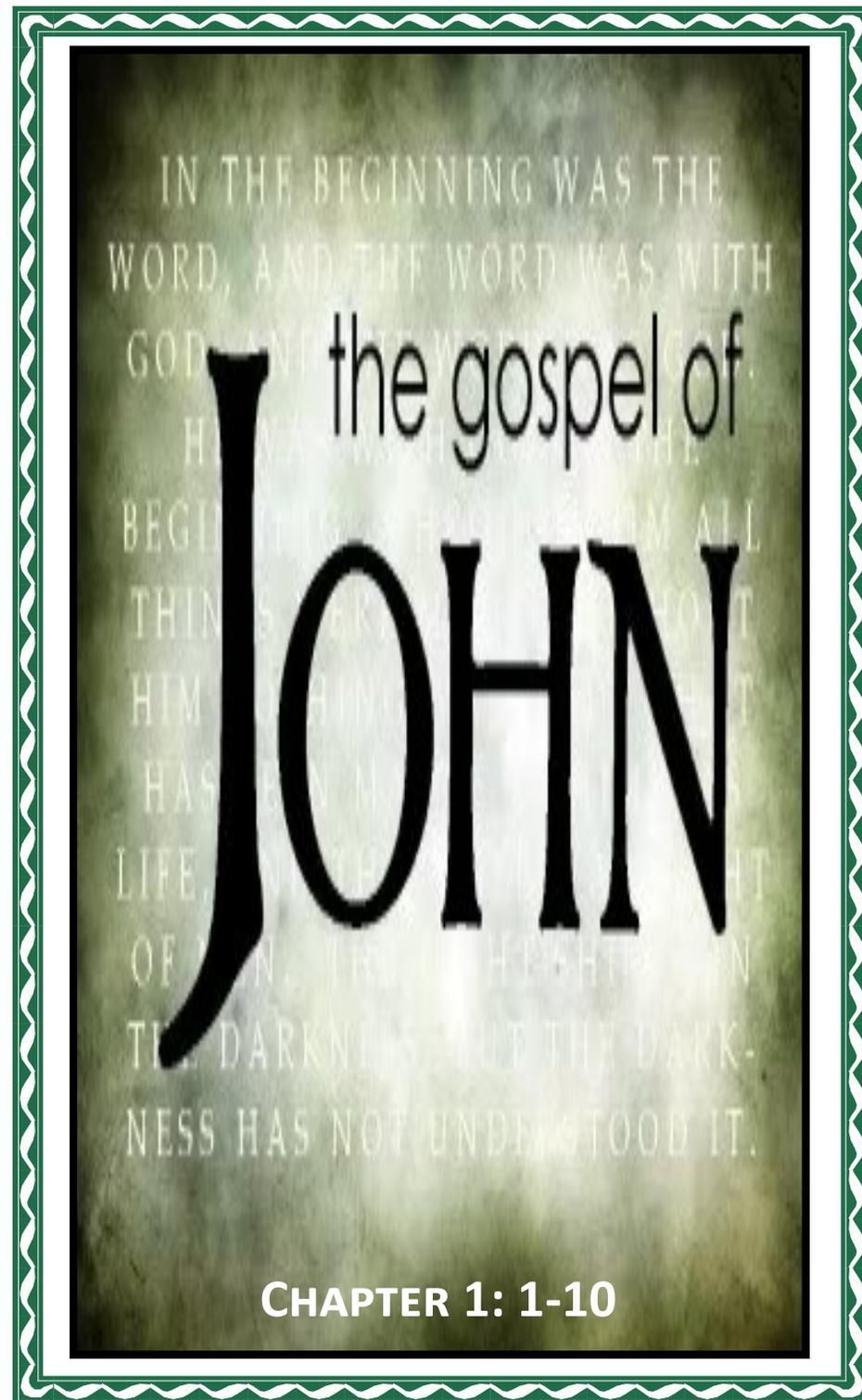


*He came unto His own, &c. By His own* Augustine, Cyril, Chrysostom, &c., understand the Jews, for they were the peculiar people of God. But by *His own* you may better understand the world, and all the inhabitants thereof. For S. John says the same thing, and after his manner repeats and enforces it, as I have already said: thus, “*He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.*” Hear S. Cyril at the Council of Ephesus, “The Only Begotten came unto His own, especially the Israelites, when He became man incarnate.”

*And His own*—not all, but many, for some did receive Jesus as the Christ, such as the twelve apostles, and the seventy-two disciples. But these were few compared with the rest of the Jews who did not receive Him.



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Scripture is *Inspired*; *Inspiration* really means that God Himself is the Chief Author of the Scriptures. He uses a Human Agent, in so marvelous a way that the Human writes what the Holy Spirit wants him to write, does so without Error, yet the Human Writer is Free, and keeps his own Style of Language. It is only because God is *Transcendent that He can do this - insure Freedom from Error, while leaving the Human Free. To say He is Transcendent means that He is above and beyond all our Human Classifications and Categories.*

John was writing his eye-witness account of Jesus some thirty years later than the other three accounts, possibly around 95AD. There had been time for growth, reflection and observation. Many thousands of Christians had by then lost their lives for their faith in the Lord Jesus, both in Rome and in Jerusalem. John himself had been in prison and was now in exile, the last of Jesus' twelve apostles to remain alive.

Considered one of the most important Catholic theologians and Bible commentators, Cornelius à Lapide's, S.J. writings on the Bible, created a Scripture Commentary so complete and scholarly that it was practically the universal commentary in use by Catholics for over 400 years. Fr. Lapide's most excellent commentaries have been widely known for successfully combining piety and practicality. Written during the time of the Counter Reformation, it includes plenty of apologetics. His vast knowledge is only equaled by his piety and holiness.

