jews stand over unto some other time; for the present, God working with us, we would direct our discourse to what is immediately before us.

'And Jesus when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water, and lo! the heavens were opened unto Him' [cf. Mt 3:16].

- Wherefore were the heavens opened?

- To inform you that at your baptism also this is done, God calling you to your country on high, and persuading you to have nothing to do with earth.

7684: And if you do not see, do not doubt it. For so evermore at the beginnings of all wonderful and spiritual transactions, sensible visions appear, and such like signs, for the sake of them that are somewhat dull in disposition, and who have need of outward sight, and who cannot at all conceive an incorporeal nature, but are excited only by the things that are seen: that so, though afterward no such thing occur, what has been declared by them once for all at the first may be received by your faith. For in the case of the apostles, too, there was a 'sound of a mighty wind' and visions of fiery tongues appeared, Ac 2:1, ff., but not for the apostles' sake, but because of the Jews who were then present.



7685: Nevertheless, even though no sensible signs take place, we receive the things that have been once manifested by them. Since the dove itself at that time, therefore, appeared, that as in place of a finger, so to say, it might point out to them that are present, and to John, the Son of God.. Not however, merely on this account, but to teach you also, that upon you no less at your baptism the Spirit comes. But since then we have no need of sensible vision, faith sufficing instead of all. For signs are 'not for them that believe, but for them that believe not, 1 Co 14:22.

7686: - But why in the fashion of a dove?

- Gentle is that creature and pure. Forasmuch, then, as the Spirit, too, is 'a Spirit of meekness' [cf. Ga 6:1], Here, therefore, appear in this sort. And besides, He is reminding us of an ancient history. For so, when once a common shipwreck had overtaken the whole world, and our race was in danger of perishing, this creature appeared, and indicated the deliverance from the tempest, and bearing an olive branch [cf. Gn 8], published the good tidings of the common calm of the whole world.

7687: All of this was a type of the things to come. For in fact, the condition of men was then much worse, and they deserved a much sorer punishment. To prevent your despairing, therefore, He reminds you of that history. Because then also, when things were desperate, there was a sort of deliverance and reformation; but then by punishment, now, on the contrary, by grace and an unspeakable gift [cf. 2 Co 9:15].

7688: Therefore, the dove also appears, not bearing an olive branch, but pointing out to us our Deliverer from all evils, and suggesting the gracious hopes. For not from out of an ark does she lead one man only, but the whole world she leads up into heaven at her appearing, and instead of a branch of peace from an olive, she conveys the adoption to all the world's offspring in common. Reflect now on the greatness of the gift, and do not account His dignity the less for His appearing in such a likeness. For I actually hear some saying that such as is the difference between a man and a dove, so great is that between Christ and the Spirit; since the one appeared in our nature, the other in the likeness of a dove.

7689: - What must we say then to these things?

- that the son of God did indeed take upon Him the nature of man, but the Spirit took not on Him the nature of a dove. Therefore, the evangelist also said not: in the nature of a dove, but 'in the form of a dove.'. Accordingly, never after did He so much as appear in this fashion, but at that moment only. And if on this account you affirm His dignity to be less, the cherubim too will be made out by this reasoning much His superior, even as much so as an eagle is to a dove: because they too were figured into that visible shape. And the angels too superior again, for they no less have many times appeared in the fashion of men.

7690: But, these things are not so, indeed they are not. For the truth of an economy is one thing, and the condescension of a temporary vision another. Do not now, I pray you, become unthankful towards your Benefactor, nor with the very contraries requite Him that has bestowed on you the fountain of blessedness. For were adoption is vouchsafed, there is also the removing of evils, and the giving of all good things. On this very account, Jewish baptism ceases, and ours takes its beginning.

7691: And what was done with regard to the Passover, the same ensues in the baptism also. For as in that case, too, He acting with a view to both, brought the one to an end, but to the other, He gave a beginning: so here, having fulfilled the Jewish baptism, He at the same time opens also the doors of that of the Church; as on one table, then, so in one river now, He had both sketched out the shadow and now adds the truth. For this baptism alone has the grace of the Spirit, but that of John was destitute of this gift.

7692: For this very cause in the case of the others that were baptized no such thing came to pass, but only in the instance of Him who was to hand on this; in order that, besides what we have said, you might learn this also that not the purity of the baptizer, but the power of the baptized, had this effect. Not until then, assuredly, were either the heavens opened, nor did the Spirit make His appearance. Because henceforth He leads us away from the old to the new polity, both opening to us the gates on high, and sending down His Spirit, from thence to call us to our country there; and not merely to call us, but also with the greatest mark of dignity. For He has not made us angels and archangels, but He has caused us to become 'sons of God' and 'beloved' and so He draws us on towards that portion of ours.

7693: Having, then, all this in your mind, you should show forth a life worthy of the love of him who calls on you, and of your citizenship in that world, and of the honor that is given to you. Crucified as you are to the world, and having crucified it to yourself, show yourself with all strictness a citizen of the city of the heavens. And do not, because your body is not translated unto heaven, suppose that you have anything to do with the earth; for you have your Head abiding above. Yes, with this very purpose the Lord, having first come here and having brought His angels, did then, taking you with Him, depart thither: that even before your going up to that place, you might understand that it is possible for you to inhabit the earth as it were heaven.

7694: Let us, then, keep watch over that noble birth, which we received from the beginning; and let us every day seek more and more the palaces there, and account all that is here to be a shadow and a dream. For so, had any king among those on earth, fiding you poor and a beggar, made you suddenly his son, never would you have thought upon your cottage, and your cottage's mean appointments. Yet surely in that case the difference is not much.

7695: Do not, then, either in this case take account of any of the former things, for you are called to much greater. For both He who calls is the Lord of the angels, and the good things that are given surpass all both word and thought Since not from earth to earth does He remove you, as the king does, but from earth to heaven, and from a mortal nature to an immortal, and to glory unspeakable, then only possible to be properly manifested, when we shall actually enjoy it... <sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> With this eschatological perspective, Fr. Bertoni cuts short Chrysostom's Homily XII on p. 78 b of the Baronet translation. Fr. Gaspar begins His Meditation 13 on p. 80 of the said translation, Chrysostom's Homily XIII.

**7696 - MEDITATION 13****7696:****Meditation 13****Mt 4:1-11****Preparatory Prayer**

Prelude 1. Mt 4:1: Then Jesus was led into the desert by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil.

v. 2: He fasted forty days and forty nights and afterward was hungry.

v. 3: The tempter approached and said to him: 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to turn into bread.'

v. 4: Jesus replied: 'Scripture has it: Not on bread alone is man to live, but on every utterance that comes from the mouth of God.'

v. 5: Next the devil took him to the holy city, and set him on the parapet of the temple,

v. 6: and said: If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. Scripture has it: 'He will bid his angels take care of you; with their hands they will support you that you may never stumble on a stone.'

v. 7: Jesus answered him; 'Scripture also has it: You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'

v. 8: The devil then took him up a very high mountain and displayed before him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence, promising,

v. 9: All these will I bestow on you if you prostrate in homage before me'.

v. 10: At this, Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! Scripture has it: You shall do homage to the Lord your God; him alone you shall adore.'

v. 11: At that the devil left him, and angels came and waited on him.

7697: Mt 4:1: Then Jesus was led into the desert by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil.

- Then, what?

- After the descent of the Spirit, after the voice that was borne from above, and said: 'this is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased', 3:17. And what was

marvelous, it was of the Holy Spirit; for this, he here said, led Him up. For since with a view to our instruction, He both did and underwent all things; he endures also to be led up thither, and to wrestle against the devil: in order that each of those who are baptized, if after his baptism he have to endure greater temptations, may not be troubled as if the result were unexpected, but may continue to endure all nobly, as though it were happening in the natural course of things.

7698: For this cause, neither does God hinder the temptations as they come in, first to teach you that you are become much stronger; next, that you may continue modest, neither be exalted even by the greatness of your gifts, the temptations having power to repress you; moreover, in order that that wicked demon, who is for a while doubtful about your desertion of him, by the touchstone of temptations may be well assured that you have utterly forsaken and fallen from him; fourthly, that you may in this way be made stronger, and better tempered than any steel; fifthly that you may obtain a clear demonstration of the treasures entrusted to you. For the devil would not have assailed you unless he had seen you brought to greater honor.

7699: Hence, for example, from the beginning he attacked Adam, because he saw him in the enjoyment of great dignity. For this reason, he arrayed himself against Job, because he saw him crowned and proclaimed by the God of all.

- How then does He say, Mt 26:41: 'Pray that you enter not into temptation?'

- For this cause he does not show you Jesus simply going up, but 'led up' according to the principle of the Economy; signifying obscurely by this that we ought not of ourselves to leap upon it, but being dragged thereto, to stand manfully.

7700: And consider whither the Spirit led Him up, when He had taken Him; not into a city and forum, but into a wilderness. that is, he being minded to attract the devil, gives him a handle not only by His hunger, but also by the place. For then most especially does the devil assail, when he sees men left alone, and by themselves. Thus did he also set upon the woman in the beginning, having caught her alone, and found her apart from her husband. Just as when he sees us with others and banded together, he is not equally confident, and makes no attack. Wherefore we have the greatest need on this very account to be flocking together continually, that we may not be open to the devil's attacks.

7701: Having then found Him in the wilderness, and in a pathless wilderness, or that the wilderness was such, Mark has declared, saying Mk 1:13, that He 'was with the wild beasts', behold with how much craft he draws near, and wickedness; and for what sort of opportunity he watches. For not in his fast, but in his hunger he approaches Him; to instruct you how great a good fasting is, and how it is a most powerful shield against the devil, and that after the fast, men should give themselves up, not to luxury and drunkenness, and a full table, but to fasting. For, for this cause even He fasted,

not as needing it Himself, but to instruct us. Thus, since our sins before the font were brought in by serving the belly.

7702: Much as if anyone who had made a sick man whole were to forbid his doing those things, from which the distemper arose; so we see here likewise that He Himself after the font brought in fasting. For indeed both Adam by the incontinence of the belly was cast out of paradise; and the flood in Noah's time, this produced; and this brought down the thunders on Sodom. For although there was also a charge of whoredom, nevertheless from this grew the root of each of those punishments; which Ezekiel also signified when he said, Ezk 16:49: 'But this was the iniquity of Sodom, that she waxed wanton in pride and in fullness of bread, and in abundance of luxury.

7703: Thus the Jews also perpetrated the greatest wickedness, being driven upon transgression by their drunkenness and delicacy [cf. Is 5:11, f.]. On this account then, even He, too, fasts forty days, pointing out to us the medicines of our salvation; yet proceeds no further, lest on the other hand, through the exceeding greatness of the miracle the truth of His economy should be discredited. For as it is, this cannot be, seeing that both Moses and Elias, anticipating Him, could advance to so great a length of time, strengthened by the power of God. And if He had proceeded farther, from this among other things His assumption of our flesh would have seemed incredible to many.

7704: Mt 4:2: Having then fasted forty days and as many nights, He was afterwards hungered'. This afforded him a point to lay hold of and approach, that by actual conflict, He might show how to prevail and be victorious. Just so do wrestlers also: when teaching their pupils how to prevail and overcome, they voluntarily in the lists engage with others, to afford these in the persons of their antagonists the means of seeing and learning the mode of conquest. Which same thing then also took place. For it being His will to draw him on so far, He both made His hunger known to him, and awaited his approach, and as He waited for him, so He dashed him to earth, once, twice, and three times, with such ease as became Him.

7705: But that we may not, by hurrying over these victories, mar your profit, let us begin from the first assault, and examine each with exact care.. thus, after He was hungered, it is said:

Mt 4:3: The tempter came and said to Him: If you are the Son of God, command these stones be made bread.'

7706: For because he had heard a voice borne from above, and saying: 'This is My beloved Son', 3:17 and he heard also John bearing so large witness concerning Him, and after that saw Him hungry; he was thenceforth in perplexity, and neither could believe that He was a mere man, because of the things spoken concerning Him; nor on the other hand receive it that He was Son of God, seeing Him as he did in hunger.

7707: Whence being in perplexity he utters ambiguous sounds. And much as when coming to Adam at the beginning, he feigns things that are not, that he may learn the things that are; even so here also, not knowing clearly the unutterable mystery of the Economy, and who He may be that is come, he attempts to weave other nets, whereby he thought to know that which was hidden and obscure. And what does he say?

7708: 'If You are the Son of God, command these stones be made bread.' 4:3.

He does not say, because you are hungry, but, 'if You be the Son of God', thinking to cheat Him with his compliments. Wherefore also he was silent touching the hunger, that he might not seem to be alleging it, and upbraiding Him. For not knowing the greatness of the Economy which was going on, he supposed this to be a reproach to Him. Wherefore flattering Him craftily, he makes mention of His dignity only.

7709: When, then, does Christ say? To put down his pride, and to signify that there was nothing shameful in what had happened, nor unbecoming His wisdom that which the other had passed over in silence to flatter Him, he brings forward and sets it forth, saying:

Mt 4:4: Who, responding said: It is written: Man shall not live by bread alone.. So that He begins with the necessity of the belly. But mark, I pray you, the craft of that wicked demon, and whence he begins his wrestlings, and how he does not forget his proper art. For, by what means he cast out also the first man, and encompassed him with thousands of other evils, with the same means here likewise he weaves his deceit; I mean, with incontinence of the belly.

7710: So, too, even now one may hear many foolish ones say their bad words by thousands because of the belly. But, Christ, to show that the virtuous man is not compelled by this tyranny to do anything that is unseemly, first hungers, then submits not to what is enjoined Him; teaching us to obey the devil in nothing. thus, because the first man did hereby both offend God, and transgress the law, as much and more does He teach you - though it be no transgression which he commands, not even so to obey.

7711: And why do I say 'transgression'? Why, even though something expedient be suggested by the devils, do not. says He, even so give heed unto them. Thus, for instance, He stopped the mouths of those devils also, proclaiming Him Son of God, Mk 1:34. And Paul, too, again, Ac 16:16, ff. rebuked them crying this self-same thing; and yet what they said was profitable; but he more abundantly dishonoring them, and obstructing their plot against us, drove them away even when doctrines of salvation were preached by them. closing up their mouths, and bidding them be silent.

7712: And therefore neither in this instance did He consent to what was said. But what did He say?

' Man shall not live by bread alone.' Mt 4:4.

Now His meaning is like this: God is able even by word to nourish the hungry man; bringing him a testimony out of the ancient Scripture, and teaching us, though we hunger, indeed, whatever we suffer, never to fall away from our Lord.

7713: But if a man say, still He should have displayed Himself; I would ask him with what intent, and for what reason? For not at all that he might believe did the other so speak, but that he might, as he thought, over argue Him into unbelief. Since the first of mankind were in this way beguiled and over-argued by him, not putting earnest faith in God. For the contrary of what God had said he promised them, and puffed them up with vain hopes, and brought them to unbelief, and so cast them out of the blessings they actually possessed.

7714: But Christ signifies Himself not to have consented, either to him, then, or afterwards to the Jews, his partisans, in their demand of signs: invariably instructing us, whatever we may have power to do, yet to do nothing vainly and at random; nor even when we are urged to obey the devil.

7715: What then does the accursed one do? Overcome and unable to persuade Him to do his bidding, and that when pressed by such violent hunger, he proceeds to another thing saying:

Mt 4:5: Next the devil too Him...etc. , v. 6: and said to Him: 'If You be Son of God, cast Yourself down; for it is written: He shall give His angels charge concerning You, and in their hands they shall bear You up.'

7716: - What can the reason be, that at each temptation He adds this: 'If You be the Son of God.'

- Much the same as he did in that former case, he does also at this time. that is, as he then slandered God, saying: Gn 3:5: In the day that you eat, your eyes shall be opened'; thereby intending to signify, that they were beguiled and over-reached, and had received no benefit; even so in this case also he insinuates this same thing, saying: In vain God has called You Son, and has beguiled You by his gift; for if this be not so, afford us some clear proof that You are of that power. Then, because Christ had reasoned with him from Scripture, he also brings in a testimony of the prophet.

7717: How then does Christ respond? He is not indignant, nor provoked, but with that extreme gentleness He reasons with him again from the Scriptures, saying:

Mt 4:7: And He aid to him: Again it is written: 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God'.



- He is teaching us that we must overcome the devil, not by miracles, but by forbearance and long-suffering, and that we should do nothing at all for display and vainglory.

7718: But mark his folly, even by the very testimony which he produced. For while the testimonies cited by the Lord were both of them spoken with exceeding fitness: his, on the other hand, were chance and random sayings, neither did he bring forward on his part that which applied to the matter in hand. 'For that it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning You', is not advice to dash and toss one's self down head-long; and moreover, this was not so much as spoken concerning the Lord. However, this for the time He did not expose, although there was both insult in his manner of speech, and great inconsistency.

7719: For of God's Son no man requires these things: but to cast one's self down is the part of the devil, and of demons. Whereas God's part is to raise up even them that are down. And if He ought to have displayed His own power, it would not have been by casting and tossing Himself down at random, but by saving others. But to cast ourselves down precipices, and into pits, pertain properly to his troop.

7720: Thus, for example, the seducer among them is active everywhere. But Christ even when these things are said, does not yet reveal Himself, but as man for a while discourses with him. For the sayings, 'Man shall not live by bread alone', and 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God', suited one not greatly revealing Himself, by representing Himself as one of the many. But do not marvel if he is reasoning with Christ oftentimes turns himself about. For as pugilists when they have received deadly blows, reel about, drenched in much blood and blinded; even so he, too, darkened by the first and second blow, speaks at random what comes uppermost: and proceeds to his third assault.

7721: MT 4:8: 'And he leads Him up into a high mountain, and shows Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, v. 9 and says to Him: All this things will I give You, if You will fall down and worship me.. v. 10: Then Jesus said to him: Get behind me Satan, for it is written: You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only will you serve'.

For since he was now come to sinning against the Father, saying that all that is the Father's was his, and was endeavoring to make himself out to be God, as artificer of the universe; He then rebuked him but not even then with vehemence, but simply: 'Get you away, Satan', which itself had in it something of a command rather than of rebuke. For as soon as He had said to him, ' Begone', He caused him to take to flight; since he brought not against Him any other temptations.

7722: - And how, says Luke that 'he ended all temptation'? [cf. Lk 4:3].

- To me it seems that in mentioning the chief of the temptations, he had spoken of all, as though the rest were included in these. For the things that form the substance of innumerable evils are these: to be a slave to the belly, to do anything for vainglory, to be in subjection to the madness of riches. Which accordingly that accursed one considering, set last the most powerful of all, I mean the desire of more: and though originally, and from the beginning, he was travailing to come to this, yet he kept it for the last, as being of more force than the rest. For in fact this is the manner of his wrestling, to apply those things last, which seem more likely to overthrow. And this sort of thing he did with respect to Job likewise. Wherefore, in this instance, too, having begun with the motives which seem to be viler and weaker, he goes on to the more prevailing.

7723: - How then are we to get the better of him?

- In the way which Christ has taught us by fleeing to God for refuge; and neither to be depressed in famine, as believing in God who is able to feed even with a word; nor amidst whatever good things we may receive to tempt Him who gave them, but to be content with the glory which is from above, making no account of that which is of men, and on every occasion to despise what is beyond our need. For nothing does so make us fall under the power of the devil, as longing for more, and loving covetousness. And this we may see even by what is done now. For now also there are those who say: All these things will we give you, if you will fall down and worship. e are indeed men by nature, but have become his instruments. Since at that time, too, he approached Him, not by himself only, but also by others. which Luke also was declaring when he said, that Lk 4:13: he departed from Him for a season, showing that hereafter he approached Him by his proper instruments.

7724: Mt 4:11: 'Then the devil left Him and behold, angels came and ministered unto Him.'

For when the assault was going on, He suffered them not to appear, that He might not thereby drive away the prey; but after He had convicted him in all points, and caused him to take to flight, then they appear: that you also may learn, that after your victories which are copied from His, angels will receive you, also, applauding you, and waiting as guards on you in all things. thus, for example, angels take Lazarus away with them, after the furnace of poverty and of famine and of all distress. For as I have already aid, Christ on this occasion exhibits many things, which we ourselves are to enjoy.

7725: Forasmuch then as all these things have been done for you, do you emulate and imitate His victory. And should any one approach you of those who are that evil spirit's servants, and savor the things that be of him, upbraiding you and saying, If you are marvelous and great, remove the mountain; be not troubled, nor confounded, but answer with meekness and say some such thing as you have heard the Lord say: You shall not tempt the Lord your God. Or should he, offering glory and dominion, and an endless amount of wealth, enjoin you to worship him, stand again manfully. For neither did the devil deal so with the common Lord of us all only, but every day also he bring these his machinations to bear on each of His servants, not in mountains only and in wildernesses, nor by himself: but in cities, likewise, in market-places, and in courts of justice, and by mean of our own kindred, even men.

- What then must we do?

- Disbelieve him altogether, and stoop our ears against him, and hate him when he flatters, and when he proffers more, then so much the more shun him...<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Fr. Bertoni ends his Meditation 13 on p. 83 b of the Baronet translation of Chrysostom's Homily 13 - which does not end until p. 86 b.

**7726 - MEDITATION 14****7726:****Meditation 14****Mt 4:12-25****Preparatory Prayer**

Prelude 1. Mt 4:12: When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee.

v. 13: He left Nazareth and went down to live in Capernaum by the sea by the sea near the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali,

v. 14: to fulfill what had been said through Isaiah the prophet:

v. 15: 'Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali along the sea beyond the Jordan, heathen Galilee:

v. 16: A people living in darkness has seen a great light. On those who inhabit a land overshadowed by death, light has arisen.'

v. 17: From that time on Jesus began to proclaim this theme: 'Reform your lives! The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

v. 18: As he was walking along the Sea of Galilee he watched two brothers, Simon now known as Peter, and his brother, Andrew, casting a net into the sea. They were fishermen.

v. 19: He said to them: 'Come after me and I will make you fishers of men.'

v. 20: They immediately abandoned their nets and became his followers.

v. 21: He walked along further and caught sight of two other brothers, James, Zebedee's son, and his brother John. They too were in their boat getting their nets in order with their father, Zebedee.

v. 22: He called them, and immediately they abandoned boat and father to follow him.

v. 23: Jesus toured all of Galilee. He taught in their synagogues, proclaimed the good news of the kingdom, and cured the people of every disease and illness.

v. 24: As a consequence of this, his reputation traveled the length of Syria. They carried to him all those afflicted with various diseases and racked with pain: the possessed, the lunatics, the paralyzed. He cured them all.

v. 25: The great crowds that followed him came from Galilee, the Ten Cities, Jerusalem and Judea, and from across the Jordan.

7727: Mt 4:12: When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, He withdrew to Galilee.

- Whereof did He depart?

- Again instructing us not to go to meet temptations, but to give place and withdraw ourselves. For it is no reproach, the not casting one's self into danger, but the failing to stand manfully when fallen into it. To teach us this accordingly, and to soothe the envy of the Jews, He retires to Capernaum; at once fulfilling the prophecy [cf. Is 9:1, 2], and making haste to catch the teachers of the world: for they, as you know, were abiding there, following their craft.

7728: Mt 4:13: He left Nazareth and went down to live in Capernaum by the sea near the territory in Zebulun and Naphtali, v. 14: to fulfill what had been said through Isaiah the prophet.

But, mark, I pray you, how in every case when He is about to depart unto the Gentiles, He has the occasion given Him by the Jews. For so in this instance, by plotting against His forerunner, and casting him into prison, they thrust out Christ into the Galilee of the Gentiles. For to show that He neither speaks of the Jewish nation by a part of it, nor signifies obscurely all the tribes; mark how the Prophet distinguishes that place, saying,

Mt 4:15: 'The land of Zebulun and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea,' beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, v. 16: 'the people which sat in darkness, saw great light,' by darkness here not meaning that which is sensible, but men's errors and ungodliness. Wherefore, he also added, 'They which sat in the region and shadow of death, to them light is sprung up.'

7729: For that you might learn that neither the light nor the darkness which he speaks of are sensible, in discoursing of the light, he called it not merely light, but 'a great light', which elsewhere he expresses by the word, 'True' Lk 1:9, and in describing the darkness, he termed it 'the shadow of death.' Lk 1:79. Then implying that they did not of themselves seek and find, but that God showed Himself to them from above, he said to them, 'Light is sprung up', that is the light of itself sprang up and shone forth: it was not that they first ran to the light. For in truth the condition of men was at the worst before Christ's coming. Since they more than 'walked in darkness'; they 'sat in darkness'; a kind of sign that they did not even hope to be delivered. For as persons not even knowing where to put a step forward, so they sat, overtaken by the darkness, not being able so much as to stand any more.

7730: Mt 4:17: 'From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

'From that time' - What time?

- After John was cast into prison.

- And wherefore did He not reach to them from the beginning? Indeed what occasion for John at all, when the witness of His works was proclaiming Him?

- That hence also you might learn His dignity; namely, that as the Fathers, so He too has prophets; to which purpose Zaccharias also spoke, Lk 1:76: 'And you child, shall be called a prophet of the Most High.' And that he might leave no occasion to the shameless Jews; which motive He Himself alleged, saying, Mt 11:18: 'John ... came neither eating, nor drinking, and they say, he has a devil; v. 19: The Son of Man came eating and drinking and they say, Behold a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.'

7731: And moreover it was necessary, that what concerned Him should be spoken by another first, and not by Himself. For if even after both testimonies and demonstration so many and so great, they said, Jn 8:13: You bear record of yourself, Your record is not true - had He, without John's saying anything, come into the midst, and first borne record of Himself; what would they not have said? For this cause, neither did He preach before John, nor did He work miracles, until John was cast into prison; lest in this way the multitude should be divided. Therefore also John did no miracle at all; that by this means also might give over the multitude to Jesus, His miracles drawing them unto Him.

7732: Again, if even after so many divine precautions, John's disciples, both before and after his imprisonment, were jealously disposed towards Him Jn 3:16, and the people, too, suspected not Him but John to be the Christ Mt 16:14; what would not the result have been, had none of these things taken place? For this cause, both Matthew distinctly notes that 'from that time He began to preach'; and when He began His preaching, He Himself also taught this same doctrine, which the other used to preach; and no word as yet concerning Himself does the doctrine which he preached say. Because it was for the time a great event even for this to be received, forasmuch as they had not as yet the proper opinion about Him.

7733: Therefore, also at the beginning, He puts nothing severe or grievous, as the other did, mentioning an ax, and a tree cut down; and a threshing-floor, and unquenchable fire; but His preludes are gracious: the Heavens and the kingdom there are the good tidings which he declares to His hearers.

Mt 4:18: 'And walking by the sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon, that was surnamed Peter, and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were

fishermen. And He said to them, Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they left their nets and followed Him

7734: - And yet John said that they were called in another manner, Jn 1:35, ff.

- Whence it is evident that this was a second call; and from many things one can perceive this. For there it is said, that he came to him, when 'John was not yet cast into prison'; but here, after he was in confinement. And there Andrew calls Peter, but here Jesus calls both. And John said, 1:42, Jesus seeing Simon coming, said, 'You are Simon, the Son of Jona, you shall be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone.' But Matthew said that he was already called by that name; for his words are: '<sup>33</sup>. And from the place where they were called, and from many other things, one may perceive this; and from their ready obedience and abandonment of all. For now they were well instructed beforehand.

7735: Thus, in the other case, Andrew is seen coming into His house, and hearing many things; but here, having heard one bare word, they followed immediately. Since neither was it unnatural to follow Him at the beginning, and then leave Him again and return anew to their own craft, when they saw both John thrown into prison, and Himself departing. Accordingly you see that He finds them actually fishing. But He neither forbade them at the first when minded to withdraw, nor having withdrawn themselves, did He let them go altogether; but He gave way when they started aside from Him, and comes again to win them back; which kind of thing is the great point of fishing.

7736: But, mark both their faith, and their obedience. For though they were in the midst of their work [and you know how greedy a thing fishing is] when they heard His command, they delayed not, they procrastinated not, they aid not, 'let us return home, and converse with our kinsfolk', but 'they forsook all and followed ', even as Elisha did to Elijah [cf. I K 19:20, 21]. Because such is the obedience which Christ seeks of us, as that we delay not even a moment of time, though something absolutely most needful should vehemently press on us. Wherefore also when some other had come unto Him, and was asking leave to bury his father, not even this did he permit him to do, My 8:21, ff.: to signify that before all we ought to esteem the following of Himself.

7737: But if you should say, the promise is very great'; even for this do I most admire hem, for that when they had not as yet seen any sign, they believed in so great a reach of promise, and accounted all but second to that attendance. And this because they believed that by what words they were caught, by the same they would be able to catch others, also. To these, then, such was His promise: but to James and John He said no such thing. For the obedience of those that had gone before had by this time

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<sup>33</sup> Here Fr. Bertoni skips a sentence which Chrysostom included, in which he refers to Mt's rendition of Peter's call, on p. 88 a of the Baronet translation.

paved the way for these. And besides they had also heard many things before concerning Him.

7738: And see how he does with exact care intimate unto us their poverty also: in that He found them sewing up their nets. So exceeding great was their poverty, that they were mending what was worn out, not being able to buy others. And this, too, was for the time no small proof of virtue, their bearing poverty with ease, their supporting themselves by honest labor, their being bound one to another by the power of love, their having their father with them, and attending upon them.

When, therefore, He had caught them, then He begins in their presence to work miracles, by his deeds confirming the words of John concerning Him. And He was continually frequenting their synagogues, even by this instructing them that He was not a sort of adversary of God and deceiver, but that He was come in accordance with the Father.

7739: And while frequenting them, He did not preach only, but also showed forth miracles, Mt 4:23: 'And Jesus toured all of Galilee. He taught in their synagogues, proclaimed the good news of the kingdom, and cured the people of every disease and illness.'

And this, because on every occasion, whensoever anything is done strange and surprising, and any polity is introduced, God is wont to work miracles, as pledges of His power, which He affords to them that are to receive his laws. thus, for instance, when He was about to make man, he crated a whole world, and then gave him that law which he had in Paradise. And when He was to give laws to Noah, He showed forth anew great miracles, in that He reduced again the whole creation to its elements, and made that fearful sea to prevail for a full year; and in that amid o great a tempest, He preserved that righteous man.

7740: And in the time of Abraham, too, He vouchsafed many signs; as his victory in the war, the plague upon Pharaoh, his deliverance from dangers. And when about to legislate for the Jews, He showed forth those marvelous and great prodigies, and then gave the law.

Just so in this case also, being to introduce a certain high polity, and to tell them what they had never heard, by the display of the miracles He confirms what He said. Thus, because the kingdom He was preaching appeared not, by the things that appear, He makes it, though invisible, manifest.

7741: And mark the evangelist's care to avoid superfluity of words; how he tells us not of every one of them that are healed, but in a few words speeds over showers of miracles. For he says:



Mt 4:24: 'They brought unto Him all that were sick with divers diseases, and torments, and those that were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy, and He healed them.'

But our inquiry is this; why it can have been that He demanded faith of none of them? For He said not, what we find Him saying after this: 'Do you believe that I am able to do this ?' Because He had not as yet given proof of His power. And besides, the very act of approaching Him, and of bringing others to Him, exhibited no common faith. For they brought them even from far; whereas they would never have brought them, unless they had persuaded themselves of great things concerning Him.

Now, then, let us follow Him for we also have many diseases of our soul...<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> Fr. Bertoni ends his Meditation 14 right here, on p. 89 a of the Baronet translation - with another full page and a half of Chrysostom's Homily 14 to go, which ends on p. 90 b of the said translation.

**7742 - MEDITATION 15****7742:****Meditation 15****Mt 5:1-13****Preparatory Prayer**

Prelude 1. Mt 5:1: When he saw the crowds he went up on the mountainside. After he had sat down his disciples gathered around him,

v. 2: and he began to teach them:

v. 3: How blest are the poor in spirit: the reign of God is theirs.

v. 4: Blest too are the sorrowing: they shall be consoled.

v. 5: Blest are the lowly; they shall inherit the land.

v. 6: Blest are they who hunger and thirst for holiness; they shall have their fill.

v. 7: Blest are they who show mercy; mercy shall be theirs.

v. 8: Blest are the single-hearted for they shall see God.

v. 9: Blest too are the peacemakers; they shall be called sons of God.

v. 10: Blest are those persecuted for holiness' sake; the reign of God is theirs.

v. 11: Blest are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of slander against you because of me.

v. 12: Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is great in heaven; they persecuted the prophets before you in the very same way.

v. 13: You are the salt of the earth. But what if salt goes flat? How can you restore its flavor? Then it is good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

v. 14: You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

v. 15: Men do not light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket. they set it on a stand where it gives light to all in the house.

v. 16: ...

7743: Mt 5:1: When he saw the crowds, he went up on the mountainside. After he had sat down his disciples gathered around him, v. 2: and he began to teach them: v. 3: How blest are the poor in spirit: the reign of God is theirs.

See how unambitious He was, and void of boasting : in that He did not lead people about with Him, but whereas, when healing was required, He had Himself gone about everywhere, visiting both towns and country places; now when the multitude is become very great, He sits in one spot; and that not in the midst of any city or forum, but on a mountain and in a wilderness; instructing us to do nothing for display, and to separate ourselves from the tumults of ordinary life, and this most especially, when we are to study wisdom, and to discourse of things needful to be done.

7744: 'When He had gone up on the mountain and sat down, His disciples came unto Him' 5:1.

Do you see their growth in virtue? and how in a moment they became better men? Since the multitude were but gazers on the miracles, but these from that hour desired also to hear some great and high thing. And indeed this it was set Him on His teaching, and made Him begin this discourse. For it was not men's bodies only that He was healing, but He was also amending their souls; and again from the care of these He would pass to attendance on the other. thus He at once varied the succor that He gave, and likewise mingled with the instruction afforded by His words, the manifestation of His glory from His works; and besides, He stopped the shameless mouths of the heretics, signifying by this His care of both parts of our being, that He himself is the Maker of the whole creation. therefore also on each nature He bestowed abundant providence, now amending the one, now the other.

7745: And in this way He was then employed, for it is said:

v. 2: 'And He opened His mouth and taught them, saying.'

- And wherefore is the clause added: 'He opened His mouth?'

- To inform you that in His very silence He gave instruction, and not when He spoke only: but at one time by 'opening His mouth', at another uttering His voice by the works He did. But when you hear that He taught them, do not think of Him as discoursing with his disciples only, but rather with all through them. For since the multitude was such a multitude ever is, and consisted moreover of such as creep on the ground, He withdraws the choir of His disciples, and makes His discourse unto them: in His conversation with them, providing that the rest also, who were yet very far from the level of His sayings, might find His lesson of self-denial no longer grievous unto them.

7746: Of which indeed Luke gave intimation, when he said that He directed His words unto them. Lk 6:20; and Matthew, too, clearly declaring the same, wrote: 'His disciples came unto Him, and He taught them.' For thus the others also were sure to be more eagerly attentive to Him, than they would have been had He addressed Himself unto all.

- Whence does He begin? and what kind of foundations of His new polity does He lay for us?

- Let us listen with strict attention to what is said. For though it was spoken unto them, it was written for the sake also of all men afterwards. And accordingly on this account, though He had His disciples in His mind and in His public preaching, yet unto them He limits not His savings, but applies all His words of blessing without restriction. Thus, He said not, 'Blessed are you, if you become poor', but 'Blessed are the poor.'

7747: And I may add that even if He had spoken of them, the advice would still be common to all. For so, when he said, Mt 28:20: 'Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world', He is discoursing not with them only, but also, through them, with all the world. And in pronouncing them blessed, who are persecuted, and chased, and suffer all intolerable things; not for them only, but also for all who arrive at the same excellency, He weaves His crown. However, that this may be yet plainer, and to inform you that you have great interest in His sayings, and so indeed has all mankind, if any may choose to give heed; hear now how He begins these wondrous words:

v. 3: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'

7748: - What is meant by the poor in spirit?

- The humble and contrite in mind. For by 'spirit' He has here designated the soul, and the faculty of choice. That is, since many are humble not willingly, but compelled by stress of circumstances; letting these pass for this were no matter of praise, He blessed them first, who by choice humble and contract themselves.

- But why did He not say, 'the humble', but 'the poor'?

- Because this is more than that. For He means here them who are awestruck, and tremble at the commandments of God. Whom also by His prophet Isaiah, God earnestly accepting, said Is 62:2: 'To whom will I look, but to him who is meek and quiet and trembles at My words?'

7749: For indeed there are many kinds of humility: one is humble in his own measure, another with all excess of lowliness. It is this last lowliness of mind which that blessed prophet commends, picturing to us the temper that is not merely subdued, but utterly broken, when he said: 'The sacrifice for God is a contrite spirit, a contrite and humble heart God will not despise', Ps 50:19. And the Three Children also offer this unto God

as a great sacrifice, saying, Dn 3:39: Nevertheless, in a contrite soul, and in a spirit of lowliness, may we be accepted'. this Christ now blesses. For whereas the greatest of evils, and those which make havoc of the whole world, had their entering in from pride: - for both the devil, not being such before, did thus become a devil; as indeed Paul plainly declared, saying 1 Tm 3:6: Lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil.'

7750: And the first man, too, puffed up by the devil with these hopes, was made an example of, and became mortal for expecting to become a god, he lost even what he had; and God also upbraiding him with this and mocking folly, said Gn 3:22: 'Behold Adam is become as one of us'. And each one of those that came after did hereby wreck himself in impiety, fancying some equality with God: - since, I say, this was the stronghold of our evils and the root and fountain of all wickedness, He, preparing a remedy suitable to the disease, laid this law first as a strong and safe foundation.

