



# **CHRIST COULD NOT BE TEMPTED**

**By  
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## AUTHOR'S REMARKS

The title to this book may startle the reader. However, the evidence for Christ's untemptability should be considered before one closes his mind. The author has never believed that Christ was peccable; but like many others, he has taught that the incarnate Son of God was tempted but due to His two holy natures He never yielded. The reason for the incorrect usage of the verb "tempted" was the incorrect translation of the Greek verb *peiradzo* when considering Christ. This verb can mean to test, try, or tempt. However, a study of the noun *peirasmos* and the verb *peiradzo* will prove there is no justification for translating these words as "temptation" or "to tempt" when they are used in reference to Jesus Christ.

The idea that Jesus Christ could be tempted is unfounded in the Biblical concept of Christ's Person. Since Christ did not have a sin nature, solicitation to do something contrary to God's will could not be entertained in His holy thought. Therefore, He could not be tempted. A study of James 1:2-15 proves that temptation has no power over a perfect Person, but it does over a depraved person.

Unless the reader is willing to consider the Biblical evidence for Christ's untemptability presented in this book, he need not read any further than this paragraph. The Bible says, "He who gives an answer before he hears, It is folly and shame to him" (Prov. 18:13 NASB). False principles and false rules of interpretation lie at the foundation of false doctrine. Therefore, Biblical evidence and not human reason must be considered as the foundation of every Biblical question. Hence, everyone who gives his opinion before he hears or reads the Biblical evidence is foolish. The Christian desires to know the truth and abide by its teaching.

This book will demonstrate the author's growth in grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ (II Pet. 3:18). More than twenty years ago he wrote his first book entitled *STUDIES IN THE PERSON AND WORK OF JESUS CHRIST*. That book, which is in print, dealt with Christ's impeccability; but this second work, dealing with Christology, is an improvement over the first. The Lord willing, if the writer adds a later work on the same subject, he hopes by God's grace that it will be an improvement over the two preceding ones.

## INTRODUCTION

The very heart of Christianity is the Person of Christ. Moreover, the Scriptures focus not only on the Person of Jesus Christ but also on His Work. However, we must ever keep in mind that Christ's Person preceded His Work, for He is the eternal Son of God.

Salvation, the redemptive Work of Jesus Christ, is vitally connected with His Person. His Person and not His Work gives value to His Work. If Jesus Christ is not who the Bible represents Him to be, then His Work as Redeemer and Savior would be invalid. Thus, those who affirm His peccability invalidate His Work. There is such an inseparability between Christ's Person and Work that any separation would cause one to go astray with respect to both. Thus, the slightest abstract notion of His Person would take from the real essence of His Work. Moreover, an isolated consideration of His Work is impossible because it can only be known in connection with His Person. His Person cannot be isolated from His Work, and His Work cannot be isolated from His Person.

The elect understand not only what Jesus Christ does but who He is—the One sent by the Father for their salvation. Without this knowledge, one can only be puzzled by His Work and ask "...Whence hath this man...these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son?..." (Matt. 13:54-57). Failure to know Jesus Christ is failure to understand His Work. Furthermore, failure to see His Work in its correct perspective is failure to understand His Person. The starting point of Christology must be the entire witness of Holy Scripture concerning both Christ's Person and His Work.

The confusion today is not objective but subjective. In other words, the real problem lies in the subjective condition of man's heart: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked..." (Jer. 17:9). Our only safeguard is the objective revelation of Scripture, for there is nothing wrong with the objective revelation of Jesus Christ. Man-made concepts of Jesus Christ are easily turned into opposite concepts. For example, "Hail" and then "Crucify".

The Lord Jesus Christ voluntarily humbled Himself (Phil. 2:5-8). To speak of Christ's humiliation is permissible, but the better term in the light of the context is self-humbleness. This passage of Scripture does not actually teach humiliation, the act of humiliating, or the state of being humiliated or dishonored — all of which are true. It teaches Christ's voluntary act of coming into the world. In this, His self-humbleness is displayed.

The three different states of Jesus Christ revealed in Philippians 2:5-11 are glory, self-humbleness, and exaltation. If Christ's natural—essential—state of glory were removed, there could be no self-humbleness. He was in a state of glory before He entered a state of self-humbleness. He was in the form of God before He was made into the likeness of man. He experienced a state of self-humbleness before He entered into a state of exaltation. Jesus Christ spoke of entering into the glory which He had with the Father before the world began after He had finished the work the Father sent Him to perform (John 17:4, 5). He manifested His moral

glory during His self-humbleness. But His essential glory was necessary to that moral glory, and His state of self-humbleness preceded His entering into the state of exaltation.

There are seven points in our Lord's vast condescension when He left the glory He had with the Father and came into this world in self-humbleness:

1. He was in the form of God.
2. He emptied Himself.
3. He took the form of a servant or bond slave.
4. He was made in the likeness of men.
5. He humbled Himself.
6. He became obedient unto death.
7. He experienced the death of the Cross.

The glory of Jesus Christ is revealed in the fact that He is in the form of God. The form of God is to be understood as the nature and essence of God. This is the only way the Greek word for "form" can be understood in Philippians 2:6. It describes the Lord Jesus Christ as He was from all eternity. "The form of a servant" of verse 7 signifies that He was really a servant. "In fashion as a man" means that He was really the God-Man. Therefore, His being in the form of God reveals that He is really and truly God, that He shares the same nature with the Father and was possessed with the same glory. He possessed all the attributes of deity. The Holy Spirit revealed, through the apostle Paul, the Person of Jesus Christ our Lord in heaven and on earth in relation to the Father and in relation to man. "Who being in the form of God" or "subsisting in the form of God" reveals Christ's essential deity, which once having had, can never be diminished. This glory or honor of Jesus Christ could never be given up, but it was veiled by being made into the likeness of men.

