

# St. GASPAR BERTONI



**13 MEDITATIONS**

**MssB ## 4615 - 4852**

transcribed from

# St. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

**17 HOMILIES *ON GENESIS***

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**Translator:**

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### GENESIS I

<b>Meditation 1 - Gn 1:1-2 [Mss. B ## 4615 - 4626]</b>	<b>10</b>
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The Prophet taught centuries later - Listen, without excessive reasoning - No mention of Unseen Powers - Paul's example of Hope - Argument from Similarities - The Sky is perfect, while the earth is imperfect.

<b>Meditation 2 - Gn 1:2-5 [Mss B ## 4627- 4646]</b>	<b>14</b>
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Accuracy - Prevision - To make known the necessity of the wise Artificer - Baptism is Prefigured - Deformity is removed [Gn 1:3] - Imitate God [Ep 5] - Symbol of Mental Light - Scriptures adapt to our Understanding - Successive Creation shows that it is not by Chance.

**Meditation 3 - Gn 1:6-8 [Mss B ## 4647- 4659] 19**

Prelude 1 & 2 [1 P 5:8; Ep 6:13] - The School of Good Reasoning: the Scriptures - Modest Gratitude - Only know those things within our grasp - Creatures are also the object of our Lauds [cf. Ps 49:14] - Scripture leads to humble reverence of the Divine Majesty.

**Meditation 4 - Gn 1:9-13 [Mss B ## 4660 - 4679] 23**

God lays bare all - great contrasts - He will order our spirit - We will walk in good light - The Church of Rome is our Mother - The Lord looks to those who consider in the Heart- Ants do not know why they live! - Life begins under ground - It is not the secondary Causes - we are unable to praise creatures as they deserve - What about the divine Craftsman? - Useful repetitions.

**Meditation 5 - Gn 1:14-19 [Mss B ## 4680 - 4699] 29**

The word is a Lamp to my feet [cf. Ps 118:9, 105] - Perfect the moral, political virtues, then the theological - Creatures are a stair-way leading to knowledge and love of God - It is not only nature - usefulness of the stars - joyous view of the sky - Order and use - All on account of humanity - the goodness of creatures.

**Meditation 6 - Gn 1:20-25 [Mss B ## 4700 - 4725] 34**

God's benignity keeps us from error - Created variety through obedience - Obey God in every undertaking - omnipotence of conservation.

**Meditation 7 - Gn1:26 [Mss B ## 4726 - 4751]] 40**

Image of God - Blessed is one whom the Lord teaches [cf. Ps 93:12] - Ancients concentrated on anything other than themselves - Just morality - Teaching of Albert, St. Thomas - An image that cost blood - God has so honored us, we need to honor Him - Dominion over the wild beasts, thieves - The woman's conversation with the snake - It is useful to remember that after sin, dominion withdrawn.

**Meditation 8 - Gn 1: 27-31 [Mss B ## 4752 - 4770] 46**

Both man and woman given control over the universe - Providence takes care of all - End of Genesis I.

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**GENESIS II**

**Meditation 9 - Gn 2:1-3 [Mss B ## 4771 - 4781] 51**

The sanctified rest of the seventh day [The shortest of Fr. Bertoni's Meditations on Genesis].

**Meditation 10 - Gn 2:4-6 [Mss B ##4782 - 4801] 54**

The generations of heaven and earth - Wisdom and Doctrine - Unrestrained tongues checked.

**Meditation 11 - Gn 2:7 [Mss B ## 4802 - 4819] 59**

From the Dust, Slime of the earth - With divine life - The essentials are vital let the rest go.

**Meditation 12 - Gn 2:8-14 [Mss B ## 4820 - 4834] 63**

The Garden of Eden and the Rivers of Creation.

**Meditation 13 - Gn 2:15 - 17 [Mss B ## 4835] 67**

**The Tree of Paradise.**

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## Translator's Preface

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

#### [I] In his Early Writings

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A modern Italian author, Divo Barsotti, has noted that in the history of Italian spirituality, it would be difficult to find in spiritual writers, at least those of recent centuries, with a greater dependence on Sacred Scripture, than Fr. Bertoni. St. Gaspar noted in the inspired word not only the sure norm for good actions, but also the means to reason well. The Divine Scriptures are that **"one and sure School of Good Reasoning."**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CF # 266 **St. John Chrysostom**, elegantly commenting on the words of Chapter 16 of St. John's Gospel, 'that they may be one, even as we are', says very well: 'Nothing can be compared to the harmony and mutual union

of wills: for by it, the individual multiplies himself. If indeed two, or ten persons agree among themselves, there is no longer one individual, but each one has multiplied himself ten times, and in the ten you shall find unity, and the ten in each individual.' Further on he says: 'This is the excellence of charity, and how it brings it about that one can be multiplied and be inseparable; that he can be found in many places at the same time; that he can be in Persia and in Rome: what nature cannot do.'

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

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

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### [C] Observations on his Copying

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

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

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

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

"Nor should such men be deterred by the words of the Prophet Jeremiah, through whom God reproves those *who steal his words, each one from his neighbor* [Jr 23:30]. Those who steal, after all, are purloining what does not belong to them; but God's word does belong to those who do what he tells them. In fact, it's the man who speaks well and lives badly that really speaks words that do not belong to him...." [cf. St. Augustine, *Teaching*

*Christianity. De Doctrina Christiana.* Introduction, Translation, and Notes,  
Edmund Hill, OP, Hyde Park NY: New City Press, pp. 239, ff.]

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

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