7751: For this being fixed as a base, the builder in security lays on it all the rest. But if this be taken away, though a man reach to the Heavens in his course of life, it is all easily undermined, and issues in a grievous end. Though fasting, prayer, almsgiving, temperance, any other good thing whatever, be gathered together in you; without humility, all fade away and perish. It was this very thing that took place in the instance of the Pharisee, Lk 18:14: for even after he had arrived at the very summit, he 'went down' with the loss of all, because he had not the mother of virtues: for pride is the foundation of all wickedness, so is humility the principle of all self-command. Wherefore also He begins with this, pulling up boasting by the very root out of the soul of His hearers.

7752: Mt 5:4: 'Blessed are the meek.'

- And what, one may ask, is this to His disciples, who were on every account humble? For in truth, they had nothing to be proud of, being fishermen, poor, ignoble, and illiterate.

- Even though these things concerned not His disciples, yet surely they concerned such as then were present and such as were hereafter to receive the disciples, lest they should on this account despise them. But it were truer to say that they did also concern His disciples. For even if not then, yet by and by they were sure to require this help, after their signs and wonders, and their honor from the world, and their confidence towards God. For neither wealth, nor power, nor royalty itself had so much power to exalt men, as the things which they possessed in all fullness.

7753: And besides, it was natural that even before the signs they might be lifted up, at that very time when they saw the multitude, and all that audience surrounding their Master; they might feel some human weakness. Wherefore He at once represses their pride. And He does not introduce what He said by way of advice, or of

commandments, but by way of blessings, so making His word less burdensome, and opening to all the course of His discipline. For He said not: This, or that person - but, they who do so, all of them are called *blessed*. So that though you be a slave, a beggar, in poverty, a stranger, unlearned, there is nothing to hinder you from being blessed, if you emulate this virtue.

7754: Now having begun, as you see, where most need was, He proceeds to another commandment, one which seems to be opposed to the judgment of the whole world. For whereas all think that they who rejoice are enviable, those in dejection, poverty, and mourning, wretched, He calls these blessed rather than those; saying thus:

Mt 5:5: 'Blessed are they who mourn.'

Yet surely all men call them miserable. For therefore, He wrought the miracles beforehand, that in such enactments as these He might be entitled to credit.

7755: And here, too, again he designated not simply all that mourn, but all that do so for sins: since surely that other kind of mourning is forbidden, and that earnestly, which relates to anything of this life. This Paul also clearly declared, when he said, 2 Co 7:10: 'The sorrow of the world works death, but Godly sorrow works repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of.' These then, He, too, Himself calls blessed, whose sorrow is of that kind; yet, not simply them that sorrow did He designate, but them that sorrow intensely. Therefore, He did not say, They that sorrow, but 'they that mourn.' For this commandment again is fitted to teach us self-control.

7756: For if those who grieve for children, or wife, or any other relation gone from them, have no fondness for gain or pleasure during that period of their sorrow; if they aim not at glory, are not provoked by insults, nor led captive by envy, nor beset by any other passion, their grief alone wholly possessing them; much more will they who mourn for their own sins, as they ought to mourn, show forth a self-denial greater than this.

- Next, what is the reward for these?

- 'For they shall be comforted', He said, 5:5.

- Where shall they be comforted, tell me.

- Both here and there. For since the thing enjoined was exceeding burdensome and galling, He promised to give that, which most of all made it light. Wherefore, if you will be comforted, mourn.

7757: And think not this a dark saying. For when God does comfort, though sorrows come upon you by thousands like snow-flakes, you will be above them all. Since in truth, as the returns which God gives are always far greater than our labors; so He has wrought in this case, declaring them that mourn to be blessed, not after the value of

what they do, but after His own love towards man. For they that mourn, mourn for misdoings, and to such it is enough to enjoy forgiveness and obtain wherewith to answer for themselves. But forasmuch as He is full of love towards man, He does not limit His recompense either to the removal of our punishments, or to the deliverance from our sins, but He makes them even blessed, and imparts to them abundant consolation. But He bids us to mourn, not only for our own, but also for other men's misdoings. And of this temper were the souls of the saints: such was that of Moses, of Paul, of David; yes, all these many times mourned for evils not their own.

7758: 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land.' Mt 5:4.

-Tell me, what kind of earth?

- So say, figurative earth, but it is not this, for nowhere in Scripture do we find any mention of an earth that is merely figurative.

- But what can the saying mean?

- He holds out a sensible prize; even as Paul also does, in that when he had said, Ep 6:1: 'Honor your father and mother', he added, 'For so shall you live long upon the earth.' And He himself unto the thief again, Lk 23:43: 'Today you shall be with Me in Paradise.' Thus, he does not incite us by means of the future blessings only, but of the present also, for the sake of the grosser sort of His hearers, and such as before the future seek those others.

7759: Thus, for example, further on also He said, 'Agree with your adversary', Mt 5:25. Then He appoints the reward of such self-command, and said, 'Lest at any time the adversary deliver you to the judge, and the judge to the officer', ib. Do you see whereby He alarmed us? By the things of sense, by what happens before our eyes. And again: 'Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council', Mt 5:22. And Paul, too, sets forth sensible rewards at great length, and uses things present in his exhortations, as when discoursing about virginity. For having said nothing about the heavens there, for the time he urges it by things present, saying, 'Because of the present distress, 1 Co 7:26: but I spare you', ib. v. 28: and 'I would have you without solicitude. ib. v. 32.

7760: Thus accordingly, Christ also with the things spiritual has mingled the sensible. For whereas the meek man is thought to lose all his own, He promises the contrary, saying, No, but this is he who possesses his goods in safety, namely, he who is not rash, nor boastful: while that sort of man shall often lose his patrimony, and his very life. And besides, since in the Old Testament the prophet used to say continually: 'The meek shall inherit the earth', Ps 36:11, He thus weaves into His discourse the words to which they were accustomed, so as not everywhere to speak a strange language.

7761: And this He said, not as limiting the rewards to things present, but as joining with these the other sort of gifts, also. For neither in speaking of any spiritual thing does He exclude such as men are in the present life; nor again in promising such as are in our life, does He limit His promise to that kind. For He said, Mt 6:3: 'Seek you the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you.'. And again, 19:29: 'Whosoever has left houses or brothers, or sisters, our father, or mother, or wife, or children, or fields on account of My name, shall receive a hundred fold in this world, and in the future shall inherit everlasting life.'<sup>35</sup>.

7762: - Mt 5:6: 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice.'

- What sort of righteousness? He means either the whole virtue, or that particular virtue which is opposed to covetousness.

- For since He is about to give commandment concerning mercy, to show how we must show mercy, as, for instance, not of rapine or covetousness, He blesses them that lay hold of righteousness. And see with what exceeding force He puts it. For He said not, Blessed are they which keep fast by righteousness, but: 'Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness'; that not merely anyhow, but with all desire we might pursue it.

7763: For since this is the most peculiar property of covetousness, and as we are not so enamored of meat and drink, as of gaining, and compassing ourselves with more and more, He bade us to transfer this desire to a new object, freedom from covetousness. Then He appoints the prize, again from things sensible; saying, 'for they shall be filled' 5:6. Thus, because it is thought that the rich are commonly made such by covetousness, 'No, He says, it is just contrary: for it is righteousness that does this. Wherefore, so long as you do righteous', fear not poverty, nor tremble at hunger. For the extortioners, they are the very persons who lose all, even as he certainly who is in love with righteousness, possesses himself the goods of all men in safety. But if they who covet other men's goods enjoy so great abundance, much more they who give up their own. Thus, because it is thought that the rich are commonly made such by covetousness, 'No, He says, it is just contrary: for it is righteousness that does this. Wherefore, so long as you do righteous', fear not poverty, nor tremble at hunger. For the extortioners, they are the very persons who lose all, even as he certainly who is in love with righteousness, possesses himself the goods of all men in safety. But if they who covet other men's goods enjoy so great abundance, much more they who give up their own.

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<sup>35</sup> Fr. Bertoni's citation is much fuller than the Latin version of Chrysostom which mentions only 'brethren' - cf. p. 94 a of the Baronet translation.



7764: Mt 5:7: 'Blessed are the merciful.'

Here He seems to me to speak not of those only who show mercy in giving of money, but those likewise who are merciful in their actions. For the way of showing mercy is manifold, and this commandment is broad.

- What is the reward thereof?

- For they shall obtain mercy.. And it seems indeed to be a sort of equal recompense, but it is a far greater thing than the act of goodness. For whereas they themselves show mercy as men, they obtain mercy from the God of all; and it is not the same thing, man's mercy, and God's; but as wide as is the interval between wickedness and goodness, so far is the one of these removed from the other.

7765: Mt 5:8: 'Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God.'

Behold again, the reward is spiritual... Now here He calls 'pure' either those who have attained unto all virtue, and are not conscious to themselves of any evil; or those who live in temperance. For there is nothing which we need so much in order to see God, as this last virtue. Wherefore Paul also said, Heb 12:14: 'Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.' He is here speaking of such sight as it is possible for man to have. For because there are many who show mercy, and who commit no rapine, nor are covetous, who yet are guilty of fornication and uncleanness; to signify that the former alone suffice not. he has added this, much in the same sense as Paul, writing to the Corinthians, bore witness of the Macedonian, that they were rich not only in almsgiving, but also in all other virtue., 2 Co 9:11. For having spoken of the noble spirit, they had shown in regard of their goods, he said, 'They gave also their own selves to the Lord, and to us.' [cf. 2 Co 8:5].

7766: Mt 5:9: 'Blessed are the peace-makers.'

Here He not only takes away altogether our own strife and hatred among ourselves, but He requires besides this something more, namely, that we should set at one again others, who are at strife. And to gain the reward which He annexes is spiritual.

- Of what kind is it?

- 'For they shall be called the children of God', ibi. Yes, for this became the work of the Only Begotten, to unite the divided, and to reconcile the alienated. Then, let you should imagine peace in all cases a blessing, He has added:

7767: Mt 5:10: 'Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake.' That is for virtue's sake, for succor given to others, and for Godliness: it being ever His wont to call by the name of 'righteousness' the whole practical wisdom of the soul. v. 11:

'Blessed are you when men shall execute you and say all manner of evils against you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

v. 12: 'Rejoice and be exceedingly glad.'

As if He had said: Though they should call you sorcerers, deceivers, pestilent persons, or whatever else, blessed are you.' So He speaks.

7768: What could be newer than these injunctions? wherein the very things which all others avoid, these He declares to be desirable; I mean, being poor, mourning, persecution, evil report. But yet He both affirmed this, and convinced not two, nor ten, nor twenty, nor a hundred, nor a thousand, men, but the whole world. And hearing things so grievous and galling, so contrary to the accustomed ways of men, the multitudes 'were astonished.' So great was the power of him who spoke. However, lest you should think that the mere fact of being evil spoken of makes men blessed, He has set two limitations; when it is said for His sake, and when the things that are said are false; for without these, he who is evil spoken of, so far from being blessed, is miserable.

7769: Then see the price again:

'Because your reward is great in heaven.' 5.12.

But even though you do not hear of a kingdom given in each one of the blessings, be not discouraged. For although He give different names to the rewards, yet He brings all into His kingdom. Thus, both when He said, 'they that mourn shall be comforted', and: they that show mercy shall obtain mercy'; and 'the pure in heart shall see God'; and 'the peace-makers shall be called the children of God' - nothing else but the Kingdom does He shadow out by all these sayings. For such as enjoy these, shall surely attain unto that. think not, therefore, that this reward is for the poor in spirit only, but for those who hunger after righteousness, for the meek, and for all the rest, without exception. Since on that account He has set His blessing on them all, that you might not look for anything sensible: for that man cannot be blessed, who is crowned with such things as come to an end with this present life, and hurry by quicker than a shadow.

7770: But when He had said, 'your reward is great', he added also another consolation, saying:

'For so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.' 5:17.

Thus, since that first, the promise of the Kingdom was yet to come, and all in expectation, He affords them comfort from this world; from their fellowship with those who before them had been ill-treated. For think not, He aid, that for something inconsistent in your sayings and enactments you suffer these things: or, as being

teachers of evil doctrines, you are to be persecuted by them; the plots and dangers proceed not of any wickedness in your sayings, but of the malice of those who hear you. Wherefore neither are they any blame to you who suffer wrong, but to them who do the wrong. And to the truth of these things all preceding time bears witness. For against the prophets they did not even bring any charge of transgressing the law, and of sentiments of impiety, that they stoned some, chased away other, encompassed others with innumerable afflictions. Wherefore let not this trouble you, for of the very same mind they do all that is done now.

7771: Do you see how He raised up their spirits, by placing them near to the company of Moses and Elias? thus also Paul writing to the Thessalonians, said, 1 Th 2:14: For you became followers of the Churches of God, which are in Judea; for you also have suffered the same things of your own fellow-countrymen, even as they have of the Jews, v. 15: who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have driven us out; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men.' Which same point here also Christ has established. And whereas in the other beatitudes, He said: 'Blessed are the poor, blessed are the merciful': here He has not put it generally, but addresses His speech unto themselves, saying:

'Blessed are you, when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and say every evil word', signifying that this is an especial privilege of theirs; and that beyond all others, teachers have this for their own.

7772: At the same time, He her also covertly signifies His own dignity, and His equality in honor with His Father. For as they on the Father's account, He said, so shall you also for me suffer these things. But when He said, the prophets which were before you, He implies that they were also by this time become prophets. Next declaring that this above all profits them, and makes them glorious, He did not say, they will calumniate and persecute you, but I will prevent it. For not in their escaping evil report, but in their noble endurance thereof and by refuting them by their actions, He will have their safety stand: this being a much greater thing than the other; even as to be struck and not hurt, is much greater than escaping the blow.

7773: Now in this place He says: 'Your reward is great in heaven.' But Luke report Him to have spoken this, both earnestly, and with more entire consolation. For he not only, as you know, pronounces them blessed, who are evil spoken of for God's sake, but declares them likewise wretched who are well spoken of all by all men. For, He says, Lk 6:26: 'Woe to you when all shall speak well of you.' And yet the Apostles were well spoken of, but not by all men. Wherefore, He said not, 'Woe unto you, when men shall speak well of you - but, 'when all men' shall do so'. For it is not even possible that those who live in the practice of virtue should be well spoken of by all men. And again He said: 'When they shall cast out your name as evil, rejoice, and leap for joy' [cf. Lk 6:22, f.]. For not only of the dangers they underwent, but of the calumny also, He

appoints the recompense to be great. Wherefore, He said not: When they shall persecute you and kill you - but, 'When they shall revile you, and say all manner of evil.'

7774: For most assuredly, men's evil reports have a sharper bite than their very deeds. For whereas, in our dangers, there are many things that lighten the toil, as to be sheered by all, to have many to applaud, to crown, to proclaim our praise; here in our reproach even this consolation is destroyed. Because we seem not to have achieved anything great; and this galls the combatant more than all his dangers: at least, many have gone on even to hang themselves, not bearing evil report. And why do you marvel at the others? since that traitor, that shameless and accursed one, he who had never ceased to blush for anything whatever, was wrought upon by this chiefly to hurry to the halter. And Job again, all adamant as he was, and firmer than a rock; when he had been robbed of all his possessions, and was suffering those incurable ills, and had become on a sudden childless, and when he saw his body pouring out worms, like a fountain, and his wife attacking him, he repelled it all with ease. But when he saw his friends reproaching and trampling upon him, and entertaining an evil opinion of him, and saying that he suffered those things for some sins, and was paying the penalty of wickedness: then there was trouble, then commotion, even in that great and noble-hearted man.

7775: And David, also, letting pass all that he had suffered, sought of God a retribution for the calumny alone. For, 2 K 16:11: 'Let him curse', he said, 'for the Lord has bidden him: v. 12: that the Lord may see the humiliation, and requite me for this cursing of his on this day.' And Paul, too proclaims the triumph not of those only who incur danger, or are deprived of their goods, but of these also, thus saying Heb 10:32, 'Call to remembrance the former day, in which after you were illuminated you endured a great fight of afflictions; v. 33: partly while you were made a gazing stock by reproaches, and afflictions.' On this account, then, Christ has appointed the reward also to be great.

7776: After this, lest anyone should say, Here you give no redress, nor stop men's mouths; and do you assign a reward there? He has put before us the prophets, to show that neither in their case did God give redress. And if, where the rewards were at hand, He cheered them with things to come; much more now, when this hope is become clearer, and self-denial is increased. And observe, too, after how many commandments He has put this: for surely He did it not without reason, but to show that it is not possible for one unprovided, and unarmed with all those other virtues, to go forth unto these conflicts. therefore, you see, in each instance, by the former precept making way for the following one, He has woven a sort of golden chain for us.

7777: Thus, first, he that is 'humble', will surely also 'mourn' for his own sins: he that so 'mourns' will be both 'meek' and 'righteous' and 'merciful'. He that is 'merciful' and 'righteous' and 'contrite' will, of course be also 'oure in heart'. And such a one will be a 'peacemaker,' too: and he that attained all these, will be moreover arrayed against dangers, and will not be troubled when evil is spoken of him, and he is enduring grievous trials innumerable. Now, then, after giving them due exhortatoin, He refreshes them again with praises. As thus: the injunctions, being high...<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Fr. Bertoni ends his Meditation 15 here in the middle of a sentence, p. 97 a, which he will repeat as the beginning of his Meditation 16 - both of which are part of Chrysostom's Homily XV, which does not end until p. 102 of the Baronet translation.

7778	-	MEDITATION 16
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**7778: Meditation 16****Preparatory Prayer**

Prelude 1. Mt 5:13: You are the salt of the earth. But what if the salt goes flat?? How can you restore its flavor? Then it is good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

v. 14: You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

v. 15: Men do not light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket. They set it on a stand where it gives light to all in the house.

v. 16: In the same way, your light must shine before men so that they may see goodness in your acts and give praise to your heavenly Father.

7779: Now , then, after giving them due exhortation, He refreshes them again with praises. As thus: the injunctions being high <sup>37</sup> and far surpassing those in the Old Testament; lest they should be disturbed and confounded, and say: How shall we be able to achieve these things?? Hear what He said:

v. 13: 'You are the salt of the earth.' Implying this that of absolute necessity He enjoins all this. For not for your own life apart, He said, but for the whole world, shall your account be. For not two cities, nor to ten, or twenty, nor to a single nation am I sending you, as I sent the prophets; but to earth and sea, and the whole world; and that in evil case.

7780: For by saying 'You are the salt of the earth', He signified all human nature to have lost its savor, and to be decayed by sins. For which cause, you see, He requires of them such virtues as are most necessary and useful for the superintendence of the common sort. For first, the meek, and yielding, and merciful and righteous, shuts not up his good deeds unto himself only, but also provides that these good fountains should run over for the benefit of others. And he again who is pure in heart, and a peacemaker, and is persecuted for the truth's sake; he again orders his way of life for the common good. Think not then, He said, that you are drawn on to ordinary conflicts, or that for some small matters you are to give account. You are the salt of the earth.

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<sup>37</sup> These words are the precise words with which the previous Meditation 15 ends - Fr. Bertoni divides the one long Homily XV of Chrysostom into two Meditations, repeating this segment as the conclusion of the previous Meditation and the beginning of # 16. [cf. Baronet translation, bottom of p. 96 b and the top of p. 97 a].

7781: - What, then? did they restore the decayed?

- By no means; for neither is it possible to do any good to that which is already spoiled, by sprinkling with salt. This therefore they did not. But rather, what things had been before restored and committed to their charge, and freed from that ill savor, these they then salted, maintaining and preserving them in that freshness which they had received of the Lord. For that men should be set free from the rottenness of their sins was the good work of Christ; but their not returning to it again any more was the object of these men's diligence and travail. Do you see how by degrees He indicates their superiority to the very prophets? in that He said that they are teachers, not of Palestine, but of the whole world; and not simply teachers, but awful ones, too. For this is the marvelous thing, that not by flattering, nor soothing, but by sharply bracing them as salt, even so they became dear to all men.

7782: Now marvel not, He said, if leaving all others, I discourse to you, and draw you on to so great danger. For consider over how many cities, tribes and nations, I am to send you to preside. Wherefore, I would have you not only be prudent yourselves, but that you should also make others the same. And such persons have great need to be intelligent, in whom the salvation of the rest is at stake: they ought so much to abound in virtue, as to impart of the profit to others also. For if you do not become such as this, you will not suffice even for your own selves. Be not impatient, then, as though my sayings were too burdensome. For while it is possible for others who have lost their savor to return by your means, you if you should come to this, will with yourselves destroy others also. So that in proportion as the matters are great, which you have put into your hands, you need so much the greater diligence.

7783: Therefore He said: But if the salt lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men.' 5:13.

For other men, though, they fail never so often, may possibly obtain indulgence: but the teacher, should this happen to him, is deprived of all excuse, and will suffer the most extreme vengeance. Thus, lest at the words, 'When they shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you', they should be too timid to go forth: He tells them, 'unless you are prepared to combat with all this, you have been chose in vain.' For it is not evil report that you should fear, but lest you should prove partners in dissimulation. For then, 'You will lose your savor, and be trodden under foot'.

But if you continue sharply to brace them up, and then are evil spoken of, rejoice; for this is the very use of salt, to sting the corrupt, and make them smart. And so their censure follows of course, in no way harming you, but rather testifying your firmness. But through fear of it you give up the earnestness that becomes you, you will have to suffer much more grievously, being both evil spoken of, and despised by all.

For this is the meaning of 'trodden underfoot.' And after this He leads on to another, a higher image:

7784: Mt 5:15: 'You are the light of the world.'

'Of the world', again; not of one nation, nor of twenty states, but of the whole inhabited earth. And 'a light' to the mind, far better than this sunbeam: like as they were also a spiritual *salt*. And before they are *salt*, and now *light*; to teach you how great is the gain of these strict precept, and the profit of that grave discipline: how it binds, and permits not to become dissolute; and causes clear sight, leading men on to virtue.

Mt 5:14: 'A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid, neither do men light a candle, and put it under the bushel.'

Again, by these words He trains them to strictness of life, teaching them to be earnest in their endeavors, as set before the eyes of all men, and contending in the midst of the amphitheater of the world.

7785: For 'look not to this', He said, 'that we are now sitting here, that we are in a small portion of one corner. For you shall be as conspicuous to all as a city set on the ridge of a hill, as a candle in a house on the candlestick, giving light. Where are they now who persevere in disbelieving the power of Christ? Let them hear these things, and let them adore His might, amazed at the power of the prophecy. For consider how great things He promised to them, who were not known even in their own country: that earth and sea should know them, and that they should by their fame reach to the limits of the inhabited world; or rather, not by their fame, but by the working of the good they wrought. For it was not fame that bearing them everywhere made them conspicuous, but also the actual demonstration by their work. Since, as though they had wings, more vehemently than the sunbeam did they overrun the whole earth, sowing the light of godliness.

7786: But He seems to me to be also training them to boldness of speech. For to say, 'A city set on a hill cannot be hid' is to speak as declaring His own powers. For as that city can by no means be hidden, so it was impossible that what they preached should sink into silence and obscurity. Thus, since He had spoken of persecutions and calumnies, of plots and wars, for fear they might think that these would have power to stop their mouths; to encourage them, He said, that so far from being hid, it should overshadow the whole world; and that on this very account they should be illustrious and renowned. By this then he declares His own power. In what follows, He requires that boldness of speech, which was due on their part. Thus saying:



7787: Mt 5:15: Neither do men light a candle, and put it under the bushel, but on the candlestick, and it gives light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.'

For I, He said, it is true, have kindled the light, but its continuing to burn, let that come of your diligence: not for your own sakes alone, but also for their sake, who are to profit by these rays, and to be guided unto the truth. Since the calumnies surely shall not be able to obscure your brightness, if you be still living a strict life, and as become those who are to convert the whole world.

7788: Show forth therefore a life worthy of His grace; that even as it is everywhere preached, so this light may everywhere accompany the same. Next He sets before them another sort of gain, besides the salvation of mankind, enough to make them strive earnestly, and to lead them unto all diligence. As thus, You shall not only, said He, amend the world, if you live aright, but you will also give occasion that God shall be glorified; even as if you do the contrary, you will both destroy men, and make God's name to be blasphemed.

- And how, it may be asked, shall God be glorified through us, if at least men are to speak evil of us?

- No, not all men, and even they themselves who in envy do this, will in their conscience admire and approve you; even as the outward flatterers of such as live in wickedness do in mind accuse them.

7789: - What, then? Do you command us to live for display and vain glory?

- Far from it; I say not this; for I did not say, 'Give diligence to bring forward your own good deeds', neither did I say, Show them. But, 'Let your light shine'. that is, 'Let your light shine', that is 'Let your virtue be great, and the fire abundant, and the light unspeakable.' For when virtue is so great, it cannot lie hid, though its pursuer shade it over ten thousand fold. Present unto them an irreprehensible life, and let them have no true occasion of evil speaking; and then, though there be thousands of evil-speakers, no man shall be able to cast any shade upon you. And well did He say, 'Your light', for nothing makes a man so illustrious, how manifold soever his will to be concealed, as the manifestation of virtue. For as if he were clad with the very sunbeam, so he shines, yet brighter than it; not spending his rays on earth, but surmounting also Heaven itself.

7790: Hence also He comforts them more abundantly. For, what though the slander pain you, He said: yet you shall have many to honor God on your account. And in both ways your recompense is gathering, as well because God is glorified through you, as because you are defamed for God's sake. Thus, lest we should on purpose seek to be reproached, on hearing that there is a reward for it: first, He has not expressed that

sentiment simply, but with two limitations, namely, when what is said is false, and when it is for God's sake: - and next He signifies how not that only, but also good report, has its great profit, the glory of it passing on to God. And he holds out to them those gracious hopes For, He said, the calumny of the wicked avails not so much as to put all others in the dark, in respect of seeing your light. For then only when you have 'lost your savor' shall they tread you under foot; but not when you are falsely accused, doing right.

7791: Yes, rather than shall there be many admiring not you only, but for your sake your Father also. And He said not, God, but 'your Father'; already sowing beforehand the seeds of that noble birth, which was about to be bestowed upon them. Moreover, indicating His parity in honor, as He aid above, 'Grieve not for you that for my sake you are thus spoken of', so here He mentions the Father: every where manifesting His equality.. Since then we know he gain that arises from this earnestness, and the danger of indolence, for if our Lord be blasphemed because of us, that were far worse than our perdition, let us give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God. [cf. I Co 10:32]. And while the life which we present before them is brighter than the sun.

7792: Yet if any one will speak evil of us, let us not grieve at being defamed, but only if we be defamed with justice. For, on the one hand, if we live in wickedness, though there be none to speak ill of us, we shall be the most wretched of all men: on the other hand, if we apply ourselves to virtue, though the whole world speak evil of us, at that very time we shall be more enviable than any. And we shall draw on to follow us all who choose to be saved, for not the calumny of the wicked, but our good life, will draw their attention.

For indeed no trumpet is so clear as the proof that is given by our actions: neither is the light itself so transparent as a pure life, though our calumniators be beyond number. I say, if all the above-mentioned qualities be ours; if we be meek and lowly, and merciful; if we be pure, and peacemakers; if hearing reproach, we revile not again, but rather rejoice; then we shall retract all that observe us no less than the miracles do. And all will be kindly disposed toward u, though one be a wild beast, a demon, or what you will...<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Fr. Bertoni ends his second Meditation, i.e., # 16 [cf. Baronet translation, p. 99 b] based on Chrysostom's very lengthy Homily XV more than three full pages prior to Chrysostom's ending of it [cf. p. 102 b of the Baronet translation].

**7793 - MEDITATION 17****7793: Meditation 17****Mt 5:17-26****Preparatory Prayer**

Prelude 1. Mt 5:17: Do not think that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets. I have come, not to abolish them, but to fulfill them.

v. 18: Of this much I assure you: until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter of the law, not the smallest part of a letter, shall be done away with until it all comes true.

v. 19: That is why whoever breaks the least significant of these commands and teaches others to do so shall be called the least in the kingdom of God. Whoever fulfills and teaches these commands shall be great in the kingdom of God.

v. 20: I tell you, unless your holiness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees you shall not enter the kingdom of God.

v. 21: You have heard the commandment imposed on your forefathers, 'You shall not commit murder; every murderer shall be liable to judgment.'

v. 22: What I say to you is: everyone who grows angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; any man who uses abusive language toward his brother shall be answerable to the Sanhedrin, and if he holds him in contempt he risks the fires of Gehenna.

v. 23: If you bring your gift to the altar and there recall that your brother has anything against you,

v. 24: leave your gift at the altar, go first to be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

v. 25: Lose no time; settle with your opponent while on your way to court with him. Otherwise your opponent may hand you over to the judge, who will hand you over to the guard, who will throw you into prison.

v. 26: I warn you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny.

7794: 'Do not think that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets.'

- Why, who suspected this? or, who accused Him that He should make a defense against this charge? Surely, from what had gone before, no such suspicion was generated. For to command men to be meek, and gentle, and merciful, pure in

heart, and to strive for righteousness, indicated no such design, but rather altogether to the contrary. Wherefore, then, can He have said this?

- Not at random, nor vainly: but inasmuch as He was proceeding to ordain commandments greater than those of old, saying, 'It was said to them of old time, You shall not kill: but I say to you, Be not even angry', Mt 5:21, ff., and to mark out a way for a kind of divine and heavenly conversation; in order that the strangeness thereof might not disturb the souls of the hearers, nor dispose them quite to mutiny against what He said, He used this mean of setting them right beforehand.

7795: For although they fulfilled not the law, yet, nevertheless, they were possessed with much conscientious regard to it; and while they were annulling it every day by their deeds, the letters thereof they would have remained unmoved, and that no one should add anything more to them. Or, rather they bore with their rulers adding thereto, not however for the better, but for the worse. For so they used to set aside the honor due to our parents by additions of their own, and very many others also of the matters enjoined them, they would free themselves of by these unseasonable additions. Therefore, since Christ in the first place was not of the sacerdotal tribe, and next, the things which he was about to introduce were a sort of addition, not however lessening, but enhancing virtue; He knowing beforehand that both these circumstances would trouble them, before He wrote in their mind those wondrous laws, casts out that which was sure to be harboring there.

7796: - And what was it that it was harboring there, and making an obstacle?

- They thought that He, thus speaking, did so with a view to the abrogation of the ancient institutions. This suspicion therefore, He heals; nor here only does He do so, but elsewhere also again. Thus, since they accounted Him no less than an adversary of God, from this sort of reason, namely, His not keeping the Sabbath; He, to heal such their suspicion, there also again sets forth His pleas, of which some indeed were proper to Himself; as when He said, Jn 5:17: 'My Father goes on working and so do I'. but some had in them much condescension, as when he brings forward the sheep lost on the Sabbath day [cf. Mt 12:11], and points out that the law is disturbed for its preservation, and makes mention again of circumcision, as having this same effect [cf. Jn 7:23].

7797: Wherefore we see also that he often speaks words somewhat beneath Him, to remove the semblance of His being an adversary of God. For this cause, he who had raised thousands of the dead with a word only, when He was calling Lazarus, added also a prayer Jn 11:41: and then, lest this should make Him appear less than His Father, He, to correct this suspicion, added: 'I said these things, because of the people which stands by, that they may believe that You have sent Me, Jn ibi, v. 42. And neither does He work all things as one who acted by his own power, that He might thoroughly correct their weakness; nor does He do all things with prayer, lest He should leave

matter of evil suspicion to them that should follow, as though he were without strength or power: but He mingles the latter with the former, and those again with these. Neither does He do this indiscriminately, but with His own proper wisdom.

7798: For while He does the greater works authoritatively, in the less He looks up to Heaven. thus, when absolving sins, and revealing His secrets, and opening Paradise, and driving away devils, and cleansing lepers, and bridling death, and raising the dead by thousands, He did all by way of command: but when, what was much less than these, He was making many loaves to spring forth out of few, then He looked up to Heaven: signifying that not through weakness He does this. For He who could do the greater with authority, how in the lesser could He need prayer? But as I was saying, He does this to silence their shamelessness.

7799: The same reckoning, then, I bid you make of His words, also when you hear Him speak lowly things. For many in truth are the causes both for words and actions of that cast; as for instance, that He might not be supposed alien from God; His instructing and waiting on all men; His teaching humility; His being encompassed with flesh; the Jews' inability to hear all at once; His teaching us to utter no high word of ourselves. For this cause many times, having in His own person said much that is lowly of Himself, the great things He leaves to be said by others. Thus, he Himself indeed, reasoning with the Jews, said, Jn 8:58: 'Before Abraham was, I AM!'; but His disciple not thus, but, ibi, 1:1: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the word was with God, and the Word was God.'

7800: Again, that He himself made Heaven and earth, and sea, and all things visible and invisible, in His person He nowhere expressly said: but His disciple, speaking plainly out, and suppressing nothing, affirms this once, twice, indeed often: writing that: 'all things were made by Him and with him nothing was made'. Jn 1:3, and: He was in the world and the world was made by him, Jn 1:10. And why marvel, if others have said greater things of Him than He of Himself; since, what is more, in many cases, what He showed forth by His deeds, by his words, He uttered not openly? Thus that it was Himself who made mankind, He showed clearly even by that blind man; when he was speaking of our formation at the beginning, He said not: I made, but Mt 19:4: He who made them, made them male and female.

7801: Again, that He created the world and all things therein, He demonstrated by the fishes, by the wine, by the loaves, by the calm in the sea, by the sunbeam which He averted on the Cross; and by very many things besides: but in words He has nowhere said this plainly, though His disciples are continually declaring it, both John and Paul, and Peter. For if they who night and day hear Him discourse, and see Him work marvels; to whom He explained many things in private, and gave so great power as even to raise the dead; whom He made so perfect as to forsake all things for Him: if even they, after so great virtue and self-denial, had not strength to bear it all, before

the supply of the Spirit; how could the people of the Jews, being both void of understanding, and far behind such excellency, and only by hazard present when he did or said anything, how could they have been persuaded but that he was alien from the God of all, unless he had practiced such great condescension throughout?

7802: For on this account we see that even when He was abrogating the Sabbath, He did not as of set purpose bring in such His legislation, but He puts together many and various pleas of defense. How if, when he was about to cause one commandment to cease, He used to much reserve in His language, that He might not startle the hearers; much more, when adding to the law, entire as it was, another entire code of laws, did He require much management and attention, not to alarm those who were then hearing him. For this same cause, neither do we find Him teaching everywhere clearly concerning His own Godhead. For if His adding to the law was sure to perplex them so greatly, much more His declaring Himself God. Wherefore many things are uttered by Him, far below His dignity. And here when He is about to proceed upon His addition to the Law, He has used abundance for correction beforehand. For neither was it once only that He said, 'I do not abrogate the Law', but He both repeated it again and added another and a greater thing when He said: think not that I am come to destroy, He subjoined, I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.' 5:17.

7803: - And how, one may ask, did He not destroy it; in what way did He rather fulfill either the Law or the Prophets?

- The Prophets He fulfilled, inasmuch as He confirmed by His actions all that had been said concerning Him; wherefore also the Evangelist used to say in each case, 'That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet. Both when He was born [cf. Mt 1:22, f.] and when the children sang that wondrous hymn to Him, and when He sat on the ass [cf. Mt 21:5-16], and in very many more instances He worked this same fulfillment: all which things must have been unfulfilled, if he had not come. But the Law He fulfilled, not in one way only, but in a second and third also. In one way, by transgressing none of the precepts of the Law. For that He did fulfill it all, hear what He said to John, Mt 3:15: 'For thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness'. And to the Jews also He said, Jn 8:46: 'Which of you convinces Me of sin.?' And to His disciples, again, Jn 14:30: 'The prince of this world comes, and finds nothing in me.' And the Prophet, too, from the first had said that, Is 53:9: 'He did no sin.' This, then, was one sense, in which He fulfilled it.

7804: Another, that He did the same through us also; for this is the marvel, that He not only Himself fulfilled it, but He granted this to us likewise. Which thing Paul also declaring said, Rm 10:4: 'Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes.' And he said also that 'He judged sin in the flesh, Rm 8:3, ff. that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh'. And again, Rm 3:31: 'Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid! Indeed, we

establish the law.' For since the Law was laboring at this to make man righteous, but had not power, He came and brought in the way of righteousness by faith, and so established that which the law desired: and what the Law could not by letters, this He accomplished by faith. On this account, He said: 'I am not come to destroy the Law.'

7805: But if one will inquire accurately he will find also another, a third sense, in which this has been done.

- Of what sort is it, then?

- In the sense of the future code of the Laws, which he was about to deliver to them. For his sayings were no repeal of the former, but a drawing out, and filling up of them. thus, 'not to kill', is not annulled by the saying, 'Be not angry, but rather filled up and put in greater security: and do of all the others. Wherefore you see, as he had before unsuspectedly cast the seeds of this teaching; so, at the time when from His comparison of the old and new commandments, He would be more distinctly suspected of placing them in opposition, He used His corrective beforehand.