The self-humbleness of the Lord Jesus Christ is seen in the fact that He emptied Himself. This is a fathomless statement. Eternity alone will suffice to plumb the depths of its meaning. He did not empty Himself of deity. That was essential to His being. He did not become less God by being made in the likeness of men. He veiled the essential glory of His deity, which was His from eternity, to accomplish His redemptive purpose in obedience to God the Father who sent Him into the world. He was not emptied of that fullness of grace which was in Him from everlasting. He appeared with this when He was made flesh and dwelt among men. He was not emptied of the perfections of His divine nature, which were not in the least diminished by the assumption of the human nature. All the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Him bodily (Col. 2:9). Although the Lord Jesus, the second Person of the Godhead, took that which He did not have before, He lost nothing of what He had from eternity. The glory of His divine nature was covered; this is what took place when He emptied Himself. It was out of sight, but some rays and beams of it broke out through His works and miracles, which He performed during the thirty-three and one-half years that He walked among the sons of men. His glory as of the only begotten of the Father was

beheld by only a few. The minds of the greater number were blinded and their hearts were hardened by not only the miracles they saw Him perform but the words they heard Him speak. They saw no form nor comeliness in Him to desire Him (Is. 53:2). The form of God in which He is eternally was hidden from them. They reputed Him as a mere man, as the despised Man, even as a worm (Ps. 22:6).

“Being found in fashion as a man” indicates a permanent union of the two natures. Thus, we have the hypostatic union. This hypostatic union is not to be confused with the theophanies, the preincarnate manifestations of the Lord Jesus in the Old Testament. The theophanies were temporary; whereas, this hypostatic union is permanent. The key to the whole subject of the kenosis (Christ emptied Himself) is in the word “likeness.” It is a window through which floods the light of His redemptive purpose in the incarnation. God was sending His only begotten Son “...in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8:3 NASB). “In the likeness of men” of Philippians 2:7 conveys the full reality of Christ’s human nature. He who had said “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Gen. 1:26) is now made in man’s likeness. What condescension for sinful man to hold in contemplation. The extent of His self-humbleness is manifested in His death. He was obedient unto death. The obedience of the first man, Adam, would have been unto life, but he disobeyed. The obedience of the God-Man was unto death. Adam’s disobedience brought his posterity, and that includes all mankind, a harvest of death. Jesus Christ’s obedience brought His posterity, His sheep, out of death into life. He voluntarily subjected Himself to this self-humbleness. He was not thrust down into it by force. He voluntarily came to do the will of His Father.

The exaltation of Jesus Christ far out-distanced His self-humbleness. His exaltation consists of three stages:

1. In the past, God has highly exalted Him (Phil. 2:9; Eph. 1:20-23).
2. In the present, He has been given a name which is above every name (Phil. 2:9).
3. In the future, every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:10, 11).

We must never permit ourselves to conceive of Him in the kenosis as any Person other than God who changes not (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8). In His self-humbleness, He was God manifest in the flesh (I Tim. 3:16).

In what sense did Jesus Christ empty Himself?

1. He took upon Himself the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men.
2. He humbled Himself and became obedient.

This is the sense in which He emptied Himself. However, there was no change in His essential being. He did two things He had never done before, and this helps us to better understand the meaning of “He emptied Himself”:

1. He became dependent. The Son can do nothing of Himself (John 5:19, 30; 8:28; 12:49; 14:10). The very essence of a man and a servant is that He is dependent. This, then, was the grace of the Son in that He willingly submitted Himself in all things to depend on the Father. Therefore, He said, "...I live by the Father..." (John 6:57).

2. He became obedient. He whom all principalities and powers obeyed learned in a new experience the grace of obedience (Heb. 5:8). His was the open ear. He was the instructed One of Isaiah 50:4. This, however, does not mean He divested Himself of the powers He possessed as God.

Liberals conclude the following statements:

1. Because Jesus Christ said "I can of mine own self do nothing" (John 5:30), He was not omnipotent.

2. Because He said "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there" (John 11:15), He was not omnipresent.

3. Because He knew not the hour (Mark 13:32), He was not omniscient.

4. Because the Bible says He "was in all points tempted like as we are" (Heb. 4:15), He had the capacity to sin. The liberal might as well go all the way and say that because Jesus Christ was man He was not God, and deny the great mystery of godliness — "...Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh..." (I Tim. 3:16).

What is the meaning of Jesus Christ emptying Himself? Did He divest Himself of His essential glory, or did He veil His essential glory by being made in the likeness of sinful men? He did not become less God because of the incarnation. God manifest in the flesh is the foundation of Christianity. That one should be the God-Man is the great mystery of our faith.

When Christianity expresses what she knows of the Lord Jesus Christ, she calls Him the God-Man. Christ's inner nature and His eternal, historical reality in His appearance before men were not contradictory. The Lord Jesus was born of a virgin, walked among the sons of men, shed His precious blood on Calvary, and arose from the dead. The contrast between what appeared to be and what the Lord Jesus Christ was essentially became sharper and sharper even to the point of His death at Calvary. The Lord Jesus, who is eternal life, sank in death in order to give life to the elect of God (John 10:11, 15). The apostle Peter rebuked the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 16:22-23 because the disciples were unable to understand His death. The disciples were ignorant of many truths concerning Christ's Person. The contrasts in Christ's life were not reconciled in His death but in His resurrection (Rom. 1:3, 4). After His resurrection, the disciples saw what Jesus Christ is eternally in nature. He was then proved to be the Son of God with power by His resurrection out from among the dead (Rom. 1:4).

The Lord Jesus declared, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). "Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him" (John 10:31). The Jews told Him they did not stone Him for a good work but for blasphemy. Anyone who does not believe Jesus Christ is the God-Man, one Person possessing two natures, has no mediator. To be mistaken about the Person of Jesus Christ is



indeed tragic. One would do better not to touch the study of the Person of Jesus Christ than go outside the circle of Biblical revelation. The Person of Jesus Christ is absolutely beyond our comprehension.

The distinctive characteristic of the incarnation is the hypostatic union, the union of two natures in one person. He was not two persons but one Person with two natures. Proper distinction must be made between a trinitarian Person (whether it be the Father, Son or Holy Spirit), a human person, and a theanthropic Person.

A trinitarian Person possesses only one nature. Three Persons are in the Godhead. They are one essence, one substance. They have one nature, which is divine. Before the incarnation, the Lord Jesus Christ possessed only one nature, the divine nature.

The human person possesses two natures—material and immaterial. His material nature alone is visible. The material body came into existence when God made man from the dust of the earth. The immaterial part of man came into existence when God breathed into that body, and man became a living soul (Gen. 2:7). Man's immaterial nature is of utmost importance. His material nature will return to the dust of the earth, but his immaterial nature will go to be with the Lord.

A theanthropic Person has three natures. Jesus Christ alone is the Theanthropic Person. He has the divine essence, a human body, and a human soul. His human body was assumed, never to be laid aside. He sits today at the right hand of the Father in the same body in which He was glorified.

