TERTULLIAN

Against Praxeas

History of Christian Philosophy
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Chapter 1. Satan's Wiles Against the Truth. How They Take the Form of the Praxean Heresy. Account of the Publication of This Heresy

In various ways has the devil rivalled and resisted the truth. Sometimes his aim has been to destroy the truth by defending it. He maintains that there is one only Lord, the Almighty Creator of the world, in order that out of this doctrine of the unity he may fabricate a heresy. He says that the Father Himself came down into the Virgin, was Himself born of her, Himself suffered, indeed was Himself Jesus Christ. Here the old serpent has fallen out with himself, since, when he tempted Christ after John's baptism, he approached Him as “the Son of God;” surely intimating that God had a Son, even on the testimony of the very Scriptures, out of which he was at the moment forging his temptation: “If you are the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.” Matthew 4:3 Again: “If you are the Son of God, cast yourself down from hence; for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning you”—referring no doubt, to the Father—“and in their hands they shall bear you up, that you hurt not your foot against a stone.” Or perhaps, after all, he was only reproaching the Gospels with a lie, saying in fact: “Away with Matthew; away with Luke! Why heed their words? In spite of them, I declare that it was God Himself that I approached; it was the Almighty Himself that I tempted face to face; and it was for no other purpose than to tempt Him that I approached Him. If, on the contrary, it had been only the Son of God, most likely I should never have condescended to deal with Him.” However, he is himself a liar from the beginning, John 8:44 and whatever man he instigates in his own way; as, for instance, Praxeas. For he was the first to import into Rome from Asia this kind of heretical pravity, a man in other respects of restless disposition, and above all inflated with the pride of confessorship simply and solely because he had to bear for a short time the annoyance of a prison; on which occasion, even “if he had given his body to be burned, it would have profited him nothing,” not having the love of God, 1 Corinthians 13:3 whose very gifts he has resisted and destroyed. For after the Bishop of Rome had acknowledged the prophetic gifts of Montanus, Prisca, and Maximilla, and, in consequence of the acknowledgment, had bestowed his peace on the churches of Asia and Phrygia, he, by importunately urging false accusations against the prophets themselves and their churches, and insisting on the authority of the bishop's predecessors in the see, compelled him to recall the pacific letter which he had issued, as well as to desist from his purpose of acknowledging the said gifts. By this Praxeas did a twofold service for the devil at Rome: he drove away prophecy, and he brought in heresy; he put to flight the Paraclete, and he crucified the Father. Praxeas' tares had been moreover sown, and had produced their fruit here also, while many were asleep in their simplicity of doctrine; but these tares actually seemed to have been plucked up, having been discovered and exposed by him whose agency God was pleased to employ. Indeed, Praxeas
had deliberately resumed his old (true) faith, teaching it after his renunciation of error; and there is his own handwriting in evidence remaining among the carnally-minded, in whose society the transaction then took place; afterwards nothing was heard of him. We indeed, on our part, subsequently withdrew from the carnally-minded on our acknowledgment and maintenance of the Paraclete. But the tares of Praxeas had then everywhere shaken out their seed, which having lain hid for some while, with its vitality concealed under a mask, has now broken out with fresh life. But again shall it be rooted up, if the Lord will, even now; but if not now, in the day when all bundles of tares shall be gathered together, and along with every other stumbling-block shall be burnt up with unquenchable fire. Matthew 13:30

Chapter 2. The Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity and Unity, Sometimes Called the Divine Economy, or Dispensation of the Personal Relations of the Godhead