## John 1: 1-10

Douay Rheims Version

### HOLY GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST, ACCORDING TO JOHN.

This is the title in the Greek and Latin codices. In the Syriac it is as follows, *The Holy Gospel, the Preaching of Jouchanon (John), which he spake and preached in Ionic (Greek) at Ephesus.* The Arabic has, *The Gospel of the holy and great disciple, the Apostle John, the son of Zebedee, the beloved of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*The divinity and incarnation of Christ. John bears witness of him.  
He begins to call his disciples.*

1. In the beginning was the Word: and the Word was with God: and the Word was God.

are in the house. But if any one shut the window, and prevent the sun from shining through it, this will be his own fault, not the fault of the sun. S. John here alludes to the sun, which gives light to the whole world. So S. Chrysostom, Cyril, Euthymius. This may be gathered from what preceded, *the light shineth in darkness*, &c. This is said of the supernatural light of grace, though S. Cyril explains it of the natural light of reason. For God has given to every man the light of reason, that by it he may know what is good, what is evil, what to embrace, and what to shun.

*That cometh into this world, i.e., born in this world.* This is a Hebraism. The Greek *ἐρχόμενον*, *coming*, may be taken to be in grammatical agreement with *light*, so that the meaning would be, *the light coming* into this world, that is, Christ born in this world, enlightens, so far as He is concerned, every man. So S. Augustine (*lib. 1. de pec. mer. c. 25*). So Christ says (*xii. 46*), *I am come a Light into the world.* But almost all the Greek and Latin interpreters take *coming* to be in the accusative, as agreeing with *man*.

Ver. 10.—*He was in the world*, &c. The Word, or Son of God, was in the world. For He as God was in the world by His essence and presence, and power, from the beginning, preserving and governing it by His providence. So S. Paul says (*Acts xvii 27*). So SS. Chrysostom, Austin, and all the other Greek and Latin Fathers. Otherwise Maldonatus, who refers the passage to the Incarnation. But the Evangelist is about to treat of the Incarnation in the verses following.

*And the world was made by Him.* *And* is here put for *assuredly*, or, more emphatically, for *because*. The meaning is—Therefore was the Word in the world, because the world was created, and is still preserved, and exists by Him. For the Word is the foundation, yea, as it were, the very soul of the world, even as Plato, though a heathen, thought. Wisely Philo saith, “It is the property of the Creator to bless, of the creature to give thanks.”

*And the world knew Him not.* John marks the ingratitude of the world, because it knew not its Maker, whom it always had present, even the Word, or Son of God. Moreover, there is a play upon the word *world*. For (1.) by *world* is properly understood the universe, and all the things that are therein, all which were made by the Word. But when it is added, *and the world knew Him not*, by the *world* is understood *inhabitants of the world*, that is to say, men given up to the world, who knew not the Author of the world. So SS. Augustine and Chrysostom.

Observe here, that by the works of Nature, it may be naturally known that God is One in Essence, but not Three in Person, and consequently the Word cannot in this way be known as *the Word*. John therefore here blames worldly men, not because they did not recognise the Word *qua* Word, but because they did not recognise Him as God, the Creator of the world, by means of His workmanship. And this affords a reply to Maldonatus, who argues that John is speaking in these words of the Incarnation of the Word. But we answer, that they did not know the Word as the Word, or the Person of the Son. Indeed, many have not from the works of God in the world even recognised God as its Creator. I allow that some men, both patriarchs and prophets, knew the Word, or Son of God, and prophesied concerning Him. But they knew this by a special revelation of God, not by His works in the world. John therefore is here deploring the blindness and ignorance of human infirmity, since the Fall, because with faith it lost the knowledge of its Creator and Saviour, that is, the Word.

*not that Light.* That is, he was not the Saviour of the world, but only His witness, who received all his own light of knowledge and prophecy and grace from Christ. Wherefore in v. 35, he is called “a burning and a shining lamp.” “But,” says Origen, “he did not burn by his own fire, nor shine by his own light.”

*That was the true Light,* &c. Not John, but Christ Himself. You will ask, Why is Christ called *the true Light*? or, as the Greek forcibly expresses it, *τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν, the Light the true?*

I answer, first, because the Word is the original, uncreated, and essential Light: but John the Baptist and the rest of the saints are light only by participation and communication from the Word. Wherefore, in comparison with Christ they do not deserve the name of light, forasmuch as they are infinitely surpassed by His brightness. Christ therefore alone is Light, and alone deserves the name of light. In the same way the name of God is Jehovah, or *He who is*, because He is the true, essential, eternal, and infinite Being, but all other things derive from Him a spark of being. Wherefore, in comparison with God they have but an imperfect and mutilated existence, so as rather to *seem* to exist, than actually to be. For they are as it were the shadow of that infinite Being, which fills immensity, that is, God, who truly is the only Being, or *He who is*.

2. Christ is *the true Light* of the world, because His faith and doctrine are opposed to the errors and false doctrines of Gentile philosophers, heretics, and atheists. For the true Light is that which is pure, Sincere, genuine, which has nothing feigned, nor obscure, nor imperfect.

3. Because Christ illuminates us far more truly and perfectly than any corporeal light does, therefore spiritual light alone deserves the name of light, and corporeal light is only, as it were, a shadow of it. In a similar way, and with a like meaning, Christ says (xv. 1), *I am the true Vine*: and in vi. 55, He calls Himself *the true Bread*. In like manner that which is perfect, and of surpassing excellency, is often called *true*.

