

A. Latin

Tertuliano – Contra Hegémones, Cap. 20

“For if He had anything to operate upon, it would have been mentioned as well as (the other two particulars). In conclusion, I will apply the Gospel as a supplementary testimony to the Old Testament. Now in this there is all the greater reason why there should be shown the material (if there were any) out of which God made all things, inasmuch as it is therein plainly revealed by whom He made all things. “**In the beginning was the Word**” — that is, the same beginning, of course, in which God made the heaven and the earth — “**and the Word was with God, and the Word was God**. All things were made by Him, and without Him nothing was made.” Now, since we have here clearly told us who the Maker was, that is, God, and what He made, even all things, and through whom He made them, even His Word, would not the order of the narrative have required that the source out of which all things were made by God through the Word should likewise be declared, if they had been in fact made out of anything? What, therefore, did not exist, the Scripture was unable to mention; and by not mentioning it, it has given us a clear proof that there was no such thing: for if there had been, the Scripture would have mentioned it”

Tertuliano – Ressurreição da Carne, Cap.6

“For so did the Father previously say to the Son: “Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness.” And God made man, that is to say, the creature which He molded and fashioned; after the image of God (in other words, of Christ) did He make him. And the **Word was God** also, who being in the image of God, “thought it not robbery to be equal to God.” Thus, that clay which was even then putting on the image of Christ, who was to come in the flesh, was not only the work, but also the pledge and surety, of God”

Tertuliano – Contra Praxeas, Cap. 7

“How could it be, that He Himself is nothing, without whom nothing was made? How could He who is empty have made things which are solid, and He who is void have made things which are full, and He who is incorporeal have made things which have body? For although a thing may sometimes be made different from him by whom it is made, yet nothing can be made by that which is a void and empty thing. Is that Word of God, then, a void and empty thing, which is called the Son, who Himself is designated God? “**The Word was with God, and the Word was God**.” It is written, “Thou shalt not take God’s name in vain.” This for certain is He “who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” In what form of God? Of course he means in some form, not in none”

Tertuliano – Contra Praxeas, Cap. 12

“I mean the Word of God. “through whom all things were made, and without whom nothing was made.” Now if He too is God, according to John, (who says.) “The Word was God,” then you have two Beings — One that commands that the thing be made, and the Other that executes the order and creates. In what sense, however, you ought to understand Him to be another, I have already explained, on the ground of Personality, not of Substance — in the way of distinction, not of division”

Tertuliano – Contra Praxeas, Cap. 13

“For here too, by saying, “God is in Thee,” and “Thou art God,” he sets forth Two who were God: (in the former expression in Thee, he means) in Christ, and (in the other he means) the Holy Ghost. That is a still grander statement which you will find expressly made in the Gospel: “**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God**.” There was One “who was,” and there was another “with

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

2

whom” He was. But I find in Scripture the name LORD also applied to them Both: “The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on my right hand.””

Tertuliano – Contra Praxeas, Cap. 15

“Now the Word of life became flesh, and was heard, and was seen, and was handled, because He was flesh who, before He came in the flesh, was the “Word in the beginning with God” the Father, and not the Father with the Word. For although the Word was God, yet was He with God, because He is God of God; and being joined to the Father, is with the Father. “And we have seen His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father;” that is, of course, (the glory) of the Son, even Him who was visible, and was glorified by the invisible Father”

Tertuliano – Contra Praxeas, Cap. 16

“But you must not suppose that only the works which relate to the (creation of the) world were made by the Son, but also whatsoever since that time has been done by God. For “the Father who loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand,” loves Him indeed from the beginning, and from the very first has handed all things over to Him. Whence it is written, “From the beginning the Word was with God, and the Word was God;” to whom “is given by the Father all power in heaven and on earth.” “The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son” — from the very beginning even.”

Tertuliano – Contra Praxeas, Cap. 21

“Consider, therefore, how many passages present their prescriptive authority to you in this very Gospel before this inquiry of Philip, and previous to any discussion on your part. And first of all there comes at once to hand the preamble of John to his Gospel, which shows us what He previously was who had to become flesh. **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.** He was in the beginning with God: all things were made by Him, and without Him was nothing made.” Now, since these words may not be taken otherwise than as they are written, there is without doubt shown to be One who was from the beginning, and also One with whom He always was: one the Word of God, the other God although the Word is also God, but God regarded as the Son of God, not as the Father); One through whom were all things, Another by whom were all things.”

Tertuliano – Contra Praxeas, Cap. 27

“Neither the flesh becomes Spirit, nor the Spirit flesh. In one Person they no doubt are well able to be co-existent. Of them Jesus consists — Man of the flesh; of the Spirit, God — and the angel designated Him as “the Son of God,” in respect of that nature, in which He was Spirit, reserving for the flesh the appellation “Son of Man.” In like manner, again, the apostle calls Him “the Mediator between God and Men,” and so affirmed His participation of both substances. Now, to end the matter, will you, who interpret the Son of God to be flesh, be so good as to show us what the Son of Man is? Will He then, I want to know, be the Spirit? But you insist upon it that the Father Himself is the Spirit, on the ground that “God is a Spirit,” just as if we did not read also that there is “the Spirit of God;” in the same manner as we find that as **“the Word was God,”** so also there is “the Word of God.””

Vitorino, Sobre a Criação do Mundo

“But the author of the whole creation is Jesus. His name is the Word; for thus His Father says: “My heart hath emitted a good word.” John the evangelist thus says: **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.** The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was nothing made that was made.””

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

3

Vitorino, Comentário em Apocalipse do Abençoado João, Cap.4

“Mark, therefore, as an evangelist thus beginning, “The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as it is written in Isaiah the prophet;” The voice of one crying in the wilderness,” — has the effigy of a lion. And Matthew, “The hook of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham:” this is the form of a man. But Luke said, “There was a priest, by name Zachariah, of the course of Abia, and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron:” this is the likeness of a calf. But John, when he begins, “**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,**” sets forth the likeness of a flying eagle. Moreover, not only do the evangelists express their four similitudes in their respective openings of the Gospels, but also the Word itself of God the Father Omnipotent, which is His Son our Lord Jesus Christ, bears the same likeness in the time of His advent”

Lactantius, Divine Institutes, Livro 4, Cap.8

“And also again in the forty-fourth Psalm: “My heart hath given utterance to a good word; I speak of my doings towards the king;” testifying, in truth, that the works of God are known to no other than to the Son alone, who is the Word of God, and who must reign for ever. Solomon also shows that it is the Word of God, and no other, by whose hands these works of the world were made. “I,” He says, “came forth out of the mouth of the Most High before all creatures: I caused the light that faileth not to arise in the heavens, and covered the whole earth with a cloud. I have dwelt in the height, and my throne is in the pillar of the cloud.” John also thus taught: “**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.** The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made.””

Hipólito, Refutação a Todas as Heresias, Livro 5, Cap. 11

“This, he says, is the great beginning respecting which Scripture has spoken. Concerning this, he says it has been declared: “In the **beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God**”

Hipólito, Against The Heresy of One Noetus, 12

“Thus, then, was the Word made manifest, even as the blessed John says. For he sums up the things that were said by the prophets, and shows that this is the Word, by whom all things were made. For he speaks to this effect: “**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.** All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made.””

Hipólito, Against The Heresy of One Noetus, 14

“These things then, brethren, are declared by the Scriptures. And the blessed John, in the testimony of his Gospel, gives us an account of this economy (disposition) and acknowledges this Word as God, when he says, “**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**” If, then, the Word was with God, and was also God, what follows? Would one say that he speaks of two Gods? I shall not indeed speak of two Gods, but of one; of two Persons however, and of a third economy (disposition), viz., the grace of the Holy Ghost”

Eusébio de Cesaréia, História Eclesiástica, Livro 1, Cap.2

“For alone who beside the Father could clearly understand the Light which was before the world, the intellectual and essential Wisdom which existed before the ages, the living Word which was in the beginning with the Father and which was God, the first and only begotten of God which was before every creature and creation visible and invisible, the commander-in-chief of the rational and immortal host of heaven, the messenger of the great counsel, the executor of the Father’s unspoken will, the creator, with the Father, of all things, the second cause of the universe after the Father, the true and only-begotten Son of God, the Lord and God and King of all created things, the one who has received dominion and power, with divinity itself, and with

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

4

might and honor from the Father; as it is said in regard to him in the mystical passages of Scripture which speak of his divinity: **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”**”

Eusébio de Cesaréia, História Eclesiástica, Oração de Eusébio Panfilo, Cap.12

“Thus universal is the agency of the Word of God: everywhere present, and pervading all things by the power of his intelligence, he looks upward to his Father, and governs this lower creation, inferior to and consequent upon himself, in accordance with his will, as the common Preserver of all things. Intermediate, as it were, and attracting the created to the uncreated Essence, this Word of God exists as an unbroken bond between the two, uniting things most widely different by an inseparable tie. He is the Providence which rules the universe; the guardian and director of the whole: he is the Power and Wisdom of God the only-begotten God, the Word begotten of God himself. For **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by him and without him was not any. thing made that hath been made”**”

Hilary of Poitiers, On The Concils, Cap.X, 24

““And if any one admits that God became Father of the Only-begotten Son at any point in times and not that the Only-begotten Son came into existence without passion beyond all times and beyond all human calculation: for contravening the teaching of the Gospel which scorned any interval of times between the being of the Father and the Son and faithfully has instructed us that **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, let him be anathema.**” It is a pious saying that the Father is not limited by times: for the true meaning of the name of Father which He bore before times began surpasses comprehension. Although religion teaches us to ascribe to Him this name of Father through which comes the impassible origin of the Son, yet He is not bound in time, for the eternal and infinite God cannot be understood as having become a Father in time, and according to the teaching of the Gospel the Only-begotten God the Word is recognized even in the beginning rather to be with God than to be born.”

Hilary of Poitiers, On The Concils, Cap.XII, 29

“And in one Lord Jesus Christ, His Only-begotten Son, God through whom are all things, who was begotten of the Father, God of God, whole God of whole God, One of One perfect God of perfect God, King of King, Lord of Lord, the Word, the Wisdom, the Life, true Light, true Way, the Resurrection the Shepherd, the Gate, unable to change or alter, the unvarying image of the essence and might and glory of the Godhead, the first-born of all creation, who always was in the beginning with God, the Word of God, according to what is said in the Gospel, and the **Word was God**, through whom all things were made, and in whom all things subsist, who in the last days came down from above, and was born of a virgin according to the Scriptures, and was made the Lamb, the Mediator between God and man, the Apostle of our faith, and leader of life. For He said, came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me. Who suffered and rose again for us on the third day, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father, and is to come again with glory to judge the quick and the dead”

Hilary of Poitiers, On The Concils, Cap.XXVII, 70

“Therefore let no one think that our words were meant to deny the one substance. We are giving the very reason why it should not be denied. Let no one think that the word ought to be used by itself and unexplained. Otherwise the word oJmooovsio" is not used in a religious spirit. I will not endure to hear that Christ was born of Mary unless I also hear, **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God.**”

Hilary of Poitiers, On The Trinity, Livro 1, 10

“Yet my soul was weighed down with fear both for itself and for the body. It retained a firm conviction, and a devout loyalty to the true faith concerning God, but had come to harbor a deep anxiety concerning itself and the bodily dwelling which must, it thought, share its destruction. While in this state, in addition to its knowledge of

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

5

the teaching of the Law and Prophets, it learned the truths taught by the Apostle in the Gospel; — In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made”

Hilary of Poitiers, On The Trinity, Livro 2, 15

“Even though your unpracticed ear failed to catch the first clause, In the beginning was the Word, why complain of the next, And the Word was with God? Was it And the Word was in God that you heard, — the dictum of some profound philosophy? Or is it that your provincial dialect makes no distinction between in and with? The assertion is that Which was in the beginning was with, not in, Another. But I will not argue from the beginning of the sentence; the sequel can take care of itself. Hear now the rank and the name of the Word: — And the Word was God. Your plea that the Word is the sound of a voice, the utterance of a thought, falls to the ground. The Word is a reality, not a sound, a Being, not a speech, God, not a nonentity”

Hilary of Poitiers, On The Trinity, Livro 2, 16

“But I tremble to say it; the audacity staggers me. I hear, And the Word was God; I, whom the prophets have taught that God is One. To save me from further fears, give me, friend Fisherman, a fuller imparting of this great mystery. Show that these assertions are consistent with the unity of God; that there is no blasphemy in them, no explaining away, no denial of eternity. He continues, He was in the beginning with God. This He was in the beginning removes the limit of time; the word God shows that He is more than a voice; that He is with God proves that He neither encroaches nor is encroached upon, for His identity is not swallowed up in that of Another, and He is clearly stated to be present with the One Unbegotten God as God, His One and Only-begotten Son”

Hilary of Poitiers, On The Trinity, Livro 2, 23

“He shall hear the words, The Father is greater than I, and I go to the Father, and Father, I thank Thee, and Glorify Me, Father, and Thou art the Son of the living God. Let Hebron try to sap the faith, who allows the Son of God no life before the Virgin’s womb, and sees in Him the Word only after His life as flesh had begun. We will bid him read again, Father, glorify Me with Thine own Self with that glory which I had with Thee before the world was, and In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, and All things were made through Him, and He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world knew Him not. Let the preachers whose apostleship is of the newest fashion — an apostleship of Antichrist — come forward and pour their mockery and insult upon the Son of God. They must hear, I came out from the Father and The Son in the Father’s bosom, and I and the Father are One, and I in the Father, and the Father in Me. And lastly, if they be wrath, as the Jews were, that Christ should claim God for His own Father, making Himself equal with God, they must take the answer which He gave the Jews, Believe My works, that the Father is in Me and I in the Father. Thus our one immovable foundation, our one blissful rock of faith, is the confession from Peter’s mouth, Thou art the Son of the living God. On it we can base an answer to every objection with which perverted ingenuity or embittered treachery may assail the truth”

