

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, and 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.¹

7366: He has become all things to all.

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

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

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...²

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² 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.³

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

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 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 straightway 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? Hearken 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...⁴

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 Mary 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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⁴ 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 shone 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 ...

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⁵ 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.

7418 - MEDITATION 4

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, Joran 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. ...⁶

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.

- 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

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

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 ⁷...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.

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

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

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.'⁸

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.

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

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 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 benefit⁹.

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⁹ With this exhortation found midway through Chrysostom's long "Homily IV", Fr. Bertoni ends his "Meditaton 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.

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

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.

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,

¹⁰ 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

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

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.¹² ...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. 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.¹³

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

¹³ 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.

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 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 shall 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, became afterwards admirable, and illustrious¹⁴.

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 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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¹⁴ 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.

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.¹⁵

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.'¹⁶

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.

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.

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ Fr. Bertoni skips a sentence here regarding astrology.

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 west¹⁷ ...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 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,

¹⁷ 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.

- 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?

2495: - 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 circumcison does he harangue the Jews. Sacrifices he makes the beginning of his instruction to them that are living under the law. For, since every one 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?

7809: 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.'¹⁸

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 lbut just delivered from their captivity there...¹⁹

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¹⁸ 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.'

¹⁹ 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? Zorobabel not having been born in Judea, but in Babylon, whence also he was called Zorobabel, 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 withholden 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 ²⁰. 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.

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,

²⁰ Fr. Bertoni skips several sentences here.

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...²¹.

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 troubles pressed

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

upon them from every side; but after their adoration, it is calm and security; and no longer a star but an Angel receives them....²² .

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²² 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:
Mt 2:11-15

Meditation 8

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 then 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 ²³. 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

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

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 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...²⁴

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²⁴ 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 things are uttered by many very idly touching these children, and the course of events 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.²⁵

- 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.

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

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

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 e not an indignity to the sufferer.

7575: But, to bring my argument nearer the very point inquired of; remember David, how when he saw Shemei 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 16t: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 ore 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 ... ²⁶ .

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²⁶ 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.