The Logic of the Logos: A Note on Stoic Logic in Adversus Praxean *10*

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The influence of Stoic ethics and anthropology on Tertullian's thought has received substantial consideration. Much less attention has been given to the place of Stoic dialectic in his thought. This article is an initial attempt to remedy this lacuna by focusing on the place of Stoic dialectic in *Adversus Praxean* 10. My exegesis of this passage argues that Tertullian deploys Stoic dialectic, against his Monarchian interlocutor, to defend the distinction between Father and Son. For Tertullian, the rules of logic articulated in a Stoic syllogism serve to affirm his rational vision of theology, which, ultimately, is derived from the intelligibility of God's revealed will.

"Tertullian," remarks Eric Osborn in his biography on the African theologian, "is the most improbable fideist."[1] Indeed, numerous volumes on Tertullian's thought have noted his philosophical pedigree and the manner in which he brings this background to bear on his writing. And yet, it seems fair to say that on a more popular level Tertullian's legacy has never been able to evade an anti-rationalist caricature, perhaps best encapsulated in his most quoted invective, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?"[2] In point of fact, however, Tertullian's familiarity with and use of the classical

1. Eric Osborn, *Tertullian, First Theologian of the West* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 29.

2. *De praescriptione haereticorum* 7.9 (CCL 1:193): *Quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis?* Some have used this caricature of Tertullian's thought as a foil with which to contrast other authors more favorably disposed to classical thought. Gilson for example writes, "Tertullien incarne le type parfait de l'adversaire chrétien de la philosophie" (*L'Esprit de la philosophie médiévale* [Paris: Vrin, 1944], 18). Similarly, Antonin Sertillanges writes, "Pour lui, Tertullien, il est fidéiste, simplement" (*Le Christianisme et les philosophies* [Paris: Aubier, 1950], 183).

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tradition bear witness to the thoroughgoing claim he believed Athens to have on Jerusalem.[3]

Here I do not wish to rehash either Tertullian's familiarity with the classical canon or his valuation of that canon and its place in Christian thought, except to say that popular myths of Tertullian's repudiation of a rational philosophical articulation of the faith do not pass muster in a careful reading of the African theologian. It is within a general frame of reference that recognizes Tertullian's indebtedness to and use of classical learning that I want to consider the place of Stoic dialectic in *Adversus Praxean* 10.[4]

Tertullian sees logic as inhering in language, and he takes this notion from the Stoic tradition. I will argue that it is this Stoic link between logic and language that enables Tertullian to make sense of the scriptural language that distinguishes between the divine persons. After briefly considering the nature of Stoic dialectic, I will analyze the presence of Stoic dialectic in *Adversus Praxean* 10, and conclude by remarking on the theological significance of Stoic dialectic in this passage. Studies on the place of Stoic thought in Tertullian have tended to focus on his appropriation of this philosophical tradition in his ethics and anthropology. There remains a lacuna in any real engagement with the place of Stoic dialectic in his thought. Indeed, Marcia Colish's superb study of the Stoic tradition places Tertullian within a group of Latin apologists who "draw most heavily on Stoic physics and ethics, paying much less attention to logic."[5] These remarks are representative of most studies on Tertullian's engagement with the Stoic tradition. Jean Daniélou, Joseph Moingt, Timothy Barnes, Eric Osborn,

3. Cf. Timothy Barnes, *Tertullian: A Literary and Historical Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 187–210. Among others, Timothy Barnes has offered a detailed study of Tertullian's education; he points out that the silver age of Latin literature is clearly evident in Tertullian's corpus. Tacitus, Pliny the Elder, and Juvenal are all represented. Roman historians—Varro, Ennius, and maybe even Cato the Elder—all make an appearance. Likewise, in his response to the Gnostic fusion of Greek philosophy with Christian theology, Tertullian demonstrates his acquaintance with the classics of the Platonic tradition: the *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, *Timaeus*, and the last book of the *Republic*.

4. I have consulted Ernest Evans's translation, *Tertullian's Treatise against Praxeas* (London: S.P.C.K, 1948), and the translation offered by Peter Holmes in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing, 1885). At times I will borrow from both of these translations. For the Latin text I am using *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina* (CCL) 2, *Adversus Praxean*, ed. E. Kroymann and E. Evans (Turnholt: Brepols, 1954).