4. Christ is *the true Light* because He most fully and most widely diffuses His light in every direction. Therefore everywhere is He the true Light. For, as S. John adds by way of explanation, *He lighteneth every man that cometh into this world*. For all the saints and the faithful, how great soever, and how many soever they are, which have been, and are, and shall be, from the beginning of the world, have derived all their light of faith and grace from Christ. But John the Baptist was a light only to Judea, a little corner of the world, and that only in the days of Herod. In like manner it has been with the rest of the saints.

Lastly, John and the rest were only able to teach their hearers exteriorly, and with the outward voice, but they could not directly, nor of themselves, illuminate the soul. But Christ does both. The voice only strikes upon the outward ears, but Christ, by His grace, both strikes upon, and illuminates the soul.

This is why Christ is continually called by John, *the Truth*. And Christ says in the 14th chapter: *I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life*. For in Christ there is all truth, and that fourfold: there is the truth of being, or existence, the truth of the soul, the truth of word, and the truth of deed. Truth lies hid, as the true Deity lay hid, in the humanity of Christ. Yet cannot it lie hid for ever. As Cicero says (*pro Caelio*), “O mighty power of truth, which by itself easily defends itself against the wit of men, against craft and cunning, and against every ensnaring device.” Wherefore, the truth may be oppressed, but can never be extinguished, just as the sun may be obscured by the clouds, but by-and-by it disperses the clouds by the force of its rays, and shines out brightly. Such is truth, and such too is Christ.

*Lighteneth every man*: that is, as far as Christ is concerned. Wherefore, let those who are not enlightened, ascribe the fault to themselves, because they will not receive the light of faith and grace which Christ offers them. Thus does the sun give light so far as he is concerned to all that

2. The same was in the beginning with God.
3. All things were made by him: and without him was made nothing that was made.
4. In him was life: and the life was the light of men.
5. And the light shineth in darkness: and the darkness did not comprehend it.
6. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.
7. This man came for a witness, to give testimony of the light, that all men might believe through him.
8. He was not the light, but was to give testimony of the light.
9. That was the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world.
10. He was in the world: and the world was made by him: and the world knew him not.
11. He came unto his own: and his own received him not.
12. But as many as received him, he gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in his name.
13. Who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
14. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (and we saw his glory, the glory as it were of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.
15. John beareth witness of him and crieth out, saying: This was he of whom I spoke: He that shall come after me is preferred before me: because he was before me.
16. And of his fulness we all have received: and grace for grace.
17. For the law was given by Moses: grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.
18. No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son who is in the Bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.
19. And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent from Jerusalem priests and Levites to him, to ask him: Who art thou?
20. And he confessed and did not deny: and he confessed: I am not the Christ.
21. And they asked him: What then? Art thou Elias? And he said: I am not. Art thou the prophet? And he answered: No.
22. They said therefore unto him: Who art thou, that we may give an answer to them that sent us? What sayest thou of thyself?
23. He said: I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaias.
24. And they that were sent were of the Pharisees.
25. And they asked him and said to him: Why then dost thou baptize, if thou be not Christ, nor Elias, nor the prophet?
26. John answered them, saying: I baptize with water: but there hath stood one in the midst of you, whom you know not.
27. The same is he that shall come after me, who is preferred before me: the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to loose.

28. These things were done in Bethania, beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

29. The next day, John saw Jesus coming to him; and he saith: Behold the Lamb of God. Behold him who taketh away the sin of the world.

30. This is he of whom I said: After me there cometh a man, who is preferred before me: because he was before me.

31. And I knew him not: but that he may be made manifest in Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.

32. And John gave testimony, saying: I saw the Spirit coming down, as a dove from heaven; and he remained upon him.

33. And I knew him not: but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me: He upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining upon him, he it is that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

34. And I saw: and I gave testimony that this is the Son of God.

35. The next day again John stood and two of his disciples.

36. And beholding Jesus walking, he saith: Behold the Lamb of God.

37. And the two disciples heard him speak: and they followed Jesus.

38. And Jesus turning and seeing them following him, saith to them: What seek you? Who said to him: Rabbi (which is to say, being interpreted, Master), where dwellest thou?

39. He saith to them: Come and see. They came and saw where he abode: and they stayed with him that day. Now it was about the tenth hour.

40. And Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who had heard of John and followed him.

41. He findeth first his brother Simon and saith to him: We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.

42. And he brought him to Jesus. And Jesus looking upon him, said: Thou art Simon the son of Jona. Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is interpreted Peter.

43. On the following day, he would go forth into Galilee: and he findeth Philip, And Jesus saith to him: follow me.

44. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

45. Philip findeth Nathanael and saith to him: We have found him of whom Moses, in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus the son of Joseph of Nazareth.

46. And Nathanael said to him: Can any thing of good come from Nazareth? Philip saith to him: Come and see.

47. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him and he saith of him: Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.

48. Nathanael saith to him: Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said to him: Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.

49. Nathanael answered him and said: Rabbi: Thou art the Son of God. Thou art the King of Israel.

50. Jesus answered and said to him: Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, thou believest: greater things than these shalt thou see.

51. And he saith to him: Amen, amen, I say to you, you shall see the heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

Observe in holy Scripture, and especially in S. John, both in his Gospel and his Epistles, the faith and grace of Christ are compared to light, and sin to darkness, on account of many apposite analogies between them. For light is heavenly, and is the most noble, the swiftest and most pure of natural things. It is impassible and most active. It cannot be defiled by any impurities, even though they be commingled with it. It brings warmth, glory, and joy. It causes all things to be seen, and brings life and power to every living thing. Such also is God, and His grace. The contrary to all this is found in sin, whose symbol is darkness. Besides all this, grace leads to everlasting light and glory, sin to the lowest and most extreme darkness.