“Nature” denotes the sum total of all essential qualities of a thing—that which makes it what it really is. The nature of the Godhead pertains to all the essential qualities of the Godhead. “Person” denotes a complete substance endowed with reason. Therefore, it is a nature with something added; that added thing is individuality. Nature is invisible and natures are indistinguishable, but persons are distinguishable. Nature is visible only as it is reflected in one's person. Each Person of the Godhead is God, having the same nature. Nevertheless, the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Father, and the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son. Jesus Christ assumed a nature that was not personalized. It did not exist by itself.

The distinction between human nature and person is illustrated in Romans 9:21. The potter's power over the clay denotes the absolute sovereignty of God. A lump of clay consists in one nature. So He took part of that one lump and made a vessel of honor, and He took another part and made a vessel of dishonor. Both vessels came from the same lump. However, when the Creator fashions the lump into vessels, they become personalized in particular vessels.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Theanthropic Person, the God-Man. He existed in the form of God before He came into the world. He did not cease from that form when He took upon Himself the form of a servant. The form of God was veiled with the form of a servant. Therefore, He was in the likeness of sinful flesh with emphasis on the word “likeness.” Many looked upon Him during His life when He walked among the sons of men; and they said, “Behold the man” (John 19:5). One must have grace to penetrate the human nature of Jesus Christ and see the divine nature; and grace enables him to see in Him the Theanthropic Person, the God-Man.

The conception of Jesus Christ was unlike that of men. His birth was no different from any other. The virgin Mary signified that He was miraculously conceived in her womb. His entire life differed from the lives of mere men. Therefore, the expressions “Son of Man,” “Son of God,” “Man approved of God,” and “Behold the man” denote One who is not just a mere man. They indicate the Theanthropic Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, who appeared in the form of a servant. The theanthropic personality of Jesus Christ began with the incarnation. He did not exist eternally as the God-Man. There was no modification nor alteration of the Holy Trinity when Jesus Christ came into the world and assumed a human nature. A fourth person was not added to the divine Triunity. There is still just a holy Triunity. The one God condescended to reveal Himself. While there is only one God, there are in the one divine essence three distinct Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

## CHRIST WAS NEVER TEMPTED TO SIN

Temptation has no power over a perfect Person, but it does over a depraved person. Jesus Christ, during His days in the flesh, was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners (Heb. 7:26). To suggest that He had a nature subject to sin is nothing short of blasphemy. On the other hand, depraved men are capable of sin because each one has a mind that is ready to receive an evil suggestion. Man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust (James 1:14). The Greek word for “lust” is *epithumia*. It means lust, desire, craving, or longing. A person is tempted when he is enticed by his own craving for that which is forbidden or unlawful. No one who understands the Biblical teaching concerning the Person of Jesus Christ could entertain a thought that He could desire the unlawful or forbidden. That is why James said, “God cannot be tempted with evil” (James 1:13).

The word “temptation” does not always carry the same connotation in every passage where it is used. It comes from the Greek word *peirasmos*, which means trial, proof, or temptation. The noun is related to the verb *peiradzo*, which means to test, to try, or to tempt. Both words may be used in either a good or a bad sense. For example, the noun is used in James 1:2 and 12; and the verb is used four times in James 1:13 and 14. In James 1:2 and 12, the noun would be better translated “trial.” The Christian “endures” an outward trial, but he should “resist” an inward temptation to evil. Hence, the distinction must be made between remaining steadfast under trial and being ensnared by one’s own sinful nature. The former is outward, and the latter is inward. God tried Abraham (Heb. 11:17; Gen. 22:1), but He did not tempt Abraham. The word “tempt” of Genesis 22:1 should be “tried” or “tested,” because “...God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man” (James 1:13). This means that God is incapable not only of being solicited to sin but of soliciting any man to sin. On the other hand, God does try or test man to prove to him what he really is (I Pet. 1:6; 4:12; Rev. 2:2, 10; 3:10). Outward trials are from God, but inward temptations are from the evil passion of depraved man.

God decreed sin, but He neither solicits nor forces anyone to sin. If God had not ordained sin, Christ would never have been crucified by the hands of wicked men (Acts 2:23). Satan solicits people to sin, but God overrules and makes the evil acts of men work for man’s good and God’s glory. It is interesting to observe the attributes of God that are advanced by sin. God’s mercy pardons sin; His justice punishes sin; His wisdom orders sin; and His power overrules sin. The source of sin is man’s depravity, but God is not the author of that depravity.

Those who claim that Jesus Christ had the capacity to sin are forced to admit that He became less than God in the incarnation. Such thinking is in direct opposition to Scripture which states: “...God cannot be tempted [*apeirastos*, an adjective which means inexperienced in temptation; incapable of being tempted] with evil [*kakon*, genitive plural of *kakos* —of evils]...” (James 1:13). God can never be induced to act inconsistently with any attribute of His character. The human nature of the Son of God in His incarnation did not exist apart from the Divine Person. If Jesus Christ had the capacity to sin, the Divine Person had the capacity to sin. His holy, human nature united to His Divine nature eliminates any concept of peccability (Luke 1:35). There can

never be any conflict between two absolutely holy natures. The Bible says Christ was made in the “likeness of men” (Phil. 2:7), but it never says He possessed a “sinful nature” or was nothing more than a mere man.

The “lust” (desire, craving, or longing) by which man is tempted is not of God. It is his own lust, which is the fruit of the fall. Evil that is in man is his own. Within man’s heart are evil desires. They are there by nature. The Devil does not introduce them. All Satan does is find out where man is most vulnerable and bombard him with things he craves. The evil suggestion admitted into one’s mind will grow in strength because of the evil desire already resident in man unless it is resisted by grace.

This is the question: Did Satan ever find a weak spot in Jesus Christ? Since there was no weakness in Him, He could never be solicited to do anything contrary to His holy character. Therefore, Jesus Christ could not be tempted with evil (James 1:13). It must be understood that evil exists in man before it comes forth from him in action. On the other hand, there was no evil in Christ. He could not be tempted by any suggestion or solicitation from without.

To say that Christ could have sinned as to His human nature but not as to His Divine nature forces one to conclude that there was a conflict between His two natures. This was impossible because His human nature was united to His Divine Person. Thus, there was never any conflict in Christ as there is in the Christian (Rom. 7:15-25).

