

The Gospel of John Introduction

¹In the beginning was *the* Logos (Word), and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God. [Jn. 1:1]

Saint Kyril of Alexandria: “He always was in the Father as in a source. The Father then being considered as the Source, the Logos was in Him, being His wisdom, power, express image, radiance, and likeness. If there was no time when the Father was without Logos, wisdom, image, radiance, and likeness, it is needful to confess also that the Son, Who is all these to the eternal Father, is eternal.” [*Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, in *Orthodox Life*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (Jan-Feb, 1999): 22, 23; cf. *P.G.* 73:11CD-12D (col. 25).]

Saint Gregory of Nyssa: “The evangelist fears our untrained state, and does not entrust to our ears the appellation of ‘Father,’ lest any of the carnal minded imagine also by consequence a mother. Neither does He name in his proclamation the Son, lest any should humanize the Godhead by an idea of passion. For this reason He calls Him ‘the Word’ (ὁ Λόγος, the Logos), for as thy word (*logos*) proceeds from thy mind, without requiring the intervention of passion, so here also, in hearing of the Word, thou shalt not conceive that which is from something, and shalt not conceive passion.” [*Against Eunomius*, Bk. IV, § 1, in *Nicene*, 2nd Ser., V:154.]

Saint Athanasios: “The Arians whisper, ‘How can the Son be Word (Logos), or the Word be God’s image? For the word of men is composed of syllables, and only signifies the speaker’s will, and then is over and is lost.’ ... For such as he that begets, such of necessity is the offspring; and such as is the Word’s Father, such must be also His Word. But God is not as man, but is existing and is ever. Therefore, also His Word is existing and is everlastingly with the Father, as radiance of light...But God’s Word...He is God also, as being God’s Image; for ‘the Word was God [Jn. 1:1]’ says Scripture. Since man’s words avail not for energizing, he works not by means of words but of hands; for they have being, but man’s word subsists not. But the ‘Word of God,’ as the apostle says is ‘living and effective (ἐνεργηής) [Heb. 4:12].’ He is then Framer of all, ‘and without Him not even one thing came into being [Jn. 1:3]. [Discourses Against the Arians, Second Discourse, Chaps. XXXV-XXXVI, Nicene, 2nd Ser., IV:467.]

Essence (Nature) & Hypostasis (Person)

Saint Ignatius: “There is one God Who has manifested Himself by Jesus Christ His Son, Who is His Word (Logos), not spoken, but essential (of the same essence). For He is not the voice of an articulate utterance, but a hypostasis begotten by divine power.” [Epistle to the Magnesians 8.1.]

“We have appropriated the concept of *essence* (ousia or nature) for our use because the word means the fact of participating in *being*... ‘*Being beyond all being*’.” (Yannaras, Elements of Faith)

Hypostasis – means a distinct *Persons* . “Every human being shares a common ways of being (a common essence), a being that has thought, reason, will, judgement, imagination, memory etc. But

every particular realization (Person or Hypostasis) of this Being, that is each person separately, incarnates all the common marks of our essence in a unique and unrepeatable way. Every human existence has absolute *otherness* (Yannaras, Elements of Fath).”

“Persons hypostasize essence, they give it an hypostasis, that is, a real and specific existence. Essence only exists in persons; person are the mode of existence of essence. (Yannaras, Elements of Fath).”

[Jn. 1:1c.] “The Logos was (ην) with (πρὸς) God.”

Saint Kyril of Alexandria: “Nor is there any objection to conceiving of the Son being in the Father as in a source....The Son is in the Father...flashing forth from Him, as the sun’s radiance flashes forth or the fire’s innate heat. For in such examples, one may see one thing generated of another, but still perpetually coexisting and inseparable, so that one of them cannot exist without the other, and preserve the true condition of its own nature.” [Ib., 23; cf. P.G. 73:12A (col. 28).]