Hilary of Poitiers, On The Trinity, Livro 3, 16

“Therefore, since the Son is the Word, and the Word was made flesh, and the Word was God, and was in the beginning with God, and the Word was Son before the foundation of the world”

Hilary of Poitiers, On The Trinity, Livro 4, 16

“His words are, And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the water, and let it divide the water from the water. And it was so, and God made the firmament and God divided the water through the midst. Here, then, you have the God from Whom, and the God through Whom. If you deny it, you must tell us through whom it was that God’s work in creation was done, or else point for your explanation to an obedience in things

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

6

yet uncreated, which, when God said Let there be a firmament, impelled the firmament to establish itself. Such suggestions are inconsistent with the clear sense of Scripture. For all things, as the Prophet says, were made out of nothing; it was no transformation of existing things, but the creation into a perfect form of the non-existent. Through whom? Hear the Evangelist: things were made through Him. If you ask Who this is, the same Evangelist will tell you: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him. If you are minded to combat the view that it was the Father Who said, Let there be a firmament, the prophet will answer you: He spake, and they were made; He commanded, and they were created. The recorded words, Let there be a firmament, reveal to us that the Father spoke. But in the words which follow, And it was so, in the statement that God did this thing, we must recognize the Person of the Agent. He spake, and they, were made; the Scripture does not say that He willed it, and did it. He commanded, and they were created; you observe that it does not say they came into existence, because it was His pleasure. In that case there would be no office for a Mediator between God and the world which was awaiting its creation”

Hilary of Poitiers, On The Trinity, Livro 7, 9

“Thus we have all these different assurances of the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ: — His name, His birth, His nature, His power, His own assertion. As to the name, I conceive that no doubt is possible. It is written, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. What reason can there be for suspecting that He is not what His name indicates? And does not this name clearly describe His nature? If a statement be contradicted, it must be for some reason. What reason, I demand, is there in this instance for denying that He is God? The name is given Him, plainly and distinctly, and unqualified by any incongruous addition which might raise a doubt. The Word, we read, which was made flesh, was none other than God. Here is no loophole for any such conjecture as that He has received this name as a favor or taken it upon Himself, so possessing a titular Godhead which is not His by nature”

Hilary of Poitiers, On The Trinity, Livro 7, 11

“But it was to save us from concluding that the Son is alien from the Divine nature of His Father that He, the Only-begotten from the eternal God His Father, born as God into a substantial existence of His own, has had Himself revealed to us under these names of properties, of which the Father, out of Whom He came into existence, has suffered no diminution. Thus He, being God, is nothing else than God. For when I hear the words, And the Word was God, they do not merely tell me that the Son was called God; they reveal to my understanding that He is God. In those previous instances, where Moses was called God and others were styled gods, there was the mere addition of a name by way of title. Here a solid essential truth is stated; The Word was God. That was indicates no accidental title, but an eternal reality, a permanent element of His existence, an inherent character of His nature”

Ambrósio, Sobre a Fé Cristã, Livro 1, Cap. 8, 56

““**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.** The same was in the beginning with God.” “Was,” mark you, “with God.” “Was” — see, we have “was” four times over. Where did the blasphemer find it written that He “was not.” Again, John, in another passage — in his Epistle — speaketh of “That which was in the beginning.” *The extension of the “was” is infinite.* Conceive any length of time you will, yet still the Son “was.””

Ambrósio, Sobre a Fé Cristã, Livro 1, Cap. 8, 57

“Now in this short passage our fisherman hath barred the way of all heresy. For that which was “in the beginning” is not comprehended in time, is not preceded by any beginning. Let Arius, therefore, hold his peace. Moreover, that which was “with God” is not confounded and mingled with Him, but is distinguished by the perfection unblemished which it hath as the Word abiding with God; and so let Sabellius keep silence. And “the Word was God,” This Word, therefore, consisteth not in uttered speech, but in the designation of celestial

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

7

excellence, so that Photinus' teaching is refuted. Furthermore, by the fact that in the beginning He was with God is proven the indivisible unity of eternal Godhead in Father and Son, to the shame and confusion of Eunomius"

Ambrósio, Sobre a Fé Cristã, Livro 1, Cap. 19, 123

"Arius, then, says: "There was a time when the Son of God existed not," but Scripture saith: "He was," not that "He was not." Furthermore, St. John has written: "**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.**" Observe how often the verb "was" appears, whereas "was not" is nowhere found. Whom, then, are we to believe? — St. John, who lay on Christ's bosom, or Arius, wallowing amid the out-gush of his very bowels? — so wallowing that we might understand how Arius in his teaching showed himself like unto Judas, being visited with like punishment"

Ambrósio, Sobre a Fé Cristã, Livro 2, Cap. 2, 29

"But perchance thou believest not others, nor the Son. Hear, then, the Father saying: "My heart hath brought forth out of its depth the good Word." The Word, then, is good — the Word, of Whom it is written: "**And the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**" If, therefore, the Word is good, and the Son is the Word of God, surely, though it displease the Arians, the Son of God is God. Let them now at least blush for shame"

Ambrósio, Sobre a Fé Cristã, Livro 3, Cap. 1, 2

"The good Word of the Father, Which was, it is said, "in the beginning," here you have His eternity. "And," it is said," the Word was with God." Here you have His power, undivided and inseparable from the Father. "And the Word was God." Here you have His unbegotten Godhead, for your faith is to be drawn from the mutual relationship"

Jerônimo, Carta 53 a Paulino, 4

"But perhaps we ought to call Peter and John ignorant, both of whom could say of themselves, "though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge." Was John a mere fisherman, rude and untaught? If so, whence did he get the words "**In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God and the word was God.**" Logos in Greek has many meanings. It signifies word and reason and reckoning and the cause of individual things by which those which are subsist. All of which things we rightly predicate of Christ. This truth Plato with all his learning did not know, of this Demosthenes with all his eloquence was ignorant. "I will destroy," it is said, "the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.""

Jerônimo, Contra Joviano, Livro 1, 26

"The first has the face of a man, on account of the genealogical table; the second, the face of a calf, on account of the priesthood; the third, the face of a lion, on account of the voice of one crying in the desert, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight." But John like an eagle soars aloft, and reaches the Father Himself, and says, "**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God,**" and so on"

Agostinho, Confissões, Livro 7, Cap.9, 13

"And Thou, willing first to show me how Thou "resistest the proud, but givest grace "s and by how great art act of mercy Thou hadst pointed out to men the c path of humility, in that Thy "Word was made flesh" and dwelt among men, — Thou procuredst for me, by the instrumentality of one inflated with most monstrous pride, certain books of the Platonists, translated from 'Greek into Latin. And therein I read, not indeed in the same words, but to the selfsame effects enforced by many and divers reasons, that, "**In the beginning was the Word,**

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

8

and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made.””

Agostinho, Carta 137, Cap.4, 14

“For I think that such signs of divine power are demanded by these objectors as were not suitable for Him to do when wearing the nature of men. **The Word was in the beginning, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,** and by Him all things were made”

Agostinho, Carta 219, Cap.4, 14

“For, as you obeyed in regard to him the apostolic precept, “Warn the unruly,” so it was our part to obey the precept immediately annexed, “Comfort the feeble-minded, and support the weak.” His error was indeed not unimportant, seeing that he neither approved what is right nor perceived what is true in some things relating to the only-begotten Son of God, of whom it is written that, **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,”** but that when the fullness of time had come, “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us;” for he denied that God became man, regarding it as a doctrine from which it must follow necessarily that the divine substance in which He is equal to the Father suffered some unworthy change or corruption, and not seeing that he was thus introducing into the Trinity a fourth person, which is utterly contrary to the sound doctrine of the Creed and of Catholic truth”

Agostinho, Cidade de Deus, Cap.29

“This is the vice of the proud. It is, forsooth, a degradation for learned men to pass from the school of Plato to the discipleship of Christ, who by His Spirit taught a fisherman to think and to say, **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.** The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.” The old saint Simplicianus, afterwards bishop of Milan, used to tell me that a certain Platonist was in the habit of saying that this opening passage of the holy gospel, entitled, According to John, should be written in letters of gold, and hung up in all churches in the most conspicuous place”

Agostinho, Sobre a Doutrina Cristã, Livro 3, Cap.2, 3

“Now look at some examples. The heretical pointing, “In principio erat verbum, et verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat,” so as to make the next sentence run, “Verbum hoc erat in principio apud Deum ,” arises out of unwillingness to confess that the Word was God. But this must be rejected by the rule of faith, which, in reference to the equality of the Trinity, directs us to say: “et Deus erat verbum;” and then to add: “hoc erat in principio apud Deum.””

Agostinho, Sobre a Trindade, Livro 1, Cap.6,9

“They who have said that our Lord Jesus Christ is not God, or not very God, or not with the Father the One and only God, or not truly immortal because changeable, are proved wrong by the most plain and unanimous voice of divine testimonies; as, for instance, **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”** For it is plain that we are to take the Word of God to be the only Son of God, of whom it is afterwards said, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,” on account of that birth of His incarnation, which was wrought in time of the Virgin. But herein is declared, not only that He is God, but also that He is of the same substance with the Father; because, after saying, “And the Word was God,” it is said also, “The same was in the beginning with God: all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made.” Not simply “all things;” but only all things that were made, that is; the whole creature. From which it appears clearly, that He Himself was not made, by whom all things were made”

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

9

Agostinho, Sobre a Trindade, Livro 2, Cap.5,9

“For who would embrace so impious an opinion as to think the Father to have uttered a word in time, in order that the eternal Son might thereby be sent and might appear in the flesh in the fullness of time? But assuredly it was in that Word of God itself which was in the beginning with God and was God, namely, in the wisdom itself of God, apart from time, at what time that wisdom must needs appear in the flesh. Therefore, since without any commencement of time, the Word was in the beginning, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, it was in the Word itself without any time, at what time the Word was to be made flesh and dwell among us. And when this fullness of time had come, “God sent His Son, made of a woman,” that is, made in time, that the Incarnate Word might appear to men; while it was in that Word Himself, apart from time, at what time this was to be done; for the order of times is in the eternal wisdom of God without time.”

Agostinho, Sobre a Trindade, Livro 4, Cap.1,3

“Because therefore the Word of God is One, by which all things were made, which is the unchangeable truth, all things are simultaneously therein, potentially and unchangeably; not only those things which are now in this whole creation, but also those which have been and those which shall be. And therein they neither have been, nor shall be, but only are; and all things are life, and all things are one; or rather it is one being and one life. For all things were so made by Him, that whatsoever was made in them was not made in Him, but was life in Him. Since, **in the beginning,**” the Word was not made, but **“the Word was with God, and the Word was God,** and all things were made by Him;” neither had all things been made by Him, unless He had Himself been before all things and not made”

Agostinho, Sobre a Trindade, Livro 6, Cap.2,3

“But in that which is added, “And the Word was with God,” there is much reason to understand thus: “The Word,” which is the Son alone, “was with God,” which is not the Father alone, but God the Father and the Son together. But what wonder is there, if this can be said in the case of some twofold things widely different from each other? For what are so different as soul and body? Yet we can say the soul was with a man, that is, in a man; although the soul is not the body, and man is both soul and body together. So that what follows in the Scripture, “And the Word was God,” may be understood thus: The Word, which is not the Father, was God together with the Father.”

Agostinho, Sobre a Trindade, Livro 13, Cap.1,2

“John the Evangelist has thus begun his Gospel: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

“This entire passage, which I have here taken from the Gospel, contains in its earlier portions what is immutable and eternal, the contemplation of which makes us blessed; but in those which follow, eternal things are mentioned in conjunction with temporal things. And hence some things there belong to knowledge, some to wisdom, according to our previous distinction in the twelfth book. For the words, — “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made”

Agostinho, Sobre a Trindade, Livro 15, Cap.10,19

“Whoever, then, is able to understand a word, not only before it is uttered in sound, but also before the images of its sounds are considered in thought, — for this it is which belongs to no tongue, to wit, of those which are called the tongues of nations, of which our Latin tongue is one; — whoever, I say, is able to understand this, is able now to see through this glass and in this enigma some likeness of that Word of whom it is said, **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”**”

Agostinho, Sobre a Trindade, Livro 15, Cap.11,20

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

1
0

“Not that word which was spoken to this or that prophet, and of which it is said, “Now the word of God grew and multiplied;” and again, “Faith then cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ;” and again, “When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men but, as it is in truth, the word of God” (and there are countless other like sayings in the Scriptures respecting the word of God, which is disseminated in the sounds of many and diverse languages through the hearts and mouths of men; and which is therefore called the word of God, because the doctrine that is delivered is not human, but divine); — but we are now seeking to see, in whatsoever way we can, by means of this likeness, that Word of God of which it is said, “The Word was God;” of which it is said, “All things were made by Him;” of which it is said, “The Word became flesh;” of which it is said “The Word of God on high is the fountain of wisdom.” We must go on, then, to that word of man, to the word of the rational animal, to the word of that image of God, that is not born of God, but made by God; which is neither utterable in sound nor capable of being thought under the likeness of sound such as must needs be with the word of any tongue; but which precedes all the signs by which it is signified, and is begotten from the knowledge that continues in the mind, when that same knowledge is spoken inwardly according as it really is”

Agostinho, The Enchiridion, Cap.35

“Wherefore Christ Jesus, the Son of God, is both God and man; God before all worlds; man in our world: God, because the Word of God (for “the Word was God”); and man, because in His one person the Word was joined with a body and a rational soul. Wherefore, so far as He is God, He and the Father are one; so far as He is man, the Father is greater than He. For when He was the only Son of God, not by grace, but by nature, that He might be also full of grace, He became the Son of man; and He Himself unites both natures in His own identity, and both natures constitute one Christ; because, “being in the form of God, He thought it not robbery to be,” what He was by nature, “equal with God.” But He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of a servant, not losing or lessening the form of God. And, accordingly, He was both made less and remained equal, being both in one, as has been said: but He was one of these as Word, and the other as man. As Word, He is equal with the Father; as man, less than the Father. One Son of God, and at the same time Son of man; one Son of man, and at the same time Son of God; not two Sons of God, God and man, but one Son of God: God without beginning; man with a beginning, our Lord Jesus Christ”

Agostinho, A treatise on faith and the creed, Cap.9, 18

“Accordingly, in so far as He is the Son, of the Father received He it that He is, while that other [the Father] received not this of the Son; and in so far as He, in unutterable mercy, in a temporal dispensation took upon Himself the [nature of] man (hominem), — to wit, the changeable creature that was thereby to be changed into something better, — many statements concerning Him are discovered in the Scriptures, which are so expressed as to have given occasion to error in the impious intellects of heretics, with whom the desire to teach takes precedence of that to understand, so that they have supposed Him to be neither equal with the Father nor of the same substance. Such statements [are meant] as the following: “For the Father is greater than I;” and, “The head of the woman is the man, the Head of the man is Christ, and the Head of Christ is God;” and, “Then shall He Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him;” and, “I go to my Father and your Father, my God and your God,” together with some others of like tenor. Now all these have had a place given them, [certainly] not with the object of signifying an inequality of nature and substance; for to take them so would be to falsify a different class of statements, such as, “I and my Father are one” (unum); and, “He that hath seen me hath seen my Father also;” and, “The Word was God,” for He was not made, inasmuch as “all things were made by Him;” and, “He thought it not robbery to be equal with God;” together with all the other passages of a similar order. But these statements have had a place given them, partly with a view to that administration of His assumption of human nature (administrationem suscepti hominis), in accordance with which it is said that “He emptied Himself:” not that that Wisdom was changed, since it is absolutely unchangeable; but that it was His will to make Himself known in such humble fashion to men.”