In the course of time, then, the Father forsooth was born, and the Father suffered, God Himself, the Lord Almighty, whom in their preaching they declare to be Jesus Christ. We, however, as we indeed always have done (and more especially since we have been better instructed by the Paraclete, who leads men indeed into all truth), believe that there is one only God, but under the following dispensation, or ὀἰκονομία, as it is called, that this one only God has also a Son, His Word, who proceeded from Himself, by whom all things were made, and without whom nothing was made. Him we believe to have been sent by the Father into the Virgin, and to have been born of her—being both Man and God, the Son of Man and the Son of God, and to have been called by the name of Jesus Christ; we believe Him to have suffered, died, and been buried, according to the Scriptures, and, after He had been raised again by the Father and taken back to heaven, to be sitting at the right hand of the Father, and that He will come to judge the quick and the dead; who sent also from heaven from the Father, according to His own promise, the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, the sanctifier of the faith of those who believe in the Father, and in the Son, and in the Holy Ghost. That this rule of faith has come down to us from the beginning of the gospel, even before any of the older heretics, much more before Praxeas, a pretender of yesterday, will be apparent both from the lateness of date which marks all heresies, and also from the absolutely novel character of our new-fangled Praxeas. In this principle also we must henceforth find a presumption of equal force against all heresies whatsoever—that whatever is first is true, whereas that is spurious which is later in date. But keeping this prescriptive rule inviolate, still some opportunity must be given for reviewing (the statements of heretics), with a view to the instruction and protection of various persons; were it only that it may not seem that each perversion of the truth is condemned without examination, and simply prejudged; especially in the case of this heresy, which supposes itself to possess the pure truth, in think-
ing that one cannot believe in One Only God in any other way than by saying that the Fa-
ther, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are the very selfsame Person. As if in this way also one
were not All, in that All are of One, by unity (that is) of substance; while the mystery of the
dispensation is still guarded, which distributes the Unity into a Trinity, placing in their order
the three Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: three, however, not in condi-
tion, but in degree; not in substance, but in form; not in power, but in aspect; yet of one
substance, and of one condition, and of one power, inasmuch as He is one God, from whom
these degrees and forms and aspects are reckoned, under the name of the Father, and of the
Son, and of the Holy Ghost. How they are susceptible of number without division, will be
shown as our treatise proceeds.

Chapter 3. Sundry Popular Fears and Prejudices. The Doc-
trine of the Trinity in Unity Rescued from These Misappre-
hensions
The simple, indeed, (I will not call them unwise and unlearned,) who always constitute the
majority of believers, are startled at the dispensation (of the Three in One), on the ground
that their very rule of faith withdraws them from the world's plurality of gods to the one
only true God; not understanding that, although He is the one only God, He must yet be
believed in with His own οἰκονομία. The numerical order and distribution of the Trinity
they assume to be a division of the Unity; whereas the Unity which derives the Trinity out of
its own self is so far from being destroyed, that it is actually supported by it. They are con-
stantly throwing out against us that we are preachers of two gods and three gods, while they
take to themselves pre-eminently the credit of being worshippers of the One God; just as if
the Unity itself with irrational deductions did not produce heresy, and the Trinity rationally
considered constitute the truth. We, say they, maintain the Monarchy (or, sole govern-
ment of God). And so, as far as the sound goes, do even Latins (and ignorant ones too) pronounce
the word in such a way that you would suppose their understanding of the μοναρχία (or
Monarchy) was as complete as their pronunciation of the term. Well, then Latins take pains
to pronounce the μοναρχία (or Monarchy), while Greeks actually refuse to understand the
οἰκονομία, or Dispensation (of the Three in One). As for myself, however, if I have gleaned
any knowledge of either language, I am sure that μοναρχία (or Monarchy) has no other
meaning than single and individual rule; but for all that, this monarchy does not, because it
is the government of one, preclude him whose government it is, either from having a son, or
from having made himself actually a son to himself, or from ministering his own monarchy
by whatever agents he will. Nay more, I contend that no dominion so belongs to one only, as
his own, or is in such a sense singular, or is in such a sense a monarchy, as not also to be ad-
ministered through other persons most closely connected with it, and whom it has itself