*Comprehended it not.* Greek, οὐ κατέλαβεν *i.e.*, as Vatablus translates, *did not receive it.* The meaning is, so great was the blindness and depravity of unbelieving and wicked men, that when the Light offered itself to them of its own accord, they would not embrace, nor receive it; for they closed their eyes that they might not admit it; for “their works were evil,” as S. John says (iii. 19).

*The was a man sent from God,* &c. He was sent, as Luke says, (iii. 1), “in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar: and the Word of God came to him in the wilderness.” “Thou, then,” Chrysostom, “when thou understandest that he was sent from God, do not think that anything merely human is being announced, but that all is Divine. He does not declare anything of his own, but the secrets of Him who sends him. Therefore he, John, is called an angel, that is, a messenger. It is the office of a messenger to know nothing of himself.”

*The same came for a witness,* &c. Namely, that he might bear witness that Jesus is the true Light of the world, and that we must look for, and ask of Him all the light of faith, and all the knowledge of salvation.

Observe that in Greek the article is prefixed to *light*, as it were *that light* meaning the spiritual and Divine light, that which shineth of itself, and is essentially light, and the source of all enlightenment, which is as it were a Divine Sun, in respect of which John the Baptist was but as the moon, or the day-star. For as the morning star goes before the sun, so did John precede Christ the Sun of righteousness. The meaning is as follows—Inasmuch as the light the Godhead was hidden in the humanity of Christ, as in a lantern dark and shaded, so that men discerned it not, therefore did God send John, that he might uncover and make this light manifest, and testify that Jesus was the very Son of God, the Teacher and Redeemer of the world. For, as Paul saith (1 Tim. vi. 16), God “inhabiteth the unapproachable light, whom no man hath seen, nor can see.” And again, the Son “is the splendour of His glory, and the form of the substance” of God the Father (Heb. i. 3, vulg.)

And again, the same is “the brightness of eternal light, and the spotless mirror of the majesty of God, and the image of His goodness” (Wisd. vii. 26).

*That all men through him might believe:* that is, believe in the Light, and so be justified and saved. *Through him*, namely, John, who as it were with his finger pointed out Christ, saying. “Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world.”

*He was not that Light,* &c. The Jews and the Scribes thought, because of the preaching and heavenly life of John in the wilderness, that he was himself the Light, *i.e.*, Christ. John the Evangelist by these words destroys such an idea. *He was*

4. and last. You may here take *life* to mean, *supernatural efficient Life*, and explain as follows, “In the Word, as in a Fount and prime Cause, was our supernatural life, that is to say, of grace and glory; and therefore that He might impart this *life* to us, He became Incarnate, as I have before said. For *supernatural life* is twofold. It is begun by grace, by which a just man serves God in faith, hope, and charity, and lives the supernatural life, believing in, hoping in, and loving God above all things, supernaturally. The other *supernatural life* is that which is consummated in glory, wherein the blessed enjoy God, and are eternally beatified. There is an allusion to Psalm xlvii., “With Thee is the Well of Life, and in Thy light shall we see life.” “This is,” says Theodoret, ““With Thee is the Word Eternal, the fountain of life; and in the light of the Holy Spirit shall we behold the light of Thy Only Begotten Son.””

*The light of man*, by which men are spiritually illuminated through faith and grace. For he is speaking, not of natural and corporeal, but of spiritual and supernatural light, as is plain from what follows. The meaning is, Our life, which I have just said was in the Word, was this illumination of the Word, by which He has illuminated men with the knowledge of God and His salvation—externally, by words and holy examples; internally, by heavenly light infused into the soul. This was why the Word was made flesh. So Clement of Alexandria (*Exhort. ad. Gent.*) says, “The Word which was with God appeared as a Teacher—the Word by which all things were made, and which, with Him who made them, gave them at the same time life as their Maker, and taught them to live well when He appeared as their Teacher, that He might hereafter, for the time to come, supply them with the means of living for ever.”

*And the light shineth in darkness*, &c. The meaning is, As the natural light by its illumination dispels the darkness, so likewise has Christ, forasmuch as He is light, done His part; but the darkness, at is, men by reason of their ignorance and unbelief, have closed the eyes of their soul, that they should not admit this light.

Observe, that Christ, as He is God, is the uncreated, efficient light: as man also He is the efficient light, because He is to men the Author of all wisdom, grace, and glory, not only giving them the natural light of reason, as Origen and Cyril explain, but still more as giving them the supernatural light of faith and wisdom. Wherefore Christ is called in Mal. iv. 2, “The Sun of righteousness.”

Observe Christ as man is here called *light*, because He chiefly *gave* light after His Incarnation. He was indeed light before, even from the first beginning of the universe. For as the sun, before it ascends above the horizon, sends forth some rays of its dawning, with which it gives light to the world, so likewise does Christ. This is what the Father says to Christ: “I have given Thee for a light unto the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be My salvation unto the ends of the earth.”

Admirably does S. Augustine say (*Hom.* 43), “Christ therefore came to give light to the eyes, because the devil had blinded them.” And the same saint says (*Epist.* 120, *ad. Honor*), “The Son of God is not absent even from the minds of the wicked, although they see Him not, just as no light is seen when it is presented to the eyes of the blind.” The light of the Word shines in the darkness of wicked men by the light of reason, by the voices of creatures, which all cry aloud that there is a Creator, and that He ought to be worshipped and loved. It shines by the law of nature written in the soul, by the New Law, by the Scriptures, by doctors and preachers, by holy inspirations, and by many such things. Wherefore, the same Augustine says (*Tract.* 2. *in Joan*), “Fall not into sin, and this sun shall not go down upon thee. If thou shalt fall into sin, it will set, and darkness will fall upon thee.” “If thou wilt see light, be thou also thyself light. But if thou lovest darkness, and the lusts of darkness, then will they overshadow thee, yea, make thee blind.”