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

1

1

Agostinho, A reply to Fautus the Manichean, Livro 3, 1

“I approved with good reason of the beginning of Mark and John, for they have nothing of David, or Mary, or Joseph. John says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,” meaning Christ. Mark says, “The gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God,” as if correcting Matthew, who calls him the Son of David. Perhaps, however, the Jesus of Matthew is a different person from the Jesus of Mark. This is my reason for not believing in the birth of Christ” – Fala de Faustus em diálogo com Agostinho.

Agostinho, A reply to Fautus the Manichean, Livro 7, 2

“He says that the apostles who declared Christ to be the Son of man as well as the Son of God are not to be believed, because they were not present at the birth of Christ, whom they joined when He had reached manhood, nor heard of it from Christ Himself. Why then do they believe John when he says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made,” and such passages, which they agree to, without understanding them? Where did John see this, or did he ever hear it from the Lord Himself? In whatever way John learned this, those who narrate the nativity may have learned also”

Agostinho, A reply to Fautus the Manichean, Livro 13, 8

“He is man, in order that in the form of a servant He might heal the hard in heart, and that they might acknowledge as God Him who became man for their sakes, that their trust might be not in man, but in God-man. He is man taking the form of a servant. And who shall know Him? For “He was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal to God.” He is man, for “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” And who shall know Him? For “in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.””

Agostinho, Writings in Connection with the Donatist Controversy, Cap.1, 3

“And the testimonies in the sacred books are without number, all of which it has not been necessary for me to crowd together into this book. And in all of them, as the Lord Christ is made manifest, whether in accordance with His Godhead, in which He is equal to the Father, so that, “In the beginning was the Word, and; the Word was with God, and the Word was God;” or according to the humility of the flesh which He took upon Him, whereby “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us;” so is His Church made manifest, not in Africa alone, as they most impudently venture in the madness of their vanity to assert, but spread abroad throughout the world”

Agostinho, The Merits and Forgiveness of Sin, Cap.60

“For although it was on earth that He was made the Son of man, yet He did not deem it unworthy of that divinity, in which, although remaining in heaven, He came down to earth, to designate it by the name of the Son of man, as He dignified His flesh with the name of Son of God: that they might not be regarded as if they were two Christs, — the one God, the other man, — but one and the same God and man, — God, because “in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God;” and man, inasmuch as “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” By this means — by the difference between His divinity and His humiliation — He remained in heaven as Son of God, and as Son of man walked on earth; whilst, by that unity of His person which made His two natures one Christ, He both walked as Son of God on earth, and at the same time as the very Son of man remained in heaven”

Agostinho, The Treatise on the gift of Perseverance, Cap.40

“For whence is that word of our Lord: “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now “? And that of the apostle: “I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal: as if unto babes in

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

1

2

Christ I have given you to drink milk, and not meat, for hitherto ye were not able, neither yet indeed now are ye able”? Although, in a certain manner of speaking, it might happen that what is said should be both milk to infants and meat for grown-up persons. As “in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,” what Christian can keep it back? Who can receive it? Or what in sound doctrine can be found more comprehensive?”

Agostinho, Sermão 28, vers. 5

“But when the Lord raised them up, He signified the resurrection. After the resurrection, what is the Law to thee? what Prophecy? Therefore neither Moses nor Elias is seen. He only remaineth to thee, “Who in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” He remaineth to thee, “that God may be all in all.””

Agostinho, Sermão 30, vers. 5

“For He assumed that which He was not, He did not lose that which He was. Forasmuch then as He is both God and man, being pleased that we should live by that which was His, He died in that which was ours. For He had nothing Himself, whereby He could die; nor had we anything whereby we could live. For what was He who had nothing whereby He could die? “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” If thou seek for anything in God whereby He may die, thou wilt not find it. But we all die, who are flesh; men bearing about sinful flesh. Seek out for that whereby sin may live; it hath it not. So then neither could He have death in that which was His own, nor we life in that which was our own; but we have life from that which is His, He death from what is ours. What an exchange!”

Agostinho, Sermão 41, vers. 2

“But when the Jews could not answer the Lord proposing a question, and asking “whose Son they said Christ was;” and they answered, “the Son of David; He goes on with the further question put to them, “How then doth David in spirit call Him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on My right hand till I make Thine enemies My footstool. If David then,” He saith,” in spirit call Him Lord, how is He his Son?” He did not say, “He is not his Son, but how is He his son?” When he saith “How,” it is a word not of negation, but of inquiry; as though He should say to them, “Ye say well indeed that Christ is David’s Son, but David himself doth call Him Lord; whom he then calleth Lord, how is He his Son?” Had the Jews been instructed in the Christian faith, which we hold; had they not closed their hearts against the Gospel, had they wished to have spiritual life in them, they would, as instructed in the faith of the Church, have made answer to this question and said, “Because in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God:” see how He is David’s Lord. But because “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us;” see how He is David’s Son. But as being ignorant, they were silent, nor when they shut their mouths did they open their ears, that what they could not answer when questioned, they might after instruction know”

Agostinho, Sermão 47, vers. 4

“In that He took man’s nature upon Him. Take away His birth of a virgin, take away that He emptied Himself, “taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and found in fashion as a man;” take away this, and where is the combat, where the contest? where the trial? where the victory, which no battle has preceded? “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was nothing made.” Could the Jews have crucified this Word? Could those impious men have mocked this Word? Could this Word have been buffeted? Could this Word have been crowned with thorns? But that He might suffer all this, “the Word was made flesh;” and after He had suffered all this, by rising again He “overcame.” So then He hath “overcome” for us, to whom He hath shown the assurance of His resurrection. Thou sayest then to God, “Have mercy upon the, O Lord, for man hath trodden me down.””

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

1

3

Agostinho, Sermão 54, vers.3

“Let there be no sickness; whom dost thou visit? No captivity; whom dost thou redeem? No quarreling; whom dost thou reconcile? No death; whom dost thou bury? In that world to come, these evils will not be; therefore these services will not be either. Well then did Martha, as touching the bodily — what shall I call it, want, or will, of the Lord? — minister to His mortal flesh. But who was He in that mortal flesh? “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God:” see what Mary was listening to! “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us:” see to whom Martha was ministering!”

Agostinho, Sermão 67

“ON THE WORDS OF THE GOSPEL, JOHN 1:1,
“IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD,
AND THE WORD WAS WITH GOD, AND THE WORD
WAS GOD,” ETC. AGAINST THE ARIANS.

1. The section of the Gospel which has been read, most dearly beloved brethren, looketh for the pure eye of the heart. For from John’s Gospel we have understood our Lord Jesus Christ according to His Divinity for the creating of the whole creation, and according to His Humanity for the recovery of the creature fallen. Now in this same Gospel we find what sort and how great a man was John, that from the dignity of the dispenser it may be understood of how great a price is the Word which could be announced by such a man; yea, rather how without price is That which surpasseth all things. For any purchasable thing is either equal to the price, or it is below it, or it exceeds it. When any one procures a thing for as much as it is worth, the price is equal to the thing which is procured; when for less, it is below it; when for more, it exceeds it. But to the Word of God nothing can either be equaled, or to exchange can anything be below It, or above It. For all things can be below the Word of God, for that “all things were made by Him;” yet are they not in such wise below, as if they were the price of the Word, that any one should give something to receive That. Yet if we may say so, and if any principle or custom of speaking admit this expression, the price for procuring the Word, is the procurer himself, who will have given himself for himself to This Word. Accordingly when we buy anything we look out for something to give, that for the price we give we may have the thing we wish to buy. And that which we give is without us; and if it was with us before, what we give becomes without us, that that which we procure may be with us. Whatever price the purchaser may find it, it must needs be such as that he gives what he has, and receives what he has not; yet so that he from whom the price goes himself remains, and that for which he gives the price is added to him. But whoso would procure this Word, whoso would have it, let him not seek for anything without himself to give, let him give himself. And when he shall have done this, he doth not lose himself, as he loseth the price when he buys anything.

2. The Word of God then is set forth before all men; let them who can, procure It, and they can who have a godly will. For in That Word is peace; and “peace on earth is to men of good will.” So then whoso will procure it, let him give himself. This is as it were the price of the Word, if so it may in any way be said, when he that giveth doth not lose himself, and gaineth the Word for which he giveth himself, and gaineth himself too in the Word to whom he giveth himself. And what giveth he to the Word? Not ought that is any other’s than His, for whom he giveth himself; but what by the Same Word was made, that is given back to Him to be remade; “All things were made by Him.” If all things, then of course man too. If the heaven, and earth, and sea, and all things that are therein, if the whole creation; of course more manifestly he, who being made after the image of God by the Word was made man.

3. I am not now, brethren, discussing how the words, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,” can be understood. After an ineffable sort it may be understood; it cannot by the words of man be made to be understood. I am treating of the Word of God, and telling you why It is not understood. I am not now speaking to make It understood, but I tell you what hinders It from being understood.

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

1

4

For He is a certain Form, a Form not formed, but the Form of all things formed; a Form unchangeable, without failure, without decay, without thee, without place, surpassing all things, being in all things, as at once a kind of foundation in which they are, and a Head-stone under which they are. If you say that all things are in Him, you lie not. For This Word is called the Wisdom of God; and we have it written, “In Wisdom hast Thou made all things.” Lo, then in Him are all things: and yet in that He is God, under Him are all things. I am showing how incomprehensible is what has been read; yet it has been read, not that it should be comprehended by man, but that man should sorrow that he comprehends it not, and find out whereby he is hindered from comprehending, and remove those hindrances, and, himself changed from worse to better, aspire after the perception of the unchangeable Word. For the Word doth not advance or increase by the addition of those who know It; but is Entire, if thou abide; Entire, if thou depart; Entire, when thou dost return; abiding in Itself, and renewing all things. It is then the Form of all things, the Form unfashioned, without thee, as I have said, and without space. For whatsoever is contained in space, is circumscribed. Every form is circumscribed by bounds; it hath limits where-from and whereunto it reaches. Again, what is contained in place, and has extension in a sort of bulk and space, is less in its parts than in the whole. God grant that ye may understand.

4. Now from the bodies which are day by day before our eyes, which we see, which we touch, among which we live, we are able to judge how that every body hath a form in space. Now everything which occupies a certain space, is less in its parts than in its whole. The arm, for instance, is a part of the human body; of course the arm is less than the whole body. And if the arm be less, it occupies a smaller space. So again the head, in that it is a part of the body, is contained in less space, and is less than the whole body of which it is the head. So all things which are in space, are less in their several parts than in the whole. Let us entertain no such idea, no such thought concerning That Word. Let us not form our conceptions of spiritual things from the suggestion of the flesh. That Word, That God, is not less in part than in the whole.

5. But thou art not able to conceive of any such thing. Such ignorance is more pious than presumptuous knowledge. For we are speaking of God. It is said, “And the Word was God.” We are speaking of God; what marvel, if thou do not comprehend? For if thou comprehend, He is not God. Be there a pious confession of ignorance, rather than a rash profession of knowledge. To reach to God in any measure by the mind, is a great blessedness; but to comprehend Him, is altogether impossible. God is an object for the mind, He is to be understood; a body is for the eyes, it is to be seen. But thinkest thou that thou comprehendest a body by the eye? Thou canst not at all. For whatever thou lookest at, thou dost not see the whole. If thou seest a man’s face, thou dost not see his back at the thee thou seest the face; and when thou seest the back, thou dost not at that thee see the face. Thou dost not then so see, as to comprehend; but when thou seest another part which thou hadst not seen before, unless memory aid thee to remember that thou hast seen that from which thou dost withdraw, thou couldest never say that thou hadst comprehended anything even on the surface. Thou handiest what thou seest, turnest it about on this side and that, or thyself dost go round it to see the whole. In one view then thou canst not see the whole. And as long as thou turnest it about to see it, thou art but seeing the parts; and by putting together that thou hast seen the other parts, thou dost fancy that thou seest the whole. But this must not be understood as the sight of the eyes, but the activity of the memory. What then can be said, Brethren, of that Word? Lo, of the bodies which are before our eyes we say they cannot comprehend them by a glance; what eye of the heart then comprehendeth God? Enough that it reach to Him if the eye be pure. But if it reach, it reacheth by a sort of incorporeal and spiritual touch, yet it doth not comprehend; and that, only if it be pure. And a man is made blessed by touching with the heart That which ever abideth Blessed; and that is this Very Everlasting Blessedness, and that Everlasting Life, whereby man is made to live; that Perfect Wisdom, whereby man is made wise; that Everlasting Light, whereby man becomes enlightened. And see how by this touch thou art made what thou wast not, thou dost not make that thou touchest be what it was not before. I repeat it, there grows no increase to God from them that know Him, but to them that know Him, from the knowledge of God. Let us not suppose, dearly beloved Brethren, that we confer any benefit on God, because I have said that we give Him in a manner a price. For we do not give Him aught whereby He can be increased, Who when thou fallest away, is Entire, and when thou returnest, abideth Entire, ready to make Himself seen that He may bless those who turn to Him, and punish those with blindness who turn away. For by this blindness, as the beginning of punishment, doth He first execute vengeance on the soul that turns away from Him. For whoso turns away

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

1

5

from the True Light, that is from God, is at once made blind. He is not yet sensible of his punishment, but he hath it already.