7806: For in a covert way, He had indeed already scattered those seeds, by what He had said. thus, 'Blessed are the poor', is the same as that we are not to be angry; 'Blessed are the pure in heart', as not to 'Look upon a woman for lust'; and the 'not laying up treasures on earth', harmonizes with 'Blessed are the merciful'; and 'to mourn', also 'to be persecuted' and 'reviled', coincide with 'entering in at the strait gate'; and 'to hunger and thirst after righteousness', is nothing else than that which He said afterwards, 'whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them.' And having declared 'the peacemaker blessed', He again almost said the same, when He gave command 'to leave the gift' and hasten to reconciliation with him that was grieved, and about 'agreeing with our adversary.'

7807: But there He set down the rewards of them that do right, here rather the punishments of them who neglect practice. Wherefore in that place He said: 'The meek shall inherit the earth'; so here, 'He that calls his brother fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire'; and there, 'The pure in heart shall see God'; and here he is a complete adulterer who looks unchastely. And having there called 'the peace-makers, sons of God'; here He alarms us from another quarter, saying, 'Lest at any time the adversary deliver you to the judge.' thus also, whereas in the former part, He blesses them that mourn, and them that are persecuted; in the following establishing the very same point, He threatens destruction to them that go not that way; for, 'They that walk 'in the broad way' He said, 'make their end there.'

7808: And He said, 'You cannot serve God and mammon', seems to me the same with, 'Blessed are the merciful', and 'those that hunger after righteousness'. But, as I said, since He is going to say those things more clearly, and not only more clearly, but also to add again more than had been already said, for He no longer merely seeks a

merciful man, but bids us give up even our coat; not simply a meek person, but to turn also the other cheek to him that would smite us; therefore, He first takes away the apparent contradiction. On this account, then, as I have already stated, He said this not once only, but once and again; in that to the words, Mt 5:17: 'Think not that I am come to destroy', He added, 'I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.'

7809: Mt 5:18: 'For verily I say unto you, Till Heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all come to pass.'

Now what He said is like this: it cannot be that it should remain unaccomplished, that the very least thing therein must needs be fulfilled. Which thing He Himself performed, in that He completed with all exactness. And here He signifies to us obscurely that the fashion of the whole world is also being changed. Nor did He set it down without purpose, but in order to arouse the hearer, and indicate, that He was with just cause introducing another discipline; if at least the very works of the creation are all to be transformed, and mankind is to be called to another country, and to a higher way of practicing how to live..

7810: Mt 5:19: 'Whoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of Heaven.' thus, having rid Himself of the evil suspicion, and having stopped the mouths of them who would fain gainsay, then at length He proceeds to alarm, and sets down a heavy denunciation in support of the enactments He was entering on. For as to His having said this in behalf not of the ancient laws, but of those which He was proceeding to enact, listen to what follows:

Mt 5:20: 'For I say unto you' He said, Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. ' For if He were threatening with regard to the ancient laws, how said He, 'except it shall exceed?' - since they who did just the same as those ancient could not exceed them on the score of righteousness.

7811: - But of what kind was the required excess?

- Not to be angry, not even to look upon a woman unchastely.

- -For what cause, then, does He call these commandments, 'least', though they were so great and high?

- Because he Himself was about to introduce the enactment of them; for as he humbled Himself, and speaks of Himself frequently with measure, so likewise of His own enactment, hereby again teaching us to be modest in everything. And besides, since there seemed to be some suspicion of novelty, He ordered His discourse for a while with reserve.



But, when you hear, 'least in the kingdom of Heaven', surmise nothing but hell and torments. For He was used to mean by 'the kingdom' not merely the enjoyment thereof, but also the time of the resurrection and that awful coming.

7812: And how could it be reasonable, that while he who called his brother fool, and transgressed but one commandment, falls into hell; the breaker of them all, and instigator of others to the same, should be within the kingdom. This, therefore, is not what He means, but that such a one will be at that time, *least*, that is, cast out, last. And he that is last will surely fall into hell. For, being God, He foreknew the laxity of the many, He foreknew that some would think these sayings were merely hyperbolical, and would argue about the laws, and say, what if any one call another a fool, is he punished? If one merely look on a woman, does he become an adulterer? For this very cause, He, destroying such insolence beforehand, has set down the strongest denunciation against either sort, as well them who transgress, as them who led on others so to do. Knowing then His threat as we do, let us neither ourselves transgress, nor discourage such as are disposed to kelp these things.

7813: 'But whosoever shall do and teach', He said, 'shall be called great', 5:19.

For not to ourselves alone, should we be profitable, but to others also; since neither is the reward as great for him who guides himself aright, as for one who with himself adds also another. For as teaching without doing condemns the teacher, for you who teach another, it is said, Rm 2:21: teach not yourself; so doing but not guiding others, lessens our reward. One ought, therefore, to be chief in either work, and having first set one's self right, thus to proceed also to the care of the rest. For on this account He Himself has set the doing before the teaching; to intimate that so most of all may one be able to teach, but in no other way. For one will be told, 'Physician, heal yourself', Lk 4:23. Since he who cannot teach himself, yet attempts to set others right, will have many to ridicule him. Or rather, such a one will have no power to teach at all, his actions uttering their voice against him. But, if he be complete in both respects, 'he shall be called great in the kingdom of Heaven.'

7814: 'For I say to you, Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven' Mt 5:20.

Here by righteousness He means the whole of virtue, even as discoursing to Job, He said, Jb 1:1: 'He was a blameless man...' According to the same signification of the word, Paul also called that man 'righteous', for whom, as he said, 1 Tm 1:9, no law is even set. And in many other places, too, one might find this name standing for virtue in general. But observe, I pray you, the increase of grace; in that He will have His newly-come disciples better than the teachers in the old covenant. For by 'Scribes and Pharisees' here, He meant not merely the lawless, but the well-doers. For, were

they not doing well, He would not have said they have a righteousness; neither would He have compared the unreal to the real.

7815: And observe here also, how He commends the old law, by making a comparison between it and the other; which kind of thing implies it to be of the same tribe and kindred. For more and less, is in the same kind. He does not, you see, find fault with the old law, but will have made it stricter. Whereas, had it been evil, He would not have made it more perfect, but would have cast it out <sup>39</sup>.

7816: Since, then, both the rewards thereof are greater, and the power given by the Spirit more abundant, in reason it requires our graces to be greater also. For it is no longer 'a land that flows with milk and honey', nor a comfortable old age, nor many children, nor corn and wine, and flocks in the Heavens, and adoption and brotherhood with the Only-Begotten, and to partake of the inheritance and to be glorified and to reign with Him, and those unnumbered rewards. And as to our having received more abundant help, hear Paul when he says, Rm 8:1: 'There is therefore no condemnation now to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, v. 2: for the law of the Spirit of life has made me free from the law of sin and death...' <sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> Fr. Bertoni skips here [p. 107 a, of the Baronet translation] almost an entire column and picks up again on p. 107 b for one more paragraph in his Meditation 17.

**7817       -       MEDITATION 18**

**7817:                      Meditation 18 <sup>40</sup>**

**Preparatory Prayer**

Prelude 1. Mt 5:21: You have heard the commandment imposed on our forefathers, 'You shall not commit murder; every murderer shall be liable to the judgment.'

v. 22: What I say to you is: everyone who grows angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; any man who uses abusive language toward his brother shall be answerable to the Sanhedrin, and if he holds him in contempt he risks the fires of Gehenna.

v. 23: If you bring your gift to the altar and there recall that your brother has anything against you,

v. 24: leave your gift at the altar, go first to be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

v. 25: Lose no time; settle with your opponent while on your way to court with him. Otherwise your opponent may hand you over to the judge, who will hand you over to the guard, who will throw you into prison.

v. 26: I warn, you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny.

7818: And now, after threatening the transgressors, and setting great rewards for them that do right, and signifying that He justly requires of us something beyond the former measures; He from this point begins to legislate, not simply, but by way of comparison with the ancient ordinances, desiring to intimate these two things; first, that not as contending with the former, but rather in great harmony with them, He is making these enactments; next, that it was meet and very seasonable for Him to add thereto these second precepts. And that this may be made yet clearer, let us hearken to the words of the Legislator

7819: - What then does He Himself say?

- Mt 5:21: You have heard that it was said to the ancients: Thou shalt not kill.'

And yet, it was Himself who gave those laws also, but so far He states them impersonally. For if on the one hand, He had said, You have heard that I said to them

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<sup>40</sup> Fr. Bertoni begins his Meditation 18, continuing right along with the end of the previous paragraph of Chrysostom's Homily XVI, cf. p. 107 b of the Baronet translation.

of old, the saying would have been hard to receive, and would have stood in the way of all the hearers. If again, on the other hand, after having said, 'You have heard that it was said to them of old by my Father', He had added, 'But I say', He would have seemed to be taking yet more on Himself. Wherefore, He has simply stated it, making out thereby one point only; the proof that in fitting season He had come saying these things. For by the words, 'It was said to them of old', He pointed to the length of time, since they received this commandment.

7820: And this He did to shame the hearer, shrinking from the advance to the higher class of His commandments; as though a teacher should say to a child that was indolent, Do you not know how long a time you have consumed in learning syllables? This then, He also covertly intimates by the expression, 'them of old time', and thus for the future summons them on to the higher order of His instructions: as if He had said, You are learning these lessons long enough, and you must henceforth press on to such as are higher than these. And it is well that He does not disturb the order of the commandments, but begins first with that which comes earlier, with which the law also began. Yes, for this, too, suits with one showing the harmony between them.

7821: Mt 5:22: 'But I say unto you that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment.'

Do you see authority in perfection? Do you see a bearing suited to a legislator? Why, which among the prophets ever spoke in this wise? which among righteous men? which among the patriarchs? No, but, 'Thus said the Lord'. But the Son, not so. Because they were publishing their Master's commands, He His Father's. And when I say, 'His Father's', I mean, His own. 'For Mine', He said, Jn 17:20: 'are Yours and thine are Mine'. And they had their fellow-servants to legislate for, He His own servants....<sup>41</sup>

7822: - Be not angry, contrary to, - Do no murder? Or is not the one commandment the completion and the development of the other?

- Clearly the one is the fulfilling of the other, and that is greater on this very account. Since he who is not stirred up to anger, will much more refrain from murder; and he who bridles wrath will much more keep his hands to himself. For wrath is the root of murder. And you see that He who cuts up the root will much more remove the branches; or, rather will not permit them so much as to shoot out at all. Not therefore, to abolish the law did He make these enactments, but for the more complete observation of it. For with what design did the law enjoin these things? Was it not that no one might stay his neighbor? It follows, that he who was opposing the law would have to enjoin murder. For to murder, were the contrary to doing no murder. But if he

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<sup>41</sup> Fr.Bertoni skips one sentence here: 'Let us now ask those who reject the law.' [cf. p. 108 a of Baronet translation].

does not suffer one even to be angry, the mind of the law is established by Him more completely. For he that studies to avoid murder will not refrain from it equally with him that has put away even anger; this latter being further removed from the crime...<sup>42</sup>.

7823: 'He that is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment', Mt 5:22.

Thus He has not altogether taken the thing away; first, because it is not possible, being a man, to be freed from passions: we may indeed get the dominion over them, but to be altogether without them is out of the question. Next, because this passion is even useful, if we know how to use it at the suitable time. See, for instance, what great good was wrought by the anger of Paul, which he felt against the Corinthians, on that well-known occasion; and how, as it delivered them from a grievous pest, so by the same means again he recovered the people of the Galatians, likewise, which had fallen aside; and others, too, beside these.

- What, then, is the proper time for anger?

- When we are not avenging ourselves, but checking others in their lawless freaks, or forcing them to attend in their negligence.

- And when is the unsuitable time?

7824: - When we do so as avenging ourselves: which Paul, also forbidding, said, Rm 12:19: 'Avenge not yourselves, dearly beloved, but rather give place unto wrath. 'When we are contending for riches; indeed for this has he also taken away, where he said, 1 Co 6:7: ' Why do you rather not take wrong? why do you not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?' For as this last sort is superfluous, so is the first necessary and profitable. But most men do the contrary; becoming like wild beasts when they are injured themselves, but remiss and cowardly when they see despite done to another; both which are just opposite to the laws of the Gospel. Being angry, then, is not a transgression, but being so unseasonably. For this cause, the Prophet also said Ps 4:5: Be angry, but sin not.'

7825: 'And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council. 'Mt 5:22.

By 'council' in this place He means the tribunal of the Hebrews: and He has mentioned this now, on purpose that He might not seem everywhere to play the stranger and the innovator.

'Raca': but this word is not an expression of a great insolence, but rather of some contempt and slight on the part of the speaker. For as we, giving orders either to

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<sup>42</sup> Here Fr. Bertoni skips more than two full pages [from p. 108 b to p. 110 a of the Baronet translation] of Chrysostom's Homily XVI.

our servants, or to any very inferior person, say, Away with you; you here, tell such a one, so they who make use of the Syrians language, say 'Raca', putting that word instead of 'you.' But, God the lover of man, roots up even the least faults, commanding us to behave to one another in seemly manner, and with due respect; and this with a view of destroying hereby also the greater.

7826: 'But whoever shall say, You fool, shall be in danger of hell fire'. 5.22.

To many, this commandment has appeared grievous and galling, if for a mere word we are really to pay so great a penalty. And some even say that it was spoken rather hyperbolically. But I fear lest, when we have deceived ourselves with words here, we may in deeds there suffer that extreme punishment. For wherefore, tell me, does the commandment seem over-burdensome? Do you not know that most punishments and most sins have their beginning from words? Yes, for by words and blasphemies and denials are by words, and reviling, and reproaches, and perjuries, and bearing false witness. Regard not then its being a mere word, but whether it have not much danger, thus, do you inquire.

7827: Are you ignorant that in the season of enmity, when wrath is inflamed, and the soul kindled, even the least thing appears great, and what is not very reproachful is counted intolerable? And often these little things have given birth even to murder, and overthrown whole cities. For just as where friendship is, even grievous things are light, so where enmity lies beneath, very trifles appear intolerable. And however simply a word is spoken, it is surmised to have been spoken with an evil meaning. And as in fire: if there be but a small spark, though thousands of planks lie by, it does not easily lay hold of them; but if the flame have waxed strong and high, it easily seizes not planks only, but stones, and all materials that fall in its way; and by what things it is usually quenched, by the same it is kindled the more, for some say that at such a time not only wood and tow, and the other combustibles, but even water darted forth upon it does but fan its power the more.

7828: So it is also with anger: whatever any one may say, becomes food in a moment for this evil conflagration. All which kind of evils Christ checking beforehand, had condemned first him that is angry without a cause to the judgment, this being the very reason why He said, 'He that is angry shall be in danger of the judgment'; then he that says 'Raca' to the council. But as yet these are no great things; for the punishments are here. Therefore for him who calls 'fool', He has added the fire of hell, now for the first time mentioning the name of hell. For having before discoursed much of the kingdom, not until then did He mention this; implying that the former comes of His own love, and indulgence towards man, this latter of our negligence.

7829: And see how He proceeds little by little in His punishments, all but excusing Himself unto you, and signifying that His desire indeed is to threaten nothing of the kind, but that we drag Him on to such denunciations. For observe, I bade you, he said, not to be angry for naught, because you are in danger of the judgment. You have despised the former commandment' see what anger has produced; it has led you on straightway to insult, for you have called your brother 'Raca'. Again I set another punishment, the 'council'. If you overlook even this, and proceed to that which is more grievous, I visit you no longer with these finite punishments, but with the undying penalty of hell, lest after this you should break forth even to murder. For there is nothing, nothing in the world more intolerable than insolence; it is what has very great power to sting a man's soul.

7830: But when the word too which is spoken is in itself more wounding than the insolence, the blaze becomes twice as great. Think it not then a light thing to call another, 'fool'. For when of that which separates us from the brutes, and by which especially we are human beings, namely, the mind and the understanding - when of this you have robbed your brother, you have deprived him of all his nobleness. Let us not, then, regard the words merely, but realizing the things themselves, and his feeling, let us consider how great a wound is made by this word, and unto how much evil it proceeds. For this cause, Paul likewise cast out of the kingdom not only the adulterous, and the effeminate, but the revilers also [cf. 1 Co 6:9, 10]. And with great reason: for the insolent man mars all the beauty of charity, and cast upon his neighbor unnumbered ills and works up lasting enmities, and tears asunder the members of Christ, and is daily driving away that peace which God so desires: giving much vantage ground unto the devil by his injurious ways, and making him the stronger.

7831: Therefore Christ Himself, cutting out the sinews of the devils power, brought in this law. For indeed, He makes much account of love: this being above all things the mother of every good, and the badge of His disciples, and the bond which holds together our whole condition. With reason, therefore, does He remove with great earnestness the roots and the sources of that hatred which utterly spoils it. Think not, therefore, that these sayings are in any wise hyperbolical, but consider the good done by them, and admire the mildness of these laws. For there is nothing for which God takes so much pains, as this; that we should be united and knit together one with another.

7832: Therefore, both in His own person, and by His disciples, as well those in the Old, as in the New Testament, He makes so much account of this commandment; and is a severe avenger and punisher of those who despise the duty. For in truth, nothing so effectually gives entrance and root to all wickedness, as the taking away of love. Wherefore He also said, Mt 24:12: 'When iniquity abounds, the love of the many shall wax cold'. Thus Cain became his brother's murderer; thus Eau; thus Joseph's brethren; thus our unnumbered crimes have come reveling in, this bond being dissevered. You see why He Himself also roots out whatever things injure this, on every side, with great exactness....<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Fr. Bertoni ends his Meditation 18 [cf. p. 112 a of the Baronet translation] abruptly right here - and begins his Meditation 19 in the succeeding paragraph on this same page of Chrysostom's Homily XVI.



## 7833 - MEDITATION 19

### **7833 : Meditation 19**

#### **Mt 5:23-26**

#### **Preparatory Prayer**

Prelude 1. Mt 5:23: If you bring your gift to the altar and there recall that your brother has anything against you,

v. 24: Leave your gift at the altar, go first to be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

v. 25: Lose no time; settle with your opponent while on your way to court with him. Otherwise your opponent may hand you over to the guard, who will throw you into prison.

v. 26: I warn you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny.

7834: Neither does He stop at those precepts only which have been mentioned, but adds also others more than those; whereby He signifies how much account he makes thereof. Namely, having threatened by 'the council', and by 'hell', He added other sayings again in harmony with the former, saying thus

Mt 5:23: If you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, v. 24: leave your gift before the altar, and go away; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

O goodness! O exceeding love to man! He makes no account of the honor due unto Himself, for the sake of our love towards our neighbor; implying that not at all from any enmity, nor out of any desire to punish, had He uttered those former threatenings, but out of very tender affection.

7835: For what can be milder than these sayings? Let my service, he said, be interrupted, that your love may continue; since this also is a sacrifice, for your being reconciled to your brother. Yes, for this cause he did not say: after the offering, or, before the offering; but while the very gift lies there, and when the sacrifice is already beginning, He sends you to be reconciled to your brother; and neither after removing that which lies before us, nor before presenting the gift, but while it lies in the midst, He bids you hasten thither.

- With what motive then does he command so to do, and wherefore?

- These two ends, as it appears to me, He is hereby shadowing out and providing for. First, as I have said, His will is to point out that He highly values charity, and considers it to be the greatest sacrifice: and that without it He does not receive even that other; next, He is imposing such a necessity of reconciliation, as admits of no excuse. For whoever has been charged not to offer before he be reconciled, will hasten, if not for love of his neighbor, yet that this may not lie unconsecrated, to run into him who has been grieved, and do away the enmity.

7836: For this cause He has also expressed it all most significantly, to alarm and thoroughly to awaken him. Thus, when He had said, 'Leave your gift', He stayed not at this, but added, 'before the altar', by the very place again causing him to shudder; and 'go away.' And He said not merely: Go away, but He added, 'first, and then come and offer your gift.' By all these things making it manifest, that this table receives not them that are at enmity with each other. Let the initiated hear this, as many as draw nigh in enmity: and let the uninitiated hear, too. Yes, for the saying has come relation to them also. For they, too, offer a gift and a sacrifice: prayer, I mean, and almsgiving. For as to this also being a sacrifice, hear what the prophet said, Ps 49:14: 'A sacrifice of praise will glorify me', and again, v. 14: 'sacrifice to God a sacrifice of praise.' And, Ps 140:2: 'The lifting up of mine hands is an evening sacrifice.'

7837: So that if it be but a prayer, which you are offering in such a frame of mind, it were better to leave your prayer, and become reconciled to your brother, and then to offer your prayer. For to this end were all things done: to this end even God became man, and took order for all those works, that he might set us at one. And whereas in this place, He is sending the wrong doer to the sufferer, in His prayer He leads the sufferer to the wrong doer, and reconciles them. For us there He said, 'Forgive men their debts'; so here, 'If he has ought against you, go your way to him.' Or rather, even here too He seems to me to be sending the injured person: and for some such reason He said not, Reconcile yourself to your brother, but, 'Be you reconciled.' And while the saying seems to pertain to the aggressor, the whole of it really pertains to him that is aggrieved.

7838: Thus, if you are reconciled to him, Christ has said, through your love to him, you will have me also propitious, and will be able to offer your sacrifice with great confidence. But if you are still irritated, consider that even I readily command that which is mine to be lightly esteemed, that you may become friends; and let these thoughts be soothing to your anger. And He did not say: When you have suffered any of the greater wrongs, then be reconciled; but, Though it be some trifle that he has against you. And He added not, Whether justly or unjustly; but merely, 'If he has ought against you'. For though it be justly, not even in that case ought to protract the enmity; since Christ was also justly angered with us, yet nevertheless He gave Himself for us to be slain, not imputing those trespasses.

7839: For this cause Paul also, when urging us in another way to reconciliation, said, Ep 4:26: 'Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.' For much as Christ by this argument of the sacrifice, so there Paul by that of the day, is urging us on to the self-same point. Because in truth he fears the night, lest it overtake him that is smitten alone, and make the wound greater. For whereas in the day there are many to distract, and draw him off; in that night, when he is alone, and is thinking it over by himself, the waves swell, and the storm becomes greater. Therefore, Paul, you see to prevent this, would fain commit him to the night already reconciled, that the devil may after that have no opportunity, from his solitude, to rekindle, the furnace of his wrath, and make it fiercer.

7840: Thus also Christ permits not, though it be ever so little delay, lest, the sacrifice being accomplished, such a one become more remiss, procrastinating from day to day: for He knows that the case requires very speedy treatment. And as a skillful physician exhibits not only the preventives of our diseases, but their correctives also, even so does he likewise. Thus, to forbid our calling 'fool', is a preventive of enmity; but to command reconciliation is a means of removing the diseases that ensue on the enmity.

7841: And mark how both commands are set forth with earnestness. For as in the former case He threatened hell, so here He receives not the gift before the reconciliation, indicating great displeasure, and by all these methods destroying both the root and the produce. And first of all he said, 'Be not angry' and after that, 'revile not.' For indeed both these are augmented, the one by the other; from enmity is reviling, from reviling enmity. On this account, then, He heals now the root, and now the fruit; hindering indeed the evil from ever springing up in the first instance; but if perchance it may have sprouted up and borne its most evil fruit, then by all means He burns it down the more. Therefore, you see, having mentioned, first the judgment, then the council, then hell, and having spoken of His own sacrifice, He adds other topics again, thus speaking:

7842: Mt 5:25: 'Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are in the way with him'

That is, you may not say, What then, if I am injured; what if I am plundered, and dragged, too, before the tribunal? even this occasion and excuse He has taken away: for He commands us not even so to be at enmity. then, since this injunction was great, he draws His advice from the things present, which are wont to restrain the grosser sort more than the future. Why, what do you say?, He said. that your adversary is stronger, and do you wrong? Of course than he will wrong you more, if you do not make it up, but are forced to go into court. For in the former case, by giving up some money, you will keep your person free; but when you are come under the sentence of the judge, you will both be bound, and pay the utmost penalty.

7843: But if you avoid the contest there, you will reap two good results: first, not having to suffer anything painful; and secondly, that the good done will be thereafter your own doing, and no longer the effect of compulsion on his part. But if you will not ruled by these sayings, you wrong not him, so much as yourself.

And see here also how He hasten him; for having said, Agree with your adversary, he added, quickly. And he was not satisfied with this, but even of this quickness He has required a further increase, saying, While you are in the way with him, pressing and hastening him hereby with great earnestness. For nothing does so much turn our life upside down, as delay and procrastination in the performance of our good works. Nay, this has often caused us to lose all. Therefore, as Paul for his part said, Ep 4:26: 'Before the sun set, do away the enmity'. And as Christ himself has said above: Before the offering is completed, be reconciled' Mt 5:24.

7844: So, He said in this place also: 'Quickly, while you are on the way with him', before you stand at the bar, and are come to be thenceforth under the sway of him who judges. . Since, before entering in, you have all in your own control; but if you set foot in that threshold, you will not by ever so earnest efforts be able to arrange your matters at your will, having come under the constraint of another.

- What is it 'to agree', 'agreeing'?

- He means either, consent rather to suffer wrong? or, so plead the cause, as if you were in the place of the other; that you may not corrupt justice by self-love, but rather, deliberating on another's cause as your own, may so proceed to deliver your vote in this matter. And if this be a great thing, marvel not; since with this view did He set forth all those His blessings, that having beforehand smoothed and prepared the hearer's soul, he might render it more apt to receive all His enactments. <sup>44</sup>.

7845: ... But to me He seems to be speaking of the judges in this world, and of the way to the court of justice, and of this prison. For after he had abashed men by higher things, and things future, he alarms them also by such as are in this life. Which thing Paul also does, using here both the future and the present to sway his hearer: as when deterring from wickedness, he points out to him that is inclined to evil, the ruler armed, thus saying, Rm 13:4: 'But if you do that which is evil, be afraid; for he bears not the sword in vain; for he is a minister of God.' And again, enjoining on us to be subject unto him, he sets forth not the fear of God only, but the threatening also of the other party, and his watchful care. v. 5: 'For you must needs be subject, not only for the wrath, but also for conscience sake'. Because the more irrational, as I have already said, are wont to be the sooner corrected by these things which appear and are at hand.

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<sup>44</sup> Fr. Bertoni skips an extended sentence here [cf. Baronet translation, p. 114 a] where Chrysostom compares "adversary" to mean the devil here.

7846: Wherefore Christ also made mention, not of hell only, but also of a court of justice, and of being dragged thither, and of the prison, and of all the suffering there; by all these means destroying the roots of murder. For he who neither reviles, nor goes to law, nor prolongs enmity, how will he ever commit murder? So that from hence also it is evident, that in the advantage of our neighbor stands our own advantage. For he that agrees with his adversary, will benefit himself much more; becoming free by his own act, from courts of law, and prisons, and the wretchedness that is there.

Let us, then, be obedient to His sayings; let us not oppose ourselves, nor be contentious; for first of all, even antecedently to their rewards, these injunctions have their pleasure and profit in themselves...<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> Fr. Bertoni ends his Meditation 19 a full page prior to the end of Chrysostom's Homily XVI which he has been following minutely [cf. Baronet translation, p. 114 b]. Fr. Bertoni's Meditation 20 begins on the next page, with the beginning of Chrysostom's Homily XVII.

**7847      -      MEDITATION 20**

**7847:****Meditation 20****Mt 5:27-32****Preparatory Prayer**

Prelude 1. Mt 5:27: You have heard the commandment, 'You shall not commit adultery'.

v. 28: What I say to you is: anyone who looks lustfully at a woman has already committed adultery with her in his thoughts.

v. 29: If your right eye is your trouble, gouge it out and throw it away! Better to lose part of your body than to have it all cast into Gehenna.

v. 30: Again if your right hand is your trouble, but it off and throw it away! Better to lose part of your body than to have it all cast into Gehenna.

v. 31: It was also said: 'Whenever a man divorces his wife, he must give her a decree of divorce.'

v. 32: What I say to you is: everyone who divorces his wife - lewd conduct is a separate case - forces her to commit adultery. The man who marries a divorced woman likewise commits adultery.

7848: You have heard it said to them of old time, You shall not commit adultery; but I say to you, that every one who looks upon a woman to lust after her, has committed adultery with her already in his heart.'

Having now finished the former commandment, and having extended it to the height of self-denial, He, advancing in the course and order, proceeds accordingly to the second, herein too obeying the law.

7849: Order

- And yet, it may be said, this is not the second, but the third; for neither is the first, You shall not kill, but, The Lord your God is one Lord. [cf. Dt 6:4] Wherefore it is worth inquiring too, why He did not begin with that. Why was it then?

- Because, had He begun from thence, he must have enlarged it also, and have brought in Himself together with His Father. But it was not as yet time to teach any such thing about Himself. And besides, he was for a while practicing His moral

doctrine only, being minded from this first, and from his miracles, to convince the hearers that He was the Son of God.

7850: Why does He not speak of the first commandment.

Now, if He had said at once, before he had spoken or done anything, You have heard that it was said to them of old time, I am the Lord, your God, and there is none other but Me - but, I say to you, Worship me, even as Him; this would have made all regard Him as a madman. For if even after His teaching, and His so great miracles, while not even yet was He saying this openly they called Him possessed with a devil; had He before all these attempted to say any such thing, what would they not have said? What would they not have thought?

7851: But, by keeping back at the proper season His teaching on these subjects, He was causing that the doctrine should be acceptable to the many. Wherefore now He passed it by quickly, but when he had everywhere established it by his miracles, and by His most excellent teaching, He afterwards unveiled it in His words also. For the present, however, by the manifestation of His miracles, and by the very manner of His teaching, He unfolds it on occasion, gradually and quietly. For His enacting such laws, with authority, would lead on the attentive and understanding hearer, little by little, unto the word of His doctrine. For it is said, 'they were astonished at Him because He taught, not as their Scribes' Mt 7:29. For beginning from those passions, which most belong to our whole race, anger, I mean, and desire, for it is these chiefly that bear absolute sway within us, and we are more natural than the rest; He with great authority, even such as became a legislator, both corrected them, and reduced them to order with all strictness.

7852: For He said not that the adulterer is merely punished; but what He had done with respect to the murderer, this He does here also, punishing even the unchaste look: to teach you wherein lies what He had more than the scribes. Accordingly, He said, 'He that looks upon a woman to lust after her, has already committed adultery with her': that is, he who makes it his business to be curious about bright forms, and to hunt for elegant features and to feast his soul with the sight, and to fasten his eyes on fair countenances.

7853: Remove concupiscence from the heart.

For he came to set free from all evil deeds not the body only, but the soul, too, before the body. Thus, because in the heart we receive the grace of the Spirit, He cleanses it out first.

- And how, one may say, is it possible to be freed from desire?

- I answer, first, if we were willing even this might be deadened, and remain inactive. In the next place, He does not here take away desire absolutely, but that

desire which springs up in men from sigh. For he that is curious to behold fair countenances, is himself chiefly the enkindler of the furnace of that passion and makes his own soul a captive, and soon proceeds also to the act.

7854: Thus, we see what he did not say: whosoever shall lust to commit adultery, but 'whosoever shall look to lust'. And in the case of anger He laid down a certain distinction, saying, 'without a cause', and 'for naught'; but, here not so; rather once and for all He took away the desire. Yet surely both are naturally implanted, and both are set in us for our profit; both anger and desire: the one that we may chastise the evil, and correct those who walk disorderly; the other that we may have children, and that our race may be recruited by such successions.. Why, then, did He not make a distinction here also? No, for very great is the distinction which, if you attend, you will see here also included. For He said not simply, whosoever shall desire, since it is possible for one to desire even when sitting in the mountains; but, 'Whosoever shall look to lust'; that is to say, he who gathers in lust unto himself; he who when nothing compels him, brings in the wild beast upon his thoughts when they are calm. For this comes no longer of nature, but of self-indulgence.

7855: This, even the ancient Scripture corrects from the first, saying, Si 9:8: 'Contemplate not beauty which is another's.' And then, lest anyone should say, what, then, if I contemplate, and be not taken captive, He punishes the look, lest confiding in this security you should some time fall into sin.

- What then, one may say, if I should look, and desire indeed, but do no evil?

- Even so you are set among the adulterers. For the Lawgiver has pronounced it, and you may not ask any more questions For thus looking once, twice, or thrice, you will perhaps have power to refrain; but if you are continually doing this, and kindling the furnace, you will assuredly be taken; for your station is not beyond that nature which is common to men.

7856: As we see, then, if we see a child holding a knife, though, we do not see him hurt, beat him, and forbid his ever holding it; so God likewise takes away the unchaste look even before the act, lest at any time you should fall in act also. For he who once kindled the flame, even when the woman whom he has beheld is absent, is forming himself continually images of shameful things, and from them often goes on even to the deed. For this cause, Christ takes away even that embrace which is in the heart only.

7857: What now can they say, who have those virgin inmates '*virgines subintroductae*, 'live-in companions' ]? Why, by the tenor of this law, they must be guilty of ten thousand adulteries, daily beholding them with desire. For this cause the blessed Job also laid down this law from the beginning, blocking out from himself on all sides this kind of gazing, Jb 31: 1. For in truth, greater is the struggle on beholding and not



possessing the object of fondness: nor is the pleasure so great which we reap from sight, as the mischief we undergo from increasing this desire; thus making our opponent strong, and giving more scope to the devil, and no longer able to repulse him, now that we have brought him into our inmost parts, and have thrown our mind open unto him.

7858: Therefore, he said: 'commit no adultery with your eyes, and you will commit none with your mind. 'For one may indeed behold in another way, such as are the looks of the chaste; seeing, but that seeing which is accompanied with desire. And if He had not meant this, He would have said simply, he who looks on a woman. But now He said not thus, but, 'He who looks to lust', he who looks to please his sight. For not at all to this end did God make your eyes, that you should thereby introduce adultery, but that, beholding His creatures you should admire the Creator. Just then as one may feel wrath at random, so may one cast looks at random; that is when you does it for lust.

7859: Rather, if you desire to look and find pleasure, look at your own wife, and love her continually; no law forbids that. But if you are to be curious about the beauties that belong to another, you are injuring both your wife by letting your eyes wander elsewhere, and her on whom you have looked, by touching her unlawfully. Since, although you have not touched her with the hand, yet have you caressed her with your eyes; for which cause this is also accounted adultery, and before that great penalty draws after it no slight one of its own. For then all within him is filled with disquiet and turmoil, and great is the tempest, and most grievous the pain, and no captive nor person in chains can be worse off than a man in this state of mind.

7860: And often times she who has shot the dart is flown way, while the wound even so remains. Or rather, it is not she who has shot the dart, but you gave yourself the fatal wound, by you unchaste look. And this I say to free modest women from the charge: since assuredly, should one deck herself out, and invite towards herself the eyes of such as fall in her way; even though she smite not him that meets with her, she incurs the utmost penalty: for she mixed the poison, she prepared the hemlock, even though she did not offer the cup. Or rather, she did also offer the cup, though no one were found to drink it.

7861: - Why then, does He not discourse with them, also?

- Because the laws which He appoints are in every case common, although He seem to address Himself unto men only. For, in discoursing with the head, He makes His admonition common to the whole body also. For woman and man He knows as one living creature, and nowhere distinguishes their kind. But if you desire to hear also His rebuke for them, in particular, listen to Isaiah, in many words, inveighing against them, and deriding their habit, their aspect, their gait, their trailing garments, their tripping feet, their drooping necks:

Is 3:16: The Lord said: Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with necks outstretched, ogling and mincing as they go, their anklets tinkling at every step,

v. 17: The Lord shall cover the scalps of Zion's daughters with scabs, and the Lord shall bare their heads.

v. 18: On that day, the Lord will do away with the finery of the anklets, sunbursts, and crescents;

v. 19: the pendants, bracelets, and veils;

v. 20: the headdresses, bangles, cinctures, perfume boxes, and amulets;

v. 21: the signet rings, and the nose rings;

v. 22: the court dresses, wraps, cloaks, and purses;

v. 23: the mirrors, linen tunics, turbans and shawls.

v. 24: Instead of perfume there will be stench, instead of the girdle a rope. And for the coiffure...

7862: Hear with him the blessed Paul [cf. 1 Tm 2:9; Tt 2:3-5], also setting many laws for hem; and both about garments and ornaments of gold, and plaiting of hair, and luxurious living, and all other such things, vehemently rebuking this sex. And Christ, too, by what follows next, obscurely intimated this very same; for when He said, 'pluck out and cut off the eye that offends you', He speaks as indicating His anger against them. Wherefore, also He subjoins,

Mt 5:29: But, lest you should say: 'If your right hand offends you, pluck it out and cast it from you.' But what if she be akin to me? what if in any other way she belong to me? therefore, He has given these injunctions; not discoursing about our limbs - far from it - for nowhere does He say that our flesh is to be blamed for things, but everywhere it is the evil mind that is accursed.

For it is not the eye that sees, but the mind and the thought. Often, for instance, we being totally turned elsewhere, our eye sees not those who are present. So that the matter does not entirely depend upon its working. again had He been speaking of members of the body, He would not have said it of one eye, nor of the right eye only, but of both. For he who is offended by his right eye, most evidently will incur the same evil by his left also.

7863: - Why, then, did He mention the right eye, and add the hand?

- To show you that not of limbs is He speaking, but of them who are near unto us. thus, If, He said, you so love anyone as though he were in stead of a right eye; if you think him so profitable to you as to esteem him in the place of a hand, and he hurts your soul; even these do cut off. And see the emphasis; for He did not say:

Withdraw from him, but to show the fullness of separation, pluck it out, He said, and cast it from you. Then, forasmuch as His injunction was sharp. He shows also the gain on either hand, both from the benefits and from the evils, continuing in the metaphor. For it is profitable to you, He said, that one of your members should perish, and not that you whole body should be cast into hell. For while he neither saves himself, nor fails to destroy you, too, what kindness is it for both to sink, whereas if they were separated, one at least might have been preserved? But, why did Paul, then, it may be said, choose to becoming cursed? Rm 9: 3: not on condition of gaining nothing, but with a view to the salvation of others. But in this case, the mischief pertain to both. And therefore, He said not, 'pluck out', only but also 'cast from you': to receive him again no more, if he continue as he is. For so shall you both deliver him from a heavier charge, and free yourself from ruin.