Vers. 1-9 are in narrative form.

In the beginning, &c. So the Persian, Syriac, Egyptian, Ethiopic, and Arabic, except that the last version has the article in the second and third clauses of the verse—“the Word was with God, *the* Word was God.” The Ethiopic for *Word* has *cal*, answering to the Latin *Verbum*, which is better than *Sermo*, as Erasmus and the innovators translate the Greek *λόγος*.

John begins from the Godhead of the Word: first, because the right order and a full account of Christ require it; second, because in the time of S. John the heresies of Cerinthus and Ebion had arisen, which denied Christ’s Divinity.

After a similar manner did Moses begin his account of the genesis of the world, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” Moses begins from the creation of the world, but John far higher, even from the eternity of the Word. Moses marks the beginning of time, in which God made all things. John marks a beginning which was from eternity, when the Word was, by which all things were made by God in time. John therefore takes up the exordium of Moses, and presupposes the beginning of the world, when he gives, so to say, an account of the long anterior beginning of the Word. Hence Tertullian, in his book against Hermogenes, truly asserts that the Gospel is the supplement of the Old Testament.

S. John alludes to Ecclus. xxiv. 5, “I (the Eternal Wisdom) came forth from the mouth of the Most High, the first begotten before every creature.” Also to Prov. viii. 22, “The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His ways, before He made anything, from the beginning.” Where the Septuagint translates, “The Lord built, or founded (*ἐκτίσσε*) me the beginning of His ways, in His work. Before the age He founded me in the beginning, before He made the earth, and appointed the great depths.”

*In the beginning*, *i.e.*, first, “in the Eternal Father,” as Cyril says, and Origen. For by-and-by John says in the 14th verse, that the Word was in the bosom of the Father. Second, and more simply, Augustine, Bede, and Hilary, *In the beginning, i.e.*, of the world, or of times, such as you can only imagine, which went on from all eternity before the foundation of the world. As much as to say, the Word was not made in the beginning of time, however ancient and imaginary; but He existed then, because He was not made, but was begotten from eternity. Third, and most simply, Augustine, Chrysostom, and Basil, *In the beginning, i.e.*, before all things, even from the beginning of all eternity, long before all angels, or men, or things created, the Word was. For S. John is here speaking of a true and real beginning (*principium*), just as Moses does in the first verse of Genesis, and Solomon in Prov. viii. 22. Wherefore, all the Fathers from the passage prove the true Divinity and eternity of Christ. This beginning S. John sets in opposition to Ebion, who affirmed that Christ began to be after His birth of the Virgin, and that He had no previous existence. So Cyril. Hence Nonnus expounds the expression *In the beginning*, in a fivefold manner one following after another. He was *in the beginning*, saith he, first, as not subject to conditions of time; second, as coeternal with the Father; third, as equal to the Father by nature; fourth, as incomprehensible; fifth, as ineffable. The four last are consequences of the first.

You will say, Eternity is infinite duration, having neither beginning, nor end: why then is a beginning here spoken of? I answer, the reason is, because of the weakness of the human intellect, which is not able to comprehend eternity, nor to

conceive of it definitely, except by a comparison with time. Therefore it conceives of eternity as duration which is coexistent with all time—past, present, and future, and that not only time actual, but which can be conceived of. Indeed, it precedes all time. The meaning therefore is this, *In the beginning*, that is, before all time, even that which can be, imagined in the mind, *the Word was*. Think of millions of millions of years, as much as ever thou canst conceive in thy mind; before all these, and whatsoever infinite number thou canst add, *the Word was*. This is why S. John repeats *was* four times, saying, *In the beginning was the Word, &c.*, that thou mayest understand that whatsoever time thou thinkest of, the Word was then: that in all ages, however far back thou goest, the Word was in those ages. *Beginning* therefore is here used relatively, for it is spoken with reference to all time, even that which far precedes. For as the whole substance and immensity of God is in every place whatsoever, yes, in every point of space, and yet it encompasses all space and every place, even what we can think of above the heavens, so likewise God's eternity, which altogether in time present, or in one single instant of the duration of time, includes and embraces all time, past, present, and to come, and far exceeds and transcends it all. And this is what we mean when we say, following the words of S. John, that God's eternity was in the beginning.

Thus we are able to ascend with our minds to the idea of the antiquity, and as it were the origin of eternity, which is here called *Principium*, that is, *the beginning* of all duration and eternity.

Though indeed this *beginning* is without beginning, a commencement without commencement. Therefore when we would say of anything, that it did not have a beginning in time, we say that it was in the beginning of all duration and eternity. And by this we mean nothing else but that it always existed, that it was from all eternity. This is the meaning of S. John when he says, *In the beginning was the Word*. This is also why we say in ordinary discourse, that God has existed from the beginning of eternity, that is, that He is from all eternity.

*Was*: the expression *was*, says S. Basil upon these words of S. John, leads us to eternity, not as if the word *was* signified that the Word preceded the beginning, concerning which it is said, *It was the beginning*, and consequently the beginning of time and the world were here to be understood (because the Word preceded in computation (*ratione*) only, as it were, for as everything whatsoever precedes its own duration, so also God is before His duration and eternity: for duration is the continuance and measure of the thing which exists and endures), therefore, even before, from all eternity, *was the Word*. Here observe that the word employed is *was* (*erat*), not *has been* (*luit*), for *has been* signifies that which has existed, and passed away; but *was* signifies that it is even now, or that it is perennial and eternal. So S. Chrysostom, Cyril, and Theophylact. The Holy Ghost therefore suggested *was* to the mind and pen of S. John, as against the Arians, whom He foresaw would arise. They were wont to say, *There was when there was no was*; meaning there was a time when the Son was not. From these words of S. John the Council of Nice condemns them; because, *In the beginning was the Word, i.e.*, from eternity.