6. Accordingly, dearly beloved brethren, let us understand that the Word of God is incorporeally, inviolably, unchangeably, without temporal nativity, yet born of God. Do we think that we can any how persuade certain unbelievers that that is not it, consistent with the truth, which is said by us according to the Catholic faith, which is contrary to the Arians, by whom the Church of God hath been often tried, forasmuch as carnal men receive with greater ease what they have been accustomed to see? For some have dared to say, “The Father is greater than the Son, and precedes Him in thee;” that is, the Father is greater than the Son, and the Son is less than the Father, and is preceded by the Father in thee. And they argue thus; “If He was born, of course the Father was before His Son was born to Him.” Attend; may He be with me, whilst your prayers assist me, and with godly heed desire to receive what He may give, what He may suggest to me; may He be with me, that I may be able in some sort to explain what I have begun. Yet, brethren, I tell you before I begin, if I shall not be able to explain it, do not suppose that it is the failure of the proof, but of the man. Accordingly I exhort and entreat you to pray; that the mercy of God may be with me, and make the matter be so explained by me, as it meet for you to hear, and for me to speak. They then say thus; “If He be the Son of God, He was born.” This we confess. For He would not be a Son, if He were not born. It is plain, the faith admits it, the Catholic Church approves it, it is truth. They then go on; “If the Son was born to the Father, the Father was before the Son was born to Him.” This the faith rejects, Catholic ears reject it, it is anathematized, whoso entertains this conceit is without, he belongs not to the fellowship and society of the saints. Then says he, “Give me an explanation, how the Son could be born to the Father, and yet be coeval with Him of whom He was born ?”

7. And what can we do, brethren, when we are conveying lessons of spiritual things to carnal men; even if so be we ourselves too are not carnal, when we intimate these spiritual truths to carnal then, to men accustomed to the idea of earthly nativities, and seeing the order of these creatures, where succession and departure separates off in age them that beget and them that are begotten? For after the father the son is born, to succeed the father, who in thee of course must die. This do we find in men, this in other animals, that the parents are first, the children after them in thee. Through this custom of observation they desire to transfer carnal things to spiritual, and by their intentness on carnal things are more easily led into error. For it is not the reason of the hearers which follows those who preach such things, but custom which even entangles themselves, that they do preach such things. Anti what shall we do? Shall we keep silence? Would that we might! For perchance by silence something might be thought of worthy of the unspeakable subject. For whatsoever cannot be spoken, is unspeakable. Now God is unspeakable. For if the Apostle Paul saith, that he “was caught up even unto the third heaven, and that he heard unspeakable words ;” how much more unspeakable is He, who showed such things, which could not be spoken by him to whom they were shown? So then, brethren, if could keep silence, and say, “This is the faith contains; so we believe; thou art not able to receive it, thou art but a babe; thou must patiently endure till thy wings be grown, lest when thou wouldest fly without wings, it should not be the free course of liberty, but the fill of temerity.” What do they say against this? “O if he had anything to say, he would say it to me. This is the mere excuse of one who is at fault. He is overcome by the truth, who does not choose to answer.” He to whom this is said, if he make no answer, though he be not conquered in himself is yet conquered in the wavering brethren. For the weak brethren hear it, and they think that there is really nothing to be said; and perhaps they think right that there is nothing to be said, yet not that there is nothing to be felt. For a man can express nothing which he cannot also feel; but he may feel something which he cannot express.

8. Nevertheless, saving the unspeakableness of that Sovereign Majesty, test when we shall have produced certain similitudes against them, any one should think that we have by them arrived at that which cannot be expressed or conceived by babes (and if it can be at all even by the more advanced, it can only be in part, only in a riddle, only “through a glass;” but not as yet, “rice to rice”), let us too produce certain similitudes against them, whereby they may be refuted, not “it” comprehended. For when we say that it may very possibly happen, that it may be understood, that He may both be born, and yet Coeternal with Him of whom He was born, in order to refute this, and prove it as it were to be false, they bring forth similitudes against us. I From whence? From the creatures, and they say to us, “Every man of course was before he begat a son, he is greater in age

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

1

6

than his son; and so a horse was before he begat his foal, and a sheep, and the other animals.” Thus do they bring similitudes from the creatures.

9. What! must we labor too, that we may find resemblances of those things which we are establishing? And what if I should not find any, might I not rightly say, “The Nativity of the Creator hath, it may be, no resemblance of itself among the creatures? For as far as He surpasseth the things which are here, in that He is there, so far doth He surpass the things which are born here, in that He was born there. All things here have their being from God; and yet what is to be compared with God? So all things which are born here, are born by His agency. And so perhaps there is no resemblance of His Nativity found, as there is none found whether of His Substance, Unchangeableness, Divinity, Majesty. For what can be found here like these? If then it chance that no resemblance of His Nativity either be found, am I therefore overwhelmed, because I have not found resemblances to the Creator of all things, when desiring to find in the creature what is like the Creator?”

10. And in very truth, Brethren, I am not likely to discover any temporal resemblances which I can compare to eternity. But as to those which thou hast discovered, what are they? What hast thou discovered? That a father is greater in time than his son; and therefore thou wouldest have the Son of God to be less in time than the Eternal Father, because thou hast found that a son is less than a father born in time. Find me an eternal father here, and thou hast found a resemblance. Thou findest a son less than a father in time, a temporal son less than a temporal father. Hast thou found me a temporal son younger than eternal father? Seeing then that in Eternity is stability, but in time variety; in Eternity all things stand still, in time one thing comes, another succeeds; thou canst find a son of lesser age succeeding his father in the variety of time, for that he himself succeeded to his father also, not a son born in time to a father eternal. How then, Brethren, can we find in the creature aught coeternal, when in the creature we find nothing eternal? Do thou find an eternal father in the creature, and I will find a coeternal son. But if thou find not an eternal father, and the one surpasses the other in thee; it is sufficient, that for a resemblance I find something coeval. For what is coeternal is one thing what is coeval another. Every day we call them coeval who have the same measure of times; the one is not preceded by the other in thee, yet they both whom we call coeval once began to “be.” Now if I shall be able to discover something which is born coeval with that of which it is born; if two coeval things can be discovered, that which begets, and that which is begotten; we discover in this case things coeval, let us understand in the other things coeternal. If here I shall find that a thing begotten hath begun to be ever since that which besets began to be, we may understand at least that the Son of God did not begin to be, ever since He that begat Him did not begin to be. Lo, brethren, perhaps we may discover something in the creature, which is born of something else, and which yet began to be at the same time as that of which it is born began to be. In the latter case, the one began to be when the other began to be; in the former the one did not begin to be, ever since the other began not to be. the first then is coeval, the second coeternal.

11. I suppose that your holiness has understood already what I am saying, that temporal things cannot be compared to eternal; but that by some slight and small resemblance, things coeval may be with things coeternal. Let us find accordingly two coeval things; and let us get our hints as to these resemblances from the Scriptures. We read in the Scriptures of Wisdom, “For she is the Brightness of the Everlasting Light.” Again we read, “The unspotted Mirror of the Majesty of God.” Wisdom Herself is called, “The Brightness of the Everlasting Light,” is called, “The Image of the Father;” from hence let us take a resemblance, that we may find two coeval things, from which we may understand things coeternal. O thou Arian, if I shall find that something that begets does not precede in time that which it begat, that a thing begotten is not less in time than that of which it is begotten; it is but just that thou concede to me, that these coeternals may be found in the Creator, when coevals can be found in the creature. I think that this indeed occurs already to some brethren. For some anticipated me as soon as I said, “For She is the Brightness of the Everlasting Light.” For the fire throws out light, light is thrown out from the fire. If we ask which comes from which, every day when we light a candle are we reminded of some invisible and indescribable thing, that the candle as it were of our understanding may be lighted in this night of the world. Observe him who lights a candle. While the candle is not lighted, there is as yet no fire, nor any brightness which proceedeth from the fire. But I ask, saying, “Does the brightness come from the fire, or the fire from the brightness?” Every soul answers me (for it has pleased God to sow the beginnings of

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

1

7

understanding and wisdom in every soul); every soul answers me, and no one doubts, that that brightness comes from the fire, not the fire from the brightness. Let us then look at the fire as the father of that brightness; for I have said before that we are looking for things coeval, not coeternal. If I desire to light a candle, there is as yet no fire there, nor yet that brightness; but immediately that I have lighted it, together with the fire comes forth the brightness also. Give me then here a fire without brightness, and I believe you that the Father ever was without the Son.

12. Attend; The matter has been explained by me as so great a matter could be, by the Lord helping the earnestness of your prayers, and the preparation of your heart, ye have taken ill as much as ye were able to receive. Yet these things are ineffable. Do not suppose that anything worthy of the subject has been spoken, if it only be for that things carnal are compared with coeternal, things temporal with things abiding ever, things subject to extinction to things immortal. But inasmuch as the Son is said also to be the Image of the Father, let us take from this too a sort of resemblance, though in things very different, as I have said before. The image of a man looking into a glass is thrown out from the glass. But this cannot assist us for the clearing of that which we are endeavoring in some sort to explain. For it is said to me, "A man who looks into a glass of course, 'was' already, and was born before that. The image came out only as soon as he looked at himself. For a man who looks in a glass, 'was' before he came to the glass." What then shall we find, from which we may be able to draw out such a resemblance, as we did from the fire and the brightness? Let us find one from a very little thing. You know without any difficulty how water often throws out the images of bodies. I mean, when any one is passing, or standing still along the water, he sees his own image there. let us suppose then something born on the water's side, as a shrub, or an herb, is it not born together with its image? As soon as ever it begins to be, its image begins to be with it, it does not precede in its birth its own image; it cannot be showed to me that anything is born upon the water's side, and that its image has appeared afterwards, whereas it first appeared without its image; but it is born together with its image; and yet the image comes from it, not it from the image. It is born then together with its image, and the shrub and its image begin to be together. Dost thou not confess that the image is begotten of that shrub, not the shrub of the image? So then thou dost confess that the image is from that shrub. Accordingly that which begets and that which is begotten began to "be" together. Therefore they are coeval. If the shrub had been always, the image from the shrub would have been always too. Now that which has its being from something else, is of course born of it. It is possible then that one that begets might always be, and always be together with that which was born of him. For here it was that we were in perplexity and trouble, how the Eternal Nativity might be understood. So then the Son of God is so called on this principle, that there is the Father also, that He hath One from whom He derives His Being; not on this, that the Father is first in thee, and the Son after. The Father always was, the Son always from the Father. And because whatever "is" from another thing, is born, therefore the Son was always born. The Father always was, the image from Him always was; as that image of the shrub was born of the shrub, and if the shrub had always been, the image would also have always been born from the shrub. Thou couldst not find things begotten coeternal with the eternal begetters, but thou hast found things born coeval with those that begat them in thee. I understand the Son coeternal with the Eternal who begat Him. For what with regard to things of thee is coeval, with regard to things eternal is coeternal.

13. Here there is somewhat for you to consider, Brethren, as a protection against blasphemies. For it is constantly said, "See thou hast produced certain resemblances; but the brightness which is thrown out from the fire, shines less brilliantly than the fire itself, and the image of the shrub has less proper subsistence, than that shrub of which it is the image. These instances have a resemblance, but they have not a thorough equality: wherefore they do not seem to be of the same substance." What then shall we say, if any one say, "The Father then is to the Son, such as the brightness is to the fire, and the image to the shrub"? See I have understood the Father to be eternal; and the Son to be coeternal with Him; nevertheless say we that He is as the brightness which is thrown out from and is less brilliant than the fire, or as the image which is reflected from and has less real existence than the shrub? No, but there is a thorough equality. "I do not believe it," he will say, "because thou hast not discovered a resemblance." Well then, believe the Apostle, because he was able to see what I have said. For he says, "He thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Equality is perfect likeness in every way. And what said he? "Not robbery." Why? Because that is robbery which belongs to another.