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provided as officials to itself. If, moreover, there be a son belonging to him whose monarchy it is, it does not immediately become divided and cease to be a monarchy, if the son also be taken as a sharer in it; but it is as to its origin equally his, by whom it is communicated to the son; and being his, it is quite as much a monarchy (or sole empire), since it is held together by two who are so inseparable. Therefore, inasmuch as the Divine Monarchy also is administered by so many legions and hosts of angels, according as it is written, “Thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him;” Daniel 7:10 and since it has not from this circumstance ceased to be the rule of one (so as no longer to be a monarchy), because it is administered by so many thousands of powers; how comes it to pass that God should be thought to suffer division and severance in the Son and in the Holy Ghost, who have the second and the third places assigned to them, and who are so closely joined with the Father in His substance, when He suffers no such (division and severance) in the multitude of so many angels? Do you really suppose that Those, who are naturally members of the Father's own substance, pledges of His love, instruments of His might, nay, His power itself and the entire system of His monarchy, are the overthrow and destruction thereof? You are not right in so thinking. I prefer your exercising yourself on the meaning of the thing rather than on the sound of the word. Now you must understand the overthrow of a monarchy to be this, when another dominion, which has a framework and a state peculiar to itself (and is therefore a rival), is brought in over and above it: when, e.g., some other god is introduced in opposition to the Creator, as in the opinions of Marcion; or when many gods are introduced, according to your Valentinuses and your Prodicuses. Then it amounts to an overthrow of the Monarchy, since it involves the destruction of the Creator.

Chapter 4. The Unity of the Godhead and the Supremacy and Sole Government of the Divine Being. The Monarchy Not at All Impaired by the Catholic Doctrine

But as for me, who derive the Son from no other source but from the substance of the Father, and (represent Him) as doing nothing without the Father's will, and as having received all power from the Father, how can I be possibly destroying the Monarchy from the faith, when I preserve it in the Son just as it was committed to Him by the Father? The same remark (I wish also to be formally) made by me with respect to the third degree in the Godhead, because I believe the Spirit to proceed from no other source than from the Father through the Son. Look to it then, that it be not you rather who are destroying the Monarchy, when you overthrow the arrangement and dispensation of it, which has been constituted in just as many names as it has pleased God to employ. But it remains so firm and stable in its own state, notwithstanding the introduction into it of the Trinity, that the Son ac-
tually has to restore it entire to the Father; even as the apostle says in his epistle, concerning the very end of all: “When He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; for He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet;” 1 Corinthians 15:24-25 following of course the words of the Psalm: “Sit on my right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool.” “When, however, all things shall be subdued to Him, (with the exception of Him who did put all things under Him,) then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.” 1 Corinthians 15:27-28 We thus see that the Son is no obstacle to the Monarchy, although it is now administered by the Son; because with the Son it is still in its own state, and with its own state will be restored to the Father by the Son. No one, therefore, will impair it, on account of admitting the Son (to it), since it is certain that it has been committed to Him by the Father, and by and by has to be again delivered up by Him to the Father. Now, from this one passage of the epistle of the inspired apostle, we have been already able to show that the Father and the Son are two separate Persons, not only by the mention of their separate names as Father and the Son, but also by the fact that He who delivered up the kingdom, and He to whom it is delivered up— and in like manner, He who subjected (all things), and He to whom they were subjected— must necessarily be two different Beings.

Chapter 5. The Evolution of the Son or Word of God from the Father by a Divine Procession. Illustrated by the Operation of the Human Thought and Consciousness