There are several things to consider in the solicitation to sin. First, there is the attraction by the suggestion of something that is desirable. That which is desired is forbidden. In order for the tempted to have what has been suggested, he must ignore a Biblical precept. However, having been intellectually enlightened as to the advantages to oneself personally, he now begins to rationalize the suggestion. The suggestion and the desire become so strongly united that the person soon is made to feel justified in doing what all along he desired to do. The more the suggestion is rationalized the more desirable it becomes. There is nothing left for the tempted person to do but succumb to what was already in his heart.

One cannot deny that the Devil made some offers to Christ in the wilderness. Neither can one deny that the eternal Son was eternally aware of every detail of the offers made by the Devil. But it is nothing short of blasphemy to entertain the thought that the Son of God wanted anything offered by the Devil. Some religious leaders are so full of iniquity that they maintain that the human nature of Jesus Christ was as fallen and rebellious as their own. The Bible teaches that the human nature is corrupt from head to foot (Is. 1:6), but it is a sign of spiritual blindness to imagine that Christ’s human nature was tainted with depravity. Christ’s human nature is called “that holy thing” (Luke 1:35).

Jesus Christ experienced only the suffering part of *peirasmos*; whereas, man experiences both the suffering and the sinning parts of temptation. Suggestion can do nothing without lust (desire). Christ had no lust; therefore, He did not suffer the sinning part of temptation. That which inwardly tempts the heart must come from within oneself: “...man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed” (James 1:14). Lust and enticement work together. The Greek word for “enticed” of verse 14 is *deleadzo*, which means to entrap, to catch with a bait, to allure, or entice. Hence, it can be said that one is enticed to sin when he is entrapped by his own

craving. This means there is something in depraved man that is drawn (*exelko*, to draw out; metaphorically to hurry away—leap) to the lure of something within the temptation. Both “drawn” (*exelkomenos*) and “enticed” (*deleadzomenos*) are present passive participles. The passive voice means the subject was acted upon. But in James 1:15, the apostle went on to say, “Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin.” The Greek word for “conceived” is *sullabousa*, second aorist active participle of *sullambano*, which means to seize, to apprehend, to conceive, or to become pregnant. This means that when the suggestion is embraced by the assent of the will, sin is brought forth. James is using the language of pregnancy and childbirth. As a child is alive before the actual moment of birth, sin does not begin to be sinful only when it is manifested in a visible action. Jesus Christ did not have a depraved will to give assent to any evil suggestion. Therefore, there could never be any conception, which proves Christ was not peccable.

When one understands the Biblical use of temptation, he will have no problem with the so-called “temptation of Christ.” Jesus Christ was not tempted, but He was “tried” to prove to mankind who He is—God incarnate. Temptation, in the English language, is the act of tempting. It is something that tempts, entices, or allures. It is the fact or state of being tempted, especially to evil. On the other hand, the word “test” is the means by which the quality or genuineness of anything is determined, a means of trial. It is the trial of the quality of something. Jesus Christ asserted His own impeccability when He said, “...the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me” (John 14:30). Satan had nothing in the incarnate Word because Jesus Christ “...knew no sin...” (II Cor. 5:21) and “...in him is no sin” (I John 3:5). Therefore, He “...did no sin...” (I Pet. 2:22).

## THE DOCTRINE THAT CHRIST WAS PECCABLE IS HERESY

Religious institutions that embrace the doctrine that Christ was peccable (capable of sinning) are Laodicean organizations. Like the Laodicean Church of Revelation 3:14-22, they may be rich, increased with goods, and feel they have need of nothing. But they are spiritually wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. They are Laodicean because they have closed the door to the impeccable Christ of Holy Scripture. Hence, the impeccable Christ of the Bible is standing at the door of those religious institutions knocking for entrance. Christ's knocking is not at the door of unregenerate hearts but upon the door of regenerate hearts to repent and come out as witnesses against the apostates—those who have turned their backs on the Biblical truth of Christ's impeccability. It is absolutely unthinkable to imagine that the Holy Spirit who regenerates the elect would lead the regenerated to embrace a peccable Christ. No one can have a true conversion experience by believing in a peccable savior. Jesus Christ comes into and has fellowship with only those who embrace Him as the impeccable Savior.

The teaching that Christ was peccable has become a popular doctrine among religionists. The following list briefly states the beliefs of some who teach that Christ could sin:

1. One believes that depravity was imparted to Christ in birth making it possible for Him to sin and to suffer for sin. Thus, He was more sympathetic to us in our depravity.
2. Another believes that Christ, as man, could have sinned but did not and was tempted but did not yield. The so-called temptation of Christ is regarded as real with a genuine appeal to Him as a man.
3. Still another believes that it was in God's plan to give Satan occasion to try to cause Christ to sin. Passing this test would prove that Christ is the qualified God-Man.
4. This person says that Christ, being human, found Satan's offers attractive; and although He did not, He could have chosen to sin.
5. This final view is more subtle. Although He did not experience sin, He was subjected to the temptation. Thus, His intercession for us is with greater understanding. His power of feeling for our needs is greater because He has experienced the strength of the temptation to sin. How can one feel what he has not experienced?

The Person of Christ must be distinguished from the person of man. Unlike man's creation, Christ's Person was uncreated. Christ did not assume a sinful person any more than God made man deity. Jesus Christ is God's Man by incarnation, but Adam was God's man by creation. Jesus Christ is God's "only begotten" — the unique or only one of His kind — Son; man is not the only one of his kind. The essential Divine nature in Jesus Christ cannot grow; but the God-like nature in the believer does grow (II Pet. 1:4 ff.). Jesus Christ was not born of the virgin with an ego turned away from God; man is born with an ego turned away from God. There was only

one ego in Christ, and that one ego always pleased the Father. On the other hand, man's depraved ego never pleases God. It is incapable of doing so.

Christ is the firstborn (Luke 2:7; Col. 1:15; Rev. 1:5). Firstborn has no reference to the origin of Christ's existence. He is the One who has brought forth everything. Therefore, He is the firstborn who created man (John 1:1-3). Jesus Christ is the firstfruits (I Cor. 15:23). The Greek word *aparche* primarily denotes an offering of firstfruits. Although the word is plural in the Kings James Bible, it is singular in the Greek text. Jesus Christ is the first in order of dignity, causality, resurrection, and influence. Believers, on the other hand, are a kind of firstfruits of God's creatures (James 1:18). The Greek word *tina (tis)* is an indefinite pronoun which means a certain one, some one, or a kind of.