14. Yet from these two comparisons, these two kinds, we may perhaps find in the creature a resemblance whereby we may understand how the Son is both coeternal with the Father, and in no respect less than He. But this we cannot find in one kind of resemblances singly: let us join both kinds together. How both kinds? One, of which they themselves give instances of resemblances, and the other, of which we gave. For they gave instances of resemblances from those things which are born in thee, and are preceded in thee by them of whom they are born, as man of man. He that is born first is greater in thee; but yet man and man, that is of the same substance. For man begets a man, and a horse a horse, and a sheep a sheep. These beget after the same substance, but not after the same thee. They are diverse in thee, but not in nature diverse. What then do we praise here in this nativity? The equality of nature surely. But what is wanting? The equality of thee. Let us retain the one thing which is praised here, that is, the equality of nature. But in the other kind of resemblances, which we gave from the brightness of the fire and the image of the shrub, you find not an equality of nature, you do find an equality of thee. What do we praise here? Equality of thee. What is wanting? Equality of nature. Join the things which you praise together. For in the creatures there is wanting something which you praise, in the Creator nothing can be wanting: because what you find in the creature, came forth from the Hand of the Creator. What then is there in things coeval? Must not that be given to God which you praise herein? But what is wanting must not be attributed to that Sovereign Majesty, in the which there is no defect. See I offer to you things begetting coeval with things begotten: in these you praise the equality of thee, but find fault with the inequality of nature. What you find fault with, do not attribute to God; what you praise, attribute to Him; so from this kind of resemblances you attribute to Him instead of a cotemporaneousness a coeternity, that the Son may be coeternal with Him of whom He was born. But from the other kind of resemblances, which itself too is a creature of God, and ought to praise the Creator, what do you praise in them? Equality of nature. You had before assigned coeternity by reason of the first distinction; by reason of this last, assign equality; and the nativity of the same substance is complete. For what is more mad, my brethren, than that I should praise the creature in anything which does not exist in the Creator? In man I praise equality of nature, shall I not believe it in Him who made man? That which is born of man is man; shall not that which is born of God, be That which He is of whom He was born? Converse have I none with works which God hath not made. Let then all the works of the Creator praise Him. I find in the one ease a cotemporaneousness, I get at the knowledge of a coeternity in the other. In the first I find an equality of nature, I understand an equality of substance in the other. In this then that is “wholly,” which in the ether case is found in the several parts, and several things. It is then “wholly” here altogether, and not only what is in the creature; I find it wholly here, but as being in the Creator, in so much higher a way, in that the one is visible, the Other Invisible; the one temporal, the Other Eternal; the one changeable, the Other Unchangeable; the one corruptible, the Other Incorruptible. Lastly, in the case of men themselves, what we Find, man and man, are two men; here the Father and the Son are One God.

15. I render unspeakable thanks to our Lord God, that He hath vouchsafed, at your prayers, to deliver my infirmity from this most perplexed and difficult place. Yet above all things remember this, that the Creator transcends indescribably whatever we could gather from the creature, whether by the bodily senses, or the thought of the mind. But wouldest thou with the mind reach Him? Purify thy mind, purify thine heart. Make clean the eye whereby That, whatever It be, may be reached. For “blessed are the clean in heart, for they shall see God.” But whilst the heart was not cleansed, what could be provided and granted more mercifully by Him, than that That Word of whom we have spoken so great and so many things, and yet have spoken nothing worthy of Him; that That Word, “by whom all things were made,” should become that which we are, that we might be able to attain to That which we are not? For we are not God; but with the mind or the interior eye of the heart we can see God. Our eyes dulled by sins, blinded, enfeebled by infirmity, desire to see; but we are in hope, not yet in possession. We are the children of God. This saith John, who says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; “ he who lay on the Lord’s Breast, who drew in these secrets from the Bosom of His Heart; he says, “Dearly beloved, we are the children of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” This is promised us.

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

1

9

16. But in order that we may attain, if we cannot yet see God the Word, let us hear the Word made Flesh; seeing we are carnal, let us hear the Word Incarnate. For for this cause came He, for this cause took upon Him our infirmity, that thou mightest be able to receive the strong words of a God bearing thy weakness. And He is truly called “milk.” For He giveth milk to infants, that He may give the meat of wisdom to them of riper years. Suck then now with patience, that thou mayest be fed to thy heart’s most eager wish. For how is even the milk, wherewith infants are suckled, made? Was it not solid meat on the table? But the infant is not strong enough to eat the meat which is on the table; what does the mother do? She turns the meat into the substance of her flesh, and makes milk of it. Makes for us what we may be able to take. So the Word was made Flesh, that we little ones, who were indeed as infants with respect to food, might be nourished by milk. But there is this difference; that when the mother makes the food turned into flesh milk, the food is turned into milk; whereas the Word abiding Itself unchangeably assumed Flesh, that there might be, as it were, a tissue of the two. What He is, He did not corrupt or change, that in the fashion, He might speak to thee, not transformed and turned into man. For abiding unalterable, unchangeable, and altogether inviolable, He became what thou art in respect of thee, what He is in Himself in respect of the Father.

17. For what doth He say Himself to the infirm, to the end that recovering that sight, they may be able in some measure to reach the Word by whom all things were made? “Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, that I am meek and lowly in heart.” What doth the Master, the Son of God, the Wisdom of God, by whom all things were made, proclaim? He calleth the human race, and saith, “Come unto Me, all ye that labor, and learn of Me.” Thou wast thinking haply that the Wisdom of God would say, “Learn how I have made the heavens and the stars; how all things also were numbered in Me before they were made, how by virtue of unchangeable principles your very hairs were numbered.” Didst thou think that Wisdom would say these things, and such as these? No. But first that. “That I am meek and lowly in heart.” Lo, see here what ye can comprehend, brethren; it is surely a little thing. We are making our way to great things, let us receive the little things, and we shall be great. Wouldest thou comprehend the height of God? First comprehend the lowliness of God. Condescend to be humble for thine own sake, seeing that God condescended to be humble for thy sake too; for it was not for His own. Comprehend then the lowliness of Christ, learn to be humble, be loth to be proud Confess thine infirmity, lie patiently before the Physician; when thou shalt have comprehended His lowliness, thou risest with Him; not as though He should rise Himself in that He is the Word; but thou rather, that He may be more anti more comprehended by thee. At first thou didst understand falteringly and hesitatingly; afterwards thou wilt understand more surely and more clearly. He doth not increase, but thou makest progress, and He seemeth as it were to rise with thee. So it is, brethren. Believe the commandments of God, and do them, and He will give you the strength of understanding. Do not put the last first, and, as it were, prefer knowledge to the! commandments of God; lest ye be only the lower, and none the more firmly rooted. Consider a tree; first it strikes downwards, that it may grow up on high; fixes its root low in the ground, that it may extend its top to heaven. Does it make an effort to grow except from humiliation? And wouldest thou without charity comprehend these transcendent matters, shoot toward the heaven without a root? This were a ruin, not a growing. With “Christ” then “dwelling in your hearts by faith, be ye rooted and grounded in charity, that ye may be filled with all the fullness of God.””

Agostinho, Sermão 68, 1

“Now when we heard “The Word was,” with whom was It? We understand the Father who did not make nor create the Same Word, but begat Him. For, “In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth.” Whereby made He them? “The Word was, and the Word was with God;” but what kind of Word? Did it sound and so pass away? Was it a mere thought, and motion of the mind? No. Was it suggested by memory, and uttered? No. What kind of Word then? Why dost thou look for many words from me? “The Word was God.” When we hear, “The Word was God,” we do not make a second God; but we understand the Son. For the Word is the Son of God. Lo, the Son, and What but God? For “The Word was God.” What the Father? God of course. If the Father is God and the Son God, do we make two Gods? God forbid. The Father is God, the Son God; but the Father and the Son One God”

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

2
0

Agostinho, Sermão 69, 2

““In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” 6 O glorious preaching! O the result of the full feast of the Lord’s Breast! “In the beginning was the Word.” Why seekest thou for what was before It? “In the beginning was the Word.” If the Word had been made (for made indeed that was not by which all things were made); if the Word had been made, the Scripture would have said, “In the beginning God made the Word;” as it is said in Genesis, “In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth.” God then did not in the beginning make the Word; because, “In the beginning was the Word.” This Word which was in the beginning, where was It? Follow on, “And the Word was with God.” But from our daily hearing the words of men we are wont to think lightly of this name of “Word.” In this case do not think lightly of the Name of “Word;” “The Word was God. The same,” that is the Word, “was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was nothing made.””

Agostinho, Sermão 69, 5

“Let no man in poorness of soul entertain this conceit, and turn over such most beggarly thoughts in his mind, and say to himself, “How ‘in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God: all things were made by Him;’ and lo, ‘ the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us ?’“ Hear why it was done. “To those” we know “who believed on Him He hath given power to become the sons of God.” Let not those then to whom He hath given power to become the sons of God, think it impossible to become the sons of God. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” Do not imagine that it is too great a thing for you to become the sons of God; for your sakes He became the Son of man, who was the Son of God. If He was made, that He might be less, who was more; can He not bring it to pass, that of that less which we were, we may be something more? He descended to us, and shall not we ascend to Him? For us He accepted our death, and shall He not give us His Life? For thee He suffered thy evil things, and shall He not give thee His good things?”

Agostinho, Sermão 69, 6

““But how,” one will say, “can it be, that the Word of God, by whom the world is governed, by whom all things both were, and are created, should contract Himself into the womb of a Virgin; should abandon the world, and leave the Angels, and be shut up in one woman’s womb?” Thou skillest not to conceive of things divine. The Word of God (I am speaking to thee, O man, I am speaking to thee of the omnipotence of the Word of God) could surely do all, seeing that the Word of God is omnipotent, at once remain with the Father, and come to us; at once in the flesh come forth to us, and lay concealed in Him. For He would not the less have been, if He had not been born of flesh. He “was” before His own flesh; He created His Own mother. He chose her in whom He should be conceived, He created her of whom He should be created. Why marvelest thou? It is God of whom I am speaking to thee: “The Word was God.””

Agostinho, Sermão 74, 3

“But now the truth sets forth to thee, Christ Unchangeable in His Nature as the Word. For, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God;” not a word to sound, and so pass away; for “the Word was God.” So then thy God endureth unchangeable”

Agostinho, Sermão 75, 3

““The Jews wished to kill Him, not only because He did these things on the sabbaths, but because He called Himself the Son of God, making Himself equal with God.” For Christ called Himself the Son after one manner, in another was it said to men, “I said, Ye are Gods, and ye are all children of the Most High.” For if He had made Himself the Son of God in such sort as any man whatever may be called the son of God (for by the grace of God men are called sons of God); the Jews would not have been enraged. But because they understand Him to call Himself the Son of God in another way, according to that, “In the beginning was the Word, and the

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

2

1

Word was with God, and the Word was God;” and according to what the Apostle saith, “Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God;” they saw a than, and they were enraged, because He made Himself equal with God. But He well knew that He was equal, but Wherein they saw not”

Agostinho, Sermão 76, 5

“He also came, He did miracles. Thou couldest not see God, a man thou couldest; so God was made Man, that in One thou mightest have both what to see, and what to believe. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Agostinho, Sermão 76, 6

“He brought thee then a temporal miracle, that thou mayest seek and admire Him who is Eternal. For He “who came forth as a Bridegroom out of His chamber,” that is, out of the virgin’s womb, where the holy nuptials were celebrated of the Word and the Flesh: He brought, I say, a temporal miracle; but He is Himself: eternal, He is coeternal with the Father, He it is, who “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” He did for thee whereby thou mightest be cured, that thou mightest be able to see what thou didst not see. What thou despisest in Christ, is not yet the contemplation of him that is made whole, but the medicine of the sick. Do not hasten to the vision of the whole. The Angels see, the Angels rejoice, the Angels feed Thereon and live; Whereon they feed faileth not, nor is their food minished. In the thrones of glory, in the regions of the heavens, in the parts which are above the heavens, the Word is seen by the Angels, and is their Joy; is their Food, and endureth. But in order that man might eat Angel’s Bread, the Lord of Angels became Man. This is our Salvation, the Medicine of the infirm, the Food of the whole”

Agostinho, Sermão 84, 4

“So then before times, before all that is called “before;” before all that is not, or before all that is. For the Gospel does not say, “In the beginning God made the Word;” as it is said, “In the beginning God made the Heaven and the earth;” or, “In the beginning was the Word born;” or, “In the beginning God begat the Word.” But what says it? “He was, He was, He was.” You hear, “He was;” believe. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” So often do ye hear, “Was:” seek not for thee, for that He always “ was.””

Agostinho, Sermão 85, 8

“Now it is the same John who said, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” See ye what heights he had passed, that he could reach to the Word Such an one, and so great, who like an eagle soared above the clouds, who in the serene clearness of his mind saw, “In the beginning was the Word ;” he hath said, “If we shall say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we shall confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Therefore pray ye”

Agostinho, Lectures Or Tractates On The Gospel According To St. John, Tractate 1, 1

“When I give heed to what we have just read from the apostolic lesson, that “the natural man perceiveth not the things which are of the Spirit of God,” and consider that in the present assembly, my beloved, there must of necessity be among you many natural men, who know only according to the flesh, and cannot yet raise themselves to spiritual understanding, I am in great difficulty how, as the Lord shall grant, I may be able to express, or in my small measure to explain, what has been read from the Gospel, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God;” for this the natural man does not perceive. What then, brethren? Shall we be silent for this cause? Why then is it read, if we are to be silent regarding it? Or why is it heard, if it be not explained?”

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

2
2

Agostinho, Lectures Or Tractates On The Gospel According To St. John, Tractate 1, 5

“Accordingly, brethren, of these mountains was John also, who said, “ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” This mountain had received peace; he was contemplating the divinity of the Word. Of what sort was this mountain? How lofty? He had risen above all peaks of the earth, he had risen above all plains of the sky, he had risen above all heights of the stars, he had risen above all choirs and legions of the angels. For unless he rose above all those things which were created, he would not arrive at Him by whom all things were made. You cannot imagine what he rose above, unless you see at what he arrived. Dost thou inquire concerning heaven and earth? They were made. Dost thou inquire concerning the things that are in heaven and earth? Surely much more were they made. Dost thou inquire concerning spiritual beings, concerning angels, archangels, thrones, dominions, powers, principalities? These also were made. For when the Psalm enumerated all these things, it finished thus: “ He spoke, and they were made; He commanded, and they were created.” If “He spoke and they were made,” it was by the Word that they were made; but if it was by the Word they were made, the heart of John could not reach to that which he says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,” unless he had risen above all things that were made by the Word. What a mountain this! How holy! How high among those mountains that received peace for the people of God, that the hills might receive righteousness !” (cf. verso 7)

Agostinho, Lectures Or Tractates On The Gospel According To St. John, Tractate 1, 8

“But let us see what advantage it is that these words have sounded, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” We also uttered words when we spoke. Was it such a word that was with God? Did not those words which we uttered sound and pass away? Did God’s Word, then, sound and come to an end? If so, how were all things made by it, and without it was nothing made? how is that which it created ruled by it, if it sounded and passed away? What sort of a word, then, is that which is both uttered and passes not away? Give ear, my beloved, it is a great matter”

Agostinho, Lectures Or Tractates On The Gospel According To St. John, Tractate 1, 10

“Perhaps some one now answers me, “Who so conceives this Word?” Do not then imagine, as it were, some paltry thing when thou hearest “ the Word,” nor suppose it to be words such as thou hearest them every day — “he spoke such words,” “such words he uttered,” “such words you tell me;” for by constant repetition the term word has become, so to speak, worthless. And when thou hearest, “In the beginning was the Word,” lest thou shouldst imagine something worthless, such as thou hast been accustomed to think of when thou weft went to listen to human words, hearken to what thou must think of: “The Word was God.””