Moreover, S. Gregory Nazianzen observes that the substantive verb *is* and *was* have a special application to God from the plenitude of His essence. Wherefore God in Hebrew is called Jehovah, *i.e.*, *He who is*.

The Word, Gr. *ὁ λόγος*, That Word, eternal and divine, which is the Son of God, as even the Arians formerly allowed. For John soon after calls this Word the Only Begotten of the Father. So constantly in Scripture, the Son is called the Word of the Father. S. Basil thought that the Holy Spirit might also be called the Word; but S. Thomas rightly observes that this can only be said improperly (improperly being used in the logical sense).

sentence is commenced, *That which was made in Him was life*. This is the pointing and reading of S. Austin, Tertullian (*cond. Hermog.*) S. Ambrose (*lib. 3 de fide, c. 3*), and the Latin Fathers *passim*. And among the Greeks are Clement of Alexandria (*lib. 1 Pæ. c. 6.*) and S. Cyril *in loc.* S. Augustine expounds as follows, "Everything mad and created by the Word was in the same Word vitally and intellectually, before it was made and created." It was in the *ideas* and eternal plans which exist in the Word. It was therefore *life, i.e.*, it lived in the mind and *idea* of the Word. S. Cyril explains differently, "Everything was made *life* in the Word, that is, it received, and continues to receive life, *i.e.*, vigour and the preservation of its being, as long as it exists, from the Word."

The third reading is that of the Syriac, Arabic, and Greek texts of S. Chrysostom, Nonnus, Euthymius, and Tertius (*in cantena*): *without Him was nothing made that was made*; then the stop, and then a fresh sentence, *In Him was life*. This is by far the best reading, and in conformity with it the Bible has been corrected at Rome, and most of the other Latin copies.

S. John adds this sentence against the Macedonians, who argued as we have seen above. As if he said, "When I say that all things were made by the Word, I mean, not the Holy Spirit, but only such things as were created and made."

*In Him was life, &c.* Life is the thing which is most excellent, as death is the worst. S. John also ascribes to the Word the Fountain of life: for in Him "we live, and move and have our being" (Acts xvii.) Hence the Greeks call their God Zeus, from *ζῆν*, *to live*, because he breathes life into all living things. S. John's meaning therefore is, "Our true life of grace and glory was in the Word as its origin and fountain. And that He might communicate, Himself as this life and light to men, He came down to them, and became man. That as by the Word this macrocosm or great universe was created, so also by the same might the microcosm, or little world of man, be re-created, and called back from the death of sin to the life of grace and righteousness." S. John explains himself by adding, *And the life was the light of men*. In his first Epistle he speaks thus of the Word of Life (chap. i. ver. 2). "For the Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal Life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." And in chap. v., the last verse, "that we may know the true God, and may be in His true Son. This is the true God, and life eternal" (Vulg.) And this is why S. John. constantly calls Christ *The Life*.

The Fathers expound this *Life* of the Word in various ways.

1. *Of Formal Life. In Him was Life*: that is, life is the very substance of the Word. The Word Himself is substantial Life. So says Cæcumenius on 1 John i. The Word Himself is essentially Life. For Life and to live are His very essence.
2. In the Word is *Life ideal, or exemplar*, because in the Word, as in *Idea*, the eternal plans of all things exist, as S. Austin says. For the Word is the *Idea* of all creatures, but the *Idea* is itself the essence and life of God. Thus therefore the Word is the life of all creatures, even of things inanimate, for all live in the Word, inasmuch as He is all Life.
3. In the Word is *efficient natural Life*, because the Word is the efficient Cause of all living things, and He gives them their life. To plants He gives *vegetable life*, to animals *animal life*, to men *rational life*, to angels *angelic life*. Jansen expounds thus, "The natural life of living things depends upon the Word."

uncreated, such as the Spirit, who is One God with the Father and the Son, and the Creator of all things. For if you were to take the word all absolutely, you might infer that the Father also had been created by the Word, which would be ridiculous, as S. Gregory Nazianzen learnedly teaches against the Macedonians (*Orat. de Sp. Sanct.*) S. John does not in this place make mention of the Holy Ghost, because he is only treating of the generation and incarnation of the Word. Wherefore, after he had said that the Word was Himself God, that is, coeternal, and of one substance with the Father, he now in this third verse describes the relation of the same Word to all created things, asserting that they were made by Him. Then in the ninth and following verses he comes down to man, showing the relation of the Word to man. He asserts that He took upon Him the nature of man, that He might illuminate and save him. This is the scope and object of the whole passage.

Observe that when it is said *by Him*, the preposition *by* does not signify an instrumental cause, or a minister, as though the Word were the instrument, or minister of God, by which He created all things, as Origen supposed, and also the Arians, but it signifies an original, or chief (*principalem*) cause, as in Prov. viii. 15, "By me kings reign," and 1 Cor. i. 9, "Faithful is God, by whom ye have been called" (Vulg.) The preposition *by* in this and other places is referred to God the Father, who is the First Cause of all things. And *by* here means that the Word with the Father is the original Cause of the creation of all things. So S. Chrysostom, Theophylact, and Euthymius on this passage, and SS. Athanasius, Basil, and others against the Arians. Wherefore also S. Paul (Heb. i. 10) interprets Psalm cii. 26, "Thou Lord in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Thy hands," of the Word, or Son. "Never, certainly, would he have said this," says S. Chrysostom, "unless he had believed the Son to be the Founder, not a minister, and that the Father and the Son were equal in dignity."