5. Marcia Colish, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 2:9.

and especially Jean-Claude Fredouille all provide excellent discussions of Tertullian's valuation and use of Stoic philosophy in Christian theology, but they fail to take into consideration the place of Stoic dialectic in his argumentation.[6] This article is an initial attempt to remedy this lacuna by focusing on one example in Tertullian's corpus in which, I believe, there is clear evidence of Tertullian's use of Stoic dialectic.

Adversus Praxean as a whole is devoted to considering scriptural language distinguishing Father and Son. The heart of the treatise is to be found, I believe, in section 10. Here Tertullian establishes his guiding theological hermeneutic—the ground that sustains the rest of the treatise. Thus, in the rest of the work Tertullian mines the Scriptures, especially the Gospel of John, for all the key passages in which Christ distinguishes himself from the Father. As such, the guiding principles of logic and language that Tertullian lays down in *Adversus Praxean* 10 serve to aid in correctly understanding the scriptural distinction of Father and Son laid out in the rest of the work.

In *Adversus Praxean* 10 Tertullian insists against his Monarchian interlocutor, Praxeas, that the distinction of the persons of the Trinity within the economy (*oikonomia*) is seen in the very logic of the language of Father and Son.[7] One is either father or one is son, argues Tertullian; one cannot be both. "A father needs to have a son to be a father; and a son must have a father to be son."[8] There is, Tertullian concludes, a relation between "having" and "being." *To be* a son is *to have* a father. Monarchians hold to a position that is logically untenable and that results in denying both the Father and the Son. *Adversus Praxean* 10 concludes that God's self-disclosure as distinctly Father and Son comports with his being. It is no use maintaining that God in his infinite power could be Father and Son in one person: "These relations, which God establishes, he himself also observes."[9] This does not limit divine power, but limits human inquiry

6. Along similar lines to what I proposing in this paper, Ronald Heine has suggested that Stoic logic is at the heart of Origen's commentary on the Gospel of John. Cf. Ronald Heine, "Stoic Logic as Handmaid to Exegesis and Theology in Origen's Commentary on the Gospel of John," *JTS* 44 (1993): 92–100.

7. For a discussion and list of relevant literature on Tertullian's use of *oikonomia* and *dispositio* see Joseph Moingt, *Théologie trinitaire de Tertullien*, vol. 1, *Histoire, doctrine, méthodes* (Paris: Aubier, 1966), 44–46. For a more theological discussion of these terms, see Jean Daniélou, *A History of Early Christian Doctrine*, vol. 3, *The Origins of Latin Christianity*, ed. John Austin Baker, trans. David Smith and John Austin Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 364–66.

8. *Prax*. 10.3 (CCL 2:1169).

9. *Prax*. 10.3 (CCL 2:1169).

to God's revealed will: "God's power is his will, and his inability is his absence of will."[10]

The nature of "son" is unintelligible apart from his relation to "father" and vice-versa. Tertullian maintains that there is a rationality to this language that comports with the very nature of God. He proposes a defense of the distinction of the divine persons predicated on what much later will be termed an "intellectualist" account of language.[11] That is to say, for Tertullian, the language Scripture uses to distinguish Father from Son comports with the reality of who God is.

While I will make a case for Tertullian's dependence on Stoic dialectic in *Adversus Praxean* 10, it seems clear that one begins to skate on much thinner ice in attempting to establish the precise Stoic philosophical sources at work in this passage.[12] Marcia Colish has drawn attention to the place of Stoicism in Tertullian's thought. She considers it the philosophical school "to which Tertullian adverts most frequently" and "the favorite weapon in his philosophical arsenal."[13] As is the case with Tertullian's interaction with other philosophical traditions, he does not have a univocal approach to Stoicism. He wholly repudiates, wholly embraces, or selectively applies it, sometimes all within a single work. It is particularly in his "natural theology" that Tertullian speaks approvingly of Stoic thought, and of the views of *Seneca saepe noster*, who shares with him an orthodox account of the soul.[14] It is Stoic thought that provides Tertullian with the philosophical apparatus to defend the existence of God, his knowability through the created order, and the rational nature of the human soul. Colish concludes, "Tertullian relates the Stoic position on the subject positively and accurately, he treats it as an ancilla to Christian truth."[15]

10. *Prax*. 10.9 (CCL 2:1170).