Agostinho, Lectures Or Tractates On The Gospel According To St. John, Tractate 1, 12

“The evangelist says, “In the beginning was the Word;” and thou sayest, “ In the beginning the Word was made.” He says, “All things were made by Him;” and thou sayest that the Word Himself was made. The evangelist might have said, “In the beginning the Word was made:” but what does he say? “In the beginning was the Word.” If He was, He was not made; that all things might be made by it, and without Him nothing be made. If, then, “in the beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God;” if thou canst not imagine what it is, wait till thou art grown. That is strong meat: receive thou milk that thou mayest be nourished, and be able to receive strong meat.” (cf. verso 13).

Agostinho, Lectures Or Tractates On The Gospel According To St. John, Tractate 1, 18

“Wherefore a little after he says, “That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” By that light John the Baptist was illuminated; by the same light also was John the Evangelist himself illuminated. He was filled with that light who said, “I am not the Christ; but He cometh after me, whose shoe’s

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

2

3

latchet I am not worthy to unloose.” By that light he had been illuminated who said, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Therefore that life is the light of men.”

Agostinho, Lectures Or Tractates On The Gospel According To St. John, Tractate 2, 1

“It is fitting, brethren, that as far as possible we should treat of the text of Holy Scripture, and especially of the Holy Gospel, without omitting any portion, that both we ourselves may derive nourishment according to our capacity, and may minister to you from that source from which we have been nourished. Last Lord’s day, we remember, we treated of the first section; that is, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was nothing made. That which was made, in Him is life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.” So far, I believe, had I advanced in the treatment of the passage: let all who were present recall what was then said; and those of you who were not present, believe me and those who chose to be present”

Agostinho, Lectures Or Tractates On The Gospel According To St. John, Tractate 2, 2

“It goes on, “There was a man sent from God whose name was John.” Truly, brethren beloved, those things which were said before, were said regarding the ineffable divinity of Christ, and almost ineffably. For who shall comprehend “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God “? And do not allow the name word to appear mean to you, through the habit of daily words, for it is added, “and the Word was God.” This Word is He of whom yesterday we spoke much; and I trust that God was present, and that even from only thus much speaking something reached your hearts. “In the beginning was the Word.” He is the same, and is in the same manner; as He is, so He is always; He cannot be changed; that is, He is. This His name He spoke to His servant Moses: “I am that I am; and He that is hath sent me.””

B. Greek

Inácio de Antioquia - Aos Antiloquianos, Capítulo 4

“O evangelista também declara que o único Pai era o ‘único e verdadeiro Deus’, não omite o que é concernente ao nosso Senhor, mas escreve: **No princípio era a Palavra, e a Palavra estava com Deus e a Palavra era Deus.** O mesmo estava com Deus no princípio e ‘todas as coisas foram feitas por intermédio Dele, e sem Ele nada do que foi feito se fez’. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.” And concerning the incarnation: “The Word,” says [the Scripture], “became flesh, and dwelt among us.” And again: “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.” And those very apostles, who said “that there is one God,” said also that “there is one Mediator between God and men.” Nor were they ashamed of the incarnation and the passion. For what says [one]? “The man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself” for the life and salvation of the world” (cf. Inácio, *Aos Tacinianos*, capítulo 6).

Irineu – Contra Heresias, Livro 1, Cap.8, verso 5.

“E ele se expressa assim: **No princípio era a Palavra, e a Palavra estava com Deus, e a Palavra era Deus;** o mesmo estava no princípio com Deus (...) Tendo primeiro de tudo distinguido esses três – Deus, o princípio e a Palavra – ele novamente os une, de modo que ele apresenta a produção de cada um deles, isto é, do Filho, a Palavra, e ao mesmo tempo demonstra sua união um com o outro com o Pai.. No princípio ele está no Pai, ao mesmo tempo que a Palavra está no princípio e além do princípio. Apropriadamente, então, ele diz: ‘No princípio era a Palavra’ por que Ele estava no Filho; “e a Palavra estava com Deus’ por que Ele estava no princípio; ‘e a palavra era Deus’ claro, por que aquele é gerado de Deus é Deus” (cf. *Contra Heresias*, Livro 3, Cap.11.1, 8).

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

2
4

Irineu – Contra Heresias, Livro 1, Cap.18, verso 2.

“For the Father bears the creation and His own Word simultaneously, and the Word borne by the Father grants the Spirit to all as the Father wills. To some He gives after the manner of creation what is made; but to others [He gives] after the manner of adoption, that is, what is from God, namely generation. And thus one God the Father is declared, who is above all, and through all, and in all. The Father is indeed above all, and He is the Head of Christ; but the Word is through all things, and is Himself the Head of the Church; while the Spirit is in us all, and He is the living water, which the Lord grants to those who rightly believe in Him, and love Him, and who know that “there is one Father, who is above all, and through all, and in us all.” And to these things does John also, the disciple of the Lord, bear witness, when he speaks thus in the Gospel: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. This was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was nothing made.””

Clemente de Alexandria, Exhortation to the Heathen, Cap.1

“Você tem as promessas de Deus; você tem Seu Amor: tornou-se participante de Sua Graça. E não suponha que a música da salvação para ser nova como o vaso ou a casa é nova. Pois ‘antes da manhã estrela era’ e ‘no princípio era a Palavra, e a Palavra estava com Deus, e a **Palavra era Deus**’. O erro parece antigo, mas a verdade uma nova coisa”

Clemente de Alexandria – O Instrutor, Livro I Capítulo 8

“For both are one — that is, God. For He has said, “**In the beginning the Word was in God, and the Word was God.**” If then He hates none of the things which He has made, it follows that He loves them. Much more than the rest, and with reason, will He love man, the noblest of all objects created by Him, and a God-loving being. Therefore God is loving; consequently the Word is loving.”

Origenes, De Principiis, Livro 1, Cap.7

“All souls and all rational natures, whether holy or wicked, were formed or created, and all these, according to their proper nature, are incorporeal; but although incorporeal, they were nevertheless created, because all things were made by God through Christ, as John teaches in a general way in his Gospel, saying, “**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was nothing made.**””

Origenes, De Principiis, Livro 2, Cap.9

“In his Gospel John indicates the same thing, saying, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God: the same was in the beginning with God: all things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made;””

Orígenes – Contra Celso, Livro 5, Cap.24

“Let it not then be held, contrary to reason, that it is the will of God to declare that the grain of wheat is not immortal, but the stalk which springs from it, while the body which is sown in corruption is not, but that which is raised by Him in incorruption. But according to Celsus, God Himself is the reason of all things, while according to our view it is His Son, of whom we say in philosophic language, “**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God;**” while in our judgment also, God cannot do anything which is contrary to reason, or contrary to Himself.”

Orígenes – Contra Celso, Livro 5, Cap.65

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

2

5

“I make a distinction, and say that if he means the word that is in us — whether the word conceived in the mind, or the word that is uttered — I, too, admit that God is not to be reached by word. If, however, we attend to the passage, **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,”** we are of opinion that God is to be reached by this Word, and is comprehended not by Him only, but by any one whatever to whom He may reveal the Father; and thus we shall prove the falsity of the assertion of Celsus, when he says, “Neither is God to be reached by word.””

Origenes, Comentário ao Evangelho de João, Livro 1, cap.42

“For before the consummation of reason comes, there is nothing in man but what is blameworthy; all is imperfect and defective, and can by no means command the obedience of those irrational elements in us which are tropically spoken of as sheep. And perhaps the former meaning is to be recognized in the words “The Logos was made flesh,” but the second in **“The Logos was God.”** We must accordingly look at what there is to be seen in human affairs between the saying, “The Word (reason) was made flesh” and **“The Word was God.”** When the Word was made flesh can we say that it was to some extent broken up and thinned out, and can we say that it recovered from that point onward till it became again what it was at first, God the Word, the Word with the Father; the Word whose glory John saw, the verily only-begotten, as from the Father”

Origenes, Comentário ao Evangelho de João, Livro 2, cap.1

“With God, however, He is God, just because He is with Him. And perhaps it was because he saw some such order in the Logos, that John did not place the clause “The Word was God” before the clause “The Word was with God.” The series in which he places his different sentences does not prevent the force of each axiom from being separately and fully seen. One axiom is, **“In the beginning was the Word,”** a second, **“The Word was with God,”** and then comes, **“And the Word was God.”** The arrangement of the sentences might be thought to indicate an order; we have first **“In the beginning was the Word,”** then, **“And the Word was with God,”** and thirdly, **“And the Word was God,”** so that it might be seen that the Word being with God makes Him God.”

Origenes, Comentário ao Evangelho de João, Livro 2, cap.4

“In the first premiss we learned where the Logos was: He was in the beginning; then we learned with whom He was, with God; and then who He was, that He was God. He now points out by this word “He,” the Word who is God, and gathers up into a fourth proposition the three which went before, “In the beginning was the Word,” “The Word was with God,” and “The Word was God.””

Origenes, Comentário ao Evangelho de João, Livro 2, cap.5

“Taking the statement that the Word was in the beginning, we have not yet learned that He was with God, and taking the statement that the Word was with God it is not yet clear to us that He was with God in the beginning; and taking the statement that the Word was God, it has neither been shown that He was in the beginning, nor that He was with God. Now when the Evangelist says, “He was in the beginning with God,” if we apply the pronoun “He” to the Word and to God (as He is God) and consider that “in the beginning” is conjoined with it, and “with God” added to it, then there is nothing left of the three propositions that is not summed up and brought together in this one. And as “in the beginning” has been said twice, we may consider if there are not two lessons we may learn. First, that the Word was in the beginning, as if He was by Himself and not with any one, and secondly, that He was in the beginning with God. And I consider that there is nothing untrue in saying of Him both that He was in the beginning, and in the beginning with God, for neither was He with God alone, since He was also in the beginning, nor was He in the beginning alone and not with God, since “He was in the beginning with God.””

Novaciano, O Tesouro da Trindade, Cap.17

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

2

6

“He shows that none other was then present to God — by whom these works were commanded that they should be made — than He by whom all things were made, and without whom nothing was made. And if He is the Word of God — “for my heart has uttered forth a good Word” — He shows that in the beginning the Word was, and that this Word was with the Father, and besides that the **Word was God**, and that all things were made by Him. Moreover, this “Word was made flesh and dwelt among us,” — to wit, Christ the Son of God; whom both on receiving subsequently as man according to the flesh, and seeing before the foundation of the world to be the Word of God, and God, we reasonably, according to the instruction of the Old and New Testament, believe and hold to be as well God as man, Christ Jesus”

Gregório Taumaturgo, Uma seção confecional da fé, Cap.7

“We forswear this, because we believe that three persons — namely, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — are declared to possess the one Godhead: for the one divinity showing itself forth according to nature in the Trinity establishes the oneness of the nature; and thus there is a (divinity that is the) property of the Father, according to the word, “There is one God the Father;” and there is a divinity hereditary in the Son, as it is written, “**The Word was God;**” and there is a divinity present according to nature in the Spirit into wit, what subsists as the Spirit of God — according to Paul’s statement, “Ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you.””

Gregório Taumaturgo, Uma seção confecional da fé, Cap.15

“All other things we hold to be objects made, and in subjection, created by God through the Son, (and sanctified in the Holy Spirit. Further, we acknowledge that the Son of God was made a Son of man, having taken to Himself the flesh from the Virgin Mary, not in name, but in reality; and that He is both the perfect Son of God, and the (perfect) Son of man, — that the Person is but one, and that there is one worship for the Word and the flesh that He assumed. And we anathematize those who constitute different worships, one for the divine and another for the human, and who worship the man born of Mary as though He were another than the God of God. For we know that “in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” And we worship Him who was made man on account of our salvation, not indeed as made perfectly like in the like body, but as the Lord who has taken to Himself the form of the servant. We acknowledge the passion of the Lord in the flesh, the resurrection in the power of His divinity, the ascension to heaven, and His glorious appearing when He comes for the judgment of the living and the dead, and for the eternal life of the saints”

Teófilo de Antioquia, A Autólico, Livro 2, Cap.22

“E dentre os sagrados escritos que nos ensinam e todos os homens inspirados, um deles, João, diz: ‘**No princípio era a Palavra, e a Palavra estava com Deus**’ mostrando que a princípio Deus estava sozinho, e a Palavra estava Nele. Depois ele diz: ‘**A Palavra era Deus**.’”

Atanásio, Contra Heathen. Parte 3, 42

“And, not to spend time in the enumeration of particulars, where the truth is obvious, there is nothing that is and takes place but has been made and stands by Him and through Him, as also the Divine says, “**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God;** all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made.””

Atanásio, De Decretis. Cap.4

“Solomon also received the same from God, and said, ‘The Lord by wisdom founded the earth,’ and John, knowing that the Word was the Hand and the Wisdom, thus preached, ‘**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God;** the same was in the beginning with God: all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made.’”