7864: But that may you see more clearly the profit of this law; let us, if you please, try what has been said, in the case of the body itself, by way of supposition. I mean if choice were given, and you must either, keeping your eye, be cast into a pit and perish, or plucking it out, preserve the rest of your body; would you not, of course, accept the latter? It is plain to everyone. For this were not to act as one hating the eye, but as one loving the rest of the body. this same reckoning you make with regard to men also and women: that if he who harms you by his friendship should continue incurable, his being thus cut off will both free you from all mischief, and he also will himself be delivered from the heavier charges, not having to answer for your destruction along with his own evil deeds.

7865: See how full the law is of gentleness and tender care, and that which seems to men in general to be severity, how much love towards man it discloses? Let them hearken to these things, who hasten to the theaters, and make themselves adulterers every day. For if the law commands to cut off him, whose connection with us tends to our hurt; what plea can they have, who, by their haunting those places, attract towards the daily those even that have not yet become known to them, and procure to themselves occasions of ruin without number? For henceforth, He not only forbids us to look unchastely, but having signified the mischief thence ensuing, He even straitens the law as He goes on, commanding to cut off, and dissever, and cast somewhere far away. And all this He ordains, who has uttered words beyond number about love, that in either way you might learn His providence and how from every source He seeks your profit.

7866: Mt 5:31: 'Now it has been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement. But, I say to you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causes her to commit adultery; and whosoever marries her that is put away, commits adultery.'

He goes on to what lies before Him, until He have well cleared out the former topics. For Lo, He shows us yet another kind of adultery?

- And what is this?

- There was an ancient law made [cf. Dt 24:1-4] that he who hated his wife, for whatever kind of cause, should not be forbidden to cast her out, and to bring home another instead of her. The law, however, did not command him simply to do this, but after giving the woman a writing of divorcement, that it might not be in her power to return to him again; that so at least the figure of the marriage might remain.

7867: For if He had not enjoined this, but it were lawful first to cast her out, and take another, then afterwards to take back the former, the confusion was sure to be great, all men continually taking each others' wives; and the matter thenceforth would have been direct adultery. With a view to this, He devised as no small mitigation, the writing of divorcement. But, these things were done by reason of another, a far greater wickedness; I mean, had He made it necessary to keep in the house her even that was hated, the husband, hating, would have killed her. For such was the race of the Jews. For they who did not spare children, slew the prophets, and shed blood as water [cf. Ps 79:3], much more would they have showed no mercy to women. For this cause, He allowed the less to remove the greater evil.

7868: For this saying was not a primary law, hear Him saying, Mt 19:8: 'Moses wrote these things according to the hardness of your hearts', that you might not slay them in the house, but rather put them out. But forasmuch as He had taken away all wrath, having forbidden not murder only, but even the mere feeling of anger, He with ease introduces this law likewise. With this view also He is every bringing to mind the former words, to signify that His sayings are not contrary to them, but in agreement: that He is enforcing, not overthrowing them; perfecting, not doing them away. And observe Him everywhere addressing His discourse to the man:

7869: Thus, 'He that puts away his wife, causes her to commit adultery, and he that marries a woman put away, commits adultery.' Mt 5:32.

That is, the former, though he take not another wife, by that act alone has made himself liable to blame, having made the first an adulteress; the latter again is become an adulterer by taking her who is another's. For tell me not this, the other has cast her out. No, for when cast out she continues to be the wife of him that expelled her. Then, lest He should render the wife more self-willed, by throwing it all upon him who cast her out. He has shut against her also the doors of him who was afterwards receiving her; in that He said: 'He who marries her that is put away, commits adultery.' And so makes the woman chaste even though unwilling, and blocks up altogether her access to all, and suffers her not to give an occasion for jealousy.

7870: For she who has been made aware that she positively must either keep the husband, who was originally allotted to her, or being cast out of that house, not have an other refuge: - she even against her will was compelled to make the best of her consort. And if He discourse not at all unto her concerning these things, marvel not; for the woman is a rather weak creature. For this cause, letting her go, is his threatening against the men, He fully corrects her remissness. Just as if anyone who had a prodigal child, leaving him, should rebuke those who make him such, and forbid them to have intercourse, or to approach him. And if that be galling, call to mind, I pray you His former sayings, on what terms He had blessed His hearers; and you will see that it is very possible and easy. For he that is meek, and a peacemaker, and poor in spirit, and merciful, how shall he cast out his wife? He that is used to reconcile others, how shall he be at variance with her that is his own? And not thus only, but in another way, also, He has enlightened the enactment.

7871: Forasmuch as even for him, He leaves one manner of dismiss, even when He said: 'except for the cause of fornication'. Since the matter had else come round again to the same issue. For if He had commanded to keep her in the house, though defiling herself with many, He would have made the matter end again in adultery. Do you see how these sayings agree with what had gone before? For he who looks not with unchaste eyes upon another woman, will not commit whoredom, and not committing whoredom, he will give no occasion to the husband to cast out his wife. Therefore, you see, after this, He presses the point without reserve, and builds up this fear as a bulwark, urging on the husband the great danger, if he do cast her out, in that he makes himself accountable for her adultery. thus, lest you being told, 'pluck out the eye' should suppose this to be said even of a wife: He added in good time, this corrective, in one way, only giving leave to cast her out, but no otherwise <sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>46</sup> Fr. Bertoni ends his Meditation 20 [cf. p. 119 b of the Baronet translation] in the Homily XVII of Chrysostom, and begins his Meditation 21 in the very next sentence.

**7872      -      MEDITATION 21**

**7872:****Meditation 21****Mt 5:33-37****Preparatory Prayer**

Prelude 1. Mt 5:33: You have heard the commandment imposed on our forefathers, 'Do not take a false oath; rather, make good to the Lord all your pledges.'

v. 34: What I tell you is this: do not swear at all. Do not swear by heaven, it is God's throne,

v. 35: nor by the earth, it is his footstool, nor by Jerusalem, it is the city of the great King;

v. 36: do not swear by your head, you cannot make a single hair white or black.

v. 37: Say 'Yes' when you mean 'Yes', and 'No' when you mean 'No.' Anything beyond that, is from the evil one.

7873: Mt 5:33: Again you have heard that it was said to them of old time, 'You shall not forswear yourself, but shall perform unto the Lord your oaths.' v. 34: But I say to you, swear not at all.'

- Why did He go straightway not to theft, but to false witness, passing over that commandment?

- Because he that steals, does upon occasion swear also; but he that knows not either swearing or speaking falsehood, much less will he choose to steal. So that by this He has overthrown the other sin likewise: since falsehood comes of stealing.

- But what does this mean: You shall perform unto the Lord your oaths? [cf. Nb 30:2; Dt 23:23].

- It is this, you shall be true in swearing.

7874: Mt 5:34: 'But I say to you, swear not at all.' Next, to lead them farther away from swearing by God, He said, 'neither by Heaven, for it is God's throne, v. 35: nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.

Still speaking out of the prophetic writings, and signifying Himself not to be opposed to the ancients. This was because they had a custom of swearing by these objects, and he intimates this custom near the end of his Gospel [cf. Mt 23:16]. But,

mark, I pray you, on what ground He magnifies the elements; not from their own nature, but from God's relation to them, such as it had been in condescension declared. For because the tyranny of idolatry was great, that the elements might not be thought worthy of honor for their own sake, He has assigned this cause, which we have mentioned, which again would pass on to the glory of God.

7875: For He neither said, because Heaven is beautiful and great, nor, because earth is profitable; but, because the one is God's throne, the other His footstool; on every side urging them onward towards their Lord.

Mt 5:36: Neither by your head,' He said, 'because you cannot make one hair white or black.' Here again, not as wondering at man, has He withdrawn him from swearing by his head, for so man himself would be worshipped, but as referring to the glory of God and signifying that you are not master even of yourself, and of course, therefore, not of the oaths made by your head. For if no one would give up his own child to another, much more will not God give up His own work to you. For though it be your head, yet is it the property of another; and so far, from being master thereof, you shall not be able to do with it, no not the least thing of all. For He said not: You cannot make one hair grow, but, not so much as change its quality.

7876: - But what, it may be said, if any one should require an oath, and apply constraint?

- Let the fear of God be more powerful than the constraint. Since, if you are to bring forward such excuses, you will keep none of the things which are enjoined. Yes, for the first with respect to your wife you will say, - what if she be contentious and extravagant; and then as to the right eye, - what if I love it, and am quite on fire? and of the unchaste look, - what then if I cannot help seeing? and of our anger against a brother, - what if I be hasty, and not able to govern my tongue? and in general, all His sayings You may on this wise trample under foot. Yet, surely with regard to human laws you care not in any case use this allegation, nor say, what then if this or that be the case, but willing or unwilling, you receive what is written. And besides, you will never have compulsion to undergo at all. For he that has hearkened unto those former blessings, and has framed himself to be such as Christ enjoined, will have no such constraint to endure from any, being held in reverence and veneration by all.

7877: Mt 5:37: But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes'; and your 'No' be no. For that which exceeds these comes of the evil one.

- What is it, then, that 'exceeds yes', and 'no'? - it is the oath, not the perjury. For this latter is quite acknowledged, and no man needs to learn that it is of the evil one; and it is not an excess, but an opposite: where as an excess means something more, and added over and above: which kind of thing swearing is.

- What, then, says one, was it of the evil one? And if it was of the evil one, how was it a law?

- Well, this same thing you will say concerning the wife, also; how is that now accounted adultery, which was before permitted? What now may one reply to this? that the precepts then uttered had reference to the weakness of them who were receiving the laws.

7878: Since also to be worshipped with the vapor of sacrifice is very unworthy of God, just as to lisp is unworthy of a philosopher. That kind of thing accordingly was now laid down to adultery, and swearing to be of the evil one, now that the principles of virtue have advanced. But if these things had been, from the first, laws of the devil, they would not have attained to so great goodness. Yes, for had those not been forerunners in the first place, these which we now have would not have been so easily received. do not you require their excellency now, when their use is past: but, then when the time was calling for them. Or, rather if you will, even now; yes, for now also is their virtue shown; and most of all for the very cause, by reason of which we find fault with them. For their appearing such now, is the greatest commendation of them.

7879: For had they not brought us up well, and made us meet for the reception of the greater precepts, they would not have appeared such. Therefore, as at the breast, when it has fulfilled all its part, and is dismissing the child to the more manly diet, after that appears useless; and the parents who before thought it necessary for the babe, now abuse it with ten thousand mockeries, and many even not content with words of abuse, anoint it also with bitter drugs; that when their words have not power to remove the child's unseasonable propensity towards it, the real things may quench their longing. So also Christ said, that they are of the evil one, not to indicate that the old law is of the devil, but in order that with the most exceeding earnestness, He might lead them away from their ancient poverty. And to them, He said these things; but with regard to the Jews, who were insensible and persevered in the same ways, He has anointed their city all round with the terror of captivity, as with some bitter drug, and made it in accessible.

7880: But since not even this had power to restrain them, but they desired to see it again, running to it, just as a child to the breast, he hid it from them altogether; but pulling it down and leading away the more part of them from it: as it is with our cattle; many, by shutting out the calves, in time, induce them to forego their old familiar use of the milk. But if the old law belonged to the devil, it would not have led people away from idolatry, but rather would have drawn them on and cast them into it; for those did the devil desire. But now we see the opposite effect produced by the old law. And indeed this very thing, the oath, was ordained of old for this cause, that they might not swear by the idols Jr 4:2: For you shall swear, says He, by the true God - in truth, judgment and in justice.



7881: They were then no small advantages which the law effected, but rather very great. For that they came unto the strong meat, was the work of its care.

- What, then, it may be said, is not swearing of the evil one?

- Yes, indeed it is altogether of the evil one; that is, now after so high a rule of self-restraint ['philosophy']; but then not so.

- But how, one may say, should the same thing become at one time good, at another time, not so good?

- No, I say the very contrary: how could it help becoming good and not good, while all things are crying aloud, that they are so; the arts, the fruits of the earth, and all things else? See it, for example, taking place first in our own kind. Thus, to be carried in the earliest age of life, is good, but afterwards pernicious; to eat food that has been softened in the mouth, is the first scene of our life, is good, but afterwards it is full of disgust; to be fed upon milk and to fly to the breast, is at first profitable and healthful, but tends afterwards to decay and harm.

7882: Do you see how the same actions, by reason of the times, appear good, and again, not so? Yes, and to wear the robe of a child is well as long as you are a boy, but contrariwise when you are become a man, it is disgraceful. Would you learn of the contrary case, too, how to the child again the things of the man are unsuited? Give the boy a man's robe, and great will be the laughter; and greater the danger, he being often upset in walking after that fashion. Allow him to handle public affairs, and to traffic, and sow and reap, and great again will be the laughter. And why do I mention these things? when killing, which among all is acknowledged to be an invention of the evil one, killing, I say, having found its proper occasion, caused Phineas, who committed it to be honored with the Priesthood. Nb 25:11, ff.

7883: For that killing is a work of him whom I just mentioned, hear what Christ said, Jn 8:41: 'You will do the works of your Father; v. 44: he was a man slayer from the beginning.' But Phineas became a man slayer, and it was counted unto him, so He speaks, for righteousness, Ps 105:31. And Abraham again on becoming not a manslayer only, but which was far worse, the slayer of his child, won more and more approbation. And Peter, too, wrought a two-fold slaughter, nevertheless what he did was of the Spirit. Let us then not examine simply the acts, but the season, too, and the causes, and the mind, and the difference of persons, and whatsoever else may accompany them, these let us search out with all exactness. And let us be diligent, if we would attain unto the kingdom, to show forth something more than the old commandments; since we cannot otherwise lay hold of the things of Heaven. For if we arrive at the same measure, that of the ancients, we shall stand without that threshold; for 'except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees you cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

7884: The Bull, *Auctorem Fidei*, of Pope Pius VI [1775-1799], a Constitution of August 28, 1794, Proposition 75, condemned by the Church, Denzinger 1575:

"The teaching which says that in the happy days of the early Church oaths seemed so foreign to the model of the divine Preceptor and to the golden simplicity of the Gospel that 'to take an oath without extreme and unavoidable need had been reputed to be an irreligious act, unworthy of a Christian person,' further, that 'the uninterrupted line of the fathers shows that oaths by common consent have been considered as forbidden'; and from this doctrine proceeds to condemn the oaths which the ecclesiastical curia, having followed, as it says, the norm of feudal jurisprudence, adopted for investitures and sacred ordinations of bishops; and it decreed, therefore, that the law should be invoked by the secular power to abolish oaths which are demanded in ecclesiastical curias when entering upon duties and offices and, in general, for any curial function, - false, injurious to the Church, harmful to ecclesiastical law, subversive of discipline imposed and approved by the Canons.

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**7885 - MEDITATION 22****7885: Meditation 22****Mt 5:38-42****Preparatory Prayer**

Prelude 1. Mt 5:38: You have heard the commandment, 'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.'

v. 30: But what I say to you, is: offer no resistance to injury, When a person strikes you on the right cheek, turn and offer him the other.

v. 40: If anyone wants to go to law over your shirt, hand him your coat as well.

v. 41: Should anyone press you into service for one mile, go with him two miles.

v. 42: Give to the man who begs from you. Do not turn your back on the borrower.

7886: You see that it was not of an eye that He was speaking before, when He made the law to pluck out the offering eye, but of him who by his friendship is harming us, an casting us into the gulf of destruction? For He who in this place uses to great strength of expression, and who, not even when another is plucking out your eye, permits you to strike out his; how should He have made it a law to strike out one's own? But if anyone accuses the ancient law, because it commands such retaliation, he seems to me very unskillful, in the wisdom that becomes a legislator, and ignorant of the virtue of opportunities, and the gain of condescension.

7887: For if he considered who were the hearers of these saying, and how they were disposed, and when they received this code of laws, he will thoroughly admit the wisdom of the Lawgiver, and will see that it is one and the same, who made both those laws and these, and who wrote each of them exceedingly profitably, and in due season. Yes, for if at the beginning He had introduced these high and most weighty commandments, men would not have received either these, or the others; but, not ordaining them severally in their due time, He has by the two corrected the whole world. And besides, He commanded this, not that we might strike out one another's eyes, but that we might keep our hands to ourselves. For the threat of suffering has effectually restrained our inclination to be doing. And thus, in fact He is silently dropping seed of much self-restraint, at least in that He commands to retaliate with just the same acts. Yet, surely he that began such transgression were worthy of a greater punishment and this the abstract nature of justice's demands.

7888: But forasmuch as He was minded to mingle mercy also with justice, He condemns him whose offenses were very great to a punishment less than his desert: teaching us even while we suffer to show forth great consideration. Having therefore mentioned the ancient law, and recognized it all, He signifies again, that it is not our brother who has done these deeds, but the evil one. For this cause He has also subjoined:

Mt 5:39: But I say to you, that you resist not the evil one. He did not say, resist not your brother, but, 'the evil one,,' signifying that on his motion men dare so to act; and in this way realizing and secretly removing most of our anger against the aggressor, by transferring the blame to another.

7889: - What then? Ought we not resist the evil one?

- Indeed we ought, but not in this way, but as He has commanded, by giving one's self up to suffer wrongfully; for thus shall you prevail over him. For one fire is not quenched by another, but fire by water. And to show you that even under the old law he that suffered rather prevails, that he it is who wins the crown; examine just what is done, and you will see that his advantage is great. For as he will see that his advantage is great. For as he that began with unjust acts, will have himself destroyed the eyes of both, his neighbor's and his own. Wherefore also he is justly hated by all, and ten thousand accusations are aimed at him: so he that has been injured, even after his equal retaliation, will have done nothing horrible. Wherefore also he has many to sympathize with him, as being clear from that offense even after he has retaliated. And though the calamity be equal to both parties, yet the sentence passed on it is not equal, either with God or with men. It should seem then, that neither is the calamity equal in the end.

7890: Now whereas at the beginning He said, 'he that is angry with his brother without a cause.' and 'he that calls him fool shall be in danger of hell fire', here He requires yet more entire self-restraint, commanding him that suffers ill not merely to be quiet, but even to be more exceedingly earnest in his turn, but offering the other cheek, Mt 5:39.

And this, he said, not as legislating about such a blow as this only, but as teaching also what forbearance we should practice in all our other trials. For just as when he said 'whoever calls his brother fool, is in danger of hell', He speaks not of this word only, but also of all reviling; even so here also He is making a law, not so much for our bearing it manfully, when smitten, as that we should be undisturbed, whatever we suffer.

7891: Because of this He both there singled out the extremest insult, and here has set down that which seems to be of all blows most opprobrious, the blows on the cheek, so full of insolence. And he commands this as having regard both of him that strikes and of him that is stricken. Since both he that is insulted will not think that he suffers any harm, being thus framed to self-restraint - no, he will not even have any sense of the insult, as striving rather for a prize than as receiving a blow; and he that is offering the affront will be made ashamed, and not add a second blow, though he be fiercer than any wild beast, yes, rather will condemn himself heartily for the former. For nothing so restrains the wrong doers, as when the injured bear what is done with gentleness. And it not only restrains them from rushing onward, but works upon them also to repent for what has gone before, and in wonder at such forbearance to draw back. And it makes them more our own, and causes them to be slaves, not merely friends, instead of haters, and enemies.

7892: Even as avenging one's self does just the contrary; for it both disgraces each of the two, and makes them worse, and their anger it heightens into a greater flame; yes, often not less than death itself is the end of it, going on from bad to worse. Wherefore, he not only forbade you to be angry when smitten, but even enjoined you to satiate the other's desire, that so neither may the former blow appear to have befallen you against your will. For thus, lost as he may be to shame, you will be able to smite him with a mortal blow, rather than if you had smitten him with our hand; or if his shamefulness be still greater, you will make him gentle in proportion.

7893: Mt 5:40: 'And if any man will sue you at the law, and take away your coat, let him have your cloak also.'

For not in the matter of blows only, but of our goods also, He would have such forbearance exhibited. Wherefore He again employs the same strong figure. That is, just as in the other case, He commands to overcome in suffering, so here again, by allowing ourselves to be deprived of more than the wrong doer expected. However, He did not put it so merely, but with something to enhance it: not saying, give your cloak to him that asks, but 'to him that would sue you at the law', that is, if he drag you into court, and give you trouble. And just as after He had bidden not to call another fool, nor to be angry without cause, He went on and required more, in that He commanded to offer the right cheek also even so here, having said, Agree with your adversary, He again amplifies the precept. For now He orders us not only to give what the other would have, but even to show forth a great liability.

7894: - What, then, one may say, am I to go about naked?

- We should not be naked, if we obeyed these sayings with exactness; rather more abundantly than any should we be clothed. For first, no one would attack men of this disposition; and next, if there chanced to be any one so savage and ungente, as to proceed even so far, yet many more would be found to clothe him, who acted with

such self-denial, not with garments only, but even with their own flesh, if it were possible.

7895: Further: even though one were of necessity to go about naked on account of this sort of self-denial, neither so were it any disgrace. Since Adam too was naked , 'and was not ashamed' Gn 2:25. And Isaiah was 'naked and barefoot' and more glorious than all the Jews Is 20:3. Joseph, also, when he stripped himself, did then more than ever shine forth. For to be thus naked is no evil, but to be so glad, as we now are, with costly garments, this is both disgraceful and ridiculous. For this cause, you see, those had praise of God, but those he blames both by prophets and by apostles.

7896: Let us not, therefore, suppose His injunctions impossible. No, for besides their expediency, they are very easy, if we are sober-minded; and the profit of them is so great as to be an exceeding help, not to ourselves only, but to those also who are using their excellence, that while they induce us to suffer wrong, they by the same means teach them also that do the wrong to control themselves. For while he on his part thinks it a great thing to take what belongs to others, but you signify to him, that to you it is easy to give even what he does not ask: while you bring in liberality for a counterpoise to his meanness, and a wise moderation to his covetousness: consider what a lesson he will get, being taught not by sayings, but by actual deeds, to scorn vice and to seek after virtue. For God will have us profitable to ourselves alone, but to all our neighbors as well.

7897: Now if you give and abstain from suing, you have sought your own advantage only; but if you give him some better thing, you have made him better, and so sent him away. Of this nature is salt which is what He would have them be; seeing it both recruits itself and keeps all other bodies with which it may associate: of this nature is light; for it shows objects both to a man's self and to all others. Forasmuch then as He has set you in the rank of these things, help you likewise him who is sitting in darkness, Lk 1:79, and teach him that neither before did he take anything by force; persuade him that he has done no despite. Yes, for thus you yourself also will be had in more respect and reverence, if you signify that you gave freely and were not robbed. Make, therefore, his sin, through your moderation, and instance you own bounty. And if you think this a great thing, wait, and you will see clearly, that neither yet have you attained to perfection.

7898: For not even here does he stop with you, who is laying down the laws of patient endurance, but He proceeds even further, thus saying:

Mt 5:41: If anyone shall compel you to go one mile, go with him twain.

Do you see the height of self-denial? in this at least, that after giving your coat, and your cloak, not even if your enemy should wish to see your naked body for

hardships and labors, note even so, He said, must you forbid him. For He would have us possess all things in common, both our bodies and our goods, as with them that are in need, so with them that insult us: for the latter comes of manliness the former of mercifulness. Because of this, He said:

If anyone shall compel you to go one mile, go with him twain', again leading you higher up, and commanding you to show forth the same kind of ambition.

7899: For if the things of which He spoke at the beginning, being far less than these, have so great blessings pronounced on them; consider what sort of portion awaits them, who duly performs these, and what they become even before their rewards, in a human and passable body winning entire freedom from passion. Since when neither insult, nor blows, nor the spoiling of their property, galls them; while they give way to no such thing, but rather add in large measure to their endurance; reflect what kind of training their soul is undergoing. On this account, then, as in regard of blows, as in regard of our goods, so in this case also, He has bidden us act. For why, He said, do I mention insult, and property? Though he should want to make use of your very own limbs for toil and weary work, and this unjustly, do you again conquer and overpass His unjust desire. For to compel is this, to rag unjustly and without any reason, and by way of despite. Nevertheless, for this also be you ready in your station, to suffer more than the other would fan you to do.

7900: Mt 5:42: Give to him that asks of you, and from him that would borrow from you, turn not away.

These last are less than what went before; but, marvel not, for this He is ever wont to do, mingling the small with the great. And if these be little in comparison with those, let them hearken, who take the goods of others, and who distribute their own among harlots, and kindle to themselves a double fire, both by the unrighteous income and by the pernicious outlay But, by 'borrowing' here, He means not the compact with usury, but the use merely. And elsewhere He even amplifies it, saying that we should give to them from whom we do not expect to receive.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Fr. Bertoni ends his Meditation 22 half way through Chrysostom's Homily XVII - and begins his Meditation 23 in the very next paragraph [cf. Baronet translation, p. 126 a].

**7901 - MEDITATION 23**

**7901:**                      **Meditation 23**

## Mt 5:43-45, 48

## Preparatory Prayer

Prelude 1. Mt 5:43: You have learned how it was said: 'You must love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

v. 44: But I say this to you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you:

v. 45: in this way you will be the sons of your father in heaven, for He causes the his sun to rise on bad men as well as good, and his rain to fall on honest and dishonest men alike.

v. 48: You must therefore be perfect just as your heavenly father is perfect.'

**7902:**

Mt 5:43:   <sup>48</sup>You have learned how it was said: 'You must love your neighbor and hate your enemy'.

v. 44: But I say this to you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you;

in this way

v. 45: In this way you will be the sons of your Father in heaven, for he causes his sun to rise on bad men as well as good, and his rain to fall on honest and dishonest men alike.

Do you see how He has set the highest pinnacle on our good deeds. For this is why He teaches not only to endure a blow, but to offer the right cheek also; not only to add the cloak to the coat, but to travel also two miles with him who compels you to go one; in order that you might receive with all facility that which is much more than these.

**7903:** - But what, one may say, is more than these? Not even to count as an enemy him who is doing these things: or rather even somewhat else more than this. For He said not, 'do not hate', but 'love'; He said not, 'do not injure', but 'do good.' And if any one should examine accurately, he will see that even to these things somewhat is added, much greater than they are. For neither did He simply command to love, but to

<sup>48</sup> In this paragraph, Fr. Bertoni repeats the copying of verses Mt 5:43-45. He continues this practice.



pray. Do you see how many steps He has ascended, and how He has set us on the very summit of virtue? No, mark it, numbering from the beginning.

7904: A first step is, not to begin with injustice: a second, after he has begun, to vindicate one's self by equal retaliation; a third, not to do unto him that is vexing us the same that one has suffered, but to be quiet; a fourth, even to give one's self up to suffer wrongfully; a fifth, to give up yet more than the other, who did the wrong, wishes; a sixth, not to hate him who has done ; a seventh, even to love him; an eighth, to do him good, also; a ninth, to entreat God Himself on his behalf. Do you see what height of self-command?

7905: Wherefore glorious, too, as we see, is the reward which it has. That is, because the thing enjoined was great, and needed a fervent soul, and much earnestness, He appoints for it also such a reward, as for none of the former. For He makes not mention here of earth, as with respect to the meek; nor of comfort and mercy, as with regard to the mourners and the merciful; nor of the kingdom of Heaven; but of all that which was more thrilling than all; our becoming like God, in such wise as men might have become so. For He said:

Mt 5:45: That you may become like your Father in heaven.

And observe, I pray you, how neither in this place, nor in the preceding parts, does He call Him His own Father, but in that instance, 'God', and 'a great king', when he was discoursing about oaths, and here, 'their Father.' And this He does, as reserving for the proper season what He had to say touching these points. then, bringing the likeness yet closer, He said:

Because He makes the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain upon just and unjust. [Mt 5:45].

7906: For he, too, so far from hating, so He speaks, even pours benefits on those that insult Him. Yet surely in no respect is the case parallel, not only because of the surpassing nature of His benefits, but, also by reason of the excellence of His dignity. For you indeed are despised by your fellow-slave, but He by His slave, who has received ten thousand benefits from Him: for you indeed give words, in praying for him, but He, the sun, and giving the annual showers. Nevertheless, even so I grant you to be mine equal, in such wise as it is possible for a man so to be.

Hate not, then, the man that does you wrong, who is procuring you such good things, and bringing you to so great honor. Curse not him that uses you spitefully; for so have you undergone the labor, but are deprived of the fruit; you will bear the loss, but lose the reward; which is of the utmost folly, having borne the more grievous, not to bear what is less than it.

7907: But how is it possible, one might ask, for this to take place?

- Having seen God become man, and descend so far, and suffer so much for your sake, do you still inquire and doubt, how is it possible to forgive your fellow servants their injuriousness? Do you not hear Him on the cross saying, Lk 23:34: Forgive them, for they do not know what they do!'. DO you not hear Paul, when he said, Rm 8:34: He who is gone on high, and is sitting on the right hand and intercedes for us?' Do you not see that even after the cross, and after He had been received up, He sent the Apostles unto the Jews that had slain Him, to bring them His ten thousand blessings, and this, though they were to suffer ten thousand terrors at their hands?

7908: But have you been greatly wronged? No, what have you endured like your Lord, bound, beaten and whips, with rods, spit upon by servants, enduring death and that death, which is of all deaths the most shameful, after then thousand favors shown? And even if you have been greatly wronged, for this very cause most of all do you do him good, that you may both make your own crown more glorious, and set your brother free from the worst infirmity. For so, too, the physicians, when they are kicked, and shamefully handled by the insane, then most of all pity them, and take measures for their perfect cure, knowing that the insult comes of the extremity of their disease.

7909: Now I bid you, too, have the same mind, touching them that are plotting against you, and do you so treat them that are injuring you. For it is they above all that are diseased, it is they who are undergoing all the violence. Deliver him then from this grievous contumely, and grant him to let go of his anger, and set him free from that grievous demon, wrath. Yes, for if we see persons possessed by devils, we weep for them; we do not seek to be ourselves also possessed. Now let us do this, too, likewise with respect to them that are angry; for in truth the enraged are like the possessed; yes, rather are more wretched than they, being made with consciousness of it. Wherefore also their frenzy is without excuse.

7910: Trample not, then, on the fallen, but rather pity him. For so should we see any one troubled with bile, blinded and giddy, and straining to cast up this evil humor, we stretch forth a hand, and continue to support him through his struggles, and though we stain through his struggles, and though we stain our garments, we regard it not, but seek one thing only, how we may set him free from this grievous distress. This then, let us do with respect to the angry also, and continue to bear them up when vomiting and struggling; not let him go until he put from him all the bitterness. And then shall he feel toward you the greatest thankfulness; when he is at rest, then he will know clearly from how great trouble you have released him.

7911: But why do I speak of the thanks from him? for God will straightway crown you, and will requite you with ten thousand honors, because you have freed your brother from a grievous disease; and that brother too will honor you as a master, ever reverencing your forbearance. Do you see not how women that are in travail, how

they bite those that stand by, and they are not pained? or rather, they are pained, but bear it bravely, and sympathize with them who are in sorrow and are torn by those pangs. These do you, too emulate, and prove not softer than women. For after these women have brought forth, for these men are more feeble-minded than the women, then, they will know you to be a man in comparison.

7812: And if the thing enjoined are grievous,, consider that to this end Christ came, that He might implant these things in our mind, that He might render us profitable both to enemies and friends. Wherefore also He commands us to have a care of both these: of our brethren, when He said, 'If you bring your gift', Mt 5:23, f. ; of our enemies, when he makes a law both to love them, and to pray for them. And not only from the example they have in God does He urge them on to this, but also from the contrary. For He said:

Mt 5:46: For if you love those that love you, what reward do you have? do not even the publicans do this same?' This Paul also said, Heb 12:4: 'You have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin.'

7813: If, then, you do these things, you have taken your stand with God; but, if you forsake them, with the publicans. Do you see you that the interval between the commandments is not so great as the difference between the persons? Let us not, therefore, infer this, 'this injunction is hard'; but let us consider also the reward, and think whom we are like, if we duly perform it, and to whom equal, if we wander from it. thus, then, to our b rather, he commands us to be reconciled, and not to desist till we have removed the enmity; but when He is discoursing of persons generally, He subjects us no longer to this necessity, but requires only what is on our part; in this way, he had said: 'they persecuted the prophets which were before you', Mt 5:12; lest an occasion of those very words they should be unfavorably disposed towards them, He bids them not easily to endure such as do so, but even to love them.

7814: Do you see how He pulls up by the roots wrath, and sensual lusts, as well as that of riches, that of glory, all that belongs to this life? For this he had done indeed from the first, but much more now. For the poor, and the meek, and the mourner, empties himself of his anger; the just and the merciful, of the lust of riches; the pure in heart is delivered from wicked lust; he that is persecuted and suffers insults, and is evil spoken of, is practicing of course entire contempt of things present, and is clear from pride and vainglory.

7815: Having therefore loosed the hearer from these bonds, and having anointed him for the conflicts, again in another way He roots up these passions, and with increased strictness. For having begun by anger, and having cut out on every side the sinews of this passion; having said, 'he that is angry with his brother', and 'he that calls fool or Raca, let him be punished: and he that is offering his gift, let him not approach the

table until he have done way the enmity; and, he that has an adversary, before he see the tribunal, let him make the enemy a friend. He makes a transition to lust again.

7916: - What does He say?

- 'He that beholds with unchaste eyes, let him be punished as an adulterer' whosoever is offended by an unchaste woman, or by a man, or by any other of those belonging to him, let him cut off all these; he that has a woman by law of marriage, let him never cast her out, and look to another. For hereby He has pulled up the roots of wicked lust. then, after this he restrains the love of riches, commanding neither to swear, nor to lie, nor to keep hold of the very cloak with which one may chance to be clad, but rather to give up one's coat, too, to him who would have it, and one's bodily services; completely and more than completely taking away our longing for riches.

7917: Then, after all these things, and the varied garland of these commandments, he goes on to say, 'pray for them which despitefully use you': leading us up to the very highest summit of self-control. For as being meek is not so much as to take smiting, nor being merciful, as to give one's coat also together with one's cloak, nor being just, as to bear injury, nor being a peacemaker, as to follow even when smitten and compelled; so also to suffer persecution is not so much as to bless when persecuted.

7918: Do you see how by degrees He leads us up into the very arches of heaven? What, then, can we deserve, who are commanded to emulate God, and are perhaps in a way not so much as to equal the publicans? For if to love them that love us be the part of publicans, sinners and heathens: when we do not even this, and we do it not, so long as we envy our brethren who are in honor, what penalty shall we not incur, commanded as we are to surpass the scribes, and taking our place below the heathens? How then shall we behold the kingdom, I pray you? How shall we set forth on that holy threshold, who are not surpassing even the publicans? For this He covertly signified, when He said:

'Do not even the publicans do this?' 5:46.

7919: And this most specially we may admire in His teaching, that while in each instance He sets down with very great fullness the prizes of the conflicts; such as to see God, and to inherit the kingdom of heaven, and to become sons of God, and like God, and to obtain mercy, and to be comforted, and the great reward: if anywhere He must needs mention things grievous, He does this in a subdued tone. thus, in the first place, the name of hell He has set down once only in so many sentences; and in some other instances, too, it is with reserve that He corrects the hearer, and as though he were managing His discourse rather in the way of shaming than threatening him; where He said, do not even the publicans do the same, and if the salt has lost its savor; and he shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven.

7920: And there are places where He puts down the sin itself by way of punishment, leaving to the hearer to infer the grievousness of the punishment: as when he said, he has committed adultery with her in his heart; and he that puts her away, causes her to commit adultery; and, that which is more than these is of the evil one. For to them that have understanding, instead of the mention of the punishment, the very greatness of the sin is sufficient for correction. Wherefore also he here brings forward the heathens and the publicans, by the quality of the person putting the disciple to shame. which Paul, too, did, saying, 1 Th 4:13: 'Sorrow not, even as the rest which have no hope,' and, 'Even as the Gentiles which know not God,' v. 5.

7921: And to signify that He requires nothing very overpowering, but a little more than was accustomed, He said:

Mt 5:47: And if you greet only your own brethren, what more are you doing. Do not the Gentiles do the same?'

Yet, nevertheless He stops not the discourse at this but makes it end with His rewards, and those good hopes, saying:

Mt 5:48: Be therefore perfect as your Heavenly father is perfect.

Ad He intersperses everywhere abundantly the name of the heavens, by the very place thoroughly elevating their minds. For as yet, I know not how, they were somewhat weak and dull.

7922: Let us, then, bearing in mind all the things which have been said, show forth great love even towards our enemies; and let us cast away that ridiculous custom, to which many of the more thoughtless give way, waiting for those that meet them to address them first. Towards that which has a great blessing, they have no zeal; but what is ridiculous, that they follow after.

- Wherefore now do you not address him first?

- Because he is waiting for this, is the reply.

- No, for this very reason most of all you should have sprung forward to him, that you might win the crown.

- No, he said, since this was his object.