11. While I hesitate to bring into Tertullian's context Thomistic terminology proper to the medieval voluntarist controversies, I consider it to be a helpful analogue to Tertullian's distinction between God's infinite power and his revealed will.

12. Cf. Gotthard Rauch, *Der Einfluss der stoischen Philosophie auf die Lehrbildung Tertullians* (Halle: Waisenhaus, 1890); Michel Spanneut, *Le Stoïcisme des pères de l'église* (Paris: Seuil, 1957).

13. Colish, *Stoic Tradition*, 2:10.

14. Cf. *De anima* 20.1. Cf. Barnes, *Tertullian*, 113; Daniélou, *History of Early Christian Doctrine*, 3:212–14; Jean-Claude Fredouille, *Tertullian et la conversion de la culture antique* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1972), 243–54.

15. Colish, *Stoic Tradition*, 2:18. It is particularly Stoic doctrines of the *logos* and *krasis* that Tertullian appropriates in his Christology. Cf. Colish, *Stoic Tradition*, 2:21–25; Raniero Cantalamessa, *La cristologia di Tertulliano* (Freiburg: University of Freiburg, 1962), 11–13, 18–27, 52–54, 192–93. Moingt, *Théologie trinitaire*, 1:36–48, offers a discussion and detailed (but now dated) biography of the influence

STOIC DIALECTIC

I will now briefly outline the fundamentals of Stoic dialectic.[16] The great Stoic logician Chrysippus (280–206 B.C.E.), who did more than anyone to advance the cause of Stoic logic,[17] held that every syllogism could be reduced to five "indemonstrable" principles, on the basis of which each syllogism could be affirmed or denied.[18] The five indemonstrables are:

1. if *p* then *q*; *p*; therefore *q* (*modus ponens*).
2. if *p* then *q*; not *q*; therefore not *p* (*modus tollens*).
3. it is not the case that both *p* and *q*; *p*; therefore not *q*.
4. either *p* or *q*; *p*; therefore not *q* (*modus ponendo tollens*).
5. either *p* or *q*; not *p*; therefore *q* (*modus tollendo ponens*).[19]

The constant elements of each logical syllogism are the propositions (*p*) and (*q*); the variants in the system are the words "or," "and," "not," and "if." Thus, a proposition can be either conjunctive (using "and") or disjunctive (using "or"). And so, to employ a classic Stoic example:

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of Stoic thought in Tertullian's trinitarian language. The notion of the corporeal substance of God and the governing principle of the soul, the *hegemonikon*, are Stoic philosophical notions that Tertullian either wholly adopts or reworks in defence of the Christian faith or by way of attack against overly Platonic or gnostic teaching. Cf. Colish, *Stoic Tradition*, 2:21–25.

16. My overview of Stoic dialectic follows the exposition offered by Susanne Bobzien in "Logic," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, ed. Brad Inwood (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 85–123. More in-depth accounts of Stoic logic are offered by Benson Mates, *Stoic Logic* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1961); William Kneale and Martha Kneale, *The Development of Logic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 113–76; Ian Mueller, "An Introduction to Stoic Logic," in *The Stoics*, ed. John Rist (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), 1–26; Susanne Bobzien, "Stoic Syllogistic," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 14 (1996): 133–92.

17. Diogenes credits Chrysippus with 311 books on logic (*Diogenes Laertius, Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, trans. Robert Drew Hicks, Loeb Classical Library [Cambridge MA: Harvard, 1925], 7.198; trans. Hicks, 313 [hereafter referred to as DL]). Diogenes remarks, "So renowned was he for dialectic that most people thought, if the gods took to dialectic, they would adopt no other system than that of Chrysippus" (DL 7:180; trans. Hicks, 289).

18. Cf. DL 7.79–81; trans. Hicks, 187–91. "Indemonstrable" is the English translation given for *anapodeiktoi*. The Skeptic philosopher Sextus Empiricus, in his outline of Skepticism (*Pyrrhōneioi hypotypōseis*), explained that Chrysippus used "indemonstrables" because "these are the arguments which they say need no proof [*anapodeiktoi*] for their own construction and are probative of the fact that the other arguments reach a conclusion" (Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Scepticism*, trans. Julia Annas and Jonathan Barnes [Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994], 2.156; trans. Annas and Barnes, 109 [hereafter referred to as *Pyrr. Hyp.*]).

