

John 8:58 – Catena Aurea by St Thomas Aquinas

Pope Gregory I, Gregory the Great:

“Our Savior mildly draws them away from their carnal view of Abraham, to the contemplation of His Divinity; Jesus said to them, “Verily, verily, I say to you, Before Abraham was, I am.” Before is a particle of past time, am, of present. Divinity has no past or future, but always the present; and therefore, He does not say, Before Abraham was, I was, but, Before Abraham was, I am; as it is in Exodus, “I am that I am”. Before and after might be said of Abraham with reference to different periods of his life; to be, in the present, is said of the truth only.

(Aquinas was saying that Jesus was saying He had no past, present or future tense)

St Augustine Hippo:

“He did not say before Abraham was, but, before Abraham was made. Nor does He say, I am made; because that, in the beginning WAS the Word.

Pope Gregory:

“Their unbelieving minds, however, were unable to support these indications of eternity; not understanding Him, sought to destroy Him, to stone Him.”

St Augustine Hippo:

“Such hardness of heart, whither was it to run, but to its truest likeness, even the stones? But now that He had done all that He could do as a teacher, and they in return wished to stone Him, since they could not bear correction, He leaves them: Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple. He did not hide Himself in a corner of the temple, as if He was afraid, or take refuge in a house, or run behind a wall, or a pillar; but by His heavenly power, making Himself invisible to His enemies, went through the midst of them: Jesus hid Himself, and, went out of the temple.”

Pope Gregory:

“Who, had He chosen to exert the power of His Divinity, could, without a word, by His mere nod, have seized them, with the very stones in their hands, and delivered them to immediate death. But He who came to suffer, was slow to execute judgment.”

St Augustine Hippo:

“So then, as a man, He flies from the stones; but woe to them, from whose stony hearts God flies.”

Pope Gregory:

“What does our Lord mean by hiding Himself, but that the truth is hidden to them, who despise His words. The truth flies the company of an unhumiliated soul. His example shows us, that we should in all humility rather retreat from the wrath of the proud, when it rises, than resist it, even though we might be able.”