- And what is worse than this folly? that is, Because this, he said, was his object; - to become procurer of a reward for me; - I will not put my hand to what he has thus suggested. Now if he first addresss you, you gain nothing, even though you accost him. But if you be first to spring forward and speak to him, you have made yourself profit of his pride, and has gathered in a manner abundant fruit from his obstinacy.

7923: What is it, then, but the utmost folly, when we are to reap so large fruit from bare words, to give up the gain; and condemning him to stumble at the very same thing? For if you blame him for this, that he first waits to be addressed by another, wherefore do you emulate that same thing which you accuse? That which you said was evil, why are you to imitate the same as good? Do you see how that nothing is more senseless than a man who associates with wickedness? Wherefore, I entreat, let us flee this evil and ridiculous practice. Yes, for ten thousand friendships has this pestilence overthrown many enmities it has wrought. For this cause, then, let us anticipate them. Since we who are commanded to take blows, and be compelled to journey, and to be stripped by enemies, and to bear it; what kind of indulgence should we deserve, exhibiting so great contentiousness in a mere formal address?

7924: Why, one said, we are despised and spit upon the moment we have given him up this. And in order that man may not despise you, do you offend God? And in order that your frenzied fellow-servant may not despise you, do you despise the Lord, who has bestowed on you benefits so great? No, if it be amiss that your equal should despise you, how much more that you should despise the God that made you. And together with this, consider that other point also; that when he despises you, he is at that very moment employed in procuring to you a greater reward. Since for God's sake you submit to it, because you have hearkened to His laws. And this, to what kind of honor is it not equal? to how many diadems? Be it my portion both to be insulted and despised for God's sake, rather than to be honored by all kings; for nothing, nothing is equal to this glory...<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>49</sup> Fr. Bertoni ends his Meditation 23 two paragraphs before the end of Chrysostom's Homily XVIII [cf. p. 130 of Baronet translation].

**7925      -      MEDITATION 24**

**7925:****Meditation 24****Mt 6:1-5****Preparatory Prayer**

Prelude 1. Mt 6:1: Be careful not to parade your good deeds before men to attract their notice; by doing this you will lose all reward from your Father in heaven.

v. 2: So, when you give alms, do not have it trumpeted before you; this is what the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win men's admiration.

v. 3: I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward.

v. 4: But when you give alms, your left hand must not know what your right hand is doing; your almsgiving must be secret, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.

v. 5: ...

7926: Mt 6:1: Be careful not to parade your good deeds before me to attract their notice.

He roots out in what remains the most tyrannical passion of all, the rage and madness with respect to vainglory, which springs up in them that do right. For at first He had not at all discoursed about it; it being indeed superfluous, before He had persuaded them to do any of the things which they ought, to teach in which way they should practice and pursue them. But after He had led them on to self-command, then He proceeds to purge away also the allow which secretly subsists with it. For this disease is by no means of random birth, but when we have duly performed many of the commandments.

7927: It behooved, therefore, first to implant virtue and then to remove the passion which mars its fruit. And see with what He begins, with fasting, and prayer, and almsgiving: for in these good deeds most especially it is wont to make its haunt. The Pharisee, for instance, was hereby puffed up, who said, Lk 18:12: 'I fast twice a week, I give tithes of my substance.' And he was vainglorious, too, in his very prayer, making it for display. For since there was no one else present, he pointed himself out to the publican, saying:

'I am not as the rest of men, nor even as this publican' [[cf. Lk 18:11].

7928: And mark how Christ began, as though he were speaking of some wild beast, hard to catch, and crafty to deceive him who was not very watchful. Thus, He said,

Take heed, as to your alms. 6:1.

So Paul also speaks to the Philippians, Ph 3:1: 'Beware of dogs.' And with reason, for the evil beast comes in upon us secretly, and without noise pulls all ways and observedly carries out all that is within.

7929: Forasmuch, then, as He had made much discourse about almsgiving, and brought forward God, 'Who makes Hi sun to rise on the evil and the good' [cf. Mt 5:45], and by motives from all quarters had urged them to exult in the abundance of their giving; He finishes by taking away also all things that encumber this fair olive tree. For which same cause he said,

'Take heed that you do not give your alms before men,' 6:1, for that which was before mentioned if God's almsgiving. And when He had said, not to do it before men, He added, 'to be seen of them.' And though it seems as if the same things were said a second time, yet if any one give particular attention, it is not the same thing, but one is different from the other; and it has great security, and unspeakable care and tenderness.

7930: For it may be, both the one doing alms before men may not do it to be seen of them, and again that one not doing it before men do may do it to be seen of them. Wherefore, it is not simply the thing but the intent, which He both punishes and rewards. And unless such exactness were employed, this would make many more backward about the giving of alms, because it is not on every occasion altogether possible to do it secretly. For this cause, setting you free from this restraint, He defines both the penalty and the reward not by the result of the action, but by the intention of the doer. That is, that you may not say, whata? am I then worse, should another see? - it is not this, He said, that I am seeking, but that the mind that is in you and the tone of what you do. For His will is to bring our soul altogether into frame, and to deliver it from every disease.

7931: Now having, as you see, forbidden men's acting for display, and having taught them the penalty thence ensuing, namely, to do it vainly, and for naught, He again rouses their spirits by putting them in mind of the Father, and of Heaven, that not by the loss alone, he might sting them, but also shame them by the reconciliation of Him who gave them being.

'For you have no reward, He said, with your Father which is in Heaven.' 6:1.

Nor even at this did He stop, but proceeds yet further, by other motives also increasing their disgust. For as above He set forth publicans and heathens, by the quality of the person shaming their imitators, so also in this place the hypocrites.



7932: Mt 6:2: 'Therefore, when you do your alms, He said, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and among the streets that they might be honored by men. Amen, I say to you: they have already received their reward.'

And well does He call them hypocrites for the mask was of mercy, but the spirit of cruelty and inhumanity. For they do it, not because they pity their neighbors, but that they themselves may enjoy credit; and this came of the utmost cruelty; while another was perishing with hunger to be seeking vainglory and not putting an end to his suffering. It is not then, the giving of alms which is required, but the giving as one ought, the giving for such and such an end.

7933: Having then amply derided those men, and having handled them so, that the hearer should be even ashamed of them, He again corrects thoroughly the mind which is so distempered: and having said how we ought not to act, He signifies on the other hand how we ought to act.

- How then ought we to do our alms.

Mt 6:3: Let not your left hand know what your right hand does Here again His enigmatical meaning is not of the hands, but He has put the thing hyperbolically. As thus: If it can be, He said, for yourself not to know it, let this be the object of your endeavor; that if it were possible, it may be concealed from the very hands that minister. It is not, as some say, that we should hide it from wrong-headed men, for He has here commanded that it should be concealed from all.

7934: And then the reward, too; consider how great it is. For after He had spoken of the punishment from the one, He points out also the honor derived from the other; from either side urging them, and leading them on to high lessons. Yes, for His is persuading them to know that God is everywhere present, and that not by our present life, are our interests limited, but a yet more awful tribunal will receive us when we go hence, and the account of all our doings, and honors, and punishments: and that no one will be hid in doing anything either greater or small, though he seem to be hid from men. For all this did He darkly signify, when he said:

Mt 6:4: Your Father which sees in secret shall reward you openly.

7935: Seeing for him a great and august assemblage of spectators, and what He desires, that very thing bestowing on him in great abundance.

- For what He said do you wish? is it not to have some to be spectators of what is going on? Behold then, you have some; not angels, nor archangels, but the God of all. And if you desire to have men also as spectators, neither of this desire does He deprive you at the fitting season, but rather in greater abundance affords it unto you. For if you now make a display, you will be able to make it to then only, or twenty, or,

we will say, a hundred persons: but, if you take pains to lie hid now, God Himself will then proclaim you in the presence of the whole universe.

7936: Wherefore, above all, if you will have men see your good deeds, hide them now, that then all may look on them with the more honor, God making hem manifest, and extolling them, and proclaiming them before all. Again, whereas now they that behold will rather condemn you as vainglorious when they see you crowned, so far from condemning, they will even admire you, all of them. When, therefore, by waiting a little, you may both receive a reward, and reap greater admiration; consider what folly it is to cast yourself out of both these; and while you are seeking your reward from God, and while God is beholding, to summon men, for the display of what is going on.

7937: Why, if on display, must be made of our love, to our Father above all should we make it; and this most especially, when our Father has the power both to crown and to punish. And let me add, even were there no penalty, it were not meet for him who desires glory, to let go this our theater, and take in exchange that of men. For who is there so wretched, as that when the king was hastening to come and see his achievements, he would let them go, and make up his assembly of spectators of poor men and beggars? For this cause, then, He not only commands to make no display, but even to take pains to be concealed: it not being at all the same, not to strive for publicity, and to strive for concealment...<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Fr. Bertoni abruptly ends here his Meditation 25, just two pages into the 10 page English translation of Chrysostom's Homily XIX [cf. p. 132 a of the Baronet translation.

**7938      -      MEDITATION 25**

**7938:****Meditation 25****Mt 6:5-8****Preparatory Prayer**

Prelude 1. Mt 6:5: And when you pray, do not imitate the hypocrites: they love to say their prayers standing up in the synagogues, and at the street corners for people to see them. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward.

v. 6: But when you pray, go to your private room and, when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in that secret place, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.

v. 7: In your prayers do not babble as the pagans do, for they think that by using many words, they will make themselves heard.

v. 8: Do not be like them; your Father know what you need before you ask him.

7939: Mt 6:5: And when you pray, do not imitate the hypocrites: they love to say their prayers standing up in the synagogues and at street corners for people to see them. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward.

v. 6: But when you pray, go to your private room and, when you have shut the door, pray to your Father who is in that secret place, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.

These, too again, He calls 'hypocrites', and very fitly; for while they are feigning to pray to God, they are looking round after men; wearing the garb not of suppliants, but of ridiculous persons. For he, who is to do a suppliant's office, letting go all other, looks to him alone, who has power to grant this request. But if you leave this one, and go about wandering and casting around your eyes everywhere, you will depart with empty hands. For this was your own will.

7940: Wherefore He said not, such shall not receive a reward, but they have it out: that is, they shall indeed receive one, but from those of whom they themselves desire to have it. For God wills not this: He rather for His part was willing to bestow on men the recompense that comes from Himself but, they seeking that which is from men, can be no longer justly entitled to receive from Him, for whom they have done nothing. But, mark, I pray you, the loving-kindness of God, in that He promises to bestow on us a reward, even for those good things which we ask of Him. Having then discredited them, who order not this duty as they ought, both from the place and from their

disposition of mind, and having shown that they are very ridiculous: He introduces the best manner of prayer, and again gives the reward, saying: 'Enter into your closet.'

7941: - What, then, it may be said, ought we not to pray in the Church?

- Indeed we ought, by all means, but in such a spirit as this. Because everywhere God seeks the intention of all that is done. Since even if you should enter into your closet, and having shut the door, should do it for display, the doors will do you not good. It is worth observing in this case also, how exact the definition, which He made when He said: that they may appear unto men. So that even if you shut the doors, this He desires you duly to perform, rather than the shutting of the doors even to shut the doors of the mind. For as in everything it is good to be freed from vainglory, so most especially in prayer. For if even without this, we wander and are distracted, when shall we attend unto the things which we are saying, should we enter in having this disease also? And if we who pray and beseech attend not, how do we expect God to attend?

7942: But yet some there are, who after such and so earnest charges, behave themselves so unseemly in prayer, that even when their person is concealed, they make themselves manifest to all by their voice, crying out disorderly, and rendering themselves objects of ridicule both by gesture and voice. Do you see not that even in a market place, should anyone come up doing like this, and begging clamorously, he will drive away him who he is petitioning: but, if quietly, and with the proper gesture, then he rather wins over him that can grant the favor? Let us not, then make our prayer by the gesture of our body, nor by the loudness of our voice, but by the earnestness of our mind neither with noise and clamor and for displays, so as even to disturb those that are near us, but with all modesty, and with contrition in the mind and with inward tears.

7943: But are you pained in mind and can not help crying aloud? yet, surely it is the part of one exceedingly pained to pray and entreat even as I have said. Since Moses, too, was pained, and prayed in this way and was heard; for this cause also God said to him, Ex 14:15: Wherefore do you cry unto me? And Hannah, too, again, her voice not being heard, accomplished all she wished, forasmuch as her heart cried out, 1 K 1:13. But, Abel prayed not only when silent, but even when dying, and his blood sent forth a cry even more clear than a trumpet, Gn 4:10. Groan, then, yourself, even as that holy one, I forbid it not. Rend, as the prophet commanded your heart and not your garments, Jl 2:13. Out of the depths call upon God, Ps 124:1. For it is said, Ps 131:1: Out of the depths I have cried to You, O Lord. From beneath, out of the heart, draw forth a voice, make your prayer a mystery.

7944: Do you not see that even in the houses of kings all tumult is put away, and great on all sides is the silence? Do you, also, therefore, entering as into a palace, - not that on the earth, but what is in heaven - show forth great seemliness. Yes, for you are joined to the choirs of angels, and are in communion with archangels, and are singing with the seraphim. And all these tribes show forth much goodly order, singing with great awe that mystical strain, and their sacred hymns to God, the King of all. With these, then, mingle yourself, when you are praying and emulate their mystical order. For not unto men are you praying, but to God, who is everywhere present, who hears even before the voice, who knows the secrets of the mind.

7945: If you so pray, great is the reward you shall receive.

Mt 6:6: For your Father, He said, who sees in secret, shall reward you openly.

He did not say: shall freely give you, but shall reward you. Yes, for He has made Himself a debtor to you, and even from this has honored you with great honor. for because He himself is invisible, He would have your prayer to be so likewise. Then, he speaks even the very words of the prayer:

Mt 6:7: When you pray, He said, use no vain repetitions, even as the heathens do. You see that when He was discoursing of almsgiving, He removed only that mischief which come of vainglory, and added nothing more; neither did He say whence one should give alms; as from honest labor, and not from rapine, nor covetousness: this being abundantly acknowledged among all. And also before that, He had thoroughly cleared up this point, when he blessed them that hunger after righteousness.

7946: But, touching prayer, He adds somewhat over and above, not to use vain repetitions. And as there He derides the hypocrites, so here the heathen; shaming the hearer everywhere most of all by the vileness of the persons. For since this, in most cases, is especially biting and stinging, I mean our appearing to be likened to outcast persons; but this topic, He dissuades them; calling frivolousness, here, by the name of 'vain repetition': as when we ask of God things unsuitable, kingdoms, and glory, and to get the better of enemies, and abundance of wealth, and in general what does not at all concern us.

7947: Mt 6:8: For He knows, he said, what things you of which you have need.

And herewith He seems to me to command in this place, that neither should we make our prayers long; long, I mean, not in time, but in number and length of the things mentioned. For perseverance indeed in the same requests is our duty: His word being, Rm 12:12: continuing instant in prayer. And Christ Himself, too, by that example of the widow, who prevailed with the pitiless and cruel ruler, by the continuance of her intercession [cf. Lk 17:1]; and by that of the friend, who came late

at night time, and roused the sleeper from his bed [cf. Lk 11:5], not for friendship's, but for his importunity's sake; what did He, but lay down a law, that all should continually make supplication unto Him? He does not, however, bid us compose a prayer of ten thousand clauses, and so come to Him and merely repeat it. For this he obscurely signified when he said:

- Mt 6:7: They think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. v. 8: Do not be like them. For He knows, He said, what things of which you have need, even before you ask Him.

- And if He know, one might say, what we have need of, wherefore must be pray?

- Not to instruct Him, but to prevail with Him, by continuance in supplication; to be humbled; to be reminded of your sins...<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Out of Chrysostom's rather long Homily XIX, Fr. Bertoni derives Meditations 24-27. He ends his Meditation 25 right, here and begins Meditation 26 in the very next paragraph [cf. Baronet translation, pp. 133 b and 134 a].

**7948 - MEDITATION 26**

**7948:** Meditation 26

## Mt 6:9-11

## Preparatory Prayer

Prelude 1. Mt 6:9 : So, you should pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be holy.

v. 10: your kingdom come, your will be done., on earth as it is in heaven.

v. 11: Give us today our daily bread.

Mt 6:9: So, you should pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be holy. Father: See how He straight way stirred up the hearer, and reminded him of all God's bounty in the beginning.

7949: For he who calls God 'Father', by him both remissions of sins, and taking away of punishment, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, and adoption, and inheritance, and brotherhood with the Only-Begotten, and the supply of the Spirit, are acknowledged in this single title. For one cannot call God Father, without having attained to all those blessings. Doubly, therefore, does He awaken their spirit, both by the dignity of Him who is called on, and by the greatness of the benefits which they have enjoyed. But when He said, 'in Heaven', He speaks not this as shutting up God there, but as withdrawing him who is praying from earth, and fixing him in the high places, and in the dwellings above.

7950: He teaches, moreover, to make our prayer common, in behalf of our brethren also. For He did not say: my Father, which art in Heaven, but, Our Father, offering up his supplications for the body in common, and nowhere looking to his own, but everywhere for his neighbor' good. And by this, he at once takes away hatred, and quells pride, and casts out envy, and brings in the mother of all good things, even charity, and exterminates the inequality of human things, and shows how far the equality reaches between the king and the poor man, if at least in those things which are the greatest and most indispensable, we are all of us fellows. For what harm comes of our kindred below, when in that which is on high we are all of us knit together, and no one has aught more than another; neither the rich more than the poor, nor the master than the servant, neither the ruler than the subject, nor the king than the common soldier, nor the philosopher than the barbarian, nor the skillful than the unlearned? For to all has He given one nobility, having vouchsafed to be called the Father of all alike.

7951: When, therefore, He has reminded us of this nobility, and of the gift from above, and of our equality with our brethren, and of charity; and when He has removed us from earth, and fixed us in Heaven; let us see what He commands us to ask after this, Not but in the first place, even that saying alone is sufficient to implant instruction in all virtue. For he who has called God Father, and a common Father, would be justly bound to show forth such a conversation, as not to appear unworthy of this nobility, and to exhibit a diligence proportionate to the gift. Yet is He not satisfied with this, but adds also another clause, thus saying:

Hallowed be Thy Name, 6: 9:

Worthy of him who calls God Father, is the prayer to ask nothing before the glory of His Father, but to account all things secondary to the work of praising Him.

7952: For 'hallowed' is *glorified*. For His own glory He has complete, and ever continuing the same, but He commands him who prays to seek that He may be glorified also by our life. Which very thing He had said before, likewise: 'Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, which is in heaven [cf. Mt 5:15]. For and the Seraphim, too, giving glory, said on this wise, Is 6:3: "Holy, Holy, Holy". So that 'hallowed' means this, glorified. That is, vouchsafe, said he, that we may live so purely, that through us all may glorify You. Which thing again appertains unto perfect self-control, to present to all a life so irreprehensible, that every one of the beholders may offer to the Lord the praise due to Him for this.

7953: Mt 6:10: Thy kingdom come.

And this again is the language of a right-minded child, not to be riveted to things that are seen, neither to account things present some great matter; but, to hasten unto our Father, and to long for the things to come. And this springs out of a good conscience, and a soul set free from things that are on earth. This, for instance, Paul himself was longing after every day: wherefore he also said, Rm 8:22: for we know that the entire creation has been groaning in one great act of giving birth, v. 23: .and not only creation that even we ourselves who have the first-fruits of the Spirit groan, waiting for an adoption, the redemption of our body. For he who has this fondness can neither be puffed up by the good things of this life, nor abashed by its sorrows; but as though dwelling in the very heavens, is freed from each sort of irregularity.



7954: Mt 6:10: Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

Behold a most excellent train of thought! in that He bade us indeed long for the things to come, and hasten towards that sojourn; and, till that may be, even while we abide here, so long to be earnest in showing forth the same conversation as those above. For you must long, He said, for heaven, and the things of heaven; however, even before heaven, He has bidden us make the earth a heaven and do and say all things, even while we are continuing in it, as having our conversation there; insomuch that these too should be objects of our prayer to the Lord. For there is nothing to hinder our reaching the perfection of the powers above, because we inhabit the earth; but it is possible even while abiding here,, to do all, as though already placed on high.

7955: What He said, therefore, is this: As there angels are not partly obedient, and partly disobedient, but in all things yield and obey, for He said, Ps 102:20: Mighty in strength, performing His word. So, vouchsafe that we men may not do Your will by halves, but perform all things as you will. Do you see He has taught us also to be modest, by making it clear that virtue is not of our endeavors only, but also of the grace above? And again, He has enjoined each one of us, who pray, to take upon himself the care of the whole world. For He did not at all say, 'They will be done', *in me*, or *in us*, but everywhere on the earth; so that error may be destroyed, and truth implanted, and all wickedness cast not, and virtue return, and no difference in this respect be henceforth between heaven and earth. For if this come to pass, said He, there will be no difference between things below and above, separated as they are in nature; the earth exhibiting to us another set of angels.

7856: Mt 6:11: Give us this day our daily bread.

- What is '*daily epiouzion, bread*'? That for one day.

- For because He had said thus; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven, but was discoursing to men encompassed with flesh, and subject to the necessities of nature, and incapable of the same impassability with the angels: - while He enjoins the commands to be practiced by us also, even as they perform them He condescends likewise, in what follows, to the infirmity of our nature. Thus, perfection of conduct He said, I require as great, not however freedom from passions; no, for the tyranny of nature permits it not: for it requires necessary food.

7957: But mark, I pray you, how even in things that are bodily, that which is spiritual abounds. For it is neither for riches, nor for delicate living, nor for costly raiment, nor for any other such thing, but for bread only, that He has commanded us to make our prayer. And for 'daily bread', so as not to 'take thought for the morrow' [cf. Mt 6:12]. Because of this He added, daily [*epiouzion*] bread, that is, bread for one day. And not

even with this expression is He satisfied, but adds another, too, afterwards, saying, 'Give us *this* day' so that we may not, beyond this, wear ourselves out with the care of the following day. For that day, the interval before which you know not whether you shall see wherefore do you submit to its cares? This, as He proceeded, he enjoined also more fully saying, 'Take no thought for the morrow', 6:34. He would have us be on every hand unencumbered and winged for flight, yielding just so much to nature as the compulsion of necessity requires of us ...<sup>52</sup>.

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<sup>52</sup> Here, on p. 135 b of the Baronet translation] Fr. Bertoni concludes his Meditation 26, the third of four which he derived from Chrysostom's Homily XIX, which concludes on p.140 of the said translation].

## 7958 - MEDITATION 27

**7958:** **Meditation 27** <sup>53</sup>

## Mt 6:12-15

## Preparatory Prayer

Prelude 1. Mt 6:12: And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven those who are in debt to us.

v. 13: And do not put us to the test, but save us from the evil one.

v. 14: Yes, if you forgive others their failings, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours;

v. 15: but if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive your failings, either.

Mt 6:12: And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven those who are in debt to us.

7959: Do you see surpassing mercy? After taking away so great evils, and after the unspeakable greatness of His gift, if men sin again, He counts them such as may be forgiven. For that this prayer belongs to believers, is taught us both by the laws of the church, and by the beginning of the prayer. For the uninitiated could not call God Father. If then the prayer belongs to believers, and entreating that sins may be forgiven the, it is clear that no even after the laver is the profit of repentance taken away. Since had He not meant to signify this, He would not have made a law that we should so pray.

7960: Now He who both brings sins to remembrance and bids us ask forgiveness, and teaches how we may obtain remission, and so makes the way easy; it is perfectly clear that He introduced this rule of supplication, as knowing, and signifying, that it is possible even after the font to wash ourselves from our offenses; by reminding us of our sins, persuading us to be modest; by the command to forgive others, setting us free from all revengeful passion; while by promising in return for this to pardon us also, He holds out the good hopes, and instructs us to have high views concerning the unspeakable mercy of God toward men.

<sup>53</sup> Fr. Bertoni skips about a sentence here in the translation [cf. p. 135 b of the Baronet translation].

7961: But what we should most observe is this, that whereas in each of the clauses He had made mention of the whole of virtue, and in this way, had included also the forgetfulness of injuries, for so that His name be hallowed, is the exactness of a perfect conversation; and that His will be done declares the same thing again; and to be able to call God, 'Father', is the profession of a blameless life; in all which things had been comprehended also the duty of remitting our anger against them that have transgressed, still He was not satisfied with these, but meaning to signify how earnest He is in the matter, He sets it down also in particular, and after the prayer, He makes mention of no other commandment than this, saying thus:

Mt 6:14: For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you.'

7962: So that the beginning is of us, and we ourselves have control over the judgment that is to be passed upon us. For in order that no one, even of the senseless, might have any complaint to make, either great or small, when brought to judgment; on you, who are to give account, He causes the sentence to depend; and in what way soever, you have judged for yourself, in the same, He said, do I also judge you. And if you forgive your fellow servant, you shall obtain the same favor from me; though indeed the one be no equal to the other. For you forgive in your need, but God, having need of none: you, my fellow slave; God, His slave: you liable to unnumbered other charges; God, being without sin.

7963: But, yet even this does He show forth His loving-kindness towards man. Since He might indeed, even without this, forgive you all your offenses; but He wills you hereby also to receive a benefit; affording you on all sides innumerable occasions of gentleness and love to man, casting out what is brutish in you, and quenching wrath, and in all ways cementing you to him who is your own member.

7964: For what can you have to say? that you have wrongfully endured some ill of your neighbor? For these only are trespasses, since if it be done with justice, the act is not a trespass. But, you too are drawing near to receive forgiveness for such things, and for much greater. And even before the forgiveness, you have received no small gift, in being taught to have a human soul, and in being trained to all gentleness. And here with a great reward shall also be laid up for you elsewhere, even to be called to account for none of your offenses. What sort of punishment, then, do we not deserve, when after having received the privilege, we betray our salvation? And how shall we claim to be heard in the rest of our matters, if we will not, in those which depend on us, spare our own selves?

7965: Mt 6:13: And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from the evil one. Amen.

Here He teaches us plainly our own vileness, and quells our pride, instructing us to deprecate all conflicts, instead of rushing upon them. For so both our victory will

be more glorious, and the devil's overthrow more to be derided. I mean, that as when we are dragged forth, we must stand nobly; so when we are not summoned, we should be quiet, and wait for the time of conflict; that we may show both freedom from vainglory, and nobleness of spirit.

7966: And here He calls the devil 'the wicked one', commanding us to wage against him a war that knows no truce, and implying that he is not such by nature. For wickedness is not of those things that are from nature, but of them that are added by our own choice. And he is so called pre-eminently, by reason of the excess of his wickedness, and because he, in no respect injured by us wages against us implacable war. Wherefore neither said He, 'deliver us from the wicked ones', but from 'the wicked one'; instructing us in no case to entertain displeasure against our neighbors, for what wrongs soever we may suffer at their hands, but to transfer our enmity from these to him, as being himself the cause of all our wrongs. Having then made us anxious as before conflict, by putting us in mind of the enemy, and having cut away from us all our remises; He then encourages and raises our spirits, by bringing to our remembrance the King under whom we are arrayed, and signifying Him to be more powerful than all.<sup>54</sup>

7967: Then, as I said before, meaning to signify that of all things He most loathes and hates bearing malice, and most of all accepts the virtue which is opposite to that vice; He has after the prayer also again put us in mind of this same point of goodness; both by the punishment set, and by the reward appointed, urging the bearer to obey this command:

Mt 6:14: For if you forgive men, He said, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, v. 15: But if you forgive not, neither will He forgive you.

7968: With this view He has again mentioned heaven also, and their Father; to abash the hearer by this topic likewise; that he of all people, being of such a Father, should be made a wild beast of; and summoned as he is to heaven, should cherish an earthly and ordinary set of mind. Since not by grace only, you see, ought we to become His children, but also by our works. And nothing makes us so like God, as being ready to forgive the wicked and wrong-doers; even as indeed He had taught before, when he spoke of His 'making the sun to shine on the evil and on the good. [cf. Mt 5:45]. For this same cause again in every one of the clauses He commands us to make our prayers common, saying 'Our Father' and 'Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven', and 'Give us the bread and forgive *us* our debts', and 'lead *us* not into temptation,' and deliver *us* ; everywhere commanding us to use this plural world, that we may not retain so much as a vestige of anger against our neighbor.

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<sup>54</sup> Fr. Bertoni skips the next several paragraphs here from Chrysostom's original [cf. Baronet translation, p. 136 a].

7969: How great punishment, then, must they deserve, who after all this, so far from themselves forgiving, do even entreat God for vengeance on their enemies, and dismetrically as it were transgress this law; and this while He is doing and contriving all, to hinder our being at variance with one another? For since love is the root of all that is good, He removing from all sides whatever mars it, bring us together, and cements us to each other. For there is not, there is not one, be he father, or mother, or friend, or what you will, who so loved us as the God who created us. And this above all things, both His daily benefits and his precepts make manifest....<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Fr. Bertoni's rather extended use of Chrysostom's Homily XIX ends right here cf. p. 137 b. of Baronet translation]. Homily XX, however, does not begin until p. 140 a - thus, Fr. Bertoni was able to draw his Meditations 24-27 from this one Homily XIX of Chrysostom, and actually from only the first 7 pages out of 10 in the English translation.

**7970 - MEDITATION 28**

**7970:****Meditation 28****Mt 6:16-21****Preparatory Prayer**

Prelude 1. Mt 6:16: When you fast, do not put on a gloomy look, as the hypocrites do; they pull long faces to let men know they are fasting. I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward.

v. 17: But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face,

v. 18: so that no one will know that you are fasting except your Father who sees all that is done in secret; and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.

v. 19: Do not store up treasures for yourselves on earth, where moths and woodworms destroy them and thieves can break in and steal.

v. 20: But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor woodworms destroy them and thieves cannot break in and steal.

v. 21: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

7971: Mt 6:16: When you fast do not put on a gloomy look as the hypocrites do: they pull long faces to let men know they are fasting.

Here it is were well to sigh aloud and to wail bitterly; for not only do we imitate the hypocrites, but we have even surpassed them. For I know, yes I know many, not merely fasting and making a display of it, but neglecting to fast, and yet wearing the masks of them that fast, and cloaking themselves and an excuse worse than their sin.

- I do this, they say, that I may not offend the many.

- What do you say? There is a law of God which commands these things, and would you talk of offense? And do you think that in keeping it you are offending, in transgressing it, delivering man from offense? And what can be worse than this folly?

7972: Will you not leave off becoming worse than the very hypocrites, and making your hypocrisy double? And when you consider the great excess of this evil, will you not be abashed at the force of the expression now before us? In that He did not say, they act a part, merely, but willing also to touch them more deeply, He said, For they disfigure their faces, that is, they corrupt, they mar them. But, if this disfiguring of the

face, to appear pale for vainglory, what should we say concerning the women who corrupt their faces wit colorings and paintings to the ruin of the unchaste sort of young men? For while those harm themselves only, these women harm both themselves and them who behold them. Wherefore we should fly both from the one pest and from the other, keeping at distance enough and to spare. For so he not only commanded to make no display, but even to seek to be concealed. which things had done before likewise.

7973: And whereas in the matter of almsgiving, He did not put it simply, but having said, 'Take heed not to do it before men', He added, 'to be seen by them.' Mt 6:1.

Yet, concerning fasting and prayer, He made no such limitation.

- Why could this have been?

- Because for almsgiving to be altogether concealed it is impossible, but for prayer and fasting, it is possible. And, therefore, when He aid, 'Let not your left hand know what your right hand is doing', 6:3, it was not of hands that He was speaking, but of the duty of being strictly concealed from all; and as when He commanded us to enter into our closet, not there alone absolutely, nor there primarily, did He command us to pray, but He covertly intimated the same thing again; so likewise here in commanding us to be anointed, He did not enact that we positively must anoint ourselves; for then we should all of us be found transgressors of this law; and above all, surely, they who have taken the most pains to keep it, the societies of the monks, who have taken up their dwelling on the mountains.

7974: It was not this, then, that He enjoined, but, forasmuch as the ancients had a custom to anoint themselves continually, when they were taking their pleasure and rejoicing and this one may see clearly from David, Ps 44:8 and Daniel 10:3; it is clearly said that we are to anoint ourselves, not that we should positively do this, but that by all means we might endeavor with great strictness, to hide this for acquisition. And to convince you that so it is He Himself, when by action exhibiting what He enjoined in words, having fasted forty days, and fasted in secret, did neither anoint nor wash Himself; nevertheless though He did not these things, He most assuredly fulfilled the whole without vainglory. It is then that He enjoins on us likewise, both bringing before us the hypocrites, and by a twice repeated charge dissuading the hearers. And somewhat else He signified by this name, this of the hypocrites.

7975: Just as the hypocrites: that is, not only by the ridiculousness of the thing, nor by its bringing an extreme penalty, but also by showing that such deceit is but for a season, does He withdraw us from that evil desire. For the actor seems glorious just so long as the audience is sitting; or, rather not even then in the sight of all. For the more part of the spectators know who it is and what part he is acting. However, when the audience is broken up, he is more clearly discovered to all. Now this, you see, the



vainglorious must in all necessity undergo. For even here they are manifest to the majority, as not being that which they appear to be, but as wearing a mask only; but much more will they be detected hereafter, when all things appear naked and open. cf. Heb 4:1.

7976: And another motive again He withdraws them from the hypocrites, by showing that His injunction is light. For He does not make the fast more strict, nor command us to practice more of it, but not to lose the crown thereof. So that what seems hard to bear, is common to us and to the hypocrites, for they also fast; but that which is lightest, namely, not to lose the reward after our labors, this is what I command, said He; adding nothing to our toils, but gathering our wages for us with all security, and not suffering us to go away unrewarded, as they do. No, they will not so much as imitate them that wrestle in the Olympic Games, who although so great a multitude is sitting there, and so many princes, desire to please but one, even him who adjudges the victory among them; and this though he be much their inferior.

7977: But you, though you have a twofold motive for displaying the victory to him, first, that He is the person to adjudge it, and also, that He is beyond comparison superior to all that are sitting in the theater, - you are displaying it to others, who so far from profiting, do privately work you the greatest harm. However, I do not forbid even this, said he. Only, if you are desirous to make a show to men, also wait, and I will bestow on you this, too, in fuller abundance, and with great profit. For as it is, this quite breaks you off from the glory which is with me, even as to despise these things unites you closely.

7978: But then shall you enjoy all in entire security; having, even before that last, no little fruit to reap in this world also, namely, that you have trodden under foot all human glory, and are freed from the grievous bondage of men, and are become a true worker of virtue. Whereas now, as long at least as you are so disposed, if you should be in a desert, you will be deserted by all your virtue, having none to behold you. This is to act as one insulting virtue itself, if you are to pursue it not for its own sake, but with an eye to the rope maker, and the brazier, and the common people of the baser sort, that the bad and they that are far removed from virtue may admire you. And you are calling the enemies of virtue to the display and the sight thereof, as if one were to choose to live continently, not for the excellency of continence, but that he might make a show before prostitutes.

7979: You also, it would seem, would not choose virtue, but for the sake of virtue's enemies; whereas you ought indeed to admire her on this very ground, that she has even her enemies to praise her, - yet, to admire her, as is meet, not for others' sake, account the thing an insult. Just so I bid you reckon in the case of virtue as well, and neither to follow after her for the sake of others, nor for men's sake to obey God; but men for God's sake. Since if you do the contrary, though you seem to follow virtue, you

have provoked equally with him who follows her not. For just as he disobeyed by so doing, so you by doing unlawfully.

7980: Mt 6:19:Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moths and woodworms destroy them.

Thus after He has cast out the disease of vainglory and not before, he seasonably introduces His discourse of voluntary contempt of riches. For nothing so trains men to be fond of riches as the fondness for glory. This for instance, is why men devise those herds of slaves, and that swarm of eunuchs, and their horses with trappings of gold, and their silver tables, and all the rest of it, yet more ridiculous; not to satisfy any wants, nor to enjoy any pleasure, but that they may make a show before the multitude. Now above He had only said that we must show mercy; but here He points out also how great mercy we must show, when He said:

7981: Do not lay up treasures for yourselves, 6:19.

For it not being possible at the beginning to introduce all at once His discourse on contempt of riches, by reason of the tyranny of the possession, He breaks it up into small portions, and having set free the hearer's mind, instills it therein, so as that it shall become acceptable. Wherefore you see, He said first, 1:7: 'Blessed are the merciful' and after this: 'Agree with your adversary', 5:25; and after that again, and if anyone will sue you at the law and take your coat, give him your cloak also, 5:40; but here that which is much greater than all these. For there His meaning was: if you see a law-suit pending, do this; since to want to be freed from strife, is better than to possess and strive; but here, supposing neither adversary nor any one at law with you, and without all mention of any other lush party, he teaches the contempt of riches itself by itself, implying that not so much for their sake who receive mercy, as for the giver's sake, he makes these laws: so that though there be no one injuring us, or dragging us into a court of justice, even so we may despise our possessions, bestowing them on those who are in need.

7982: And neither here has He put the whole, but even in this place it is gently spoken; although he had in the wilderness shown forth to a surpassing extent, Mt 4:8, ff. , His conflicts 'in that behalf'. However, He does not express this, nor bring it forward; for it was not yet time to reveal it; but for a while He searches out for reasons, maintaining the place of an adviser rather than a lawgiver, in His sayings on this subject. For after He had said, Lay up not treasures upon the earth, 6:19. He added: where moth and rust do corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. For the present He signifies the hurtfulness of the 'treasure here, and the profit of what is there, both from the place, and from the things which mar it.