19. Cf. DL 7.79–81; trans. Hicks, 187–91.

It is day *and* it is light. (Conjunctive)
It is day *or* it is night. (Disjunctive)

The first indemonstrable is a simple conjunctive in which the conclusion follows from the antecedent premise. A classic Stoic syllogism of the first indemonstrable would read:

If it is day, it is light. (Conditional)
It is day. (Premise)
Therefore, it is light. (Conclusion)[20]

The second indemonstrable inserts "not" in front of a proposition, thereby negating both conjunctive and disjunctive statements. Thus, this syllogism repeats the first except that it negates the premise and therefore the conclusion:

If it is day, it is light. (Conditional)
It is not day. (Premise)
Therefore, it is not light. (Conclusion)[21]

The third indemonstrable necessitates the negation of one of the conjunctions ("and"). Thus, to use the same example:

If it is not both day and night. (Negated conjunction)
It is day. (Premise as negated conjunct)
Therefore, it is not night. (Conclusion)[22]

The fourth and fifth indemonstrables introduce exclusive disjunctive syllogisms employing "either . . . or" to link two statements positively or negatively. So, a disjunctive assertable introduces the syllogism; the premise contains one of the disjuncts and the conclusion retains the remaining contrary disjunct. An example of a positive exclusive disjunctive assertable syllogism (the fourth indemonstrable) would run as follows:

Either it is day or it is night. (Disjunctive assertable)
It is day. (Premise as disjunct)
Therefore, it is not night. (Conclusion)[23]

Finally, the fifth indemonstrable simply negates the premise (i.e., "It is not night") leading to the contrary remaining disjunct (i.e., "Therefore, it is day").[24]

20. Cf. DL 7.65; trans. Hicks, 175. Also, Sextus, *Pyrr. Hyp*. 2.157; trans. Annas and Barnes, 109.
21. Cf. Sextus, *Pyrr. Hyp*. 2.157; trans. Annas and Barnes, 109.
22. Cf. Sextus, *Pyrr. Hyp*. 2.158; trans. Annas and Barnes, 109.
23. Cf. Sextus, *Pyrr. Hyp*. 2.158; trans. Annas and Barnes, 110.
24. Cf. Sextus, *Pyrr. Hyp*. 2.158; trans. Annas and Barnes, 110.

Reducing logic to a system operating on the basis of the five indemonstrables allows syllogisms to be "truth-functional," that is to say, the conclusion is necessarily true (in the logical order) if both the assertable and the premise are granted.[25] An inherent necessity is contained in each indemonstrable: if the assertable and the premise are granted, the conclusion cannot but follow. Obviously, a premise could be false, in which case the conclusion would also be false; nevertheless, the syllogism would remain "valid." The syllogism demonstrates a logical necessity in the conclusion as it is derived from the premise—it is internally coherent. Subsequent criticism of Stoic logic focused on its inability to provide for genuine knowledge: if all syllogisms (conjunctive or disjunctive) only provide accurate conclusions if the assertable and the premises are accurate, then the terms of the syllogism must already be known. In other words, the conclusion of the syllogism only yields knowledge already found in the assertable and the premise. A Stoic syllogism, it is alleged, can only reformulate knowledge already known.[26]

STOIC DIALECTIC IN *ADVERSUS PRAXEAN* 10

Stoic metaphysics is the substructure to the logic operative in *Adversus Praxean* 10 by which Tertullian distinguishes Father from Son. Unlike Aristotle's ten categories of being, Stoic metaphysics held to only four predicables: substance, quality, disposition, and relative disposition.[27] It is the last of these that makes intelligible Tertullian's logical argument for the distinction of the divine persons. Relative disposition is in some sense accidental to the other predicables, or at least external to a being in a way unlike the other predicables. A man exists (as substance) in a unique manner or form (quality), and this man is standing (disposition). The external relations of the man—that he is a father to his children or a citizen in relation to his fellow countrymen—are termed his relative dispositions.[28] It is the distinction between what is constitutive of a being's substance and the *relative dispositions* in terms of the relational character

25. Cf. Bobzien, "Stoic Syllogistic," 133–34. A source of considerable discussion among Stoic logicians was the contingency of time and place upon which the "truth functional" value of the assertable ("it is day") hinged. Assertables that change their truth-value in terms of place and time were termed *metapiptonta* (Bobzien, "Logic," 88).