While it is true that Christ was "made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:7), it is also true that He is very much unlike men. Demands for a complete parallel between Christ and man can never be met. In Christ's conception and birth, there was a union of the eternal Son with human nature (John 1:1, 14). This was very much unlike man's conception and birth. Man is the created creature of God; therefore, he is not eternal. Furthermore, since Adam, man is the product of procreation. Christ's conception was without a human father. His human nature was from God the Father, by the Holy Spirit, and in the womb of the virgin (Heb. 10:5; Matt. 1:18-21; Luke 1:35). Man is the product of a man and a woman who conceived man in sin (Ps. 51:5). Human initiation was completely excluded in Christ's conception, which enables us to understand the total absence of any capability to sin in the Person and Life of Christ. He stood outside of Adam and ordinary generation. Contrarily, man owes his existence to human initiation in the providence of God. He is a sinner by nature.

Christ's earthly life and ministry were never identified with the degradation of sinful men. He identified Himself with the titles and designations which prove His identification was with the elect as the subjects of Divine grace. To suggest that Jesus Christ was identified with fallen mankind, except in His redemptive work, would be blasphemous. Hence, the Son of God never identified Himself with fallen human nature until He did so sacrificially at Calvary. Only at Calvary did "the Holy One" come into personal identification with sin. There, on the cross, Christ identified Himself vicariously and sacrificially with sin.

The inspired writer of Hebrews spoke of the incarnation: "...in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren..." (Heb. 2:17). "In all things" (*kata panta*) should be taken with "made like." While Jesus Christ shared in some experiences of men, one must not overlook the truth that there were some things in which He did not share. The same Greek construction is used in Hebrews 4:15 — "...but was in all points [*kata panta*] tempted [*pepeirasmēnon* — having been tried] like as we are, yet without sin." Hence, neither "made like" nor "in all things" can be understood to mean in an absolute sense. Both are qualified, if not in the immediate context, in the overall context of Scripture. Christ's conception and birth were different from His brethren because He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin. Furthermore, His life was different, because, unlike His brethren, He was impeccable. Finally, His death was different because He died for the sins of His brethren—the elect.

If Jesus Christ was made in the incarnation like unto His brethren "in all things" without qualification, His brethren were without a standard above themselves. When one examines the

text (Heb. 2:17) closely, he will observe orderly points in his devotion to Christ. First, “it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren.” The Greek word *homoiothenai* is first aorist passive infinitive of *homoioo*, which means to make like, cause to be like; passively, to be made like, to become like, or resemble. Who was made like His brethren? He was the “only begotten God [*theos*]” (John 1:18 NASB). Here, we see His Divine nature, a trinitarian Person. Second, we see His human nature. He had a human spirit, a human soul, and a human body. Third, the union of the two natures is expressed in the passive infinitive “to be made.” This points to the union of both natures in one Person. Christ’s likeness unto His brethren is not what mortal man might imagine. His essential form did not take the form of a servant from Him, nor did this union alter His equality with the Father. Finally, the purpose of the union of the two natures is expressed in the words “to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.” There is a difference between the Sanctifier and the sanctified, even though the sanctified are made one with the Sanctifier by grace (Heb. 2:9-11).

It behoved Christ to be made like unto His brethren. The Greek word for “behoved” is *opheilen*, the imperfect active indicative of *opheilo*, which means to owe money, service, or love; duty or obligation. It has been said that to give a gift and call it a debt is not our usual language, but it is the language of heaven. The word implies a necessity. The Son of God was obligated by an eternal decree. He must be about His Father’s business. Since the Sanctifier was obligated to be made like unto us, His brethren, the brethren are obligated to be like unto the Sanctifier. Conclusively, if the Sanctifier was made like unto the brethren “in all things” without qualification, the elect could never have been sanctified because the Sanctifier would have needed sanctification.



## CHRIST WAS TESTED APART FROM SIN

During the Arian controversy of the fourth century, two Greek words were brought before the religious world. They were *homoousion*, the same in substance, and *homoiousion*, of a similar substance. The only difference between the two words was one Greek character, “*i*” (*iota*), but what a great difference it made in the Biblical concept of the Person of Jesus Christ. Arianism, a heretical doctrine taught by Arius, was the doctrine that Jesus Christ was not of the same substance, essence, or nature with God the Father. Athanasius, on the other hand, declared that Jesus Christ was of the same substance with the Father.

Athanasius declared for 47 years Christ’s *homoousion*. He was driven into exile five times. His enemies slandered him, and death threatened him. But he continued to declare Christ’s *homoousion*, “the same in substance, equal in power and glory,” at the expense of having his pulpit undermined. Constantine the Great was so moved by the controversy that he authorized a council to consider the question of Christ’s Person. Hence, a Synod convened in Alexandria for the examination of Arianism. Arius was condemned and expelled by nearly 100 pastors and bishops.

There is another controversy over the Person of Christ in the twentieth century. It, too, involves two words, impeccability and peccability. Impeccability means Christ could not sin, and peccability means He could sin. Some uninformed “church members” (religionists) may not feel that the controversy is serious enough to cause divisions. However, God’s elect who have been led by the Spirit of regeneration to embrace the impeccable Savior in a true conversion experience are responsible to cry out against the heresy of peccability. In fact, they, like Athanasius of old, cannot keep quiet when the Person of their Savior is being questioned.

Peccability is related to temptability. This means that man is tempted to outward sin by inward sin. Inward sin is the fruit of depravity. The aim of temptation is to persuade man to outwardly manifest inward sin and to bring him to the guilt of his inward and outward sin before others. No person can be tempted to sin without a sinful propensity. Thus, the difference between sin and temptation is revealed.

The Bible defines sin as transgression of the law (I John 3:4). Man is subject to certain desires which are essential to human nature. However, these desires are to be gratified in God’s appointed ways. Adam failed to do this. Therefore, he fell and all his posterity fell in him. Temptation is outward allurements. It suggests to inward depravity the advantage of succumbing to the outward attraction. Thus, man’s inward weakness is influenced to some object of natural desire. Without the restraint of the fear of God (Jer. 32:40), a man will submit to fulfilling his inward evil desire.

Those who embrace the doctrine of peccability say the impossibility for Christ to sin would destroy the whole meaning of temptation in the life of Christ. Their opinion is that although Christ was without sin, He was not without the susceptibility to temptation. Furthermore, they

claim that the area of testing and the potential for falling were in His humanity. They conclude that since He was fully human, He could have made the wrong choice.