“See how he everywhere adds the ‘was’ on account of His generation before the ages, yet, by saying that the Logos was with God, showing that the Son is One, having existence by Himself, while God the Father again, ‘with’ Whom ‘was the Logos,’ is Another.” [Ib., 26; cf. P.G. 73:15C (col. 32).] “The Father is His own hypostasis (ὑποστάσει), and the Son likewise, the Holy Spirit being counted with Them. The Son is coessential (ὁμοούσιος) with the Father and the Father with the Son, wherefore They arrive at an unchangeable likeness, so that the Father is seen in the Son, the Son in the Father,...and Each is manifest in the Other, even as the Savior says, ‘The one who has seen Me hath seen the Father; I am in the Father and the Father in Me [Jn. 14:9, 11].’ Even though He be in the Father...He is not deprived of His separate hypostasis.” [Ib., 26; cf. P.G. 73:15D-16DA (cols. 32, 33).]

Saint Chrysostom: “The first ‘was,’ applied to ‘the Logos (Word),’ only declares His eternal Being. The second ‘was,’ used in ‘the Logos was with God,’ denotes His relative Being. For since to be eternal and without beginning is most peculiar to God, this he puts first. Then, lest any should hear that He was in the beginning and was unbegotten also, he straightway mentions what He was, that He was ‘with God.’ By wisely adding the article in saying ‘the Word’ he has prevented anyone from supposing that this ‘Word’ is simply such a one as is either uttered or conceived. He does not say ‘in God’ but ‘with God,’ declaring to us His eternity as to His hypostasis. Then he advances, clearly revealing it, by adding that this ‘Logos’ also ‘was God.’” [Hom. 3, P.G. 59:20 (col. 40).] “So ‘with God’ means eternally even as the Father Himself, for the Father was never without the Logos, but He was always God with God, yet each in His proper hypostasis.” [Hom. 4, P.G. 59:27 (col. 47).]

Historical Background of Term “Logos”: The Orthodox New Testament

The Greek word *logos* is usually translated as “word” in English Bibles, which is one of its meanings (speech, discourse, proclamation, rational principle), but it also means “reason.” *Logos* was known both in pagan and Jewish antiquity, having been defined by Heraclitus (c. 500 B.C.) in a pantheistic way as the universal reason governing and permeating the world, which the Stoics adopted and popularized as a concept. In Hellenistic Judaism the *Logos* as an independent hypostasis was further developed, and came to be associated with Wisdom (*Sophia*) [Wis. of Sol. 9:1, 2, 18:15]. Philo of Alexandria combined Greek terms of philosophy and biblical concepts saying that the *Logos* is the divine pattern from which the material world is copied, the divine power in the cosmos, the divine purpose or agent in creation and an intermediary between God and man. Saint John, having a knowledge of the ideas of the ancient world, identified the *Logos* with the Messiah in an entirely new way. It is not possible with any accuracy to learn to what extent his use of *Logos* was an inheritance from Hebrew Scriptures or a derivation from Hellenic philosophy.

To some writers the philosophic doctrine of the *Logos* was thought a cosmic mediatorial principle, while others perceived the rational principle, or *logos*, to have divine or semidivine attributes and, on occasion, even denominated as “God” (*Theos*). Central to the doctrine were three technical terms: (1) All human beings, like all creation, are indwelt by the *logos*, or at least a portion of the *logos*, by token of which the *logos* was perceived to function in a seminal or germinal capacity. This was called *logos spermatikos*. (2) As a dynamic rational principle, the *logos* had its distinct existence as an unspoken word or thought, existing in the mind of God but not yet uttered, a thought having as it were the potential for articulation. This was called the *logos endiathetos*. (3) Once the thought was expressed, however, it went out from the mind of God as a verbal emanation. This was called *logos prophorikos*.

The Synod of Nicæa spoke out against the theology of Arius and those apologists who had subordinated the *Logos* to God, thinking they were preserving God’s oneness and distinguishing God from all that was not God, including God’s innate and articulated *Logos*. While they could not refer to the *Logos* as God or as God the *Logos* made flesh, the Nicæans insisted on full divinity. If the apologists viewed the *Logos* as the “articulation” of God, the Nicæans saw the *Logos* as perfect God and perfect Man. In the post-Nicene period, “*Logos*” was no longer used exclusively of Jesus, but became one of many synonyms for Jesus, including Wisdom (*Sophia*) or Power (*dynamis*).