26. Sextus considers the syllogism to be restating a logical redundancy (Sextus, *Pyrr. Hyp.* 2.159–162; trans. Annas and Barnes, 110–11). Cf. Mueller, "Introduction to Stoic Logic," 22–23.

27. Cf. A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1974), 160–63.

28. Cf. Colish, *Stoic Tradition*, 1:53–56.

of the *substance* that informs Tertullian's distinction of the persons in the *oikonomia* and his insistence against Praxeas that the unity of the divine monarchy remains uncompromised by such relative dispositions.

In *Adversus Praxean* 10 Stoic dialectic safeguards the theological distinction between the divine substance and their relative dispositions in the *oikonomia*. In Tertullian's theological practice the inherent rationality of a syllogism comports with his understanding of the rational character of theological discourse. *Adversus Praxean* 10 makes clear that it is this rational character of theological language that enables human speech to bespeak truthfully divine relations, and it is in this context that I am suggesting Stoic dialectic comes into play. Tertullian writes,

> So one is either the father or the son, just as the day is not the same as the night; nor is the father the same as the son, as if both of them should be one, or as if one or the other should be both—which is the opinion of the vapid Monarchians. They say, "He made himself his own Son." Now a father makes a son, and a son makes a father; and they who are reciprocally related out of each other can in no way simply be related to themselves, as if the father could make himself his own son, and the son could cause himself to be his own father. These relations, which God establishes, he himself also observes. A father needs to have a son to be a father; and a son must have a father to be son. It is, however, one thing *to have*, and another thing *to be*. For example, in order *to be* a husband, I must *have* a wife; I cannot be my own wife. Similarly, in order *to be* a father, I need *to have* a son, for I can never be my own son; and, in order to be a son, I need to have a father, for it is impossible for me ever to be my own father. It is these relations which make me what I am: I will be a father when I have a son and will be a son when I have a father . . . .
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> "But," they say, "Surely with God nothing is difficult." Indeed, who does not recognize that! Of course, "the things which are impossible with men are possible with God" (Luke 18.27) and "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise" (1 Corinthians 1.27). Sure, we have read this all before! Therefore, they say, "It was not difficult for God to make himself both a father and a son, contrary to the regular state of things among people. Just as it is against nature for a barren woman to have a child or for a virgin to conceive, and yet this is no difficulty for God." Certainly nothing is too difficult for God. But if we choose to apply this principle so rashly, we may then make God out to have done anything we imagine as if he had done it, on the ground that he can do all things. We must not believe that he has actually done what he has not done simply on the ground that he can do all things. Rather, we must inquire whether he has actually done it . . . . In one sense there is something difficult even for God— namely, that which he has not done—not because he could not do it, but because he would not do it. For God's power is his will, and his inability is his absence of will: and what his will was, that was in his power,

> and he has shown what that was. Therefore, if God wished to make himself his own Son he certainly had it in his power to do so; and since, if he had it in his power, he did it. However, you will prove that he could have done it and wished to do it only when you have proved that he actually did do it.[29]

I want to analyze this passage of *Adversus Praxean* 10 in detail, focusing in particular on how Tertullian's adoption of Stoic syllogisms functions both as an argument against Monarchian theology and as revelatory of his theological method, that is to say, his understanding of the rational character of theological discourse. The Monarchians claimed that the Father and the Son were one person who revealed himself in various modes. Tertullian argues that this is a logical fallacy that violates basic laws of thought. One person cannot be both father and son as it cannot be in the same way and in the same respect both night and day. He writes, "So one is either the father or the son, just as the day is not the same as the night; nor is the father the same as the son" (*Ita aut pater aut filius est, et neque dies eadem et nox, neque pater idem et filius*).[30] I have noted that this example of night and day was a standard one in Stoic dialectic. Here Tertullian presents an argument for the distinction of the divine persons