Peccability teachers have sought to explain Christ's temptation of Hebrews 4:15 — "...was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" — in the following way: Imagine a father in days of great poverty who has the opportunity to take some money belonging to another person. He was not guilty of stealing the money, but the thought of a starving family made him feel the temptation. Furthermore, imagine a Christian sentenced to die if he does not renounce Jesus Christ. The love of life would make the Christian feel the temptation. It is therefore conceivable that although Christ was without sin, He was not without susceptibility to temptation.

The preceding explanation is false and the truth of Hebrews 4:15 should be considered. The infirmities (*astheneiais*, dative plural of *astheneia*, weakness) did not refer to sin. They cover the frailties of human nature. Christ's human nature was subject to limitations and trials with the one exception that He could have no experimental knowledge of sin. He did not possess a sinful human nature. His human nature was only made in the likeness of sinful nature (Rom. 8:3). Christ's conception and birth protect His human nature from defilement with depravity. "Like as we are" is the translation of *kath homoioteta*, ablative singular of *homoiotes*, which means in a similar way, not in the identical way that we are tempted. This form of the Greek word for "likeness" is used only here and in Hebrews 7:15. There, it is translated "after the similitude [likeness] of Melchisedec."

There is a more profound truth than "yet without sin" or "without committing sin." The Greek word *choris* is an adjective which means apart from, without, on a distinct footing from, or independently of. The most common interpretation of *choris hamartias* is "without yielding to sin," but it has a stronger meaning. In Christ's statement, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John 8:7), the Greek word for "without sin" is *anamartatos* (used only here), which means without sin or guiltless. In this case, it means he who has committed no sin. However, *choris* is stronger in meaning than *anamartatos*. The Greek word *choris* is used as an adjective with the ablative of separation in every place with the exception of John 20:7. There, it is used as an adverb. Christ was completely separated from sin because there was no sin in Him to be aroused by temptation. The Lord Jesus did not sin because He could not sin. He was impeccable. Therefore, He remained undefiled in a world of sin.

Impeccability is united to holiness. This is in direct opposition to peccability which is related to temptability. While no human being is beyond the possibility of temptation because of inward depravity, Christ had no inward depravity with which to struggle. His human will was always subservient to His divine will. He always pleased the Father (John 8:29). Christ's holiness was one of equality with the Father. Holiness, which is God's chief attribute, is spoken of more frequently than any other of His attributes.

In conclusion, the following are arguments against the heresy of peccability. If Christ could have sinned, He would have been able to sin only by a completely free opposition of His will to the divine. However, that was impossible. The managing possessor of the human will was the Divine *Logos*. Hence, God would have had to apostatize from Himself, which is ludicrous. To argue that Christ's human will must be free to choose or He could not have won the moral victory is to make His will mutable. A perfectly free will is determined to act according to its character.

Christ's will could not act contrary to His character: "For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Heb. 7:26). On the other hand, the sinner cannot act contrary to his character: "Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children" (II Pet. 2:14). Now, who will be bold enough to say Christ was peccable? The inner incapacity for sin in Jesus Christ resulted from the fact that the "I" of the human nature is the Divine *Logos*. Thus, it is not a human but a Divine self who is responsible for the deeds performed through the Divine will.

## TEACHERS OF PECCABILITY PROCLAIM ANOTHER JESUS

When Christians read the Bible under the influence of the Holy Spirit, they do not dissect Christ's personality like physiologists dissect the human body. They recognize their discipleship and worship God in spirit and in truth. The incarnation did not make Jesus Christ a dual personality—Divine and human. He was one Divine personality in equal relation to His two natures. Thus, the statement “The Word became flesh” (John 1:14 NASB) implies more than a Divine Person taking a human body, which could have meant no more than a theophany of the Old Testament. The second Person in the Godhead assumed a human body with all that perfect unfallen human nature implies by being born of a virgin. The effect of this fact on regenerate hearts will not be a philosophical statement that “Christ is such an one as ourselves.” Like Thomas, the regenerate will say, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28).

One is correct to say Jesus Christ is “very God of very God” when defending the two natures of Jesus Christ. But the frequently heard statement “very man of very man” ignores the work of the Holy Spirit in the conception of Christ's human nature in the womb of the virgin. The true humanity of Christ is accepted by Christians without attempting to describe how it was produced.

All that Scripture records on the subject of the incarnation should be considered; but one must not go beyond Scripture and let his imagination run wild. There are some “secret things” about the incarnation which God has not decreed to make known. Thus, believers apprehend the fact of the incarnation without comprehending how the conception by the Holy Spirit took place. Those to whom the Son has revealed the Father will believe its validity where human reason doubts.

Whether people like it or not, the truth of Christ's impeccability, like other truths, is a revelation restricted to the elect. Where human reason dominates the thinking of religionists concerning the Person of Christ, the elect to whom Christ has revealed the Father rest in a God-given faith in the Savior's impeccability. Christ said, “All things are delivered unto me of my Father...” (Matt. 11:27). The verb “delivered” is *paredothe*, first aorist passive indicative of *paradidomi*, which means to give into the hands of another or to deliver to one something to keep or use. Hence, God the Father turned over to God the Son the execution of His will. Therefore, only those to whom Christ chooses to reveal the Father will ever come to know Him through the impeccable Christ (John 1:18).

Many in Paul's day and many today have a false view of Jesus Christ. Paul looked forward to the time when he would have the privilege of presenting his converts as chaste virgins to Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom:

For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye

receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him (II Cor. 11:2-4).

His jealousy for them was the product of an exclusive loyalty. To be espoused (*hermosamen*, aorist middle indicative of *harmodzo*, to betroth) to one husband demands loyalty. God will endure no rival. They had been betrothed to Christ. Paul was fearful that they might be turned from exclusive loyalty to Him.

The servant of Abraham illustrates ministers of God entrusted with the work of espousing the elect to the impeccable Savior (Gen. 24). Christ's ministers, like Eliezer, are properly instructed (vv. 1-9), are zealous for their work (vv. 10-14), are given spiritual discernment (vv. 15-23), declare the things of Christ, typified by Isaac (v. 53), are faithful to the elect, typified by Rebekah (vv. 56, 57), and present the regenerated as chaste virgins to Christ, represented by Rebekah's being presented to Isaac (v. 61).