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

2
7

Atanásio, Aos Bispos do Egito, Cap. 2, 12

“Next, if the Son has a beginning of existence, and all things likewise have a beginning, let them say, which is prior to the other. But indeed they have nothing to say, neither can they with all their craft prove such a beginning of the Word. For He is the true and proper Offspring of the Father, and **‘in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.’** For with regard to their assertion, that the Son knows not His own essence, it is superfluous to reply to it, except only so far as to condemn their madness; for how does not the Word know Himself, when He imparts to all men the knowledge of His Father and of Himself, and blames those who know not themselves?”

Atanásio, Quatro discursos contra os arianos, Discurso 1, Cap.3.9

“Wonderful this heresy, not plausible even, but making speculations against Him that is, that He be not, and everywhere putting forward blasphemy for reverent language! Were any one, after requiring into both sides, to be asked, whether of the two he would follow in faith, or whether of the two spoke fitly of God, — or rather let them say themselves, these abettors of irreligion, what, if a man be asked concerning God (for **‘the Word was God’**), it were fit to answer. For from this one question the whole case on both sides may be determined, what is fitting to say, — He was, or He was not; always, or before His birth; eternal, or from this and from then; true, or by adoption, and from participation and in idea; to call Him one of things originated, or to unite Him to the Father; to consider Him unlike the Father in essence, or like and proper to Him; a creature, or Him through whom the creatures were originated; that He is the Father’s Word, or that there is another word beside Him, and that by this other He was originated, and by another wisdom; and that He is only named Wisdom and Word, and is become a partaker of this wisdom, and second to it?”

Atanásio, Quatro discursos contra os arianos, Discurso 1, Cap.4.11

“Why do ye, as ‘the heathen, rage, and imagine vain phrases against the Lord and against His Christ?’ for no holy Scripture has used such language of the Savior, but rather ‘always’ and ‘eternal’ and ‘coexistent always with the Father.’ For, **‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.’** And in the Apocalypse he thus speaks; ‘Who is and who was and who is to come.’ Now who can rob ‘who is’ and ‘who was’ of eternity? This too in confutation of the Jews hath Paul written in his Epistle to the Romans, ‘Of whom as concerning the flesh is Christ, who is over all, God blessed for ever;’ while silencing the Greeks, he has said, ‘The visible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal Power and Godhead;’ and what the Power of God is, he teaches us elsewhere himself, ‘Christ the Power of God and the Wisdom of God.’”

Atanásio, Quatro discursos contra os arianos, Discurso 1, Cap.11.41

“And if, as David says in the 71st Psalm, ‘His Name remaineth before the sun, and before the moon, from one generation to another,’ how did He receive what He had always, even before He now received it? or how is He exalted, being before His exaltation the Most High? or how did He receive the right of being worshipped, who before He now received it, was ever worshipped? It is not a dark saying but a divine mystery. **‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God;’** but for our sakes afterwards the ‘Word was made flesh.’ And the term in question, ‘highly exalted,’ does not signify that the essence of the Word was exalted, for He was ever and is ‘equal to God,’ but the exaltation is of the manhood.”

Atanásio, Quatro discursos contra os arianos, Discurso 1, Cap.11.41

“And therefore in a human relation, because of the flesh which He bore, it is said of Him, ‘Lift up your gates,’ and ‘shall come in,’ as if a man were entering; but in a divine relation on the other hand it is said of Him, since ‘the Word was God,’ that He is the Lord’ and the ‘King of Glory.’ Such our exaltation the Spirit foreannounced

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

2

8

in the eighty-ninth Psalm, saying, ‘And in Thy righteousness shall they be exalted, for Thou art the glory of their strength.’ And it the Son be Righteousness, then He is not exalted as being Himself in need, but it is we who are exalted in that Righteousness, which is He”

Atanásio, Quatro discursos contra os arianos, Discurso 2, Cap.14.7

“Thus then the Lord also, **‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God;’** but when the Father willed that ransoms should be paid for all and to all, grace should be given, then truly the Word, as Aaron his robe, so did He take earthly flesh, having Mary for the Mother of His Body as if virgin earth, that, as a High Priest, having He as others an offering, He might offer Himself to the Father, and cleanse us all from sins in His own blood, and might rise from the dead.”

Atanásio, Quatro discursos contra os arianos, Discurso 2, Cap.18.35

“But God’s Word is not merely pronounced, as one may say, nor a sound of accents, nor by His Son is meant His command; but as radiance of light, so is He perfect offspring from perfect. Hence He is God also, as being God’s Image; for **‘the Word was God’** ‘says Scripture.”

Atanásio, Quatro discursos contra os arianos, Discurso 2, Cap.20.53

“For He is the Father’s Radiance; and as the Father is, but not for any reason, neither must we seek the reason of that Radiance. Thus it is written, **‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God;’** and the wherefore it assigns not; but when ‘the Word was made flesh,’ then it adds the reason why, saying, ‘And dwelt among us.’”

Atanásio, Quatro discursos contra os arianos, Discurso 2, Cap.20.56

“Thus here, when He says ‘He created,’ He sets down the cause, ‘the works;’ on the other hand, when He signifies absolutely the generation from the Father, straightway He adds, ‘Before all the hills He begets me;’ but He does not add the ‘wherefore,’ as in the case of ‘He created,’ saying, ‘for the works,’ but absolutely, ‘He begets me,’ as in the text, **‘In the beginning was the Word.’** For, though no works had been created, still **‘the Word’** of God ‘was,’ and **‘the Word was God.’** And His becoming man would not have taken place, had not the need of men become a cause. The Son then is not a creature”

Atanásio, Quatro discursos contra os arianos, Discurso 2, Cap.21.63

“Not then because He was from the Father was He called ‘First-born,’ but because in Him the creation came to be; and as before the creation He was the Son, through whom was the creation, so also before He was called the First-born of the whole creation, not the less was the Word Himself with God and the **Word was God.** But this also not understanding, these irreligious men go about saying, ‘If He is First-born of all creation, it is plain that He too is one of the creation.’ Senseless men! if He is simply ‘First-born of the whole creation,’ then He is other than the whole creation; for he says not, ‘He is First-born above the rest of the creatures,’ lest He be reckoned to be as one of the creatures, but it is written, ‘of the whole creation,’ that He may appear other than the creation”

Atanásio, Quatro discursos contra os arianos, Discurso 3, Cap.23.4

“So also the Godhead of the Son is the Father’s; whence also it is indivisible; and thus there is one God and none other but He. And so, since they are one, and the Godhead itself one, the same things are said of the Son, which are said of the Father, except His being said to be Father: — for instance, that He is God, **‘And the Word was God;’**”

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

2

9

Atanásio, Quatro discursos contra os arianos, Discurso 3, Cap.26.29

“And this scope is to be found throughout inspired Scripture, as the Lord Himself has said, ‘Search the Scriptures, for they are they which testify of Me.’ But lest I should exceed in writing, by bringing together all the passages on the subject, let it suffice to mention as a specimen, first John saying, **‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.** The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was made not one thing;’ next, ‘And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of one Only-begotten from the Fathers;’ and next Paul writing, ‘Who being in the form of God, thought it not a prize to be equal with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion like a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.’”

Atanásio, Quatro discursos contra os arianos, Discurso 4, Cap.1.1

“The Word is God from God; for **‘the Word was God,’** and again, ‘Of whom are the Fathers, and of whom Christ, who is God over all, blessed for ever. Amen.’ And since Christ is God from God, and God’s Word, Wisdom, Son, and Power, therefore but One God is declared in the divine Scriptures. For the Word, being Son of the One God, is referred to Him of whom also He is; so that Father and Son are two, yet the Monad of the Godhead is indivisible and inseparable. And thus too we preserve One Beginning of Godhead and not two Beginnings, whence there is strictly a Monarchy. And of this very Beginning the Word is by nature Son, not as if another beginning, subsisting by Himself, nor having come into being externally to that Beginning, lest from that diversity a Dyarchy and Polyarchy should ensue; but of the one Beginning He is own Son, own Wisdom, own Word, existing from It. For, according to John, **‘in’ that ‘Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,’** for the Beginning was God; and since He is from It, therefore also **‘the Word was God.’** And as there is one Beginning and therefore one God, so one is that Essence and Subsistence which indeed and truly and really is, and which said ‘I am that I am,’ and not two, that there be not two Beginnings; and from the One, a Son in nature and truth, is Its own Word, Its Wisdom, Its Power, and inseparable from It. And as there is not another essence, lest there be two Beginnings, so the Word which is from that One Essence has no dissolution, nor is a sound significative, but is an essential Word and essential Wisdom, which is the true Son. For were He not essential, God will be speaking into the air, and having a body, in nothing differently from men; but since He is not man, neither is His Word according to the infirmity of man. For as the Beginning is one Essence, so Its Word is one, essential, and subsisting, and Its Wisdom. For as He is God from God, and Wisdom from the Wise, and Word from the Rational, and Son from Father, so is He from Subsistence Subsistent, and from Essence Essential and Substantive, and Being from Being”

Atanásio, Quatro discursos contra os arianos, Discurso 3, Excurso C, 26

“But that the Son has no beginning of being, but before He was made man was ever with the Father, John makes clear in his first Epistle, writing thus: *‘That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of Life; and the Life was manifested, and we have seen it; and we bear witness and declare unto you that Eternal Life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.’* While he says here that ‘the Life,’ not ‘became,’ but ‘was with the Father,’ in the end of his Epistle he says the Son is the Life, writing, *‘And we are in Him that is True, even in His Son, Jesus Christ; this is the True God and Eternal Life.’* But if the Son is the Life, and the Life was with the Father, and if the Son was with the Father, and the same Evangelist says, **‘And the Word was with God,’** the Son must be the Word, which is ever with the Father. And as the ‘Son’ is ‘Word,’ so ‘God’ must be ‘the Father.’ Moreover, the Son, according to John, is not merely ‘God’ but ‘True God;’ for according to the same Evangelist, **‘And the Word was God;’** and the Son said, ‘I am the Life.’ Therefore the Son is the Word and Life which is with the Father. And again, what is said in the same John, ‘The Only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father,’ shews that the Son was ever. For whom John calls Son, Him David mentions in the Psalm as God’s Hand, saying, ‘Why stretchest Thou not forth Thy Right Hand out of Thy bosom?’ Therefore if the Hand is in the bosom, and the Son in the bosom, the Son will be the Hand, and the

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

3

0

Hand will be the Son, through whom the Father made all things for it is written, 'Thy Hand made all these things,' and 'He led out His people with His Hand;' therefore through the Son. And if 'this is the changing of the Right Hand of the Most Highest,' and again, 'Unto the end, concerning the things that shall be changed, a song for My Well-beloved;' the Well-beloved then is the Hand that was changed; concerning whom the Divine Voice also says, 'This is My Beloved Son.' This 'My Hand' then is equivalent to 'This My Son. "'

Atanásio, Concílio de Armínio e Selucia, História da Opção Ariana, 23

“And in One Lord Jesus Christ, His Son, **Only-begotten God** (John 1:18), by whom are all things, who was begotten before all ages from the Father, God from God, whole from whole, sole from sole, perfect from perfect, King from King, Lord from Lord, Living Word, Living Wisdom, true Light, Way, Truth, Resurrection, Shepherd, Door, both unalterable and unchangeable; exact Image of the Godhead, Essence, Will, Power and Glory of the Father; the first born of every creature, who was in the beginning with God, God the Word, as it is written in the Gospel, and the **Word was God**' (John 1:1); by whom all things were made, and in whom all things consist; who in the last days descended from above, and was born of a Virgin according to the Scriptures, and was made Man, Mediator between God and man, and Apostle of our faith, and Prince of life, as He says, 'I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me' (John 6:38); who suffered for us and rose again on the third day, and ascended into heaven, and sat down on the right hand of the Father, and is coming again with glory and power, to judge quick and dead.”

Basílio, Prolegomena, Trabalhos, Sobre Provérbios 7.22

“Now when the Father was made defender and true, He was not a thing made; and similarly when the Son was made wisdom and sanctification, He was not a thing made. If it is true that there is one God the Father, it is assuredly also true that there is one Lord Jesus Christ the Savior. According to them the Savior is not God nor the Father Lord, and it is written in vain, 'the Lord said unto my Lord.' False is the statement, 'Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee.' False too, 'The Lord rained from the Lord.' False, 'God created in the image of God.' and 'Who is God save the Lord?' and 'Who is a God save our God.' False the statement of John that '**the Word was God** and the Word was with God; and the words of Thomas of the Son, '**my Lord and my God.**' The distinctions, then, ought to be referred to creatures and to those who are falsely and not properly called gods, and not to the Father and to the Son.”

Basílio, Prolegomena, Trabalhos, Homilias XXIII

“In the force of with God. “Note with admiration the exact appropriateness of every single word. It is not said 'The Word was in God.' It is not said 'The word was in God.' It runs 'was with God.' This is to set forth the proper character of the hypostasis. The Evangelist did not say 'in God' to avoid giving any pretext for the confusion of the hypostasis. That is the vile blasphemy of men who are endeavoring to confound all things together, asserting that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, form one subject matter, and that different appellations are applied to one thing. The impiety is vile, and no less to be shunned than that of those who blasphemously maintain that the Son is in essence unlike God the Father. The Word was with God. Immediately after using the term Word to demonstrate the impassability of the generation, he forthwith gives an explanation to do away with the mischief arising in us from the term Word. As though suddenly rescuing Him from the blasphemers' calumny, he asks, what is the Word? The Word was God. Do not put before me any ingenious distinctions of phrase; do not with your wily cleverness blaspheme the teachings of the Spirit. You have the definitive statement. Submit to the Lord. The Word was God.”