29. *Prax*. 10.1–9 (CCL 2:1169–70): *Ita aut Pater aut Filius est, et neque dies eadem et nox, neque Pater idem et Filius, ut sint ambo unus et utrumque alter, quod uanissimi isti monarchiani uolunt. "Ipse se, inquiunt, Filium sibi fecit." Atquin pater filium facit et patrem filius et qui ex alterutro fiunt a semetipsis sibi fieri nullo modo possunt, ut pater se sibi filium faciat et filius se sibi patrem praestet. Quae instituit deus, etiam ipse custodit. Habeat necesse est pater filium ut pater sit, et filius patrem ut filius sit. Aliud est autem habere, aliud esse. Verbi gratia, ut maritus sim, habeam oportet uxorem, non ipse mihi ero uxor. Sic etiam, ut pater sim, filium habeo, non ipse mihi ero filius et ut filius sim, patrem habeo, non ipse mihi ero pater. Quae enim me faciunt si habuero, tunc ero pater si filium habeam, filius uero si patrem. Porro si ipse ero quid eorum, iam non habeo quod ipse ero, nec patrem quia ipse ero pater, nec filium quia ipse ero filius . . . .*

Sed nihil Deo difficile, quis hoc nesciat? Et: Impossibilia apud saeculum possibilia apud Deum, quis ignoret? Et: stulta mundi elegit Deus, ut confundat sapientia. Legimus omnia. "Ergo, inquiunt, difficile non fuit Deo ipsum se et patrem et filium facere aduersus traditam formam rebus humanis. Nam et sterilem parere contra naturam difficile Deo non fuit, sicut nec uirginem." Plane nihil Deo difficile, sed si tam abrupte in praesumptionibus nostris hac sententia utamur, quiduis de Deo confingere poterimus, quasi fecerit quia facere potuerit. Non autem, quia omnia potest facere, ideoque credendum est illum fecisse etiam quod non fecerit sed an fecerit requirendum . . . . Hac ratione erit aliquid et difficile Deo, id scilicet, quodcumque non fecerit, non quia non potuerit sed quia noluerit. Dei enim posse uelle est et non posse nolle. Quod autem uoluit, et potuit et ostendit. Ergo—quia si uoluit semetipsum sibi filium facere, potuit et quia si potuit, fecit—tunc probabis illum et potuisse et uoluisse, si probaueris illum fecisse.

30. *Prax*. 10.1 (CCL 2:1169).

based on the fourth indemonstrable principle: a disjunctive syllogism employing "either . . . or" to link two positive statements in which one of the disjuncts necessarily excludes the other.[31] Tertullian's use of the Latin exclusive *aut . . . aut* followed by the example of the disjunctive syllogism of night and day is, I believe, a clear example of Stoic dialectic. Either one is father or one is son (*aut pater aut filius est*), but to be both in one is to hold to a logical contradiction. Putting Tertullian's example in syllogistic form, we get the following:

Either he is father or he is son. (Disjunctive assertable)
He is father. (Premise as disjunct)
Therefore, he is not son. (Conclusion)

Tertullian painstakingly explores the nature of the terms of the relation that necessitate at least two persons; two persons who cannot but have a disjunctive relation.

Related to and immediately following from the first exclusive disjunctive syllogism, Tertullian explores the logical dialectic between "to be" (*esse*) and "to have" (*habere*). This syllogism is also constructed according to the fourth indemonstrable principle. *To be* a father one has *to have* a son. "For to have is one thing, to be is another" (*aliud est autem habere, aliud esse*). Similarly, *to be* a husband, explains Tertullian, is *to have* a wife. Such is the rational coherency of the exclusive disjunctive syllogism—to be a husband one cannot also *be* the wife (at the same time and in the same respect); rather one must *have* a wife. Likewise, to be a father one cannot also *be* the son (at the same time and in the same respect, that is in the same relation),[32] rather one must *have* a son. Again, Tertullian's syllogism would read:

Either it is *esse* or it is *habere*. (Disjunctive assertable)
It is *esse*. (Premise as positive disjunct)
Therefore, it is not *habere*. (Conclusion)

Thus, with both the example of father or son (*aut . . . aut*) and the example of *esse* or *habere* Tertullian relies on the fourth Stoic indemonstrable principle, that of the exclusive positive disjunctive syllogism.