7983: And neither at this point does He stop, but adds also another argument. And first, what things they most fear, from these He urges them. For of what art you afraid? He said, lest your goods should be spent, if you give alms? No, then give alms, and so they will not be spent; and, what is more, so far from being spent, they will actually receive a greater increase; yes, for the things in heaven are added unto them. However, for a time He said it not, but puts it afterwards. But, for the present what had most power to persuade them that he brings forward, namely, that the treasure would thus remain for them unspent. And on the other hand, he attracts them. For He said not only, If you give almost, it is preserved; but He threatened also the opposite thing, that if you give not, it perishes.

7984: And see His unspeakable prudence. For neither did He say, You must leave them to others; since this, too, is pleasant to men: He alarms them, however, on a new ground, by signifying that not even this do they obtain; since though men defraud not, there are those which are sure to defraud, the moth and the rust. For although this mischief seem very easy to restrain, it is nevertheless irresistible and uncontrollable, and devise what you will, you will be unable to check this harm.

- What, then does moth make away with the gold?
- Though not moth, yet thieves do.
- What, then? have all been despoiled?
- Though not all, yet the greater part. On this account, then, He adds another argument, which I have already mentioned, saying:

7985: Mt 6:21: Where the your treasure is, there is your heart also.

For though none of these things should come to pass, he said, you will undergo no small harm in being nailed to the things below, and in becoming a slave instead of a freeman, and casting yourself out of the heavenly things, and having no power to think on ought that is high, but all about money, usuries and loans, and gains, and ignoble trafficking. Than this what could be more wretched? For in truth such a one will be worse off than any slave, bringing upon himself a most grievous tyranny, and giving up the chiefest thing of all, even the nobleness and the liberty of man. For how much soever any one may discourse to you, you will not be able to hear any of those things which concern you, while your mind is nailed down to money; but found like a dog to a tomb, by the tyranny of riches, more grievously than by any chain, barking at all that come near you, you have this one employment continually, to keep for others what you have laid up. than this what can be more wretched?

7986: However, for as much as this was too high for the mind of His hearers, and neither was the mischief within easy view of the generality, nor the gain evident, but there was need of a spirit more self-command to perceive either of these; first, He has put it after those other topics, which are obvious, saying: Where your treasure is, there your heart is also....<sup>56</sup>.

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<sup>56</sup> Meditation 29 begins within this same paragraph, on p. 143 a of the Baronet translation of Chrysostom's Homily XX.

## 7987 - MEDITATION 29

**Meditation 29****Mt 6:22,23****Preparatory Prayer**

Prelude 1. Mt 6:22: The lamp of the body is the eye. It follows that if your eye is sound, your whole body will be filled with light.

v. 23: But if your eye is diseased, your whole body will be in darkness. If, then, the light inside you is darkness, what darkness that will be!

7987: Mt 6:21: Where your treasure is, there your heart will be:

He makes it clearer again by withdrawing his discourse from the intellectual to the sensible, and saying:

Mt 6:22: The light of the body is the eye.

What He said is this: Bury not gold in the earth, nor do any other such thing, for you do gather it for the moth, and the rust and the thieves. And even if you should entirely escape these evils, yet the enslaving of your heart, the nailing it to all that is below, you will not escape: For your treasure is where your heart is.

7988: As then, laying up stores in heaven, you will reap not this fruit only, the attainment of the rewards for these things, but from this world you already receive your recompense, in getting into harbor there, in setting your affections to the things that are there, and caring for what is there, for where you have laid up your treasures, it is not clear that you transfer your mind also; so if you do this upon earth, you will experience the contrary. But if the saying be obscure to you, hear what comes next in order:

The light of your body is the eye; if, therefore, your eye be single, your whole body shall be full of light. But, if your eye is evil, your whole body shall be full of darkness. But if the light that is in you be darkness, how great is the darkness?

7989: He leads His discourse to the things which are more within the reach of our senses. I mean, for as much as He had spoken of the mind as enslaved, and brought into captivity, and there were not many who could easily discern this, He transfers the lesson to the things outward, and lying before men's eyes, that by these the others also might reach their understanding. thus, If you know not, He said, what a thing it is to be injured in mind, learn it from the things of the body; for just what the eye is to the

body, the same is the mind to the soul. As therefore, you would not choose to wear gold, and to be clad in silken garments, your eyes withal being put out, but account their sound health more desirable than all such superfluity, for, should you lose their health, or waste it, all your life besides will do you no good: for just as when the eyes are blinded, most of the energy of the other members is gone, their light being quenched; so also, when the mind is depraved, your life will be filled with countless evils.

7890: As therefore in the body this is our aim, namely, to keep the eye sound, so also the mind in the soul. But if we mutilate this, which ought to give light to the rest, by what means are we to see clearly anymore? For as he that destroys the fountain, dries up also the river, so he who has quenched the understanding has confounded all his doings in this life. Wherefore He said,

If the light that is in you be darkness, how great is the darkness? For when the pilot is drowned, and the candle is put out, and the general is taken prisoner; what sort of hope will there be, after that?

7991: Thus, then, when omitting now to speak of the plots to which wealth gives occasion, the strives, the suits, these indeed He had signified above, when He said, The adversary shall deliver you to the judge, and the judge to the officer, 5:25; and setting down what is more grievous than all these, as sure to occur, He so withdraws us from the wicked desire. For to inhabit the prison is not nearly so grievous, as for the mind to be enslaved by this disease; and the former is not sure to happen, but the other is connected as an immediate consequence with the desire of riches. And this is why He puts it after the first, as being a more grievous thing, and sure to happen. For God, He said, gave us understanding, that we might chase away all ignorance, and have the right judgment of things and light against all that is grievous or hurtful, we might remain in safety. But, we betray the gift for the sake of things superfluous and useless.

7992: For what good is the use of soldiers arrayed in gold, when the general is dragged along a captive? what the profit of a ship beautifully equipped, when the pilot is sunk beneath the waves? what the advantage of a well-proportioned body, when the sight of the eye is stricken out? As therefore, should anyone cast into sickness the physician who should be in good health, that he may end or diseases, and then bid him lie on a silver couch, and in a chamber of gold, this will nothing avail the sick persons; even so, if you corrupt the mind, which has power to put down our passions, although you set it by a treasure, so far from doing it any good, you have inflicted the very greatest loss, and has harmed your whole soul.

7993: Do you see how by those very things, through which most especially men everywhere affect wickedness, even by these most of all he deters them from it, and brings them back to virtue? For with what intent do you desire riches? He said; is it not that you may enjoy pleasure and luxury? Why now, this above all things, you will fail to obtain thereby, it will rather be just contrary. For if when our eyes are stricken out, we perceive not any pleasant thing, because of such our calamity; much more will this be our case in the perversion and maiming of the mind.

- Again, with what intent do you bury it in the earth?

- That it may be kept in safety.

- But, here, too, again, it is the contrary, said He. And thus, as in dealing with him that for vainglory fasts, and gives alms and prays, by those very things which he most desires, He had allured him not to be vainglorious: - for with what intent, said He, do you so pray and give alms? for love of the glory that may be had from men? then do not pray thus, He said, and so you shall obtain it in the day that is to come.

7994: So He has taken captive the covetous man also, by those things for which he was most earnest. Thus: what would you? He said, to have your wealth preserved, and to enjoy pleasure? Both these things I will afford you in great abundance, if you lay up your gold in that place, where I bid you. It is true that hereafter He displayed more clearly the evil effect of this on the mind, I mean, when He made mention of the thorns; but, for the present, even here He has strikingly intimated the same by representing him as darkened who is beside himself in this way. And as they that are in darkness see nothing distinct, but if they look at a rope, they suppose it to be a serpent, if at mountains, and ravines, they are dread with fear; so these also: what is not alarming to them that have sight, that they regard with suspicion.

7995: Thus, among other things they tremble at poverty; or rather not at poverty only, but even at any trifling loss. Yes, and if they should lose some little matter, those who are in want of necessary food do not so grieve and bewail themselves as they. At least many of the rich have come even to the halter not enduring such ill fortune: and to be insulted also, and to be despitefully used, seems to them. so intolerable, that even because of this again many have actually torn themselves from this present life. For to everything wealth had made them soft, except to the waiting on it. thus, when it commands them to do service unto itself, they venture on murders, and stripes, and revilings and all shame.

7996: A thing which comes of the utmost wretchedness; to be of all men most effeminate, where one ought to practice self-command, but where more caution was required, in these cases again to become more shameless, and obstinate. Since in fact the same kind of thing befalls them, as one would have to endure who had spent all his goods on unfit objects. for such a one, when the time of necessary expenditure comes on, having nothing to supply it, suffers incurable evils, for as much as all that he had has been ill spent beforehand...<sup>57</sup>.

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<sup>57</sup> Fr. Bertoni ends his brief Meditation 29 right here [cf. p. 144 b of the Baronet translation] and picks up his Meditation 30 in the following Homily XXI of St. John Chrysostom [cf. p. 146 a, of said translation].



**7997      -      MEDITATION 30**

**7997:****Meditation 30****Mt 6:24-26****Preparatory Prayer**

Prelude 1. Mt 6:24: No man can serve two masters: he will either hate the first and love the second, or treat the first with respect and the second with scorn. You cannot be the slave both of God and of money.

v. 25: that is why I am telling you not to worry about your life and what you are to eat, nor about your body and how you are to clothe it. Surely life means more than food, and the body more than clothing.

v. 26: Look at the birds in the sky. They do not sow or reap or gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?

7998: Mt 6:24: No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to one and despise the other.

Do you see how by degrees He withdraws us from the things that now are, and at greater length introduces what He has to say, touching voluntary poverty, and casts down the dominion of covetousness? For He was not contented with His former sayings, many and great as they were, but He adds others also, more and more alarming. For what can be more alarming than what He now says, if indeed we are for our riches to fall from the service of Christ? or, what ore to be desired, if indeed, by despising wealth, we shall have our affection towards Him and our charity perfect? For what I am continually repeating, the same do I now say likewise, namely, that by both kinds He presses the hearer to obey His sayings; both by the profitable and by the hurtful; much like an excellent physician, pointing out both the disease which is the consequence of neglect, and the good health which results from obedience.

7999: See, for instance, what kind of gain He signifies this to be, and how He establishes the advantage of it by their deliverance from the contrary things. Thus, wealth, He said, hurts you not in this only, that it arms robbers against you, nor in that it darkens your mind in the most intense degree, but also in that it casts you out of God's service, making you captive of lifeless riches, and in both ways, doing you harm, on the one hand, by causing you to be slaves of what you ought to command; on the other, by casting you out of God's service, whom, above all things, it is indispensable for you to serve. For just as in the other place, He signified the mischief to be twofold, in both laying up here, where moth corrupts, and in not laying up there, where the

watch kept is impregnable; so, in this place, too, He shows the loss to be twofold, in that it both draws off from God, and makes us subject to mammon.

8000: But He sets it not down directly, rather He establishes it first upon general considerations, saying thus:

No man can serve two masters, Mt 6:24; meaning here two that are enjoining opposite things; since, unless this were the case, they would not even be two. For so the multitude of them that believed, were of one heart and of one soul [cf. Ac 4:32], and yet were they divided into many bodies; their solemnity, however, made the many one. Then so adding to the force of it, He said:

So far from serving, he will even hate and abhor: For either he will hate the one said he, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. 6:24.

8001: And it seems indeed as if the same thing were said twice over; he did not, however, choose this form without purpose, but in order to show that the change for the better is easy. I mean, lest you should say, I am once for all made a slave; I am brought under the tyranny of wealth. He signifies that it is possible to transfer one's self, and that as from the first to the second, so also from the second one may pass over to the first. Having thus, you see, spoken generally, that He might persuade the hearer to be an uncorrupt judge of His words, and to sentence according to the very nature of the things; when he has made sure of his assent, then, and not until then, he discovers Himself. thus, He presently adds:

You cannot serve God and mammon. 6:24.

Let us shudder to think that we have thought Christ to say: with the name of God, to put that of gold. But if this be shocking, its taking place in our deeds, our preferring the tyranny of gold to the fear of God, is much more shocking.

8002: - What, then? was not this possible among the ancients?

- By no means. How then, one might say, did Abraham, how did Job obtain a good report? tell me not of them that are rich, but of them that serve riches. Since Job also was rich, but he ruled over it, and was a master, not a slave. Therefore, he so possessed all those things, as if he had been the steward of another man's goods; not only not extorting from other, but even giving up his own to them that were in need. And what is more, when he had them that were no joy to him: so he also declared, saying, Jb 32:25: : If I did so much as rejoice when my wealth waxed great; wherefore, neither did he grieve when it was gone.

8003: But they that are rich are not now such as he was, but are rather in a worse condition than any slave, playing as it were tribute to some grievous tyrant. Because their mind is as a kind of citadel occupied by the love of money, which from thence

daily sends out unto them its commands full of all iniquity, and there is none to disobey. Be not, therefore, thus over subtle. No, for God has once for all declared and pronounced it a thing impossible for the one service and the other to agree. Say not, then, it is possible. Why, when the one master is commanding you to spoil by violence, the other to strip yourself of your possessions; the one to be chaste, the other to commit fornication; the one to be drunken and luxurious, the other to keep the belly in subjection; the one again to despise the things that are, the other to be riveted to the present; the one to admire marble, and walls, and roofs, the other to condemn these, but to honor self-restraint: how is it possible that these should agree?

8004: Now He calls mammon here a master, not because of its own nature, but on account of the wretchedness of them that bow themselves beneath it. So also He calls the belly a god, Ph 3:19, not from the dignity of such a mistress, but from the wretchedness of them that are enslaved; it being a thing worse than any punishment, and enough, before the punishment, in the way of vengeance on him who is involved in it. For what condemned criminals can be so wretched as they who having God for the Lord, do from that mild rule desert to their grievous tyranny, and this when their act brings after it so much harm even here? For indeed their loss is unspeakable by so doing: there are suits, and molestations, and strifes, and toils, and a blinding for the soul; and what is more grievous than all, one falls away from the highest blessings; for such a blessing it is to be Gods servant.

8005: Having now, as you see, in all ways taught, the advantage of contemning riches, as well for the very preservation of riches, as for the pleasure of the soul, and for acquiring self-command, and for the securing of godliness; He proceeds to establish the practicability of this command. For this especially pertains to the best legislation, not only to enjoin what is expedient, but also to make it possible. Therefore, He also goes on to say,

Mt 6:25: that is why I am telling you not to worry about your life and what you are to eat, nor about your body and how you are to clothe it.

That is, lest they should say, - What then?

- if we cast away all, how shall we be able to live? At this objection, in what follows, He makes a stand, very seasonably. For as surely as if at the beginning He had said, Take no thought, the word would have seemed burdensome; so surely, now that he has shown the mischief arising out of covetousness, His admonition coming after is made easy to receive.

8006: Wherefore neither did He now simply say, take no thought, but He added the reason, and so enjoined this. After having said, You cannot serve God and mammon, He added, 'therefore, I say unto you, take no thought.

- Therefore, for what/

- Because of the unspeakable loss. For the hurt you receive is not in riches only, rather the wound is in the most vital parts, and in that which is the overthrow of your salvation; casting you as it does out from God who made you, and cares for you, and loves you. Therefore, I say to you, take no thought. Thus, after He has shown the hurt to be unspeakable, then, and not before, He makes the commandment stricter; in that He not only bids us cast away what we have, but forbids us to take thought even for our necessary foods, saying: Take no thought for your soul, what you shall eat, 6:25.

Not because the soul needs food, for it is incorporeal; but He spoke according to the common custom. For though it needs not food, yet can it not endure to remain in the body, except that it be fed.

8007: And in saying this, He puts it not simply so, but here also He brings up arguments, some from those things which we have already, and some from other examples. From what we have already, He says:

Is not the soul more than food, and the body more than raiment? 6:25.

He therefore that has given the greater how shall He not give the less? He that has fashioned the flesh that is fed, how shall He not bestow the food? Wherefore neither did He simply say, Take no thought what you shall eat, or, wherewithal you shall be clothed. But, 'for the body', and 'for the soul': for as much as from them He was to make His demonstrations, carrying on His discourse in the way of comparison.

8008: Now the soul He has given once for all, and it abides such as it is; but the body increases every day. Therefore, pointing out both these things, the immortality of the one, and the frailty of the other, He subjoins and says:

Mt 6:27: Which of you can add one cubit unto his stature?

Thus, saying no more of the soul, since it receives not increase, He discoursed of the body only: hereby making manifest this point also, that not the food increases it, but the providence of God. Which Paul showing also in other ways, said, 1 Co 3:7: So, then, neither is he that plants anything, neither he that waters; but God that gives the increase. From what we have already, then, He urges us in this way; and from examples of other things, by saying:

8009: Mt 6:26: Behold the birds of the air, He says.

Thus, lest any should say, we do good by taking thought. he dissuades them both by that which is greater, and by that which is less; by the greater, i.e., the soul and the body; by the less, i.e., the birds. For if of the things that are very inferior, He has so much regard, how shall He not give unto you?, He has said. And to them on this wise, for as yet it was an ordinary multitude: but to the devil not thus;

- But, how?

- Mt 4:4: Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. But here He makes mention of the birds, and this in a way greatly to abash them; which sort of thing is very great value for the purpose of admonition.

8010: However, some of the ungodly have come to so great a patch of madness, as even to attack His illustration. Because, they say, it was not meet for one strengthening moral principle, to use natural advantages as incitements to that end. For to those animals, they add, this belongs by nature. What then shall we say to this? That even though it is theirs by nature, yet possibly we, too, may attain it by choice. For neither did He say, behold how the birds fly' which were a thing impossible to man; but, that they are fed without taking thought, a kind of thing easy to be achieved by us, also, if we will. And this they have proved, who have accomplished it in their actions. Wherefore it were meet exceedingly to admire the consideration of our Lawgiver; in that when He might bring forward His illustration from among men, and when He might have spoken of Moses and Elias and John, and others like them, who took no thought; that He might touch them more to the quick, He made mention of the irrational beings.

8011: For He had spoken of these righteous men, these would have been able to say, we are not yet become like them. But now by passing over them in silence, and bringing forward the fowls of the air, He has cut off from them every excuse, imitating in this place also the old law. Yes, for the old covenant likewise sends to the bee, Si 11:3; and to the ant, Pr 6:6,, to the turtle and to the swallow, Jr 8:7 . And neither is this a small sign of honor, when the same sort of things, which those animals possess by nature, those we are able to accomplish by an act of our choice. If then He takes so great care of them which exist for our sakes, much more of us; if of the servants, much more of the master.

8012: Therefore, he said: Behold the birds of the air, and He did not add, for they do not traffic, nor make merchandise, for these were among the things that were earnestly forbidden.

-But what?, one might ask, they sow not, neither do they reap.

- He said not: we must not sow, but we must not *take thought* ; neither that one ought not to work, but not to be low-minded, nor to rack one's self with cares. Since He bade us also be nourished, but not 'taking thought.'

8013: Of this lesson, David also lays he foundation from old time, saying enigmatically, Ps 144:52: You open Your hand and You fill every creature with your bounty. And again, Ps 146:10: to Him that gives to the beasts their food and to the young ravens that call upon Him.

- Who, then, it may be said, have not taken thought?

- Did you not hear how many of the righteous I adduced? Do you see not with them Jacob, departing from his father's house destitute of all things? Do you not hear him, praying and saying... Gn 28:20: If....

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## 8014 - MEDITATION 31

### **8014:**

### **Meditation 31**

#### **Mt 6:28-32**

#### **Preparatory Prayer**

Prelude 1. Mt 6:28: And why worry about clothing? Think of the flowers growing in the fields; they never have to work or spin;

v. 29: yet, I assure you that not even Solomon in all his regalia was robed like one of these.

v. 30: Now if that is how God clothes the grass in the field which is here today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, will he not much more look after you, you men of little faith?

v. 31: So do not worry; do not say: what are we to eat? What are we to drink? How are we to be clothed?

v. 32: It is the pagans who set their hearts on all these things. Your heavenly Father knows you need them all.

8015: Mt 6:28: And why worry about clothing? think of the flowers in the fields; they never have to work, or spin; v. 29: yet, I assure you that not even Solomon in all his regalia was robed like one of these.

Having spoken of our necessary food and having signified that not even for this should we take thought, He passes on in what follows to that which is more easy. For raiment is not so necessary as food.

-Why, then, did He not make use here also of the same example, that of the birds, neither mention to us the peacock, and the swan, and the sheep? for surely there were many such examples to take from thence.

- Because he would point out how very far the argument may be carried both ways: both from the vileness of the things that partake of such elegance, and from the munificence vouchsafed to the lilies, in respect of their adorning. For this cause, when he has checked them out, He does not so much as call them lilies any more, but

8016: Mt 6:30: the grass of the field. And he is not satisfied even with this name, but again adds another circumstance of vileness saying:

Which today is. But He did not add, 'and tomorrow is not', but which is much baser yet,

Tomorrow is cast into the oven. ibi. And He did not say simply, 'clothe' but 'so clothed.' Do you see everywhere how He abounds in amplifications and intensities? And this He does, that He may touch them home: and therefore, He has also added, shall He not much more clothe you? For this, too, has much emphasis: the force of the word, 'you', being no other than to indicate covertly the great value set upon our race, and the concern shown for it; as though He had said, 'you' to whom He gave a soul, for whom He fashioned a body, for whose sake He made all the things that are seen, for whose sake He sent prophets, and gave the law, and wrought those innumerable good works; for whose sake He gave up His only begotten Son.

8017: And not until He has made His proof clear, does He proceed also to rebuke them, saying, O you, of little faith! For this is the quality of an adviser: He does not admonish only, but reproves also, that He may awaken men the more to the persuasive power of His words. Hereby He teaches us not only to take no thought, but not 'even to be dazzled at the coastlines of men's apparel. Why, such comeliness is the grass, such beauty of the green herb: or, rather, the grass is even more precious than such apparelling. Why then, pride yourself on things, whereof the prize rests with the mere plant, with a great balance in its favor?

8018: And see how from the beginning He signifies the injunction to be easy; by the contraries again, and by the things of which they were afraid, leading them away from these cares. Thus, when He had said, 'Consider the lilies of the field', 6:28, He added, 'they toil not': so that the desire to set us free from toils, did He give these commands. In fact, the labor lies, not in taking no thought, but in taking thought for these things. And as in saying, 'they sow not', it was not the sowing that He did away with, but the anxious thought; so in saying, they toil not, neither do they spin.' He put an end to the work, but not to the care. But, if Solomon was surpassed by their beauty, and that not once nor twice, but throughout all his reign: - for neither can one say, that at one time, He was clothed with such apparel, but after that He was no more; rather not so much as on one day did He array Himself so beautifully: for this Christ declared by saying, in all his reign.' And if it was not that He was surpassed by this flower, but vied with that, but He gave place to all alike, wherefore He also said, 'as one of these': for such as between the truth and the counterfeit, so great is the interval between these robes and these flowers.

8019: If, then, he acknowledged his inferiority, who was more glorious than all kings that ever were: when will you be able to surpass, or rather to approach even faintly to such perfection of form? After this, He instructs us, not to aim at all at such ornament. See at least the end thereof; after its triumph, it is cast into the oven; and if things



mean, and worthless, and of no great use, God has displayed so great care, how shall He give you up, of all living creatures the most important?

- Wherefore then, did He make them so beautiful?

- That He might display His own wisdom and the excellency of His power; that from everything we might learn His glory. For not, 'the Heavens are the glory of God', Ps 18:2, but also the earth; and this David declared when he said, Ps 148:9: Praise the Lord, you fruitful trees, and all cedars.'

8020: For some by their fruits, some by their greatness, some by their beauty, send up praise to Him who made them: this, too, being a sign of great excellency of wisdom, when even upon things that are very vile, [and what can be viler than that which today is, and tomorrow is not?] He pours out such great beauty. If, then, to the grass He has given that which it needs not, for what does the beauty thereof help to the feeding of the fire? How shall He not give unto you that which you need? If that which is the vilest of things, He has lavishly adorned, and that as doing it not for need, but for munificence, how much more will He honor you, the most honorable of all things, in matters which are of necessity.

8021: Now when, as you see, He had demonstrated the greatness of God's providential care, and they were in what follows to be rebuked also, even in this He was sparing, laying to their charge not want but poverty, of faith. thus,

If God, He said, so clothes the grass of the field, much more you, O you of little faith! Mt 6:20.

And yet surely all these things He Himself works. For, Jn 1:3: all things were made by Him, and without Him was no so much as one thing made. But, yet nowhere as yet makes mention of Himself: it being sufficient for the time, to indicate His full power, that He said at each of the commandments, 'You have heard that it has been said of them of old time, but I say unto you!'

8022: Marvel not, then, when in subsequent instances also He conceals Himself, or speaks something lowly of Himself: since for the present He had but one object, that His word might prove such as they would easily receive, and might in every way demonstrate that He was not a sort of adversary of God, but of one mind and in agreement with the Father. Which accordingly He does here also; for through so many words as He has spent He ceases not to act to set Him before us, admiring His wisdom, His providence, His tender care extending through all things, both great and small. Thus, both when He was speaking of Jerusalem, He called it 'the city of the Great King' [cf. Mt 5:35]; and when He mentioned heaven, He spoke of it again as 'God's throne' [cf. v. 34]; and when He was discoursing of His economy in the world to Him again, He attributes it all, saying, 'He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the

good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust' , Mt 5:45; And in the prayer, too, He taught us to say, His is 'the kingdom and the power and the glory. And here in discoursing of His providence, and signifying how even in little things, he is the most excellent of artists, He said, that He clothes the grass of the field, 6:30.

8023: And nowhere does He call Him His own Father, but theirs; in order that by the very honor He might reprove them, and that when he should call Him His Father, they might no more be displeased. Now if for bare necessities one is not to take thought, what pardon can we deserve, who take thought for things expensive? Or rather, what pardon can they deserve, who do even without sleep, that they may take the things of others?

Mt 6:31: Therefore, take no thought, saying, what shall we eat? or, what shall we drink? or, wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the nations of the world seek. v. 32.

8024: Do you see how again He has both shamed them the more, and has also shown by the way, that He had commanded nothing grievous, nor burdensome? As therefore when he said, If you love them which love you, it is nothing great which you practice, for the very Gentiles He was stirring them up to something greater: so now also He brings them forward to reprove us, and to signify that it is a necessary debt which he is requiring of us. For if we must show forth something more than the Scribes of Pharisees, what can we deserve, who so far from going beyond these, do even abide in the mean estate of the Gentiles, and emulate their littleness of soul?

8025: He does not, however, stop at the rebuke, but having by this reprov'd and roused them, and shamed them with all strength of expression, by another argument He also comforts them, saying, For your Heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. he did not say: God knows, but your Father knows, to lead them to a greater hope. For if He be a Father, and such a Father, He will not surely be able to overlook His children in extremity of evils; seeing that not even men, being fathers, bear to do so. And He adds along with this yet another argument.

- Of what kind, then, is it?

- That you have need of them. What He said is like this. What! are these things superfluous, that He should disregard them? Yet not even in superfluities did He show Himself wanting in regard, in the instance of the grass; but now are these things even necessary. So that what you consider a cause for your being anxious, this I say is sufficient to draw you from such anxiety.

8026: I mean: if you say, Therefore I must need take thought, because they are necessary; on the contrary, I say, No, for this self-same reason take no thought, because they are necessary. Since were they superfluities, not even then ought we to

despair, but to feel confident about the supply of them; but now that they are necessary, we must no longer be in doubt. for what kind of father is he, who can endure to fail in supplying to his children even necessities? So that for this cause again God will most surely bestow them

For indeed He is the Artificer of our nature, and He knows perfectly the wants thereof. So that neither can you say, He is indeed our Father, and the things we seek are necessary, but he knows not that we stand in need of them. For He that knows our nature itself, and was the framer of it, and formed it such as it is; evidently He knows its need also better than you, who are placed in want of them: it having been by His decree that our nature is in such need. He will not, therefore, oppose Himself to what He has willed, first subjecting it of necessity to so great want, and on the other hand again, depriving it of what it wants, and of absolute necessities.

8027: Let us not, therefore, be anxious, for we shall gain nothing by it, but tormenting ourselves. For whereas He gives both when we take thought, and when we do not, and more of the two, when we do not; what do you gain by your anxiety, but to exact of yourself a superfluous penalty? Since one on the point of going to a plentiful feast, will not surely permit himself to take thought for food; nor is he that is walking to a fountain anxious about drink. Therefore, seeing we have a supply more copious than either any fountain, or innumerable banquets made ready, the providence of God; let us not be beggars, nor little minded. ..<sup>58</sup>.

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<sup>58</sup> Fr. Bertoni ends his Meditation 31 on this note of Chrysostom's Homily XXII, and picks up in the very next paragraph, with his Meditation 32 [cf. Baronet translation, p. 152. b].

**8028 - MEDITATION 32****8028:****Meditation 32****Mt 6:33, 34****Preparatory Prayer**

Prelude 1. Mt 6: 33: Set your hearts on his kingdom first, and on his righteousness, and all these other things will be given you as well.

v. 34: So, do not worry about tomorrow: tomorrow will take care of itself. each day has enough trouble of its own.

Mt 6:33: Set your hearts on his kingdom first, and on his righteousness, and all these other things will be given you as well.'

For together with what has been said, He puts also yet another reason for feeling confidence about such things, saying,

'Set your hearts on his kingdom first...

8029: Thus, when He had set the soul free from anxiety, then He made mention also of Heaven. For indeed he came to do away with the old thing, and to call us to a greater country. Therefore, He does all to deliver us from things unnecessary, and from our affection for the earth. For this cause he mentioned the heathens, also, saying that the Gentiles seek after these things; they whose whole labor is for the present life, who have no regard for the things to come, nor any thought of Heaven. But to you not these present are the chief things, but other than these. For we were not born for this end, that we should eat and drink and be clothed, but that we might please God, and attain unto the good things to come.

8030: Therefore, as things here are secondary in our labor, so also in our prayers let them be secondary. Therefore, He also said,

Seek first the kingdom of Heaven, and all these things shall be added unto you.

He did not say:, shall be given, but, shall be added, that you might learn that the things present are no great part of His gifts, compared with the greatness of the things to come. Accordingly, He does not bid us so much to ask for them, but while we ask for other things, to have confidence, as though these also were added to those. Seek, then, the things to come, and you will receive things present also; seek not the things that are seen, and you shall surely attain unto them.

8031: Yes, for it is unworthy of you to approach your Lord for such things. And you, who ought to spend all your zeal and your care for those unspeakable blessings, do greatly disgrace yourself by consuming it on the desire of transitory things.

- How then, one might say, did He not bid us to ask for bread?

- No, He added 'daily', and to this again, 'this day', which same thing did in fact He does here also. For He did not 'say, take no thought, but take no thought for the morrow, at the same time both affording us liberty, and fastening our soul on those things that are more necessary to us. For to this end also He base us ask even those, not as though god needed reminding by us, but that we might learn that by his help, we accomplish whatever we do accomplish, and that we might be made more His own by our continual prayer for these things.

8032: Do you see how by this again He would persuade them, that they shall surely receive the things present? For He that bestows the greater, much more will He give us the less. For not for this end, said He, did I tell you not to take thought nor to ask, that you should suffer distress, and go about naked, but in order that you might be in abundance of these things also. And this, you see, was suited above all things to attract them to Him. So that like as in almsgiving, when deterring the fro making a display to men, he won upon them making chiefly by promising to furnish them with it more liberally; for your Father, He said, who sees in secret, shall reward you , Mt 6:4 - even so here also, in drawing them off from seeking these things, this is His persuasive topic, that He promises to bestow it on them, not seeking it, in greater abundance.

8033: Thus, to this end, He said, do I bid you not seek, not that you may not receive, but that you may receive plentifully; that you may receive in the fashion that becomes you, with the profit which you ought to have; that you may not, by taking thought, and distracting yourself in anxiety about these, render yourself unworthy both of these, and of the things spiritual; that you may not undergo unnecessary distress, and again fall away from that which is set before you.

6:34: take therefore, no thought for the morrow; for sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof, that is to say, the affliction and the bruising thereof Is it not enough for you to eat your bread in the sweat of your brow, Gn 3:19? Why add the further affliction that comes of anxiety, when you are on the point to be delivered henceforth even from the former toils?

8034: By 'evil' here He means not wickedness, far from it, but affliction and trouble, and calamities; much as in another lace also He said, Am 3:6: Is there evil in a city which the Lord has not done? - not meaning rapines, nor injuries, nor anything like these, but the scourges that are borne from above. And again, "I", He said, Is 45:6: make peace and create evils. v. 7: For neither in this place does He speak of

wickedness, but of famines and pestilences, things accounted evil by most men: the generality being wont to call these things evil.

8035: Thus, for example, the priests and prophets of those five lordships [the Satraps], when having yoked the kine to the ark, gave the name of 'evil' to those heaven-sent plagues, and the dismay and anguish thereby sprang up within them, 1 K 6: 4, ff." This, then, is His meaning here also, when He said,

Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof 6:34.

For nothing so pains the soul as carefulness and anxiety. thus, did Paul, also, when urging to celibacy, give counsel, saying, 1 Co 7:32: I would have you without carefulness. But, when He said, the morrow shall take thought for itself, Mt 6:34, He said it not, as though the day took thought for these things, but forasmuch as He had to speak to a people somewhat imperfect, willing to make what He said more expressive, He personifies the time, speaking unto them according to the custom of the generality.

8036: And here He indeed advises, but as he proceeds, He even makes it a law, saying, Lk 10:4: Provide neither gold nor silver, nor scrip for your journey. Thus, having shown it all forth in His actions, then after that he introduces the verbal enactment of it more determinately, the precept too having then become more easy of acceptance, confirmed as it had been previously by His own actions.

- Where, then, did He confirm it by His actions?

- Lk 9:58: The Son of Man has not where to lay His head. Neither is He satisfied with this only, but in his disciples also He exhibits His full proof of these things, by fashioning them to be in want of anything.

8037: But mark His tender care also, how He surpasses this affection of any father. Thus, This I command, He said, for nothing else, but that I may deliver you from superfluous anxieties. For even if today you have taken thought for tomorrow, you will also have to take thought again tomorrow.

- Why force the day to receive more than the distress which is allotted to it, and together with its own troubles add to it also the burden of the following day; and this, when there is no chance of your lightening the other by the addition so taking place, but you are merely to exhibit yourself as coveting superfluous troubles? Thus, that He may reprove them the more, He does all but give life to the very time, and brings it in as one injured, and exclaiming against them for their causeless desire.

8038: Why, you have received the day, to care for the things hereof. Wherefore, then, add unto it the things of the other day also? Has it not then burden enough in its own anxiety? Why, no, I pray, do you make it yet heavier? Now when the Lawgiver said

these things, and He that is to pass judgment on us, consider the hopes that He suggests to us, how good they are; He himself testifying, that this life is wretched and wearisome, so that the anxiety even of the one day is enough to hurt and afflict us. Nevertheless after so many and so grave words, we take thought for these things, but for the things in Heaven no longer; rather we have reversed His order, on either side, fighting against His sayings.

8039: This is the carelessness of a relaxed anxiety, but is not the negligence of faith.<sup>59</sup>

Mark well; He said: Seek not the things present, at all; but we are seeking these things for ever. Seek the things of Heaven, he said But those things we seek not so much as for a short hour, but according to the greatness of the anxiety we display about the things of the world, is the carelessness we entertain in things spiritual; or rather even much greater. But this does not prosper for ever; neither can this be for ever. What if for ten days we think scorn? if for twenty? if for a hundred? and fall into the hands of the Judge? <sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> This sentence is not found in Fr. Bertoni's notes. [cf. p. 154 b of Baronet translation].

<sup>60</sup> Fr. Bertoni ends his Meditation 32 with this challenging question, two full pages before the end of Chrysostom's Homily XXII [cf. Baronet translation, ib.].

## 8040 - MEDITATION 33

**8040: Meditation 33 <sup>61</sup>****Mt 7:1-5****Preparatory Prayer**

Prelude 1. Mt 7:1: Do not judge and you will not be judged;

v. 2: because the judgments you give are the judgments you will get, and the amount you measure out is the amount you will be given.

v. 3: Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye and never notice the plank in your own?

v. 4: How dare you say to your brother, Let me take the splinter out of your eye, when all the time there is a plank in your own.

v. 5: Hypocrite! take the plank out of your own eye first, and then you will see clearly enough to take the splinter out of your brothers eye.

**8041:** Mt 7:1: Do not judge, and you will not be judged.

What then? Ought we not to blame them that sin? Because Paul also said this self-same thing, or rather, there, too, it is Christ, speaking by Paul, and saying: Rm 14:10: Why do you judge your brother? And you, why do you set at naught you brother? and, v. 4: It is not for you to condemn someone else's servant. And again, Therefore, judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come. 1 Co 4:5.

How, then, does He say elsewhere, 2 Tm 4:2: Reprove, rebuke, exhort, and 1 Tm 5:20: them that sin, rebuke before all. And Christ, too, to Peter: Mt 18:15: Go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. And if he listens, you have gained a brother. v. 16: And if he does not listen, add to yourself one or two others also...v. 17: And if he does not listen to them, declare it to the Church likewise. And how has He set over us so many to reprove; and not only to reprove, but also to punish?