You will ask, Why then does S. John use the preposition *διὰ* (*per*, or *through*) instead of *ὑπὸ* *by*, when he says that all things were made through (*διὰ*) Him?

1. That he might signify that the Word proceeds from the Father, and is begotten of Him. "Lest any one should suppose," says S. Chrysostom, "that the Word was unbegotten."

2. That he might signify that the Word is the *Idea* of created things, according to which the Father with the Son created all things. For an artificer makes all the works of his art by an ideal, or conception, or mental word, or plan. All these similitudes are transferred to the Divine Word, who is the Begotten but Uncreated Wisdom.

*And without Him was made nothing* (Vulg.) *Nothing: i.e., evil*, as corruptible things, whose constant tendency is to nothingness, from whence they came forth, as the Manichæans say. For they thought that things corporeal and corruptible were not created by God, but by a demon, or evil god. But that this interpretation of the words is false and foolish is shown by the Greek for *nothing* (*οὐδὲ ἐν*), *nor even one thing*, meaning that everything, without one single exception, was created by the Word. So the Arabic clearly translates, *All things were made by Him, and without Him was there not made anything of the things which were made.*

3. By *nothing*, S. Augustine understands sin: that all things were made by the Word, nothing, *i.e., sin* being excepted, the author of which is the devil and an evil will not God. But this idea is shown to be untenable in this place by the Greek, *οὐδὲ ἐν*, *not even one thing.*

Which was made. Here there are three ways of pointing, and in consequence a threefold interpretation and meaning. The first is *without Him was nothing made, which was made in Him*: then the stop, after which begins a new sentence, *There was life*, &c. So read and punctuate SS. Hilary, and Epiphanius, and some others.

But this reading is generally rejected as containing a manifest tautology.

A second reading is, *without Him was made nothing*: then a full stop, after which a new

You will ask why is the Son of God called *the Word*? I answer that the Greek *λόγος* (*Logos*) has many meanings, which are all applicable in this place.

1. *Logos* may be translated *reason*, because, as reason proceeds from the mind, so does the Son from the Father. So SS. Chrysostom and Basil.
2. *Logos* may be translated *definition*, because the Word definitely expresses and unfolds the nature and attributes of the Father. Wherefore Nicetas (*in Orat. 42 Nazianz.*) says, "The same relation that a definition bears to the thing defined does the Son bear to the Father. For He declares the Father as a definition declares that which is defined by it. Wherefore Christ said, 'Philip, he that seeth Me, seeth My Father also.' For the Son is a compendious demonstration of the Paternal nature; for every offspring is a sort of tacit account, or definition, of its parent."
3. *Logos* may be translated *cause*, because the Word is the cause of all things which have been created and produced by the Word of God.
4. *Λόγος* may be translated *work*, because the Word is the Work of the Father, coextensive with Him, coeternal and coequal.
5. *Λόγος* can be translated *power*, or *virtue*, because the Word is the *strength* and *right hand* of the Father.
6. *Λόγος* may be translated *beauty*, because the Word is the *form*, *grace*, and *beauty* of the Father.
7. And chiefly, *Λόγος* may be translated, with Tertullian, Cyprian, and Ambrose, *speech* (*sermo*), or rather *Word* (*Verbum*).

This *Word*, or *speech*, is not of the mouth, but of the mind; because as we by thinking form a conception to ourselves of the thing thought of, or understood, which is called the word of the mind, so the eternal Father, by comprehending and understanding His Essence, and all that belongs to It, has produced this Eternal Word, coequal with, and like to, Itself, by means of which it comes to pass that this Word is God, and the Son of God, begotten of the Father.

Hence also the Gentile philosophers, Trismegistus, Orpheus, Plato, and the rest of the Greeks, Chaldæans, and Egyptians called the Father *vōuv i.e., mind*; and the Son *Logos*, as it were, the offspring of the mind. See S. Augustine (*lib. 7, Confess. c. 9*). Whence that saying of Plato's, "A Monad begat a Monad, and in it reflected his ardour." He means, The Father begat the Son, and through Him breathed the Holy Spirit, which is the reciprocal Love of the Father and the Son. Many, however, are of opinion that Plato and the other Gentile philosophers mean by the *Logos* not the *Son* but the *idea* in the mind of God, according to which He created all things, and reflected His love back upon Himself, because He created the world on account of His love.

Here observe, the Word of God is twofold. First, *essential*, because it is the very Intelligence of the Father, which together with essence, understanding, and will, He shares with the Son and the Holy Ghost. The second *isnotional*, which is the Word produced by the Father, and subsisting personally, that is, as the Son. So S. Thomas (1, *dist. 27 q. 2. a. 2*). This is the twofold meaning of the Word, taken in its widest sense.

I have written more upon the Word in 1 Epis. John, chap. i. ver. 1. Let me add here what S. Augustine says (*Serm. 38 de Verb. Dom.*) "The Word of God is, as it were, a Form, but not formed. It is the Form of all forms, over all things, and existing in all things. But some ask, How could the Son be begotten coeternal with the Father? As

if fire were eternal, would not its brightness be coeternal with it? Is it not the same with the reflection in a mirror, or in water? As, for example, a shrub would always have its reflection in the water beside which it grew." And S. Chrysostom says, "He said not Word simply, but by the article distinguished it from all others. For it is an Hypostasis, proceeding forth impassibly from the Father. This is the meaning of *was in the beginning*, that it always existed, and with an infinite existence. For it is not said of the heaven and the earth, that they *were* in the beginning, but that *they were made* in the beginning.