31. Cf. DL 7.72; trans. Hicks, 181. Also, Bobzien, "Logic," 96.

32. Tertullian is attentive to the contingencies of the relation, namely that one cannot be both father and son in the *same* relation; he notes that in different relations one can, of course, be both father and son. Perhaps this indicates Tertullian's awareness of the importance of the *metapiptonta*—assertables that change their "truth-value" depending on the context. Cf. Bobzien, "Logic," 88.

The inverse is also true, explains Tertullian. *To have* negates the possibility of *to be*. I cannot have what I also am; I cannot have a father within the same relationship in which I am the father. Here Tertullian pivots the syllogism from the fourth indemonstrable to the fifth indemonstrable. That is, he restates the positive exclusive disjunctive syllogism as a negative:

Either it is *esse* or it is *habere*. (Disjunctive assertable)
It is not *esse*. (Premise as negative disjunct)
Therefore, it is *habere*. (Conclusion)

Thus, if in any given paternal-filial relation I am not the son, the conclusion can be none other than that I am the father.

THE THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF STOIC DIALECTIC

What is the theological significance of Tertullian's use of Stoic dialectic? Upon initial reading it seems that in *Adversus Praxean* 10 Tertullian is belaboring the point; he repeats in multiple forms the same premise that a linguistic distinction between Father and Son necessitates a real distinction of the divine persons. However, upon critical evaluation of his appropriation of Stoic dialectic, it becomes clear that Tertullian is formulating in various modes Stoic syllogisms framed as disjunctive indemonstrables that necessitate the conclusion distinguishing the divine persons. Stoic dialectic allows Tertullian to conclude that the Monarchian understanding of the Father making himself his own Son is a position utterly void of rationality (*vanissimi isti monarchiani*). One becomes a father or a son within a relationship, a relationship that is by definition with another; such are the rules of logic. Tertullian concludes, "These relations, which God establishes, he himself also observes."[33]

I have attempted to demonstrate that the foundation of Tertullian's anti-Monarchian argument in *Adversus Praxean* 10 is Stoic dialectic. The indemonstrables, composed of two disjunctive assertables with one of the disjuncts in the premise, grounds Tertullian's defense of the distinction of the divine persons. This does not mean, however, that Tertullian is simply demonstrating his dialectical prowess or his familiarity with Stoic logic. Rather, these Stoic syllogisms serve his vision of what theology should be. Theology, for Tertullian, is predicated on divine self-disclosure; it is not the arbitrary imposition of names and concepts, but has an inherently rational character, even a logical character. *Adversus Praxean* reveals a confidence

33. *Prax*. 10.3 (CCL 2:1169): *Quae instituit Deus, etiam ipse custodit*.

that human rationality and language has an affinity to the Logos; indeed, a conception of the "logic of the Logos" animates Tertullian's theology.

After drawing out the syllogisms to their logical conclusions, Tertullian puts an objection in the mouth of his imagined Monarchian interlocutor: "'But,' they say, 'Surely with God nothing is difficult.'"[34] While violations of Stoic indemonstrables are impossible humanly speaking, with God all things are possible (Luke 18.27); after all, he who was born of a virgin could also make himself to be both father and son. Quoting 1 Corinthians 1.27, the imagined Monarchian asserts, "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise."[35] We've read it all before (*legimus omnia*), states Tertullian dismissively; he is unconvinced of the objection. Why? Tertullian questions the starting point of the Monarchian objection. God's infinite power is not a valid theological principle from which to proceed doctrinally, maintains Tertullian. A doctrine of the nature of the divine persons that proceeds from the premise of God's infinite power (to violate laws of logic) is a faulty theological ground from which to begin theological inquiry. Tertullian states, "We may then make God out to have done anything we imagine as if he had done it, on the ground that he can do all things."[36] The crux of Tertullian's objection is that the logic of Monarchian theology proceeds from God's infinite power. Instead, it is God's revealed *Logos* in the *oikonomia*—his rational discourse—that ought to be the theological premise of Trinitarian doctrine.