Gregório Nazareno, Oração 29, 17

“For we have learnt to believe in and to teach the Deity of the Son from their great and lofty utterances. And what utterances are these? These: God — The Word — He That Was In The Beginning and With The Beginning, and The Beginning. “**In the Beginning was The Word, and the Word was with God, and the**

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

3

1

Word was God,” and “With Thee is the Beginning,” and “He who calleth her The Beginning from generations.” Then the Son is Only-begotten: The only “begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, it says, He hath declared Him.” The Way, the Truth, the Life, the Light. “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life;” and “I am the Light of the World.” Wisdom and Power, “Christ, the Wisdom of God, and the Power of God.””

Gregório de Nissa, Contra Eunônio, Livro 2,4

“But as we were taught by the voice of the Lord, this we say, that the word “one” does not indicate the Father alone, but comprehends in its significance the Son with the Father, inasmuch as the Lord said, “I and My Father are one .” In like manner also the name “God” belongs equally to the Beginning in which the Word was, and to the Word Who was in the Beginning. For the Evangelist tells us that “**the Word was with God, and the Word was God .**” So that when Deity is expressed the Son is included no less than the Father.”

Gregório de Nissa, Contra Eunônio, Livro 2,12

“O Paul and John and all you others of the band of Apostles and Evangelists, who are they that arm their venomous tongues against your words? who are they that raise their frog-like croakings against your heavenly thunder? What then saith the son of thunder? “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.””

Gregório de Nissa, Contra Eunônio, Livro 4,1

“Once more the spiritual voice of John speaks, once more the Evangelist in his proclamation takes tender care for the hearing of those who are in childhood: not yet have we so much grown by the hearing of his first words as to hear of “the Son,” and yet remain firm without being moved from our footing by the influence of the wonted sense. Therefore our herald, crying once more aloud, still proclaims in his third utterance “the Word,” and not “the Son,” saying, “**And the Word was God.**” First he declared wherein He was, then with whom He was, and now he says what He is, completing, by his third repetition, the object of his proclamation”

Gregório de Nissa, Contra Eunônio, Livro 8,5

“But if these examples taken from Scripture excite any man’s fear, on the ground that they do not accurately present to us the majesty of the Only-begotten, because neither is essentially the same with its substratum — neither the exhalation with the ointment, nor the beam with the sun — let the true Word correct his fear, Who was in the Beginning and is all that the Beginning is, and existent before all; since John so declares in his preaching, “**And the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**” If then the Father is God and the Son is God, what doubt still remains with regard to the perfect Divinity of the Only-begotten, when by the sense of the word “Son” is acknowledged the close relationship of Nature, by “brightness” the conjunction and inseparability, and by the appellation of “God,” applied alike to the Father and the Son, their absolute equality, while the “express image,” contemplated in reference to the whole Person of the Father, marks the absence of any defect in the Son’s proper greatness, and the “form of God” indicates His complete identity by showing in itself all those marks by which the Godhead is betokened”

Gregório de Nissa, Contra Eunônio, Livro 10,4

“And herein the sublime John seems to me to have been prophetically moved, that the mouths of those fighters against Christ might be stopped, who on the ground of these additions deny the existence, in the strict sense, of the Christ, saying simply and without qualification “**The Word was God,**” and was Life, and was Light, not merely speaking of Him as being in the beginning, and with God, and in the bosom of the Father, so that by their relation the absolute existence of the Lord should be done away”

Gregório de Nissa, Contra Eunônio, Livro 11,3

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

3

2

“And as the sublime John, having previously called Him “Word,” so introduces the further truth that the Word was God, that our thoughts might not at once turn to the Father, as they would have done if the title of God had been put first, so too does the mighty Moses, after first calling Him “Angel,” teach us in the words that follow that He is none other than the Self-Existent Himself, that the mystery concerning the Christ might be fore-shown, by the Scripture assuring us by the name “Angel,” that the Word is the interpreter of the Father’s will, and, by the title of the “Self-Existent,” of the closeness of relation subsisting between the Son and the Father”

João Crisóstomo, Homilias no Ev. de Mateus. Homilia 16 – Mateus 5.17

“For this cause many times, having in His own person said much that is lowly of Himself, the great things He leaves to be said by others. Thus He Himself indeed, reasoning with the Jews, said, “Before Abraham was, I AM:” but His disciple not thus, but, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.””

João Crisóstomo, Gálatas, Cap.1

“Wherefore is it, O Paul, that, wishing to bring these Judaizers to the faith, you introduce none of those great and illustrious topics which occur in your Epistle to the Philippians, as, “Who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God,” (Philippians 2:6.) or which you afterwards declared in that to the Hebrews, “the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of His substance;” (Hebrews 1:3.) or again, what in the opening of his Gospel the son of thunder sounded forth, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God;” (John 1:1.) or what Jesus Himself oftentimes declared to the Jews, “that His power and authority was equal to the Father’s?” (John 5:19, 27, etc.)”

“Here again is a plain confutation of the heretics, who say that John in the opening of his Gospel, where he says “the Word was God,” used the word THEÓS without the article, to imply an inferiority in the Son’s Godhead; and that Paul, where he says that the Son was “in the form of God,” did not mean the Father, because the word THEÓS without the article. For what can they say here, where Paul says, APÓ THEOU PATRÓS, and not APÓ TOU THEOU?”

João Crisóstomo, Evangelho de João, Homilia 4 (Jo.1.1), 3

““How then,” says one, “does John lay down a beginning by saying, ‘In the beginning was’?” Tell me, have you attended to the “In the beginning,” and to the “was,” and do you not understand the expression, “the Word was”? What! when the Prophet says, “From everlasting and to everlasting Thou art” (Psalm 90:2), does he say this to assign Him limits? No, but to declare His Eternity. Consider now that the case is the same in this place. He did not use the expression as assigning limits, since he did not say, “had a beginning,” but “was in the beginning”; by the word “was” carrying thee forward to the idea that the Son is without beginning. “Yet observe,” says he, “the Father is named with the addition of the article, but the Son without it.” What then, when the Apostle says, “The Great God, and our Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13); and again, “Who is above all, God”? (Romans 9:5) It is true that here he has mentioned the Son, without the article; but he does the same with the Father also, at least in his Epistle to the Philippians (chapter 2:6), he says, “Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God”; and again to the Romans, “Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 1:7) Besides, it was superfluous for it to be attached in that place, when close above it was continually attached to “the Word.” For as in speaking concerning the Father, he says, “God is a Spirit” (John 4:24), and we do not, because the article is not joined to “Spirit,” yet deny the Spiritual Nature of God; so here, although the article is not annexed to the Son, the Son is not on that account a less God. Why so? Because in saying “God,” and again “God,” he does not reveal to us any difference in this Godhead, but the contrary; for having before said, “and the Word was God”; that no one might suppose the Godhead of the Son to be inferior, he immediately adds the characteristics of genuine

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

3

3

Godhead, including Eternity, (for “He was,” says he, “in the beginning with God,”) and attributing to Him the office of Creator. For “by Him were all things made, and without Him was not anything made that was made””

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

3

4

Sócrates Scholasticus, Ecclesiastical History, Livro 2, Cap.10

“In conformity with evangelic and apostolic tradition, we believe in one God the Father Almighty, the Creator and Framer of the universe. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, his Son, God the only-begotten, through whom all things were made: begotten of the Father before all ages, God of God, Whole of Whole, Only of Only, Perfect of Perfect, King of King, Lord of Lord; the living Word, the Wisdom, the Life, the True Light, the Way of Truth, the Resurrection, the Shepherd, the Gate; immutable and inconvertible; the unaltering image of the Divinity, Substance and Power, and Counsel and Glory of the Father; born ‘before all creation’; who was in the beginning with God, God the Word, **according as it is declared in the Gospel, and the Word was God**, by whom all things were made, and in whom all things subsist: who in the last days came down from above, and was born of the virgin according to the Scriptures”

Teodoret, Ecclesiastical History, Livro 1, Cap.3

“Now that the Son of God was not created out of the non-existent, and that there never was a time in which He was not, is expressly taught by John the Evangelist, who speaks of Him as ‘the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father.’ This divine teacher desired to show that the Father and the Son are inseparable; and, therefore, he said, ‘that the Son is in the bosom of the Father.’ Moreover, the same John affirms that the Word of God is not classed among things created out of the non-existent, for, he says that ‘all things were made by Him,’ and he also declares His individual personality in the following words: **‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... All things were made by Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made’** If, then, all things were made by Him, how is it that He who thus bestowed existence on all, could at any period have had no existence himself? The Word, the creating power, can in no way be defined as of the same nature as the things created, if indeed He was in the beginning, and all things were made by Him, and were called by Him out of the non-existent into being.”

Teodoret, Diálogo 2, O Inconfundível

Eran. — What must we call Jesus the Christ? Man?

Orth. — By neither name alone, but by both. For the Divine Man after being made man was named Jesus Christ. “For,” it is written, “Thou shalt call His name Jesus for he shall save His people from their sins,” and unto you is born this day in the city of David Christ the Lord. Now these are angels’ voices. But before the Incarnation he was named God, son of God, only begotten, Lord, Divine Word, and Creator. For it is written “In the beginning was the Word, and the word was with God, and the word was God,” and “all things were made by Him,” and “He was life,” and “He was the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” There are also other similar passages, declaring the divine nature. But after the Incarnation He was named Jesus and Christ.

Eran. — Therefore the Lord Jesus is God only.

Orth. — You hear that the divine Word was made man, and do you call him God only?

Eran. — Since He became man without being changed, but remained just what He was before, we must call Him just what He was.

Orth. — The divine Word was and is and will be immutable. But when He had taken man’s nature He became man. It behooves us therefore to confess both natures, both that which took, and that which was taken.

Eran. — We must name Him by the nobler.”

Teodoret, Demonstrações por Silogismos que Deus, o Verbo, é imutável, verso 10

“The words “the Word was made flesh” are plainly indicative not of mutation but of His unspeakable loving-kindness. For after the illustrious Evangelist had said **“in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God,”** and had declared Him to be Creator of the visible and invisible, and had

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

3

5

called Him life and true light, adding other similar expressions, and had spoken concerning the Godhead in such terms as human reason can take in and the language at its command can express, he went on “And the Word was made flesh,” as though smitten with amazement and astounded at the boundless loving-kindness. His existence is eternal; He is God; He made all things; He is source of eternal life and of true light; and on account of the salvation of men He put about Him the tabernacle of flesh”

Teodoret, Cartas do abençoado Teodoert, Bispo de Cyrus, Ao Bispo Timóteo

“On this account, therefore, even after the incarnation, He is called also by the titles which are anterior to the incarnation, since His nature is invariable and immutable. But when relating the passion the divine Scripture nowhere uses the term God, since that is the name of the absolute nature. No one on bearing the words “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” and similar expressions, would suppose that the flesh existed before the ages, or is of one substance with the God of the universe, or was Creator of the world. Every one knows that these terms are proper to the Godhead. Nor would any one on reading the genealogy of St. Matthew suppose that David and Abraham according to nature were forefathers of God, for it is the assumed nature which is derived from them”

Teodoret, Cartas do abençoado Teodoert, Bispo de Cyrus, A João o Oeconomus

“These are the lessons we have learnt from the divine Apostles; this is the teaching given us by John and Matthew, those mighty rivers of the gospel message. The latter says “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham;” and the former when he shewed the things which were before the ages wrote, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him.””

Teodoret, Cartas do abençoado Teodoert, Bispo de Cyrus, Aos monges of the Euephratensian

“Furthermore it is in obedience to the divine Scriptures that we acknowledge the Christ to be God and man. That our Lord Jesus Christ is God is asserted by the blessed evangelist John “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made.””

Cirilo, The Catechetical Lectures, Sobre o Batismo, 14

“If thou too hast unfeigned piety, the Holy Ghost cometh down on thee also, and a Father’s voice sounds over thee from on high — not, “This is My Son,” but, “This has now been made My son;” for the “is” belongs to Him alone, because **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.** To Him belongs the “is,” since He is always the Son of God: but to thee “has now been made:” since thou hast not the sonship by nature, but receivest it by adoption. He eternally “is;” but thou receivest the grace by advancement”

Cirilo, The Catechetical Lectures, Sobre as Palavras: Unigênito, Filho de Deus, 10

“The Father begat the Son, not as among men mind begets word. For the mind is substantially existent in us; but the word when spoken is dispersed into the air and comes to an end. But we know Christ to have been begotten not as a word pronounced, but as a Word substantially existing and living; not spoken by the lips, and dispersed, but begotten of the Father eternally and ineffably, in substance. For, **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,** sitting at God’s right hand; — the Word understanding the Father’s will, and creating all things at His bidding: the Word, which came down and went up; for the word of utterance when spoken comes not down, nor goes up; the Word speaking and saying, The things which I have seen with My Father, these I speak: the Word possessed of power, and reigning over all things: for the Father hath committed all things unto the Son”

How the Church Fathers understand Jo.1.1?

Marcelo Berti – marceloberti.wordpress.com

3

6

Cirilo, The Catechetical Lectures, Sobre as Palavras: Encarnação, Feito Homem, 1

“Hearers of the Holy Gospels, let us listen to John the Divine. For he who said, **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God**, went on to say, and the Word was made flesh. For neither is it holy to worship the mere man, nor religious to say that He is God only without the Manhood. For if Christ is God, as indeed He is, but took not human nature upon Him, we are strangers to salvation. Let us then worship Him as God, but believe that He also was made Man”

Alexandre de Constantinopla, Cartas sobre a heresia ariana, 4

“But that the Son of God was not made “from things which are not,” and that there was no “time when He was not,” the evangelist John sufficiently shows, when he thus writes concerning Him: “The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father.” For since that divine teacher intended to show that the Father and the Son are two things inseparable the one from the other, he spoke of Him as being in the bosom of the Father. Now that also the Word of God is not comprehended in the number of things that were created “from things which are not,” the same John says, “All things were made by Him.” For he set forth His proper personality, saying, **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.** All things were made by Him; and with out Him was not anything made that was made.” For if all things were made by Him, how comes it that He who gave to the things which are made their existence, at one time Himself was not.”