

GENESIS II

Meditation 9

[Mss B ## 4771-4781]

Gn 2:1-3³⁶

4771: Preparatory Prayer

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

4772: v. 1: So, the heavens and the earth were finished and all the furniture of them.

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

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

4774: v. 2: God completed on the sixth day, the text says, 'the works He had done'.

Notice how it says the same thing twice over so that we might learn all the works of creation were done up to the sixth day. The text says, remember

He completed on the sixth day the works he had done, and on the seventh day he rested from all the works he had done, v. 2.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4781: If anyone in a spirit of great gratitude has a mind to survey everything, detail by detail, done for our benefit each day by the Creator of all things, you would find an abyss of loving kindness. I mean, what reasoning or what imagination would arrive at

the unspeakable goodness which He displays for the race of human beings, making the sun rise on the evil and the good, sending rain upon just and unjust, Mt 5:45, and bestowing every kind of good?³⁷

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

Meditation 10³⁸
[Mss B ## 4762-4801]
Gn 2:4-6

4782: Preparatory Prayer.

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

4783: Wisdom and Doctrine

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

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

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

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

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

4785: Do not be surprised, dearly beloved; after all, it is the custom with Holy Scripture not to describe everything to us in detail in every case but rather to begin with a summary of related items and to leave further detail to be considered by right-

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

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

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

minded listeners as they take in what is said. So that you may learn this is the case, I will make it clear from the very verses just now read.

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

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

4788: Untamed Tongues held in check.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4795: This, in fact, can be seen happening also in the case of fire: though it has the capacity to burn up, and it prevails over everything, consuming all material of stone, wood, iron and other bodies with ease, yet when the Creator so directed, it left untouched the delicate and perishable bodies and, in fact, kept the children unharmed

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

in the middle of the furnace [Dn 3]. Do not be surprised if it left these bodies untouched and, if in fact, this irrational element demonstrated the kind of restraint that cannot be described. You see, it did not so much as harm their hair; instead, it formed a circle around them and kept them inside it.

4796: The substance of fire, as it were, responded in obedience, and in compliance with the Lord's direction it kept those excellent children safe and sound, so that they moved about in the furnace with such ease as though strolling through a meadow or garden. And, lest anyone think that what they saw was not a fire at work, the loving Lord for that purpose did not hamper its efficacy; instead, He allowed its burning qualities to remain active, rendering His servants proof against its harmful effect but ensuring those those who thrust them in might learn the extent of the power of the Lord of all: the first showed its force against them, burning and consuming them as they stood outside the furnace while at the same time encircling the children inside.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4802: Preparatory Prayer.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4808: You see, that very remark: 'God...shaped the human being ...and breathed, v. 7, is properly inapplicable to God. Yet, because of us and our limitations, Sacred Scripture expresses it in that way, showing considerateness to us, so that, having been thought worthy of the considerateness, we might be enabled to arrive at that sublime level of thought⁴².

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'The human being became alive; v. 7.

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

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

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

4816: Lest you think this happened from things already created at that time instead of from something that happens each day at the present time, consider, I ask you, how after the departure of the soul this body appears odious and unpleasant? How repulsive, how much reeking with stench, how marked by complete deformity this

creature that previously when it had the soul to conduct it was bright, graceful, marked by beauty of form, abounding with intelligence, enjoying great aptitude for the performance of good deeds.

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

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

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

4819: Our loving Lord, you see, knowing the weakness of our purpose and our tendency to fall, has left us great remedies in the reading of the Scriptures so that we might constantly apply them to ourselves and recall the lives of those great and wonderful men. Thus we may be led to imitation and not neglect virtue, but rather avoid evil and do everything so as not to prove ourselves unworthy of those unspeakably good people⁴³.

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

Meditation 12
[Mss B ## 4820-4834]
Gn 2:8-14⁴⁴

4820: Preparatory Prayer.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4824: Sacred Scripture, though, whenever it wants to teach us something like this, gives its own interpretation, and does not let the listener go astray. On the other hand, since the majority of listeners apply their ears to the narrative, not for the sake of gaining some profit but for enjoyment, they are at pains to take note of things able to bring enjoyment rather than those that bring profit. So, I beg you, block your ears against all distractions of that kind and let us follow the norm of sacred Scripture.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Do you recognize here a life free of any care? Do you see a wonderful existence? Like some angel, in fact, man lived this way on earth, wearing a body, yet being fortunately rid of any bodily needs, like a king adorned with scepter and crown and wearing his purple robe, he reveled in this life of freedom and great affluence in the garden.

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

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

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

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

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

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

4833: Perhaps, however, these people who like to talk from their own wisdom do not concede again that these rivers are rivers, or these waters really waters, but propound some different interpretation to people ready to lend them their ears⁴⁵. Let us, however, I beg you, not be convinced by them, but block our ears against them; let us instead place our credence in Sacred Scripture and heed what is told us there; let it be our concern to lay its sound teachings in our soul and be scrupulously careful about them and about our life, so that our life may witness to the teachings and the teachings

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

may declare the integrity of our life. After all, it will be of no avail for us to get teachings right if we neglect life.

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

So, too, with the Christian: correct doctrine is of no benefit unless one attends to the business of living. Accordingly Christ declared such people blessed: 'Blessed is one who does and teaches'⁴⁶. I mean, far more dependable and trustworthy than the teaching of words is teaching in action⁴⁷.

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⁴⁶ *A precis of Mt 5:19*

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

Meditation 13
[Mss B 4835-4852]
Gn 2:15-17⁴⁸

4835: Preparatory Prayer

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

Prelude 2.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4844: At this were very properly are astonished at God's loving kindness beyond all telling, which He reveals to us through this brief sentence: 'He instructed', v. 16. Notice

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

from the outset how much esteem He evidences for the human being. I mean, it did not say: He commanded, or ordered, but 'He instructed'. Just as one friend is said to instruct another about some pressing needs, God, too, in like manner conducts His relationship with Adam, just as if He wants to win him over through this attitude of esteem to obedience to His instructions.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4849: He did this in the manner of a kindly master entrusting his huge residence to someone and prescribing some humble coin to be given by him as a pledge for keeping ownership intact for himself. Well, in quite the same way our loving Lord lavished on the human being the enjoyment of everything in the garden and bade him abstain from one tree only, so as to be in a position to know that he is subject to the Lord, Whom he should obey and to Whose commands he should submit.

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

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

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

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

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The End

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

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