Eliezer disallowed anticipated compromise. During the course of instruction, he said:

Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest? And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again.... And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again (Gen. 24:5, 6, 8).

Likewise, ministers of God must not compromise the message concerning the Person of Jesus Christ. If people do not rise to the truth of Christ's impeccability, the message must not be diluted to a heretical message of peccability. The message must be relevant to Christ's impeccability in order for God's message of the Person of Christ to be relevant.

As the servant of Abraham loved Rebekah for Isaac's sake, ministers of God love the elect for Christ's sake. Rebekah's attachment to the servant for a season was for her spiritual adornment during her pilgrimage to meet Isaac. The same is true with the elect of God and their ministers. Rebekah's desire was to know more about Isaac, her future bridegroom. The desire of the elect is to know more about the Person of Jesus Christ, their future Bridegroom.

Like Eliezer and Paul, faithful ministers look upon the sheep under their care as the bride of the impeccable Savior, not as their own bride. On the other hand, the sheep receive their undershepherds, unite themselves to them, obey them, and honor them for their work's sake (I Thess. 5:12, 13; Heb. 13:7).

Paul's great concern was that the thoughts (*noemata*, plural of *noema* — thought) of some might be corrupted (*phthare*, second aorist passive subjunctive of *phtheiro*, which means to spoil, ruin, or corrupt) from the simplicity (*haplotetos*, genitive of *haplotes*, which means sincerity, or purity of mind—singlehearted loyalty) and purity (*hagnotatos*, genitive of *hagnotes*, which means purity of life) in Christ. He warned the Corinthian Christians of one coming and preaching another person as Jesus whom he did not proclaim. Paul did not say another Christ, but "another Jesus." Hence, the false apostles taught a purely human Jesus. Therefore, one can expect what follows. Another spirit other than the Holy Spirit empowers those who preach another Jesus. Furthermore, another Jesus is the message of another gospel, which is not another (Gal. 1:6-9).

Promoters of peccability are preaching “another Jesus” by the power of “another spirit” which results in “another gospel.” As Paul did not preach the same “Jesus” as the false teachers, the preachers of impeccability do not preach the same “Jesus” as the peccability teachers.

Unlike the teachers of peccability, demons recognize the absolute holiness of Jesus Christ. There are religious demons:

And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes. And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him (Mark 1:21-27).

Demons are usually spoken of as persons being possessed by demons of drunkenness, lust, drugs, dishonesty, etc. They are seldom thought of as religious demons. Mark told of a man in the synagogue who had an unclean spirit. Such a person will not listen to truth. Although the man had come to the synagogue, he had no desire to hear what Jesus Christ had to say. Acknowledging that this Jesus of Nazareth was “the Holy One of God,” he said, “Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth?” The mere external proclamation of the gospel will never find lodgement in the unsanctified ears of man, a man possessed with an unclean spirit. The Holy Spirit of regeneration alone can make a person desire the company of “the Holy One of God.”

To say “I know Jesus Christ” is insufficient. Unlike the promoters of peccability, the man with an unclean spirit said, “I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.” There was no doubt in his mind that Jesus of Nazareth was absolutely holy, impeccable, not peccable. The Greek word for “know” is *oida*, second perfect active indicative of *oida*, which suggests fullness of knowledge. The difference between *ginosko* and *oida* is interesting. The word *ginosko* often suggests progress in knowledge; whereas, *oida* suggests fullness of knowledge. For example, when Christ said to the Jews, “...ye have not known him,” i.e., the Father, He used the word *ginosko*. He told them that they had not begun to know the Father. On the other hand, Christ said, “...if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him and keep his saying” (John 8:55). Christ used the word *oida*, which means perfect knowledge, when speaking of His knowledge of the Father. The point is, the man with an unclean spirit had no problem with Christ’s impeccability. What a difference between his confession, “I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God,” and that of one who said that Jesus Christ must be born again to see the Kingdom of God.

## JESUS CHRIST IS THE UNIQUE PERSON

The truth concerning Jesus Christ is infinite. This unique Person was conceived in the womb of Mary thirty years before Peter's confession: "...Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). Hence, He was conceived in the womb of the virgin before He was conceived in the mind of Peter. His conception in the mind, however, is as necessary to salvation as His conception in the virgin. The Holy Spirit is the Author of both conceptions, in the womb and in the mind.

And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God (Luke 1:35).

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost (Matt. 1:18-20).

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven (Matt. 16:17).

Since the Holy Spirit could not conceive a peccable Person in the womb of the virgin, He cannot conceive a peccable Christ in the mind of a person whom He regenerates. Everything God does is perfect. Therefore, peccability is out of the question in God's work. Those who believe in peccability are forced to deny the miraculous conception in the womb of Mary, the virgin. Furthermore, they are forced to deny that salvation is wholly of God. They must acknowledge that man had not only something to do with Christ's human nature but he has something to do with the conception in the human mind.

Objections to the impeccability of the unique Christ will be answered. Opponents of the impeccability of Jesus Christ say the humanity of Jesus was no different from the humanity of Adam before the fall. They claim that the difference came only by the fall of the first Adam and the victory of the second Adam.

The humanity of both Adam and Jesus Christ cannot be apprehended apart from their persons. Adam was a mutable person; Christ is the immutable Person. Adam was a peccable person; Christ is the impeccable Person. Adam's peccability gave him the capacity to sin; therefore, he fell. Christ's impeccability made it impossible for Him to sin; therefore, He was never tempted to sin. There is no capacity to sin in infinite perfection. Hence, there was a definite difference between the natures of Adam and Christ.

The eternal Son of God was responsible for all that would be done through the instrumentality of the assumed human nature. Thus, everything done through the instrumentality of the assumed nature is attributable to the one Person of the God-Man. Since the Divine nature is the foundation of Christ's Person, anyone who says Christ could sin says God could sin. Guilt could not be confined to the human nature but would encompass the whole theanthropic Person. To say that Christ's human nature could have sinned without involving the God-Man is senseless. There is no such thing as a fallen nature. The word "fallen" is applied not to nature but to the Person. Christ's human nature is undefiled, but that His nature was fallen must ever be disputed.

An unusual view of impeccability is that Christ's Divine nature controlled His human nature. Therefore, Christ had a peccable human nature, but He was an impeccable Person. Although this view affirms the impeccability of Christ, the statements about Christ's human nature are unscriptural.