The argument surrounding God's infinite power is initially surprising in the context of the Monarchian debate. Nevertheless, Tertullian's argument flows naturally in light of his reliance on Stoic dialectic. I have suggested that Tertullian is not (simply) engaging in a display of his rhetorical prowess or of his familiarity with the Stoic tradition. Rather, his use of Stoic dialectic comports with his understanding of the natural intelligible order as revelatory of the divine will.[37] In other words, Tertullian is intent to hold in tandem God's absolute power (*potentia absoluta*)—what he can do—with how he has revealed his ordained power (*potentia ordinata*) within the natural rational order—what he has done: "We must not believe that he has actually done what he has not done simply on the ground that he can do all things. Rather, we must inquire whether he has actually done

34. *Prax*. 10.7 (CCL 2:1170).

35. *Prax*. 10.7 (CCL 2:1170). Tertullian's use of 1 Corinthian 1.27 in relation to classical learning and philosophy is frequent. Cf. Carlo Scaglioni, "'Sapientia muni' e 'dei sapientia': L'Esegesi di I. Cor. 1, 18–2, 5 in Tertulliano," *Aevum* 46 (1972): 183–96.

36. *Prax*. 10.8 (CCL 2:1170).

37. Cf. Fuetscher, "Die natürliche Gotteserkenntnis," 217–51.

it."[38] God's absolute power is not a valid theological starting point simply because God's power is infinite; rather his ordained power ought to be the baseline of theological inquiry, maintains Tertullian.

The Monarchians unlawfully separate God's infinite power from his revelation. Of course, within such a paradigm, anything is possible exclaims Tertullian: God could have furnished people with wings to fly like birds and, for that matter, could have blotted out all heretics, even Praxeas! But there had to be the distinctions of the divine persons, wings for birds, and the existence of heretics because that is the actually existing order given by God.[39] Establishing a completely different order is difficult to imagine, even for God,[40] because it is other than his revealed will carried out in the *oikonomia* through the *Logos* in creation and redemption. It is difficult for God "not because he could not do it, but because he would not do it."[41] Such then is Tertullian's guiding theological principle: "For God's power is his will, and his inability is his absence of will: and what his will was, that was in his power, and he has shown what that was."[42] The inherent rationality in a syllogism—that there are "indemonstrable" principles—results from the logical order of the universe. Tertullian suggests that Stoic syllogisms have a place in theological discourse because of the intelligibility of God's revealed will. Indeed, for Tertullian this is the logic of the *Logos* that makes theological inquiry possible.

The rest of the treatise of *Adversus Praxean* is devoted to a scriptural analysis—particularly in the Gospel of John—of the distinction between Father and Son. However, this entire analysis is predicated upon the intelligibly of scriptural language and the possibility of scriptural language

38. *Prax*. 10.8 (CCL 2:1170).

39. *Prax*. 10.8 (CCL 2:1170).

40. *Prax*. 10.8 (CCL 2 :1170): *Hac ratione erit aliquid et difficile Deo*.

41. *Prax*. 10.8 (CCL 2:1170).

42. *Prax*. 10.8–9 (CCL 2:1170): *id scilicet, quodcunque non fecerit, non quia non potuerit sed quia noluerit. Dei enim posse velle est et non posse nolle. Quod autem voluit, et potuit et ostendit*. Tertullian insists that one should not drive a speculative wedge between God's infinite power and his self-revelation in the *Logos*. Medieval voluntarist controversies will see this debate highlighted again, particularly by considering the implications of distinguishing between God's absolute power (*potentia absoluta*) and his ordained power (*potentia ordinata*). *Adversus Praxean* 10 cautions against a voluntarist use of this distinction, which would build a speculative theological case on the basis of God's absolute power. Tertullian's theological practice of deploying Stoic dialectic models his theological principle that is grounded in the actually existing order of God's revealed rational will: "For God's power is his will, and his inability is his absence of will: and what his will was, that was in his power, and he has shown what that was" (*Prax*. 10.9 [CCL 2:1170]).

bespeaking a real theological distinction. For Tertullian, rules of logic must also be operative when the scriptural text is read—for example, Christ says, "The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son" (John 5.22).[43] A correct interpretation of this statement necessitates that the rules of logic be sustained—that two persons are not in fact one person. The actually existing order is the baseline for scriptural interpretation of theological mysteries, and it is to this existing order that rational principles—including those of Stoic thought—ought to be applied.

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43. *Prax*. 16.1 (CCL 2:1180–81).