But since they will have the Two to be but One, so that the Father shall be deemed to be the same as the Son, it is only right that the whole question respecting the Son should be examined, as to whether He exists, and who He is and the mode of His existence. Thus shall the truth itself secure its own sanction from the Scriptures, and the interpretations which guard them. There are some who allege that even Genesis opens thus in Hebrew: “In the beginning God made for Himself a Son.” As there is no ground for this, I am led to other arguments derived from God’s own dispensation, in which He existed before the creation of the world, up to the generation of the Son. For before all things God was alone— being in Himself and for Himself universe, and space, and all things. Moreover, He was alone, because there was nothing external to Him but Himself. Yet even not then was He alone; for He had with Him that which He possessed in Himself, that is to say, His own Reason. For God is rational, and Reason was first in Him; and so all things were from Himself. This Reason is His own Thought (or Consciousness) which the Greeks call λόγος, by which term we also designate Word or Discourse and therefore it is now usual with our people, owing to the mere simple interpretation of the term, to say that the Word was in the beginning with God; although it would be more suitable to regard Reason as the more ancient; because God
had not Word from the beginning, but He had Reason even before the beginning; because also Word itself consists of Reason, which it thus proves to have been the prior existence as being its own substance. Not that this distinction is of any practical moment. For although God had not yet sent out His Word, He still had Him within Himself, both in company with and included within His very Reason, as He silently planned and arranged within Himself everything which He was afterwards about to utter through His Word. Now, while He was thus planning and arranging with His own Reason, He was actually causing that to become Word which He was dealing with in the way of Word or Discourse. And that you may the more readily understand this, consider first of all, from your own self, who are made “in the image and likeness of God,” Genesis 1:26 for what purpose it is that you also possess reason in yourself, who are a rational creature, as being not only made by a rational Artificer, but actually animated out of His substance. Observe, then, that when you are silently conversing with yourself, this very process is carried on within you by your reason, which meets you with a word at every movement of your thought, at every impulse of your conception. Whatever you think, there is a word; whatever you conceive, there is reason. You must needs speak it in your mind; and while you are speaking, you admit speech as an interlocutor with you, involved in which there is this very reason, whereby, while in thought you are holding converse with your word, you are (by reciprocal action) producing thought by means of that converse with your word. Thus, in a certain sense, the word is a second person within you, through which in thinking you utter speech, and through which also, (by reciprocity of process,) in uttering speech you generate thought. The word is itself a different thing from yourself. Now how much more fully is all this transacted in God, whose image and likeness even you are regarded as being, inasmuch as He has reason within Himself even while He is silent, and involved in that Reason His Word! I may therefore without rashness first lay this down (as a fixed principle) that even then before the creation of the universe God was not alone, since He had within Himself both Reason, and, inherent in Reason, His Word, which He made second to Himself by agitating it within Himself.

Chapter 6. The Word of God is Also the Wisdom of God. The Going Forth of Wisdom to Create the Universe, According to the Divine Plan

This power and disposition of the Divine Intelligence is set forth also in the Scriptures under the name of Σοφία, Wisdom; for what can be better entitled to the name of Wisdom than the Reason or the Word of God? Listen therefore to Wisdom herself, constituted in the character of a Second Person: “At the first the Lord created me as the beginning of His ways, with a view to His own works, before He made the earth, before the mountains were settled; moreover, before all the hills did He beget me;” Proverbs 8:22-25 that is to say, He
created and generated me in His own intelligence. Then, again, observe the distinction between them implied in the companionship of Wisdom with the Lord. “When He prepared the heaven,” says Wisdom, “I was present with Him; and when He made His strong places upon the winds, which are the clouds above; and when He secured the fountains, (and all things) which are beneath the sky, I was by, arranging all things with Him; I was by, in whom He delighted; and daily, too, did I rejoice in His presence.” Proverbs 8:27-30 Now, as soon as it pleased God to put forth into their respective substances and forms the things which He had planned and ordered within Himself, in conjunction with His Wisdom's Reason and Word, He first put forth the Word Himself, having within Him His own inseparable Reason and Wisdom, in order that all things might be made through Him through whom they had been planned and disposed, yea, and already made, so far forth as (they were) in the mind and intelligence of God. This, however, was still wanting to them, that they should also be openly known, and kept permanently in their proper forms and substances.

Chapter 7. The Son by Being Designated Word and Wisdom, (According to the Imperfection of Human Thought and Language) Liable to Be Deemed a Mere Attribute. He is Shown to Be a Personal Being