*And the Word was with God.* S. John meets an objection. Some one may say, "Where was the Word in the beginning, *i.e.*, from eternity, when as yet there was no place, and no created nature of things?" He answers, "The Word had no need of place, because It is spiritual, and divine; but It was with the Father, as with that from which It derived Its origin." As it is said in the 18th verse, It was *in the bosom* of the Father. Or, as we might say, It was in the Father's House, which is God Himself, and His immensity.

The preposition *with* denotes—

1. Distinction of person, because indeed the Son is a different Person from the Father, not one and the same, as the Sabellians say. "For how should that which is one numerically be understood to be with itself?" says S. Cyril. "Before all things," says Tertullian (*lib. 5 cons. Prax.*) "God alone was Himself to Himself both universe and space and everything. But in this respect only was He alone, that He had nothing external to Himself, for not even then was He alone; for He had with Himself what he had in Himself, His Reason, or that which the Greeks call His *Logos*."
2. *With* denotes the loving and perfect union of the Son with the Father, by which it comes to pass that it is impossible for Him to be separated from the Father. So Nonnus.
3. *With* denotes the equality of the Son with the Father. For to be *with* God, or *near to (juxta)* God, means to sit at the right hand of God, as it were God of the same substance as the Father. Wherefore Christ is said after His Ascension to have returned to the right hand of the Father (Mark xvi.) As Nonnus expounds, "the Son is *sunthronos* with the Father," a term which cannot be expressed by a single word in English, but which means an associate in the same throne, an assessor in the same seat.

*And the Word was God.* The order of the words in the Greek is, *And God was the Word*. Lest the Arians should bring forward the objection, "If the Word was with God, then the Word was not God, John confutes them by anticipation, saying *The Word was God*. For the Arians placed the interior and essential Word of God, that is, the Intelligence of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (as the orthodox faith is) in one Person of Godhead, coeternal with Himself. They said that God began to be a Father in time, when He produced the Word (*Verbum notionale*) distinct from Himself, as it were the first of creatures, and by him all other creatures. John refutes this by saying, *And God was the Word*, meaning that the Word already spoken of was God. He said this lest any one should suppose that the Word was not God, because he had said that He was with God. He means that the Word was with God in such sort that He Himself was God.

The Arians object that the Greek word *θεὸν i.e.*, God, has not the article in this clause as it had in the preceding clause, *and the Word was with God (apud τὸν θεόν)*. Therefore, say they, the Word was not true God. I reply by denying the conclusion. For the reason of the difference is that the word God (*θεόν*) in the preceding clause, *with God*, denotes a distinct Person, namely, the Person of the Father with whom the Word was. But in this latter clause it denotes not a Person but the essence of the Godhead common to each Person. For the Word is one God with the Father, so far as relates to Essence and Godhead, but not as regards Person. And the article in this place signifies a distinct Person, not the nature common to both. Again, the Greeks

prefix the article to the subject, not the predicate; and in this place God is the predicate, the Word is the subject.

Observe that John in this sentence with three clauses, by the first clause unfolds the *when* of the Word: it was eternity. Secondly, the *where* of the Word, and His distinction from the Father. In this third clause, the essence of the Word, and His identity in essence with the Father. S. John unfolded this threefold sentence of His Gospel in the Creed which, at the bidding of the Blessed Virgin, he delivered to S. Gregory Thaumaturgus, as S. Gregory of Nyssa relates in his life. For this symbol is as follows, "There is one Father of the living Word, the substantial Wisdom and Power, and eternal Image, the perfect Father of the perfect and only begotten Son. One Lord, alone from the Only One, God of God, the form and image of the Godhead, the efficacious Word, the comprehensive Wisdom by which all things were made, and the effectual power of the whole creation. True Son that cannot be seen, of the true Father that cannot be seen, incorruptible, immortal, and eternal Son of the incorruptible, immortal, and eternal Father."

*The same was in the beginning with God.* He compendiously repeats and confirms this proposition of this clause by a sentence of a single clause. Thus, "This Word, which I have said is God, was in the beginning, that is, from eternity, with God." For it is difficult to understand how the Word can be with God, and yet the same be God. Therefore John writes and inculcates both together, that he may signify at one and the same time the unity of essence and the diversity of persons, and that he may teach that in the Godhead there is a Trinity of Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. For this is the deepest and most obscure mystery of our faith, and the most difficult to be believed.

Maldonatus gives a second reason for this repetition, derived from the third clause, *the Word was God*, that is to say, forasmuch as the Word was God, therefore it follows that He was in the beginning with God the Father, that is, coeternal and of one substance with the Father.

S. Hilary gives a third reason (*lib. 1 de Trin.*), lest any one should suppose because he said *the Word was God*, and *the same was in the beginning with God*, there were therefore two Gods, one which was the Word, and the other with whom the Word was, as the Manichæans held two Principles, or Gods, one of which was the Creator of all things corporeal, the other the Creator of angels and things spiritual, John declares that the Word was so with God the Father as to be the same God with Him.

*All things were made by Him*, that is, by the Word. All things which were not God were created by the Word. "All things, from an angel to a worm," says S. Augustine; who adds, "between God who speaks, and the creature which was made, what is there by which it was made, but the Word, by whom God said, *Let it be made, and it was made*. As the Apostle says, "By Him," *i.e.*, the Word, "were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him" (Col. i. 16).

From these words of S. John the Macedonians falsely denied that the Holy Ghost is God, arguing that He was made by the Word, and therefore that He was a creature, and not the Creator. But it is plain that the words refer to things created, not things