**8042:** For him that hearkens to none of these, He has commanded to be as a heathen and a publican [cf. Mt 18:17]. And how did He give them the keys also? since if they are not to judge, they will be without authority in any matter, and in vain have they received the power to bind and loose. And besides, if this were to obtain, all would be lost alike, whether in churches, or in states, or in houses. For except the master judge the servant, and the mistress the maid, and the father the son, and friends one

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<sup>61</sup> Fr. Bertoni's Meditation 33 is based on Chrysostom's Homily XXIII.



another, there will be an increase of all wickedness. And why, I say, friends? unless we judge our enemies, we shall never be able to put an end to our enmity, but all things will be turned upside down.

8043: What, then, can the saying be? Let us carefully attend, lest the medicines of salvation and the laws of peace, be accounted by any man laws of overthrow and confusion. First of all, then, even by what follows, He has pointed out to them that they have understanding the excellency of this law, saying,

Why do you behold the mote that is in your brother's eye, but consider not the beam that is in your own eye? But if to many of the less attentive, it seem yet rather obscure, I will endeavor to explain it from the beginning.

8044: In this place, then, as it seems at least to me, He does not simply command us not to judge any of men's sins, neither does He simply forbid the doing of such a thing, but to them that are full of innumerable ills, and are tramping upon other men for trifles. And I think that certain Jews, too, are here hinted at, for that while they were bitter accusing their neighbors for small faults, and such as came to nothing, they were themselves insensibly committing deadly sins. Herewith, towards the end also He was upbraiding them, when He said, Mt 23:4: You bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, but you will not move them with your finger. And, v. 23: You pay tithe of mint and arise, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith.

8045: Well, I think that the Jews are comprehended in His invective; that He is checking them beforehand as to those things, wherein they were hereafter to accuse His disciples. For although His disciples had been guilty of no such sin, yet in them were supposed to be offenses; as, for instance, not keeping the Sabbath, eating with unwashed hands, sitting at meat with publicans; of which He said also in another place, You who strain the gnat, and swallow the camel, Mt 22:24. But yet it is also a general law that He is laying down on these matters. And the Corinthians, too, Paul, 1 Co 4:3, ff., did not absolutely command not to judge. His command was not to judge their own superiors, and upon grounds that are not acknowledged; not absolutely to refrain correction them that sin

8046: Neither indeed was He then rebuking all without distinction, but disciples doing so to their teachers are the object of His reproof; and they who, being guilty of innumerable sins, bring an evil report upon the guiltless. This, then, is the sort of thing which Christ also in this place intimated; not intimated merely, but guarded it too with a great terror, and the punishment from which no prayers can deliver:

Mt 7:2; For with what judgment you judge, He said, you shall be judged.

That is, it is not the other, Christ said, that you condemn, but yourself, and you are making the judgment-seat dreadful to yourself, and the account strict. As then in the forgiveness of our sins the beginnings are from us, so also in this judgment, it is by ourselves that the measures of our condemnation are laid down.

8047: You see, we ought not to upbraid, nor trample upon them, but to admonish; not to revile, but to advise; not to assail with pride, but to correct with tenderness. [What will judge the judge?]

For not him, but yourself, do you give over to extreme vengeance, by not sparing him, when it may be needful to give sentence on his offenses.

Do you see how these two commandments are both easy, fraught with great blessings to the obedient, even as of evils on the other hand, to the regardless? For both he that forgives his neighbor, has freed himself first of the two from the grounds of complaint, and that without any labor; and he that with tenderness and indulgence inquires into other men's offenses, great is the allowance of pardon, which he has by his judgment laid up beforehand for himself.

8048: - What, then, one might say, if one commit fornication, may I not say that fornication is a bad thing, nor at all correct him that is playing the wanton?

- No, correct him, but not as a foe, nor as an adversary exacting a penalty, but as a physician providing medicines. For neither Christ did say, Stay not him that is sinning, but, judge not; that is, be not bitter in pronouncing sentence. And besides it is not of great things, as I have already observed, nor of things prohibited, that this is said, but of those which are not even counted offenses. Wherefore He said also:

Mt 7:3: Why do you behold the mote that is in your brother's eye, and you do not see the beam in your own?

8049: Yes, for many now do this; if they see but a monk wearing an unnecessary garment, they produce against him the law of our Lord, while they themselves are extorting without end, and defrauding men every day. If they see him but partaking rather largely of food, they become bitter accusers, while they themselves are daily drinking to excess and surfeiting: not knowing that besides their own sins, they do hereby gather up for themselves a greater flame, and deprive themselves of every plea. For on this point, that your own doings must be strictly inquired into, you yourself has first made the law, by thus sentencing those of your neighbor. Account it not then to be a grievous thing, if you are also yourself to undergo the same kind of trial.

8050: Mt 7:5: You hypocrite! First cast out the beam from your own eye!

Here His will is to signify the great wrath, which He has against them that do such things. For so, wheresoever He would indicate that the sin is great, and the

punishment and wrath in store for it grievous, He begins with a reproach. As then unto him that was exacting the hundred pence, He said in his deep displeasure, You wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt, Mt 18:12. Even so here, You hypocrite! For not of protecting care comes such a judgment, but of ill will to man; and while a man puts forward a mask of benevolence, he is doing a work of the utmost wickedness, causing reproaches without ground, and accusations, to cleave unto his neighbor's, and usurping a teacher's rank, when he is not worthy to be so much as a disciple. On account of this He called him 'hypocrite.' For you, who in other men's doings art so bitter, as to see even the little things; how have you become so remiss in your own, as that even the great things are hurried over by you?

8051: First cast the beam of out your own eye. Mt 7:5.

Do you see, that He forbids not judging, but commands to cast out first the beam from your eye, and then to set right the doings of the rest of the world? For indeed each one knows his own things better than those of others; and sees the greater rather than the less; and loves himself more than his neighbor. Wherefore, if you do it out of guardian care, I bid you care for yourself first, in whose case the sin is both more certain and greater. But, if you neglect yourself, it is quite evident that neither do you judge your brother in care for him, but in hatred, and wishing to expose him. For what if he ought to be judged? it should be by one who commits no such sin, not by you.

8052: Thus, because He had introduced great and high doctrines of self denial, lest any man should say, it is easy to practice it in words; He willing to signify His entire confidence, and that He was not chargeable with any of the things that had been mentioned, but had only fulfilled all, spoke this parable. And that, because He, too, was afterwards to judge, saying, Mt 23:14: Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Yet, was not he chargeable with what has been mentioned; for neither did He pull out a mote, nor had He a beam on His eyes, but being clean from all these, He so corrected the faults of all For it is not at all meet, He said, to judge others when one is chargeable with the same things.

8053: And why marvel at his establishing this law, when even the very thief knew it upon the cross, saying to the other thief, Lk 23:40: Do you not fear God, seeing we are in the same condemnation, expressing the same sentiments with Christ? But you, so far from casting out your own beam, do not even see it, but another's mote you not only see, but also judge, and try to cast it out; as if any one seized with a grievous dropsy, or indeed with any other incurable disease, were to neglect this, and find fault with another who was neglecting a slight swelling. And if it be an evil not to see one's own sins, it is a two-fold and threefold evil to be even sitting in judgment on others, while men themselves, as if past feeling, are bearing about beams in their own eyes: since no beam is so heavy as sin.

8054: His injunction, therefore, in these words is as follows, that he who is chargeable with countless evil deeds, should not be a bitter censor of other men;s offenses, and especially when these are trifling. He is not overthrowing reproof nor correction, but forbidding men to neglect their own faults, and exult over those of other men. For indeed this was a cause of men's going into great vice, bringing in a twofold wickedness. For he, whose practice it had been to slight his own faults, great as they were, and to search bitterly into those of others, being slight and of no account, was spoiling himself two ways: first, by thinking lightly of his own faults; next, by incurring enmities and feuds with all men, and faults, and training himself every day to extreme fierceness, and want of feeling for others... <sup>62</sup>.

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<sup>62</sup> Fr. Bertoni ends abruptly his Meditation 33, with still many pages left to Chrysostom's Homily XXIII, which will supply the material for Fr. Bertoni's last interventions in this series, Meditations 34 & 35.

## 8055 - MEDITATION 34

### **8055:**

### **Meditation 34**

#### **Mt 7: 6-12**

#### **Preparatory Prayer**

Prelude 1. Mt 7:6: Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls in front of pigs, or they may trample them and then turn on you and tear you to pieces.

v. 7: Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you.

v. 8: For the one who asks, always receives; the one who searches, always finds; the one who knocks will always have the door opened to him.

v. 9: Is there a man among you who would hand his son a stone when he asked for bread?

v. 10: Or would hand him a snake when he asked for a fish?

v. 11: If you, then, who are evil, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

v. 12: So, always treat others as you like them to treat you; that is the meaning of the Law and prophets.

**8056:** Mt 7:6: Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not through your pearls in front of pigs, or they may trample them and the turn on you and tear you to pieces.

- Yet, further on , it will be said, He commanded, Mt 10:27: What you have heard in the ear, that preach upon the housetops.

- But, this is in no wise contrary to the former. For neither in that place did He simply command to tell all men, but to whom it should be spoken, to them He bade speak with freedom.

And 'by dogs': here He figuratively described them that are living in incurable ungodliness, and affording no hope of change for the better.

**8057:** And by "swine": He means them that abide continually in an unchaste life, all of whom He has pronounced unworthy of hearing such thing. Paul also, it may be observed, declared this when he said, 1 Co 2:14: But a natural man receives not the things of the Spirit, for they are foolishness unto him. And in many other places, too, He said that corruption of life is the cause of men's not receiving the more perfect

doctrines, cf. Ph 3:4. Wherefore, He commands not to open the doors to them; for indeed they become more insolent after learning. For as to the well-disposed and intelligent, things appear venerable when revealed, so to the insensible, when they are unknown rather. Since then from their nature, they are not able to learn them, let the thing be hidden, He said, that at least for ignorance they may reverence them. For neither does the swine know at all what a pearl is. Therefore, since he knows not, neither let him see it, lest he trample under foot what he knows not. For nothing results, beyond greater mischief to them that are so disposed when they hear; for both the holy things are profaned by them, not knowing what they are; and they are the more lifted up and armed against us.

8058: For this is meant by: lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you. No, surely, one said, they ought to be so strong as to remain equally impregnable after men's learning them, and not to yield to other people occasions against us. But it is not the things that yield it, but that these men are swine; even as when the pearl is trampled under foot, it is not so trampled, because it is really contemptible, but because it fell among you. And beautifully did He say: turn again and rend you; for they feign gentleness so as to be taught; then, after they have learned, quite changing from one sort to another, they jeer, mock, and deride us, as deceived persons. Therefore, Paul also said to Timothy, 2 Tm 4:15: Of whom be you wary also; for he has greatly withstood our words. And again, ibi 3:5: From such, turn away; and, Tt 3:10: A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject.

8059: It is not, you see, that those truths furnish them with armor, but they become fools with this way of their own accord, being filled with this way of their own accord, being filled with more willfulness. On this account, it is no small gain for them to abide in ignorance, for so they are not such entire scorers. But if they learn, the mischief is twofold. For neither will they themselves be at all profited thereby, but rather the more damaged, and to you they will cause endless difficulties.

Let them hearken, who shamelessly associate with all, and make the awful things contemptible. For the mysteries we too, therefore celebrate with closed doors, and keep out the uninitiated, not for any weakness of which we have convicted our rites, but because the many are as yet imperfectly prepared for them. For this very reason, He Himself also discoursed much unto the Jews in parables, because they seeing, saw not. For this, Paul likewise commanded, to know how we ought to answer every man. Col 4:6.

8060: Mt 7:7: Ask and it shall be given you; seek and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.'

For inasmuch as He had enjoined things great and marvelous, and had commanded men to be superior to all their passions, and had led them up to Heaven

itself, and had had enjoined them to strive after the resemblance, not of angels and archangels, but as far as was possible of the very Lord of all; and had bidden His disciples not only themselves duly to perform all this, but also to correct others, and to distinguish between the evil and them that are not such, the dogs and them that are not dogs, although there be much that is hidden in men: - that they might not say, these things are grievous and intolerable, for indeed in the sequel Peter did utter some such things: Who can be saved? Mt 19:25. And again, Mt 19:10: If the case of the man be so, it is not good to marry.

8061: In order, therefore, that they might not now likewise say so: as in the first place even by what had gone before He had proved it all to be easy, setting down many reasons one upon another, of power to persuade men; so after all, He adds also the pinnacle of all facility, devising as no ordinary relief to our toils, the assistance derived from persevering prayers. Thus, we are not ourselves, said He, to strive alone, but also to invoke the help from above: and it will surely come and be present with us, and will aid us in our struggles, and make all easy. therefore, He both commanded us to ask, and pledged Himself to the giving. However, not simply to ask did He command us, but with much assiduity and earnestness.

8062: For this is the meaning of 'seek'. For so he that seeks, putting all things out of his mind, is taken up with that alone which is sought, and forms no idea of any of the persons present. And this which I am saying they know, as many as have lost either gold, or servants, and are seeking diligently after them. By 'seeking', then, He declared this; by 'knocking', that we approach with earnestness and a glowing mind. Despond not, therefore, O man, nor show less of zeal about virtue, than they do of desire for wealth. For things of that kind you have often sought and not found, but nevertheless, though you know this, that you are not sure to find them, you put in motion every mode of search; but here, although having a promise that you will surely receive, you do not show even the smallest part of that earnestness.

8063: And if you do not receive straightway, do not even thus despair. For to this end, He said, 'knock', to signify that even if He should not straightway open the door, we are to continue there. And if you doubt my affirmation, at any rate, believe His example.

Mt 7:9: For what man is there of you, He said, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?

Because, as among men, if you keep on doing so, you are even accounted troublesome, and disgusting: so, with God, when you do not so, then you do more entirely provoke Him. And if you continue asking though you receive not at once, you surely will receive. For to this end was the door shut, that He may induce you to knock: to this end He does not straightway assent, that you may ask. Continue then to do these things, and you will surely receive.

8064: For that you might not say: What, then, if I should ask and not receive? He has blocked up your approach with that similitude, again framing arguments, and by those human things urging us to be confident on these matters; implying by them that we must not only ask, but ask what we ought.

For which of you is there, a father, of whom if his son shall ask bread, will he give him a stone? Mt 7:9.

So that if you receive not, you asking as tone is the cause of your not receiving. For though you be a son, this suffices not for your receiving: rather, this very thing even hinders your receiving, that being a son, you ask what is not profitable. Do you also therefore, ask nothing worldly, but all things spiritual, and you will surely receive. For so Solomon, because he asked what he ought, behold how quickly he received. 3 K 3: 5, ff.

8065: Two things, now, you see, should be in him that prays, asking earnestly, and asking what he ought: since you, too, He said, though you be fathers, wait for your sons to ask: and if they should ask of you anything inexpedient, you refuse the gifts; just as if it be expedient, you consent and bestow it. Do you, too, considering these things not withdraw until you receive; until you have found, retire not; relax not your diligence, until the door be opened. For if you approach with this mind, and say, Except I receive, I depart not; you will surely receive, provided you ask such things as are both suitable for Him of whom you ask to give and expedient for you, the petitioner.

- But what are these?

- To seek the things spiritual, all of them; to forgive them that have trespassed, and so to draw nigh asking forgiveness: to lift up holy hands without wrath and doubting. If we thus ask, we shall receive.

8066: As it is, surely our asking is a mockery, and the act of drunken rather than of sober men.

- What then, one might say, if I ask even spiritual things, and do not receive?

- You did not surely knock with earnestness; or, you made yourself unworthy to receive; or did quickly leave off.

- And, wherefore, it may be inquired, did He not say, what things we ought to ask?

- No, truly, He has mentioned them all in what precedes, and has signified for what things we ought to draw near. Say not, then, I draw near, and did not receive. For in no case is it owing to God that we receive not, God who loves us so much as to surpass even fathers, to surpass them as far as goodness does this evil nature.



Mt 7:11: For if you being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more your heavenly Father.

8067: Now this He said not to bring an evil name on man's nature, nor to condemn our race as bad; but in contrast to His own goodness He calls paternal tenderness evil, so great is the excess of His love to man.

Do you see an argument unspeakable, of power to arouse to good hopes even him that has become utterly desperate? Now here indeed He signifies His goodness by means of our fathers, but in what precedes by the chief among His gifts, by the 'soul', by the body. And nowhere does He set down the chief of all good things, nor bring forward His own coming: - for He who thus made speed to give up His Son to the laughter, how shall He not freely give us all things?

8068: This had not yet come to pass. But Paul indeed sets it forth, thus saying, Rm 8:12: He that spares not His own Son, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things? But His discourse with them is still from the things of men. After this, to indicate that we ought neither to feel confidence in prayer, while neglecting our own doings; nor, when taking pains, trust only to our own endeavors; but, both to seek after the help from above, and contribute withal our own part; Christ sets forth the one in connection with the other. For so after such exhortation, He taught also how to pray, and when he had taught how to pray, He proceeded again to His exhortation concerning what we are to do; then, from that again to the necessity of praying continually., saying, 'Ask', and then 'Seek', and 'Knock'. And thence again, to the necessity of being also diligent ourselves.

8069: Mt 7: 12: For all things, he said, whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them.

Summing up all in brief, and signifying, that virtue is compendious, and easy, and readily known of all men. And He did not merely say: All things whatsoever you would, but, Therefore, all things. For this word, 'therefore', He did not add without purpose, but with a concealed meaning: if you desire, He said, to be heard, together with what I have said, do these things also.

- What then, are these?

- Whatsoever you would that men should do unto you. Do you see how He has hereby also signified that together with prayer we need exact conversation?

8070: And He did not say: Whatsoever things you would to be done unto you of God, those do unto your neighbor; lest you should say, but how is it possible? He is God, and I am man; but, whatsoever you would to be done unto you of your fellow servant, these things do you also yourself show forth toward your neighbor. What is less burdensome than this? what fairer? Then the praise also, before the rewards is exceeding great: For this is the law and the prophets, 7:12. Whence, it is evident that virtue is according to our nature; that we all, of ourselves, know our duties; and that is not possible for us ever to find refuge in ignorance....<sup>63</sup>.

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<sup>63</sup> Fr. Bertoni ends his Meditation 34 right here, about one third of the way through Chrysostom's Homily XXIII. Fr. Bertni then continues in the next paragraph with his Meditation 35, the last in the series from Matthew's Gospel.

**8071 - MEDITATION 35**

**8071:****Meditation 35****Mt 7:13-20****Preparatory Prayer**

Prelude 1. Mt 7:13: Enter by the narrow gate, since the road that leads to perdition is wide and spacious, and many take it;

v. 14: but it is a narrow gate and a hard road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

v. 15: Beware of false prophets, who come to you disguised as sheep but underneath are ravenous wolves.

v. 16: You will be able to tell them by their fruits. Can people pick grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles?

v. 17: In the same way, a sound tree produces good fruit but a rotten tree bad fruit.

v. 18: A sound tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor a rotten tree good fruit.

v. 19: Any tree that does not produce good fruit is cut down and thrown on the fire.

v. 20: I repeat, you will be able to tell them by their fruits.

**8072:** Mt 7:13: Enter by the narrow gate, since the road that leads to perdition is wide and spacious, and many take it; v.14: but it is a narrow gate and a hard road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

- And yet, after this, He said: My yoke is easy and my burden is light, Mt 11:30. And in what He has lately said also, He intimated the same: how then does He here say it is strait and confined?

- In the first place, if you attend, even here He points to it as very light, and easy, and accessible.

- And how, it may be said, is the narrow and confined way easy?

- Because it is a way and a gate; even as also the other, though it be wide, though spacious, is also a way and a gate. And of these there is nothing permanent, but all things are passing away, both the pains and the good things of life.

8073: And not only herein is the part of virtue easy, but also by the end again it becomes yet easier. For not the passing away of our labors and toils, but also their issuing in a good end, for they end is life, is enough to console those in conflict. So that both the temporary nature of our labors, and the perpetuity of our crowns, and the fact that the labors come first, and the crowns after, must prove a very great relief in our toils. Wherefore, Paul also called their affliction 'light'; not from the nature of the events, but because of the mind of the combatants, and the hope of the future. 2 Co 4:17: For our light affliction, he said, works an eternal weight of glory, v. 18: while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.

8074: For if to sailors the waves and the seas, to soldiers their slaughters and wounds, to husbandmen the winters and the frosts, to boxers, the sharp blows, be light and tolerable things, all of them, for the hope of those rewards which are temporary and perishing; much more when heaven is set forth, and the unspeakable blessings, and the eternal rewards will no one feel any of the present hardships. Or, if any account it, even thus, to be toilsome, the suspicion comes of nothing but their own remissness. See, at any rate how He on another side also makes it easy, commanding not to hold intercourse with the dogs, nor to give one's self over to the swine, and to beware of the false prophets; thus on all accounts causing men to feel as if in real conflict.

8075: And the very fact, too, of calling it narrow contributed very greatly towards making it easy; for it wrought on them to be vigilant. As Paul then, when he said, Ep 6:12: We wrestle not against flesh and blood, does so not to cast down, but to rouse up the spirits of the soldiers: even so He also, to shake the travelers out of their sleep, called the way rough. And not in this way only did He work upon men to be vigilant, but also by adding that it contains likewise many to supplant them; and, what is yet more grievous, they do not even attack openly, but hiding themselves; for such is the race of the false prophets. 7:13: But look not to this, He said, that it is rough and narrow but where it ends; nor that the opposite is wide and spacious, but where it issues.

8076: And all these things He said, thoroughly to awaken our alacrity; even as elsewhere also He said, Mt 11:12: Violent men take it by force. For whoever is in conflict, when he actually sees the judge of the lists marveling at the painfulness of his efforts, is the more inspirited. Let it not, then, bewilder us, when many things spring up hence, that turn to our vexation. For the way is strait, and the gate narrow, but not the city. Therefore, must one neither look for rest here, nor there expect any more aught that is painful. Now in saying, Few there be that find it, here again he both declared the carelessness of the generality, and instructed His hearers not to regard the felicities of the many, but the labors of the few.

For the more part, He said, so far from walking this way, do not so much as make it their choice: a thing of most extreme criminality. But we should not regard the many, but emulate the few; and by all means equipping ourselves, should so walk therein. For besides that it is strait, there are also many to overthrow us in the way that leads thither. [Wherefore, He also added;]

8077: Mt 7:15: Beware of false prophets, for they will come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

Behold, together with the dogs and swine another kind of ambush and conspiracy, far more grievous than that. For those are acknowledged and open, but these are shaded over. For which cause also, while from those He commanded to hold off, these He charged to watch with exact care, as though it were not possible to see them at the first approach. Wherefore He also said, 'beware'; making us more exact to discern them. Then, lest when they had heard that it was narrow and strait, and that they must walk on a way opposite to the many and must keep themselves from swine and dogs, and together with these from another more wicked kind, even this of wolves; lest, I say, they should sink down at this multitude of vexations, having both to go a way contrary to most men, and therewith again to have such anxiety about these things: He reminded them of what took place in the days of their fathers, by using the term, 'false prophets', for then also no less did such things happen.

8078: Lk 21:9: Be not now, I pray you, troubled, so He speaks, for nothing new nor strange is to befall you. Since for all truth the devil is always secretly substituting its appropriate deceit. And by the figure of false prophets here, I think, He shadows out not the heretics, but them that are of a corrupt life, yet wear a mask of virtue; whom the generality are wont to call by the name of impostors. Wherefore, He also said further:

Mt 7:16: By their fruits you shall know them.

For among heretics one may often find actual goodness, but among those whom I was mentioning, by no means.

8079: - What, then, it may be said, if in these things, too, they counterfeit?

- No, they will be easily detected; for such is the nature of this way, in which I commanded men to walk, painful and irksome; but the hypocrite would not choose to take pains, but to make a show only; wherefore also he is easily convicted. thus, inasmuch as He had said, there be few that find it, He clears them out again from among those, who find it not, yet feign so to do, by commanding us not to look to them that wear masks only, but to them who in reality pursue it.

8080: - But wherefore, one may say, did He not make them manifest, but set us on the search for them?

- That we might watch and be ever prepared for conflict, guarding against our disguised as well as against our open enemies: which kind indeed Paul also was intimating, when he said that, Rm 16:18: By their good words they deceive the hearts of the simple. Let us not be troubled, therefore, when we see many such even now. No, for this too, Christ foretold from the beginning. And see His gentleness: how He said not, 'Punish them', but Be not hurt by them. Do not fall among them unguarded.

8081: Then you might not say, it is impossible to distinguish that sort of men, again He states an argument from a human example, thus saying:

Mt 7:16: Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? v. 17: even so, every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but the corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. v. 18: A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

Now, that which He said is like this: they have nothing gentle nor sweet; it is the sheep only so far as the skin; wherefore also it is easy to discern them. And lest you should have any least doubt, He compares it to certain natural necessities, in matters which admit of no result but one.

8082: In which sense, Paul also said, Rm 8:6: The carnal mind is death; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. And if He states the same thing twice, it is not tautology. But, lest anyone should say, Though the evil tree bear evil fruit, it bears also good, and makes the distinction difficult, the crop being twofold: this is not so, He said, for it bears evil fruit only, and never can bear good: as indeed in the contrary case also.

8083: - What, then? Is there no such thing as a good man becoming wicked? And the contrary again takes place, and life abounds with many such examples.

- But Christ did not say this, that for the wicked there is no way to change, or that the good cannot fall away, but that so long as he is living in wickedness, he will not be able to bear good fruit. For he may indeed change to virtue, being evil; but while continuing in wickedness, he will not bear good fruit.

- What, then? did not David, being good, bear evil fruit?

- Not continuing good, but being changed; since undoubtedly, had he remained always what he was he would not have brought forth such fruit. For not surely while abiding in the habit of virtue, did he commit what he commanded.

8084: Now by these words He was also stopping the mouths of those who speak evil at random, and putting a bridle on the lips of all calumniators. I mean, whereas many suspect the good by reason of the bad, He by this saying has deprived them of all excuse. For you cannot say, I am deceived and beguiled; since I have given you exactly this way of distinguishing them by their works, having added the injunction to go to their actions, and not to confound all at random. Then, forasmuch as He had not commanded to punish, but only to beware of them. He, at once, both to comfort those whom they vex, and to alarm and change them, set up as a bulwark against them, the punishment they should receive at His hands, saying:

8085: Mt 7:19: Every tree that brings not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Then, to make the saying less grievous, He added:

Mt 7:20: Wherefore, by their fruits, you shall know them.

That He might not seem to introduce the threatening as His leading topic, but to be stirring up their mind in the way of admonition. Here He seems to me to be hinting at the Jews also, who were exhibiting such fruits...<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Fr. Bertoni ends his Meditation 35 abruptly here in Chrysostom's Homily XXIII [cf. Baronet translation, p. 164, a.].

## 8096 - MEDITATION 36

**8096:****Meditation 36****Mt 7:21-23<sup>65</sup>**

Mt 7:21: Not everyone that say to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that does the will of My Father Who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.

v. 22: Many will say to Me in that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, and cast out devils in Your name, and done many miracles in Your name?

v. 23: And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from he, you that work iniquity.

8087: Mt 7:21: Not everyone that says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.

- Why did He not say: but he that does My will?

- Because for the time it was a great gain for them to receive even this first; yes, it was very great, considering their weakness. And moreover He intimated the one also by the other. And withal this may be mentioned, that in fact there is no other will of the Son besides that of the Father.

8088: And here He seems to be censuring the Jews chiefly, laying as they did the whole stress upon the doctrines and taking no care of practice. For which Paul also blames them saying, Rm 2:17: But, if you are called a Jew and rest in the law, and make your boast of God, v. 18: And know His will, and approve the more profitable things, being instructed by the law..., but you are nothing advantaged thereby, so long as the manifestation by life and by works is not there. But He Himself stayed not at this, but said also what was much more, that is:

Mt 7:22: Many will say to Me in the day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name?

8089: For not only, He said, is he that has faith, if his life be neglected, cast out of heaven, but though, besides his faith, he has wrought many signs, yet if he has done nothing good, even this man is equally shut out from that sacred porch.

For many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name? 7:22.

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<sup>65</sup> These remaining Meditations 36-41 were bound at the beginning Volume V of the Manoscritti Bertoni, pp. 2007-2023.



Do you see how He secretly brings in Himself also here and afterwards, having now finished His whole exhortation? how He implies Himself to be judge? For that punishment awaits such as sin, He that signified in what precedes; and now who it is that punishes, He here proceeds to unfold. And He said not openly, I am He, but Many will say unto Me, making out again the same thing.

8090: Since were He not the judge, how could He have told them:

Mt 7:23: And then will I profess unto them, depart from me, I never knew you? Depart from Me, all you who work iniquity.

Not only in the time of judgment, but not even then, when you were working miracles, He said.. Therefore, He said also to His disciples, Lk 10:20: rejoice not, that the devils are subject to you but because your names are written in Heaven.. And everywhere He bids us practice great care of our way of life. For it is not possible for one living rightly, and freed from all the passions, ever to be overlooked; but though he chance to be in error, God will quickly draw him over to the truth. But there are some who say, they made this assertion falsely; and this is their account why such men are not saved. Nay, then it follows that His conclusion is the contrary of what He intends.

8091: For surely His intention is to make out that faith is of no avail without works. Then, enhancing it, He added miracles also, declaring that not only faith, but the exhibiting even of miracles, avails nothing for him who works such wonders without virtue. Now, if they had not wrought them, how could this point have been made out here? And besides, they would not have dared, when the judgment was come, to say these things to His face: and the very reply, too, and their speaking in the way of question, implies their having wrought them: I mean, that they, having seen the end contrary to their expectation, and after they had been here admired among all for their miracles, beholding themselves there with nothing but punishment awaiting them; - as amazed and marveling they say:

'Lord, have we not prophesied in Your Name? 7:22. - how then do You turn from us now?

8092: What means this strange and unlooked - for end? But, though they marvel because they are punished after working such miracles, yet do not you marvel. For all the grace was of the free gift of Him that gave it, but they contributed nothing on their part; wherefore, they are justly punished, as having been ungrateful and without feeling towards Him that had so honored them as to bestow His grace upon them though unworthy.

For what Christ took pains to point out is this, that neither faith nor miracles avail where practice is not: to which effect Paul also said, 1 Co 13:1... Though I have faith, so that I could remove mountains, and understand all mysteries, and all

knowledge, and have not charity, I am nothing. Many of them that believed received gifts such as He that was casting out devils, Mk 9:37, ff., and was not with Him; such as Judas; for even he, too, wicked as he was, had a gift.

8093: And in the Old Testament also this may be found, in that grace has oftentimes wrought upon unworthy persons, that it might do good to others. That is, since all men were not meet for all things, but some were of a pure life, not having so great faith, and others just the contrary; by these sayings, while He urges the one to show forth much faith, the others, too, He was summoning by this His unspeakable gift to become better men. Wherefore also with great abundance did He bestow that grace.

For we wrought, it is said, many mighty works. But, then will I profess unto them, I knew you not, 7:23. For now indeed they suppose they are My friends; but then shall they know that not as to friends did I give to them.

8094: And why marvel is He has bestowed gifts on men that have believed on Him, though without life suitable to their faith, when even on those who have fallen from both these. He is unquestionably found working? For so Balaam was an alien both from faith and from a truly good life; nevertheless grace wrought on him for the service of other men. Nb 22:1, ff. And Pharaoh, too, was of the same sort: yet, for all that even to Him He signified the things to come. Gn 41:25, ff. And Nebuchadnezzar was very full of iniquity; yet to him again He revealed what was to follow after many generations. Dn 2: 1, ff. And again, to the son of this last, though surpassing his father in iniquity, he signified the things to come, ordering a marvelous and great dispensation. Dn 5: 13, ff.

8095: Accordingly because then also the beginnings of the gospel were taking place, and it was requisite that the manifestation of its power should be abundant, many even of the unworthy used to receive gifts. Howbeit, from those miracles no gain accrued to them; rather, they are the more punished. Wherefore unto them did He utter even that fearful saying, I never knew you! - there being many for whom His hatred begins already even here; whom He turns away from, even before the judgment. Let us fear, therefore, beloved; and let us take great heed to our life, neither let us account ourselves worse off, in that we do not work miracles now. For that will never be any advantage to us, as neither any disadvantage in our not working them, if we take heed to all virtue. Because for the miracles we ourselves are debtors, but for our life and our doings, we have God as our debtor.

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**8096 - MEDITATION 37****8096:****Meditation 37****Mt 7:28-8:4**

Mt 7:28: And it came to pass when Jesus had fully ended these words, the people were in admiration of his doctrine.

v. 29: For He was teaching them as one having power, and not as the scribes and Pharisees.

8:1: And when He was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him.

v. 2: And behold a leper came and adored him, saying: Lord, if you will, you can make my clean.

v. 3: And Jesus stretching forth his hand, touched him, saying: I will, be made clean. And forthwith, his leprosy was cleansed.

v. 4: And Jesus said to him: See that you tell no man; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift which Moses commanded for a testimony unto them.

8097: Yet, it was rather natural for them to grieve at the unpleasantness of His sayings, and to shudder at the loftiness of His injunctions; but now so great was the power of the Teacher, that many of them were even caught thereby, and thrown into very great admiration, and persuaded by reason of the sweetness of His sayings, not even when He ceased to speak, to depart from Him at all afterwards. For neither did the hearers depart, He having come down from the mountain, but even then the whole auditory followed Him; so great a love for His sayings had He instilled into them. But they were astonished most of all at His authority. For not with reference to another, like the prophet and Moses, did He say what He said; but everywhere indicating Himself to be the person that had the power of deciding. For so, when setting forth His laws, He still kept adding, But I say unto you. And in reminding them of that day, He declared Himself to be the judge both by the punishments, and by the honors.

8098: And yet it was likely that this, too, would disturb them. For if, when they saw Him by His works showing forth His authority, the scribes were for stoning and persecuting Him; while there were words only to prove this, how was it other than likely for them to be offended? and especially when at first setting out these things were said, and before He had given proof of His own power? But, however, they felt nothing of this; for when the heart and mind is candid, it is easily persuaded by the words of the truth. And this is just why one sort even when the miracles were proclaiming His

power, were offended; while the other on hearing mere words were persuaded and followed Him.

8099: This, I would add, the evangelist, too, is intimating, when he said:

Great multitudes followed Him [Mt 8:1].

Not any of the rulers, nor of the scribes, but as many as were free from vice, and had their judgment uncorrupted. And throughout the whole gospel you see that such cleaved unto Him. For both while He spoke, they used to listen in silence, not making any intrusion, not breaking in upon the connection of His sayings, nor tempting Him, and desiring to find a handle like the Pharisees; and after His exhortation, they followed Him again, marveling. But do mark, I pray you, the Lord's consideration, how He varies the mode of profiting His hearers, after miracles entering on words, and again from the instruction by His words passing to miracles. Thus, both before they went up into the mountain, He healed many, Mt 4:23, preparing the way for His sayings; and after finishing that long discourse to the people, He comes again to miracles, confirming what had been said by what was done.

8100: And so, because He was teaching as one having authority, lest His so teaching should be thought boasting and arrogant, He does the very same in His works also, as having authority to heal; that they might not more be perplexed at seeing Him teach in this way, when He was working His miracles also in the same.

Mt 8:1: For when He was come down from the mountain, there came a leper, saying, Lord, if You will, You can make me clean.

Great was the understanding and the faith of him who so drew near. For he did not interrupt the teaching, nor break through the auditory, but awaited the proper time, and approaches Him, when He is come down.

8101: And not at random, but with much earnestness, and at His knees, he beseeches Him, as another evangelist said, Mk 1:10, and with the genuine faith and right opinion about him. For neither did he say, If You request it of God, nor, If You pray, but, If You Will, You can make me clean. Nor did he say, Lord, cleanse me, but leaves all to Him, and makes His recovery depend on him, and testifies that all the authority is His.

- What, then, says one, if the leper's opinion was mistaken?

- It were meet to do away with it, and to reprove, and set it right.

- Did He then so do?

- By no means; but quite on the contrary, He establishes and confirms what had been said. For this cause, you see, neither did He say, Be cleansed, but:

8102: Mt 8:3: I will, be made clean; that the doctrine might no longer be a thing of the other's surmising, but of His own approval. But the apostles not so: rather in what way? The whole people being in amazement, they said, Ac 3:12: Why give heed to us, as though by our own power, or authority we had made him to walk? But the Lord, though he spoke oftentimes many things modestly, and beneath His own glory, what He said here, to establish the doctrine of them that were amazed at Him for His authority? I will, be made clean! Although in the many and great signs which he wrought, He nowhere appears to have uttered this word.

8103: Here, however, to confirm the surmise both of all the people and of the leper touching His authority, He purposely added, I will! And it was not that He said this, but did it not; but the work also followed immediately. Whereas, if he had not spoken well, but the saying had been a blasphemy, the work ought to have been interrupted. But now nature herself gave way at His command, and that speedily, as was meet, even more speedily than the evangelist has said. For the word, 'immediately', falls far short of the quickness that there was in the work. But He did not merely say, I will, be made clean! - but He also put forth His hand, and touched him, a thing especially worthy of inquiry.

8104: - For wherefore, when cleansing him by will and word, did He add also the touch of His hand?

- It seems to me, for no other end, but that He might signify by this also, that He is not subject to the law, but is set over it; and that to the clean, henceforth, nothing is unclean. For this cause, we see, Elisha did not so much as see Naaman, but though he perceived that he was offended at his not coming out and touching him, observing the strictness of the law, he abides at home, and sends him to Jordan to wash. Whereas the Lord, to signify that He heals not as a servant, but as absolute master, does also touch. For His hand became not unclean from the leprosy, but the leprous body was rendered clean by his holy hand. Because, as we know, He came not to heal bodies only, but also to heal the soul unto self-command.