Then, therefore, does the Word also Himself assume His own form and glorious garb, His own sound and vocal utterance, when God says, “Let there be light.” Genesis 1:3 This is the perfect nativity of the Word, when He proceeds forth from God—formed by Him first to devise and think out all things under the name of Wisdom—“The Lord created or formed me as the beginning of His ways;” Proverbs 8:22 then afterward begotten, to carry all into effect—“When He prepared the heaven, I was present with Him.” Thus does He make Him equal to Him: for by proceeding from Himself He became His first-begotten Son, because begotten before all things; Colossians 1:15 and His only-begotten also, because alone begotten of God, in a way peculiar to Himself, from the womb of His own heart—even as the Father Himself testifies: “My heart,” says He, “has emitted my most excellent Word.” The Father took pleasure evermore in Him, who equally rejoiced with a reciprocal gladness in the Father’s presence: “You are my Son, today have I begotten You;” even before the morning star did I beget You. The Son likewise acknowledges the Father, speaking in His own person, under the name of Wisdom: “The Lord formed Me as the beginning of His ways, with a view to His own works; before all the hills did He beget Me.” For if indeed Wisdom in this passage seems to say that She was created by the Lord with a view to His works, and to accomplish His ways, yet proof is given in another Scripture that “all things were made by the Word, and without Him was there nothing made;” John 1:3 as, again, in another place (it is said), “By His word were the heavens established, and all the powers thereof by His Spirit”
— that is to say, by the Spirit (or Divine Nature) which was in the Word: thus is it evident that it is one and the same power which is in one place described under the name of Wisdom, and in another passage under the appellation of the Word, which was initiated for the works of God. Proverbs 8:22 which “strengthened the heavens;” “by which all things were made,” John 1:3 “and without which nothing was made.” John 1:3 Nor need we dwell any longer on this point, as if it were not the very Word Himself, who is spoken of under the name both of Wisdom and of Reason, and of the entire Divine Soul and Spirit. He became also the Son of God, and was begotten when He proceeded forth from Him. Do you then, (you ask,) grant that the Word is a certain substance, constructed by the Spirit and the communication of Wisdom? Certainly I do. But you will not allow Him to be really a substantive being, by having a substance of His own; in such a way that He may be regarded as an objective thing and a person, and so be able (as being constituted second to God the Father,) to make two, the Father and the Son, God and the Word. For you will say, what is a word, but a voice and sound of the mouth, and (as the grammarians teach) air when struck against, intelligible to the ear, but for the rest a sort of void, empty, and incorporeal thing. I, on the contrary, contend that nothing empty and void could have come forth from God, seeing that it is not put forth from that which is empty and void; nor could that possibly be devoid of substance which has proceeded from so great a substance, and has produced such mighty substances: for all things which were made through Him, He Himself (personally) made. 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.” John 1:1 It is written, “You shall not take God’s name in vain.” Exodus 20:7 This for certain is He “who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” Philippians 2:6 In what form of God? Of course he means in some form, not in none. For who will deny that God is a body, although “God is a Spirit?” John 4:24 For Spirit has a bodily substance of its own kind, in its own form. Now, even if invisible things, whatsoever they be, have both their substance and their form in God, whereby they are visible to God alone, how much more shall that which has been sent forth from His substance not be without substance! Whatever, therefore, was the substance of the Word that I designate a Person, I claim for it the name of Son; and while I recognize the Son, I assert His distinction as second to the Father.
Chapter 8. Though the Son or Word of God Emanates from the Father, He is Not, Like the Emanations of Valentinus, Separable from the Father. Nor is the Holy Ghost Separable from Either. Illustrations from Nature

