

# St. GASPAR BERTONI



**41 MEDITATIONS**

**Mss B ## 7343 - 8151**

transcribed from

**St. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM**  
**COMMENTARY *ON MATTHEW***

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**Translator:**

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

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So all the generations from Abraham to David are 14 generations, and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are 14 generations, and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are 14 generations.

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When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews?

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Storm on the lake

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**TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION**

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

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

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

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

[a] The English translation for this may be found in rather antiquated language, in *The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. Matthew*. Translated by Rev. Sir George Prevost, Baronet, M.A., of Oriel College, revised with Notes by Rev. M.B. Riddle, D.D. Professor of New Testament exegesis in the western Theological Seminary at Allegheny PA.. This is Volume X in the Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Edited by Philip Schaff, D.D., LL.D., pp. 1-164.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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**[Translator's Note]**

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

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