8105: As therefore He from that time forward no more forbade to eat with unwashed hands, introducing that excellent law, which relates to the indifference of meats; just so in this case also, to instruct us for the future, that the soul must be our care: - that leaving the outward purifications, we must wipe that clean, and dread the leprosy thereof alone, which is sin [for to be a leper is no hindrance to virtue]: - He Himself first touches the leper, and no man finds fault. For the tribunal was not corrupt, neither were the spectators under the power of envy. Therefore, so far from blaming, they were on the contrary astonished at the miracle, and yielded thereto: and both for what He said, and for what He did, they adored His uncontrollable power.

8106: Mt 8:4: Having therefore healed his body, He bids him: Tell no man! teaching us to avoid boasting and vainglory. And yet, He well knew that the other would not obey, but would proclaim his benefactor; nevertheless, he does His own part..

- You might ask, how then elsewhere does He bid them to tell of it?

- Not as jostling with, or opposing Himself, but as teaching men to be grateful. For neither in that place did He give command to proclaim Himself, Lk 17:18, but to give glory to God; training us to be clear of pride and vainglory, by the other to be thankful and grateful; and instructing on every occasion to offer to the Lord the praise of all things that befall us.

8107: That is, because men for the most part remember God in sickness, but grow slacker after recovery; He bids them continually both in sickness and in health to give heed to the Lord in these words: Give glory to God.

- But wherefore did He command him also to show himself to the priest, and to offer a gift?

- To fulfill the law again Mt 8:4:1. For neither did He in every instance set it aside, nor in every instance keep it, but sometimes He did the one, sometimes the other; by the one making way for the high rule of life that was to come, by the other checking for a while the insolent speech of the Jews, and condescending to their infirmity.

And why marvel, if just at the beginning He Himself did this, when even the very apostles, after they were commanded to depart unto the Gentiles, after the doors were opened for their teaching throughout the world, and the law shut up, and the commandments made new, and all the ancient things had ceased, are found sometimes observing the law, sometimes neglecting it?

8108: - But what, it may be said, does this saying, Show yourself to the priest, contribute to the keeping of the law?

- No little. Because it was an ancient law, Lv 14:1, ff., that the leper when cleansed should not entrust to himself the judgment of his cleansing, but should show himself to the priest, and present the demonstration thereof to his eyes, and by that sentence be numbered among the clean. For if the priest said not, The leper is cleansed, he remained still with the unclean without the camp.

Wherefore He said:

Show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded. 8:4.

He did not say, which I command, but for a time remits him to the law, by every means stopping their mouths. Thus, lest they should say, He had seized upon the

priests' honor; though He performed the work Himself, yet the approving it He entrusted to them, and made them sit as judges of His own miracles. Why, I am so far, He said, from striving either with Moses or with the priests that I guide the objects of my favor to submit themselves unto them

-But, what is: for a testimony unto them?

- For reproof, for demonstration, for accusation, if they be unthankful.

8109: For since they said, as a deceiver and impostor we persecute Him, as an adversary of God, and a transgressor of the law; You shall bear me witness, He said, at that time, that I am not a transgressor of the law. Nay, for having healed you, I remit you to the law, and to the approval of the priests; which was the act of one honoring the law, and admiring Moses, and not setting himself in opposition to the ancient doctrines. And if they were not in fact to be the better, hereby most of all one may perceive His respect for the law, that although He foreknew they would reap no benefit, He fulfilled all His part. For this very thing, he did indeed foreknow, and foretold it; not saying, for their correction, neither, for their instruction, but, for a testimony unto them, that is, for accusation, and for reproof, and for a witness that all has been done on my part.

8110: And though I foreknew they would continue incorrigible, not even so did I omit what ought to be done; only they continued keeping up to the end their own wickedness. This, we may observe, he said elsewhere, Mt 24:14: This gospel shall be preached in all the world for a testimony to all the nations, and then shall the end come; to the nations, to them that obey not, to them that believe not. Thus, lest any one should say, And wherefore preach to all, if all are not to believe? - it is that I may be found to have done all my own part, and that no man may hereafter be able to find fault, as though he had not heard. For the very preaching shall bear witness against them, and they will not be able hereafter to say, We heard not; for the word of godliness has gone out unto the ends of the world.

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**8111 - MEDITATION 38**

**8111: Meditation 38**

**Mt 8:5-8**

Mt 8:5: And when he had entered into Capharnaum, there came to Him a centurion, beseeching him,

v. 6: And saying, Lord, my servant lies at home sick of the palsy, and is grievously tormented.

v. 7: And Jesus said to him: I will come and heal him.

v. 8: And the centurion making answer, said, Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof; but only say the word, and my servant shall be healed.

8112: - The leper then came unto Him when he was come down from the mountain; but this centurion, when He was entered into Capharnaum. Wherefore then did neither the one nor the other go up into the mountain?

- Not out of remissness, for indeed the faith of them both was fervent; but in order not to interrupt His teaching.

But having come unto Him, he said:

Mt 8:6: Lord, my servant lies at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented<sup>66</sup>.

But I say, this is a sig of his having great faith, even much greater than theirs, who let one down through the roof. For because he knew for certain, that even a mere command was enough for the raising up of the patient, he thought it superfluous to bring him. What then does Jesus do? What He had in no case done before, here He does. For whereas, on every occasion He was used to follow the wish of His supplicants, here He rather springs toward it, and offers not only to heal him, but also to come to the house.

8113: And this He does that we might learn the virtue of the centurion; for if He had not made this offer, but had said, Go your way, let your servant be healed, we should have known none of these things. This at least He did, in an opposite way, in the case also of the Phoenician woman. For here, when not summoned to the house, of His own accord, He says He will come, that you might learn the centurion's faith and great humility; but in the case of the Phoenician woman, he both refuses the grant, and drives her away, persevering therein, to great perplexity; for being a wise physician and full

<sup>66</sup> Fr. Bertonni omits a sentence found here in Homily XXVI of Chrysostom - cf. Baronet translation, p. 176 a.



of resources, He knows how to bring about contraries the one by the other. And as here by His freely offered coming, so there by His peremptory putting off and denial, He unfolds the woman's faith. So likewise he does in Abraham's case, saying, Gn 18:17: I will by no means hide from Abraham my servant; to make you know that man's kindly affection, and his care for Sodom. And in the instance of Lot, they were sent refuse to enter into his house, to make you know the greatness of that righteous man's hospitality. Gnu 19:2.

8114: What then does the Centurion say?

Mt 8:8: I am not worthy that you should come under my roof.

Let us hearken, as many as are to receive Christ: for it is possible to receive Him even now. Let us hearken, and emulate, and receive Him with as great zeal; for indeed, when you receive a poor man who is hungry and naked, you have received and cherished him.

But say in a word only, and my servant shall be healed. 8:8.

See this man also, how, like the leper, he has the right opinion touching Him. For neither did this one say, entreat, nor did he say, pray, and beseech, but, command only.

8115: And then, from fear lest out of modesty, He refuse, he said:

Mt 8:9: For I also am a man under authority, having under me soldiers; and I say to this man, go, and he goes; and to another, come, and he comes; and to my servant, do this, and he does it.

- And what of that, one might say, if the Centurion did suspect it to be son? For the question is, whether Christ affirmed and ratified as much.<sup>67</sup>

So, far from blaming, He did even approve it, and did somewhat more than approve it. For neither has the evangelist said that He praised the saying only, but declaring a certain earnestness in His praise, that He even 'marvelled'; and neither did He simply marvel, but in the presence also of the whole people and set him as an example to the rest that they should emulate him.<sup>68</sup>

8116: Mt 8:10: And marveling at him, Jesus said: I have not found so great faith, not, not in Israel.

Now to convince you of this by the opposite also; Martha having said nothing of this sort, but on the contrary, Jn 11:22: Whatsoever you will ask of God, He will give it to You - so, far from being praised, although an acquaintance, and dear to Him, and

<sup>67</sup> Fr. Bertoni omits about a paragraph here - cf. BAronet translation, p. 177 a

<sup>68</sup> Here Fr. Bertoni omits another paragraph or so - cf. ib., p. 177 a & b.

one of them that had shown great zeal toward Him, she was rather rebuked and corrected by Him, as not having spoken well; in that He said to her, Did I not say to you that if you would believe you should see the glory of God?, blaming her, as though she did not even yet believe. And again, because she had said, Whatsoever You will ask of God, He will give it to You; to lead her away from such a surmise, and to teach her that He needs not to receive from another, but is Himself the foundation of all good things, He said: I am the resurrection and the life, Jn 11:25, that is to say, wait to receive active power, but work all of myself.

8117: Wherefore at the Centurion He both marvels and profers him to all the people, and honors him with the gift of the kingdom, and provokes the rest to the same zeal. And to show you that for this end, he so spoke, viz., for the instructing of the rest to believe in like manner, listen to the exactness of the evangelist, how he has intimated it. For,

Jesus, He said, turned him about, and said to them that followed Him, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. Mt 8:10.

It follows, that to have high imaginations concerning Him, this especially is of faith, and tends to procure the kingdom and His other blessings. For neither did His praise reach to words only, but He both restored the sick man whole, in recompence of his faith, and weaves for him a glorious crown, and promises great gifts, saying on this wise:

Mt 8:11: For I say to you that many shall come from the east and west and shall sit down in the bosoms of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out.

thus, since He had shown many miracles, He proceeds to talk with them more unreservedly. Then, that no one might suppose His words to come of flattery, but that all might be aware that such was the mind of the centurion, He said:

8118: Mt 8:13: Go your way; as you have believed, so be it done unto you.

And straightway the work followed, bearing witness to his character,

And his servant was healed from that hour/ 8:13.

Which was the result in the case of the Syrophenician woman also; for to her, too, He said, O woman, great is your faith; be it unto you even as you will. And her daughter was made whole. <sup>69</sup>

But, do not I pray you, merely inquire what was said by him, but add therefore to his rank also, and then you will see the man's excellency. Because in truth great is the pride of them that are in places of command, and not even in afflictions do they take

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<sup>69</sup> At this point, Fr. Bertoni omits more than a column and a half - cf. Baronet translation p. 178 a & b.

lower ground. He, for example, who is set down in John Jn 4:49, is for dragging Him into his house, and said: Come down, for my child is ready to die. But, not so this man; rather he is far superior both to him, and to those who let down the bed through the roof. For he seeks not for His bodily presence, neither did He bring the sick man near the physician; a thing which implied no mean imaginations concerning Him, but rather a suspicion of His divine dignity. And he said, speak only the word. And at the beginning he said not even, speak the word, but only describe his affliction: for neither did he, of great humility, expect that Christ would straightway consent, and inquire for his house. Therefore, when he heard Him say, I will come and heal him, then, not before, he said: speak the word. 8:7 <sup>70</sup>.

8119: And yet it was not he that pressed it, but Christ that offered it: nevertheless, even so he feared, lest perchance he should be thought to be going beyond his own deserving, and to be drawing upon himself a thing above his strength.

Do you see His wisdom Mark the folly of the Jews, in saying, He was worthy for whom He should do the favor. <sup>71</sup>. But not so he, but he affirmed himself even in the utmost degree unworthy, not only of the benefit, but even of receiving the Lord in his house. Wherefore, even when he said, My servant lies sick, he did not add, speak, for fear lest he should be unworthy to obtain the gift; but he merely made known his affliction. And when he saw Christ zealous in His turn, not even so did he spring forward, but still continues to keep to the end his own proper measure.

8120: And if anyone should say, wherefore did not Christ honor him in return? - we would say this, that He did make return to him in honor, and that exceedingly: first, by bringing out his mind, which thing chiefly appeared by His not coming to his house; and in the second place, by introducing him into His kingdom, and preferring him to the whole Jewish nation. For because he made himself out unworthy even to receive Christ into his house, he became worthy both of a kingdom and of attaining unto those good things which Abraham enjoyed. <sup>72</sup>

And it was a very great thing for a man who was out of the list of the Jewish people to admit so great a thought. For he did no less than imagine to himself, as it seems to me, the armies in Heaven; or that the diseases and death, and everything else, were so subject to Him, as his soldiers to himself.

8121: Wherefore he said likewise:

For I also am a man set under authority, that is, You are God, and I, man; I under authority, but You are not under authority. If I therefore, being a man, and under

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<sup>70</sup> Fr. Bertoni omits a sentence here - cf. Baronet translation, p. 179 a.

<sup>71</sup> Fr. Bertoni again skips a sentence, ib.

<sup>72</sup> Fr. Bertoni omits an entire paragraph here - cf. Baronet translation, p. 179 b.

a authority, can do so much; for more He, both as God and as not under authority. Thus, with the strongest expression He desires to convince Him, that he said this, as one giving not a similar example, but one far exceeding. For if, I [said he], being equal in honor to them whom I command, and under authority, yet, by reason of the trifling superiority of my rank am able to do such great things; and no man contradicts me, but what I command, that is done, though the injunctions be various [for I say to this man, go, and he goes; and to another, come, and he comes, 8:9], much more will You Yourself be able.<sup>73</sup>

8122: But mark, I pray you, how he signified that Christ is able both to overcome even death as a slave, and to command it as its master. For in saying, come, and he comes, and, go, and he goes; he expresses this: If You should command his end not to come upon him, it will not come.

Do you see how believing he was? For that which was afterwards to be manifest to all, here is one who already has made it evident; that He has power both of death and of life, and leads down to the gates of hell, and brings up again [cf. 1 S 26]. Nor, was he speaking of soldiers only, but also of slaves; which related to a more entire obedience. But, nevertheless though having such great faith, he still accounted himself to be unworthy. Christ, however, signifying that he was worthy to have Him enter into his house, did much greater things, marveling at him, and proclaiming him, and giving more than he had asked.

For he came indeed seeking for his servant health of body, but went away, having received a kingdom. Do you see how the saying had already been fulfilled, Mt 6:33: Seek first the kingdom of heaven, and all these things shall be added unto you. For because he evinced great faith, and lowliness of mind, He both gave him heaven and added unto him health.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Another one sentence omission here - cf. Baronet translation, p. 179 b.

<sup>74</sup> Fr. Bertoni ends his Meditation 38 here, a good five pages prior to the conclusion of Chrysostom's Homily XXVI on which Fr. Bertoni based his instruction - cf. Baronet translation, pp. 180 a, ff.

## 8123 - MEDITATION 39

### 8123:

### Meditation 39

#### **Mt 8:14-15<sup>75</sup>**

Mt 8:14: And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother lying, and sick of a fever;

v. 15: And he touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she arose and ministered to them.

- But for what intent did He go into Peter's house?

- As it seems to me, to take food. this at least is declared when it is said: She arose and ministered unto Him 8:15. For He used to visit His disciples, as Matthew likewise, when He had called him], so honoring them and making them more zealous.

8124: But do mark, I pray you, herein also Peter's reverence towards Him. For though he and his wife's mother at home lying ill, and very sick of a fever, he drew Him not into his house, but waited first for the teaching to be finished, then for all the others to be healed; and then when He had come in, besought Him. Thus, from the beginning was he instructed to prefer the things of all others to his own. Therefore neither does he himself bring him in, but He entered of His own accord, after the Centurion had said: Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof, to show how much favor He bestowed on His disciple.

8125: And yet consider of what sort the houses of these fishermen; but for all that, He disdained not to enter into their mean huts, teaching you by all means to trample under foot human pride. And sometimes He heals by words only, sometimes He even stretches forth His hand, sometimes He does both these things, to bring into sight His way of healing. For it was not His will always to work miracles in the more surpassing manner: it being needful for Him to be concealed awhile, and especially as concerned His disciples; since they out of their great delight would have proclaimed everything. And this was evident from the fact, that even after coming to the mount, it was needful to charge them that they should tell no man.

8126: Having therefore touched her body, He not only quenched the fever, but also gave her back perfect health. Thus, the disease being an ordinary one, He displayed His power by the manner of healing; a thing which no physician's art could have wrought. For you know that even after the departing of fevers, the patients yet need much time to return to their former health. But then all took place at once. And not in this case only, but also in that of the sea, Mt 8:23, ff. For neither there did He quiet the

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<sup>75</sup> Fr. Bertoni omits the first paragraph here - cf. Baronet translation, p. 184 a.

winds and the storm, but he also stayed at once the swelling of the waves; and this also was a strange thing <sup>76</sup> Wherefore also the evangelist, to declare this, said, She arose and ministered unto Him; which was a sign both of Christ's power, and of the disposition of the woman, which she showed towards Christ.

8127: And another thing together with these we may hence observe that Christ grants the healing of some to the faith, even of others. Since in this case, too, others besought Him, as also in the instance of the centurion's servant. And this grant He makes, when there is no unbelief in him that is to be healed, but either through disease he cannot come unto Him, or through ignorance imagines nothing great of Him, or because of His immature age.

Mt 8:16: When the evening was come, they brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits from them with a word, and healed all that were sick, v. 17: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophet Isaiah, that He took our infirmities and bare our sickness [cf. Is 53:4].

8128: Do you see the multitude, by this time, growing in faith? For not even when the time pressed could they endure to depart, nor did they account it unseasonable to bring their sick to him at eventide.

But mark, I pray you, how great a multitude of persons healed the evangelists pass quickly over, not mentioning one by one, and giving us an account of them, but in one word, traversing an unspeakable sea of miracles. Then, lest the greatness of the wonder should drive us again to unbelief, that even so great a people and their various diseases should be delivered and healed by Him in one moment of time, He brings in the prophet also to bear witness to what is going on: indicating the abundance of the proof we have, in every case, out of the Scriptures; such, that from the miracles themselves we have no more.

8129: And He said, that Isaiah also spoke of these things, 53:4:

He took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.

He said not, He did them away, but, He took and bore them; which seems to be spoken rather of sins, by the prophet in harmony with John, where he said, Jn 1:29: Behold, the Lamb of God, that bears the sin of the world.

- How then does the evangelist here apply it to diseases?

- Either as rehearsing the passage in the historical sense, or to show that most of our diseases arise from sins of the soul. For if the sum of all, death itself, has its root and foundation from sin, much more the majority of our diseases also: since our very capability of suffering did itself originate there.

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<sup>76</sup> Here Fr. Bertoni omits two sentences - cf. Baronet translation, p. 185 a.

8130: Mt 8:18: Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave commandment to depart unto the other side.

Do you see again His freedom from ostentation? in that as the others say, He charged the devils not to say it was He, so this writer said, He repels the multitudes from Him. Now in so doing, He was at once both training us to be moderate, and at the same time allaying the envy of the Jews, and teaching us to do nothing for display. For He was not, we know, a healer to bodies only, but a curer also of the soul and a teacher of self-restraint; by both disclosing Himself both by putting away their diseases, and by doing naught for display. Because they indeed were cleaving unto Him, loving Him, and marveling at Him, and desiring to look upon Him.

8131: For who would depart from one who was doing such miracles? Who would not long, were it only to see the face, and the mouth that was uttering such words? For not by any means in working wonders only was He wonderful, but even when merely showing Himself, he was full of great grace; and to declare this the prophet said, Ps 44:3: Faith in beauty beyond the children of men. And if Isaiah said, Is 53:2, He has no form nor comeliness, he affirms it either in comparison of the glory of His Godhead, which surpasses all utterance and description; or, as declaring what took place at His passion, and the dishonor which He underwent at the season of the cross and the mean estate which throughout His life He exemplified in all respects.

8132: Further, He did not first give commandment to depart unto the other side, nor until He had healed them. For surely they could not have borne it. As therefore, on the mountain they not only continued with him while exhorting them, but also when it was silence followed Him; so here, too, not in His miracles only did they wait on Him, but also when He had ceased again, from His very countenance receiving no small benefit. For if Moses had his face made glorious, and Stephen like that of an angel; consider you our common Lord, what manner of person it was likely He would appear at such a time.

8133: Many now perchance have fallen into a passionate desire of seeing that form; but if we are willing we shall behold one far better than that. For if we can pass through our present life with Christian boldness, we shall receive Him in the clouds, meeting Him in an immortal and incorruptible body. But observe how He does not simply drive them away, lest He should hurt them. For He did not say, withdraw, but gave commandment to depart to the other side, giving them to expect that He would surely come thither. And the multitudes for their part evinced this great love, and were following with much affection....<sup>77</sup>.

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<sup>77</sup> Fr. Bertoni ends his Meditation 39 in the middle of a sentence of Chrysostom's Homily XXVII - cf. p. 186 a of the Baronet translation.

## 8134 - MEDITATION 40

### **8134:**

### **Meditation 40**

#### **Mt 8:19**

Mt 8:19: And a certain scribe came and said to him: Master, I will follow you whithersoever you shall go.

But some one person, a slave of wealth, and possessed with much arrogance, approaches Him, and said: <sup>78</sup>

Master, I will follow You whithersoever You go.

Do you see how great his arrogance? For as not deigning to be numbered with the multitude, and indicating that he is above the common sort, so he comes near. Because such is the Jewish character; full of unseasonable confidence. So, too, another afterwards, when all men were keeping silence, of his own accord springs up, and says, Mt 22:36: Which is the first commandment.

8135: Yet, nevertheless the Lord rebuked not his unseasonable confidence, teaching us to bear even with such as these. therefore, he does not openly convict them who are devising mischief, but replies to their secret thought, leaving it to themselves only to know that they are convicted, and doubly doing them good, first by showing that He knows what is in their conscience, next by granting unto them concealment after this manifestation, and allowing them to recover themselves again, if they will: which thing he does in the case of this man also. For he, seeing the many signs, and many drawn after Him, thought to make a gain out of such miracles; wherefore also he was forward to follow Him.

- And whence is this manifest?

- Form the answer which Christ makes, meeting not the question, as it stands verbally, but the temper shown in its meaning. For, What? says he, do you look to gather wealth by following Me? Do you not see that I have not even a lodging, not even so much as the birds have?

8136: Mt 8:20: For the foxes, He said, have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head.

Now these were not the words of one turning Himself away, but of one who while putting to the proof his evil disposition, yet permitted him [if he were willing with

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<sup>78</sup> Fr. Bertoni picks up the truncated sentence with which he ended his Meditation 39, and opens his Meditation 40 continuing the same sentence.



such a prospect] to follow Him. And to convince you of his wickedness, when he had heard these things, and had been proved, he did not say, I am ready to follow You..

And in many other places also Christ is clearly doing this; He does not openly convict, but by his answer He manifests the purpose of them that are coming unto Him <sup>79</sup>. And see how in this also He shows forth great moderation: in that He did not say, I have it indeed, but despise it, but, I have it not. Do you see what exact care goes along with His condescension? <sup>80</sup>

8137: But a certain other one, we read, said to Him:

Mt 8:21: Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

Do you mark the difference how one impudently said, I will follow you whithersoever You go; but this other, although asking a thing of sacred duty, said, Suffer me.

Yet, He suffered him not, but said:

Mt 8:22: Let the dead bury their dead, but you follow me. For in every case He had regard to the intention.

- And wherefore, one might ask did He not suffer him?

Because on the one hand, there were those that would fulfill that duty, and the dead was not going to remain unburied; on the other, it was not fit for this man to be taken away from the weightier matters.

8138: But, by saying: their own dead, He implies that this is not one of His dead. And that because he that was dead, was, at least as I suppose, of the unbelievers. Now if you admire the young man that for a matter so necessary he besought Jesus, and did not go away of his own accord; much rather admire him for staying also when forbidden.

- Was it not, then, one may say, extreme ingratitude, not to be present at the burial of his father?

- If indeed he did so out of negligence, it was ingratitude, but if in order not to interrupt a more needful work, his departing would most surely have been of extreme inconsideration. For Jesus forbade him, not as commanding to think lightly of the honor due to our parents, but signifying that nothing ought to be to us more urgent than the things of Heaven, and that we ought with all diligence to cleave to these, and not to put them off for ever so little, though our engagements be exceeding

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<sup>79</sup> Once again, right here Fr. Bertoni omits about three fourths of a column from Chrysostom's Homily XXVII - cf. pages 186 b - 187 a of the Baronet translation.

<sup>80</sup> Another paragraph omitted! A real challenge for the translator!

indispensable and pressing. For what can be more needful than to bury a father? what more easy? Since it would not even consume any long time.

8139: But if one ought not to spend even as much time as is required for a father's burial, nor is it safe to be parted even so long from our spiritual concerns; consider what we deserve, who all our time stand off from the things that pertain to Christ, and prefer things very ordinary to such as are needful, and are remiss, when there is nothing to press on us? And herein, too, we should admire the instructiveness of His teaching, that He nailed him fast to His word, and with this freed him from those endless evils, such as lamentations, and mourning, and the things that follow thereafter. For after the burial he must of necessity proceed to inquire about the will, then about the distribution of the inheritance, and all the other things that follow thereupon; and other things that follow thereupon; and thus waves after waves coming in succession upon him, would bear him away very far from the harbor of truth.

8140: For this cause He draws him, and fastens him to Himself. But if you still marvel, and are perplexed, that he was not permitted to be present at his father's burial; consider that many suffer not the sick, if it be a father that is dead or a mother, or a child, or any other of their kinsmen, to know it, nor to follow him to the tomb; and we do not for this charge them with cruelty nor inhumanity: and very reasonably. For on the contrary, it were cruelty to bring out to the funeral solemnity men in such a state.

8141: But, if to mourn and be afflicted in mind for them that are of our kindred is evil, much more our being withdrawn from spiritual discourses. For this same cause He said elsewhere also, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of Heaven. And surely it is far better to proclaim the kingdom and draw back others from death, than to bury the dead body, that is nothing advantaged thereby; and especially when there are some to fulfill all these duties. <sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Fr Bertoni ends his Meditation 40 here with about two pages left in Chrysostom's Homily XXVII - cf. Baronet translation, p. 188 a.

## 8142 - MEDITATION 41

### **8142: Meditation 41**

#### **Mt 8:23-24**

Mt 8:23: And when he entered into the boat, his disciples followed him.

v. 24: And behold a great tempest arose in the sea, so that the boat was covered with waves, but he was asleep.<sup>82</sup>

The multitudes then He sent on, but the disciples He took with Himself: for the others mention this, too. And He took them with Him, not for naught, nor at hazard, but in order to make them spectators of the miracle that was to take place. For like a most excellent trainer, He was anointing them with a view to both objects; as well as to be undismayed in dangers, as to be modest in honors. Thus, that they might not be high minded, because having sent away the rest, He retained them, He suffers them to be tossed with the tempest; at once correcting this, and disciplining them to bear trials nobly.

8143: For great indeed were the former miracles, too, but this contained also in it a kind of discipline, and that no inconsiderable one, and was a sign akin to that of old. For this cause He takes the disciples only with himself. For as, when there was a display of miracles, He suffers the people also to be present; so when trials and terrors were rising up against Him, then He takes with him none but the champions of the whole world, whom He was to discipline.

And while Matthew merely mentioned that He was asleep, Luke aid that it was on a pillow, signifying both His freedom from pride, and to teach us hereby a high degree of austerity. The tempest therefore being thoroughly excited, and the sea raging:

Mt 8:25: They awake Him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.

But He rebuked them before He rebuked the sea.

v. 26: And Jesus said to them: Why are you fearful, O you of little faith? Then rising up he commanded the winds, and the sea, and there came a great calm. <sup>83</sup>.

8144: Because as I said, for discipline these things were permitted, and they were a type of the temptations that were to overtake them. Yes, for after these things again, He often suffered them to fall into more grievous tempests of fortune, and bare long

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<sup>82</sup> Fr. Bertoni immediately omits the first paragraph of Chrysostom's Homily XVIII.

<sup>83</sup> In his manuscript, Fr. Bertoni adds this biblical text here, not found in Chrysostom..

with them. Wherefore Paul also said, 2 Co 1:8: I would not, brethren, have you ignorant, of our tribulation, which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure beyond strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life. v. 9: But we had in our selves the answer... v. 10: Who has delivered and does deliver us out of so great dangers: in whom we trust that he will yet also deliver us. Signifying therefore hereby that they ought to be confident, though the waves rise high, and that He orders all things for good, He first of all reproves them.

8145: For indeed their very alarm was a profitable occurrence, that the miracle might appear greater, and their remembrance of the event be rendered lasting. Since when anything strange is about to happen, there are prepared beforehand many things to cause remembrance, lest after the miracle had passed by, men should sink into forgetfulness. Thus Moses also first is in fear of the serpent, and not merely in fear, but even with much distress; and then he sees that strange thing come to pass [cf. Ex 4:3, f]/. So these, too, having first looked to perish, were then saved, that having confessed the danger, they might learn the greatness of the miracle. Therefore, He sleeps.

8146: For had he been awake when it happened, either they would not have feared, or they would not have besought Him, or they would not so much as have thought of His being able to do any such thing. Therefore, He sleeps, to give occasion for their timidity, and to make their perception of what was happening more distinct. For a man looks not with the same eyes on what happens in the persons of others, as in his own. Therefore, since they had seen all benefited, while themselves had enjoyed no benefit, and were supine [for neither were they lame, nor had they any other such infirmity]; and it was meet they should enjoy His benefits by their own perception: He permits the storm, that by their deliverance they might attain to a clearer perception of the benefits. Therefore, neither does He this in the presence of the multitudes, that they might not be condemned for little faith, but He has them apart, and corrects them, and before the tempest of the waters, He puts an end to the tempests of their soul, rebuking them, and saying:

Why are you fearful, O you of little faith? 8:26.

8147: He instructed them also that men's fear is wrought not by the approach of the temptation, but by the weakness of their mind. But should any one say that it was not fearfulness, or little faith, to come near and awaken Him; I would say this, that that very thing was an especial sign of their wanting the right opinion concerning Him. That is, His power to rebuke when awakened they knew, but that He would do so even sleeping, they knew not as yet. And why at all marvel that it was so now and when even after many other miracles their impressions were still rather imperfect? wherefore also they are often rebuked; as when He said:

Are you also without understanding?

8148: Marvel not, then, if when the disciples were in such imperfect dispositions, the multitudes had no exalted imagination of Him. For:

They marveled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the sea and the winds obey Him?

But Christ did not chide them for calling Him a man, but waited to teach them by His signs, that their supposition was mistaken.

- But from what did they think Him a man?

- First from His appearance, then from His sleeping, and making use of a ship. So, on this account they were cast into perplexity, saying: What manner of man is this?

8149: Since while the sleep and the outward appearance showed man, the sea and the calm declared Him God. For because Moses had once done some such thing, in this regard also does He signify His own superiority, and that the one works miracles as a slave, the other as Lord. Thus He put forth no rod, as Moses did, neither did He stretch forth His hands to Heaven, nor did He need any prayer, but, as was meet for a master commanding His handmaid, or a creator His creature, so did He quiet and curb it by word and command only; and all the surge was straightway at an end, and not one trace of the disturbance remained.

8150: Mt 8:28: For this the evangelist declared, saying:

And there was a great calm 8:26.

And that which had been spoken of the Father as a great thing, this He showed forth again by His works, Ps 106:25. And what had been said concerning Him? He spoke, it says, and the strong wind ceased. So here likewise, He spoke, and there was a great calm. And for this most of all did the multitudes marvel at him; who would not have marveled, had He done it in such manner as did Moses.

Now when He is departed from the sea, here follows another miracle yet more awful. For men possessed with devils like wicked runaways at sight of their master, said:

8151: Mt 8:28: And when he was come on the other side of the water, into the country of the Gerasens,, there met him two that were possessed with devils, coming out of the sepulchers, exceeding fierce, so that none could pass by that way.. v. 29: And behold, they cried out, saying: What have we to do with You, Jesus Son of God? are you come hither to torment us before the time?

For because the multitudes called Him man, the devils came proclaiming His Godhead, and they that heard not the sea swelling and subsiding, heard from the devils the same cry, as it by its calm was loudly uttering. Then, lest the thing might

seem to come of flattery, according to their actual experience they cry out and say in these words:

Have you come here to torment us before the time?

8152: With this in view, then, their enmity is avowed beforehand, that their entreaty may not incur suspicion. For indeed they were invisibly receiving stripes, and the sea was not in such a storm as they; galled and inflamed, and suffering things intolerable from His mere presence. Accordingly no man daring to bring them to Him, Christ of Himself goes unto them.

And Matthew relates indeed that they said: Have you come here before the time to torment us? 8:29.<sup>84</sup> For they supposed that their punishment was now close upon them, and feared as even now to fall into vengeance<sup>85</sup>. Have you come here to torment us before the time?

8153: that they had sinned, they could not deny, but they demand not to suffer their punishment before the time. For, since He had caught them in the act of perpetrating those horrors so incurable and lawless, and deforming and punishing His creature in every way; and they supposed that he, for the excess of their crimes would not await the time of their punishment: therefore, they besought and entreated Him: and they that endured not even bands of iron come bound, and they that run about the mountains, are gone forth into the plain; and those who hinder all others from passing, at sight of Him blocking the way, stand still.<sup>86</sup>

8154: Mt 8:30: And there was, not far from them, an herd of many swine feeding.

v. 31: And the devils besought Him, saying: If you cast us out hence, send us into the herd of swine.

v. 32: And he said to them: Go. But they going out went into the swine, and behold the whole herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea: and they perished in the waters.<sup>87</sup>

- Now, should anyone say, And wherefore did Christ fulfill the devils' request, suffering them to depart into the herd of swine?

- This would be our reply, that He did so, not as yielding to them, but as providing for many that are delivered from those wicked tyrants, how great the malice of their insidious enemies; another that all might learn how not even against swine are they bold, except He allow them; a third, that they would have treated those men more

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<sup>84</sup> Fr. Bertoni skips a sentence here - cf. Baronet translation p. 191 a.

<sup>85</sup> Fr. Bertoni skips a paragraph here - ib., p. 191 a & b.

<sup>86</sup> Here Fr. Bertoni skips almost a full column, cf. pp. 191 b - 192 b.

<sup>87</sup> Fr. Bertoni adds these three biblical texts, not found this way in the Chrysostom original.

grievously than the swine, unless even in their calamity they had enjoyed much of God's providential care.

8155: For they that hate us more than the brutes is surely evident to every man. So then they that spared not the swine, but in one moment of time cast them all down the precipice, much more would they have done so to the men whom they possessed, leading them towards the desert, and carrying them away, unless even in their very tyranny the guardian care of God had abounded, to curb and check the excess of their violence. Whence it is manifest that there is no one, who does not enjoy the benefit of God's Providence. And if not all alike, nor after one manner, this it itself a very great instance of providence; in that according to each man's profit, the work also of providence is displayed.

8156: And besides what has been mentioned, there is another thing also, which we learn from this; that His providence is not only over all in common, but also over each in particular; which He also declared with respect to His disciples, saying: But the very hairs of your head are numbered. MT 10:30. And from these demoniacs too, one may clearly perceive this; who would have been choked long before, if they had not enjoyed the benefit of much tender care from above. For these reasons then He suffered them to depart into the herd of swine, and that they also who dwelt in those places should learn His power.

Mt 8:33: And they that kept them fled: and coming into the city, told everything, and concerning them that had been possessed by the devils <sup>88</sup>.

For where His name was great, He did not greatly display Himself: but where no one knew Him, but they were still in an insensible condition, He made his miracles to shine out, so as to bring them over to the knowledge of His Godhead.

8157: For it is evident from the event that the inhabitants of that city were a sort of senseless people; for when they ought to have adored and marveled at His power, they sent Him away, and besought Him that He would depart out of their coasts. <sup>89</sup>.

Mt 8:34: And behold the whole city went out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart from their coasts.

And mark also His meekness together with His power. For when the inhabitants of that country, after having received such benefits, were driving Him away, He resisted not, but retired, and left those who had shown themselves unworthy of His teaching, having given them for teachers them that had been freed from the demons, and the swine-herd, that they might of them learn all that had happened.

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<sup>88</sup> Fr. Bertoni adds this biblical passage, not in Chrysostom's original

<sup>89</sup> Fr. Bertoni omits more than a half of a column here - cf. Baronet translation, pp. 192 b - 193 a. As is noted, it was most difficult to follow Fr. Bertoni here, with his omissions and his additions, all copied from some other source.

While He retiring, leaves the fear vigorous in them. For the greatness withal of the loss was spreading the fame of what had been done, and the event penetrated their mind. And from many quarters were wafted sounds, proclaiming the strangeness of the miracle; from the cured, and from the drowned, from the owners of the swine, from the men that were feeding them...<sup>90</sup>

- 8158:
1. Election of Matthew.
  2. To whom does the Church belong.
  3. Jesus and others.
  4. May God so conserve it!

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<sup>90</sup> Fr. Bertoni ends here abruptly His Meditation 41, leaving the last two and a half pages of Chrysostom's Homily XXVIII untouched [cf. Baronet translation, pp. 193 a - 195 B.

Fr. Nello Dalle Vedove writes: "After 73 Meditations on the First Book of Kings, and 41 on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Fr. Bertoni judged that his seminarians were now mature to take on their deeper understanding of Genesis. This is the motivation that he finds expressed by St. John Chrysostom in his Commentary [ On Genesis, Hom. II, n. 1], and which is included in the First Prelude: 'Let us imitate the farmers: when they see that the field has been prepared and that the harmful weeds have been removed, they seminate the field abundantly, thus, since this our spiritual field, by the grace of God, is not purified from disordered affections, after which the dogmas of Sacred Scripture have been presented, today let us try to approach the more subtle teachings...' " [cf. Nello, pp. 606, f. - Mss B, \$ 4615].