If any man from this shall think that I am introducing some προβολή — that is to say, some prolation of one thing out of another, as Valentinus does when he sets forth Æon from Æon, one after another— then this is my first reply to you: Truth must not therefore refrain from the use of such a term, and its reality and meaning, because heresy also employs it. The fact is, heresy has rather taken it from Truth, in order to mould it into its own counterfeit. Was the Word of God put forth or not? Here take your stand with me, and flinch not. If He was put forth, then acknowledge that the true doctrine has a prolation; and never mind heresy, when in any point it mimics the truth. The question now is, in what sense each side uses a given thing and the word which expresses it. Valentinus divides and separates his prolations from their Author, and places them at so great a distance from Him, that the Æon does not know the Father: he longs, indeed, to know Him, but cannot; nay, he is almost swallowed up and dissolved into the rest of matter. With us, however, the Son alone knows the Father, Matthew 11:27 and has Himself unfolded “the Father's bosom.” John 1:18 He has also heard and seen all things with the Father; and what He has been commanded by the Father, that also does He speak. John 8:26 And it is not His own will, but the Father's, which He has accomplished, John 6:38 which He had known most intimately, even from the beginning. “For what man knows the things which be in God, but the Spirit which is in Him?” 1 Corinthians 2:11 But the Word was formed by the Spirit, and (if I may so express myself) the Spirit is the body of the Word. The Word, therefore, is both always in the Father, as He says, “I am in the Father,” John 14:11 and is always with God, according to what is written, “And the Word was with God;” John 1:1 and never separate from the Father, or other than the Father, since “I and the Father are one.” John 10:30 This will be the prolation, taught by the truth, the guardian of the Unity, wherein we declare that the Son is a prolation from the Father, without being separated from Him. For God sent forth the Word, as the Paraclete also declares, just as the root puts forth the tree, and the fountain the river, and the sun the ray. For these are προβολαί, or emanations, of the substances from which they proceed. I should not hesitate, indeed, to call the tree the son or offspring of the root, and the river of the fountain, and the ray of the sun; because every original source is a parent, and everything which issues from the origin is an offspring. Much more is (this true of) the Word of God, who has actually received as His own peculiar designation the name of Son. But still the tree is not severed from the root, nor the river from the fountain, nor the ray from the sun; nor, indeed, is the Word separated from God. Following, therefore, the form of these analogies, I confess that I call God and His Word—the Father and His Son—
two. For the root and the tree are distinctly two things, but correlatively joined; the fountain and the river are also two forms, but indivisible; so likewise the sun and the ray are two forms, but coherent ones. Everything which proceeds from something else must needs be second to that from which it proceeds, without being on that account separated. Where, however, there is a second, there must be two; and where there is a third, there must be three. Now the Spirit indeed is third from God and the Son; just as the fruit of the tree is third from the root, or as the stream out of the river is third from the fountain, or as the apex of the ray is third from the sun. Nothing, however, is alien from that original source whence it derives its own properties. In like manner the Trinity, flowing down from the Father through intertwined and connected steps, does not at all disturb the Monarchy, while it at the same time guards the state of the Economy.


Bear always in mind that this is the rule of faith which I profess; by it I testify that the Father, and the Son, and the Spirit are inseparable from each other, and so will you know in what sense this is said. Now, observe, my assertion is that the Father is one, and the Son one, and the Spirit one, and that They are distinct from Each Other. This statement is taken in a wrong sense by every uneducated as well as every perversely disposed person, as if it predicated a diversity, in such a sense as to imply a separation among the Father, and the Son, and the Spirit. I am, moreover, obliged to say this, when (extolling the Monarchy at the expense of the Economy) they contend for the identity of the Father and Son and Spirit, that it is not by way of diversity that the Son differs from the Father, but by distribution: it is not by division that He is different, but by distinction; because the Father is not the same as the Son, since they differ one from the other in the mode of their being. For the Father is the entire substance, but the Son is a derivation and portion of the whole, as He Himself acknowledges: “My Father is greater than I.” John 14:28 In the Psalm His inferiority is described as being “a little lower than the angels.” Thus the Father is distinct from the Son, being greater than the Son, inasmuch as He who begets is one, and He who is begotten is another; He, too, who sends is one, and He who is sent is another; and He, again, who makes is one, and He through whom the thing is made is another. Happily the Lord Himself employs this expression of the person of the Paraclete, so as to signify not a division or severance, but a disposition (of mutual relations in the Godhead); for He says, “I will pray the Father, and He shall send you another Comforter...even the Spirit of truth,” John 14:16 thus making the Paraclete distinct from Himself, even as we say that the Son is also distinct from the Father; so that He showed a third degree in the Paraclete, as we believe the second de-
gree is in the Son, by reason of the order observed in the Economy. Besides, does not the very fact that they have the distinct names of Father and Son amount to a declaration that they are distinct in personality? For, of course, all things will be what their names represent them to be; and what they are and ever will be, that will they be called; and the distinction indicated by the names does not at all admit of any confusion, because there is none in the things which they designate. “Yes is yes, and no is no; for what is more than these, comes of evil.” Matthew 5:37

Chapter 10. The Very Names of Father and Son Prove the Personal Distinction of the Two. They Cannot Possibly Be Identical, Nor is Their Identity Necessary to Preserve the Divine Monarchy

So it is either the Father or the Son, and the day is not the same as the night; nor is the Father the same as the Son, in such a way that Both of them should be One, and One or the Other should be Both—an opinion which the most conceited “Monarchians” maintain. He Himself, they say, made Himself a Son to Himself. Now a Father makes a Son, and a Son makes a Father; and they who thus become reciprocally related out of each other to each other cannot in any way by themselves simply become so related to themselves, that the Father can make Himself a Son to Himself, and the Son render Himself a Father to Himself. And the relations which God establishes, them does He also guard. A father must needs have a son, in order to be a father; so likewise a son, to be a son, must have a father. It is, however, one thing to have, and another thing to be. For instance, in order to be a husband, I must have a wife; I can never myself be my own wife. In like manner, in order to be a father, I have a son, for I never can be a son to myself; and in order to be a son, I have a father, it being impossible for me ever to be my own father. And it is these relations which make me (what I am), when I come to possess them: I shall then be a father, when I have a son; and a son, when I have a father. Now, if I am to be to myself any one of these relations, I no longer have what I am myself to be: neither a father, because I am to be my own father; nor a son, because I shall be my own son. Moreover, inasmuch as I ought to have one of these relations in order to be the other; so, if I am to be both together, I shall fail to be one while I possess not the other. For if I must be myself my son, who am also a father, I now cease to have a son, since I am my own son. But by reason of not having a son, since I am my own son, how can I be a father? For I ought to have a son, in order to be a father. Therefore I am not a son, because I have not a father, who makes a son. In like manner, if I am myself my father, who am also a son, I no longer have a father, but am myself my father. By not having a father, however, since I am my own father, how can I be a son? For I ought to have a father, in order to be a son. I cannot therefore be a father, because I have not a son, who
makes a father. Now all this must be the device of the devil—this excluding and severing one from the other—since by including both together in one under pretence of the Monarchy, he causes neither to be held and acknowledged, so that He is not the Father, since indeed He has not the Son; neither is He the Son, since in like manner He has not the Father: for while He is the Father, He will not be the Son. In this way they hold the Monarchy, but they hold neither the Father nor the Son. Well, but “with God nothing is impossible.”

Matthew 19:26 True enough; who can be ignorant of it? Who also can be unaware that “the things which are impossible with men are possible with God?”

Luke 18:27 “The foolish things also of the world has God chosen to confound the things which are wise.”

1 Corinthians 1:27 We have read it all. Therefore, they argue, it was not difficult for God to make Himself both a Father and a Son, contrary to the condition of things among men. For a barren woman to have a child against nature was no difficulty with God; nor was it for a virgin to conceive. Of course nothing is “too hard for the Lord.”

Genesis 18:14 But if we choose to apply this principle so extravagantly and harshly in our capricious imaginations, we may then make out God to have done anything we please, on the ground that it was not impossible for Him to do it. We must not, however, because He is able to do all things suppose that He has actually done what He has not done. But we must inquire whether He has really done it. God could, if He had liked, have furnished man with wings to fly with, just as He gave wings to kites. We must not, however, run to the conclusion that He did this because He was able to do it. He might also have extinguished Praxeas and all other heretics at once; it does not follow, however, that He did, simply because He was able. For it was necessary that there should be both kites and heretics; it was necessary also that the Father should be crucified. In one sense there will be something difficult even for God—namely, that which He has not done—not because He could not, but because He would not, do it. For with God, to be willing is to be able, and to be unwilling is to be unable; all that He has willed, however, He has both been able to accomplish, and has displayed His ability. Since, therefore, if God had wished to make Himself a Son to Himself, He had it in His power to do so; and since, if He had it in His power, He effected His purpose, you will then make good your proof of His power and His will (to do even this) when you shall have proved to us that He actually did it.