Christ's holy human nature was not peccable. How could it be peccable since it was wholly the work of God? One may argue that Adam was solely the work of God, but he fell. This has already been answered by showing that the humanity of both Adam and Christ cannot be apprehended apart from their persons. Adam was created upright (Eccl. 7:29) but mutable. One must never think of Adam's human nature apart from the mutability of his person. On the other hand, the human nature of Christ — "that holy thing" — was immutable. Thus, we have the mutability of Adam versus the immutability of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, we have the difference between "man" and the "God-Man."

One theologian has denied the impeccability of the God-Man, although he believes in the sinlessness of Christ. He says this does not add up to absolute impeccability because if Christ was truly human, He had to be capable of sinning. The possibility was there. If it was not there, then His sympathy with His people is rendered impossible.

The hypothesis that Jesus could have sinned had He chosen is based on mere supposition. It comes from a false understanding of the Person of Christ. To say that Adam fell even though he was perfect as he came from God and had no weakness for sin is a misunderstanding of Adam's perfection. Adam's perfection cannot be equated with Christ's. One is finite and the other is infinite. Infinite perfection is untemptable. The Lord Jesus never felt temptation because He could never be induced to evil. He was tried apart from sin.

Building an argument on a supposition is like trying to build a skyscraper without a foundation. To suppose Christ could have sinned is to be suppositious without any Biblical foundation.

Another argument against the impeccability of Christ states that if it were impossible for Jesus to yield to temptation, there would be an excuse for Adam. The question is raised, Why did not God make Adam so that he too could not sin? It is far more wonderful for Jesus to resist temptation than to be immune from its power. Amazingly, many fail to distinguish the difference between the finite and the Infinite. The finite has the capacity to sin, but the Infinite does not. How could it be more wonderful to trust a Savior who could sin but did not than one who could not? If Christ could sin but did not, what about His being the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8)? Trusting an airplane that cannot fall makes more sense than trusting one that can but does not.



At this point, it is appropriate to investigate some of Christ's attributes in their relationship to His impeccability. Christ's holiness is established (Acts 3:14; Mark 1:24; Heb. 7:26, 27). Holiness is positive virtue which has neither room for nor interest in sin. Moreover, holiness is not only an active attribute which has no interest in sin, but it must take retributive action against sin. Holiness, therefore, is not just a passive freedom from iniquity.

Christ is not only holy but He is immutable (Heb. 13:8). An immutable person is one who "cannot" not "does not" change. Jesus Christ cannot move from one good to another because all good eternally resides in Him. He cannot change from good to better since that would imply improvement. He cannot change from good to bad because of absolute holiness. Therefore, Jesus Christ is not one who was able not to sin, but He could not sin. According to the teaching of those who embrace peccability, if Christ could have sinned during His first advent, He had to change from who He was eternally. But that cannot be. "For I am the LORD, I change not..." (Mal. 3:6).

Christ is omnipotent. "All things were made by Him..." (John 1:3). Paul spoke of "Christ the power of God" (I Cor. 1:24). "For by him 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: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (Col. 1:16, 17). Christ not only created all things but "by him all things consist." The word "consist" is *sunisteken*, perfect active indicative of *sunistemi*, which means to place together or to hold together. Hence, Christ is the controlling and unifying power in the universe. Providence is under His control. To say that Christ could have sinned is to admit that a finite power is capable of overcoming infinite power.

Christ is omniscient. He said to the scribes whose thoughts He knew: "...Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?" (Matt. 9:4). Again, when the Pharisees said, "This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. And Jesus knew their thoughts..." (Matt. 12:24, 25). God has infinite knowledge (Ps. 147:5). It has been said that omniscience is infinite awareness. God cannot learn because He knows. Therefore, God's eternal awareness could not be caught off-guard.

Another argument against Christ's impeccability states that there is not a Scripture which says that Jesus could not sin, but many state that He did not sin. Those who believe in peccability say the human Jesus, not His deity, was involved in temptation. They believe Jesus chose to overcome temptation as a man. This argument presents a serious view concerning the Person of Christ. He is not two persons, but one Person with two natures. Jesus Christ possessed only one purpose. Thus, the Divine nature, which is immutable, determines and controls the human nature. This means the human nature never acts independently of the Divine.

Many regard Christ's inability to sin as a threat to His humanity. They say that His temptation cannot be viewed as real if the proposition that Christ cannot sin is true. They fail to understand that the subject of Christ's impeccability must proceed from His holiness. The negative aspect of holiness is taught (II Cor. 5:21; I Pet. 2:22; I John 3:5). The positive aspect of Christ's holiness is taught (Acts 3:14; 4:27, 30; Luke 1:35; John 6:69). Therefore, Christ asked, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" (John 8:46).

Peccability advocates say the power of sympathy does not depend on the experience of sin but on the experience of the strength of temptation to sin, which only the sinless can know in its full intensity. They say temptation implies the possibility of sin. They further state that if it were impossible for Him to sin, He could not sympathize with His people. Their so-called proof text is Hebrews 2:18 and Hebrews 4:15.

Christ's testing has some help in it for the elect: "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" (Heb. 2:18). The verb "suffered" is *peponthen*, perfect active indicative of *pascho*, which means to suffer or to be afflicted. "Being tempted" is *peirastheis*, first aorist passive participle of *peiradzo*, to test, try, or tempt. Hence, the text could read, "For in that he suffered, having been tested." The Greek word for "succour" is *boethasai*, first aorist active infinitive of *boetheo*, which means to run to the aid of those who cry for help. Those who are being tested have someone who can bring them help.

Temptation in all points like His people was not necessary for Christ to sympathize with them. "In all points" is a restricted statement, as has already been shown. The unrestricted idea of peccability advocates carried to its logical conclusion would mean that Jesus Christ felt the sin of concupiscence. That would be blasphemy.

The fullness of the Godhead (*theotetos* means the totality of all that enters into the conception of Godhood) dwells bodily in Christ (Col. 2:9). Such fullness (*pleroma*, those perfections and qualities which fill up the Divine nature) cannot dwell in mere human nature. Christ's two natures have the same subsistence. In Christ are "hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3). Therefore, He can represent to Himself how sin affects His people without having been tempted by sin. Christ who was separated from sinners could not be tempted by sensual lust, pride, envy, gluttony, drunkenness, etc. Such temptations would be too wicked to imagine.

## CHRIST ASSUMED A HUMAN NATURE

A very important point in our study of Christ's human nature must be considered. Did the Son of God assume "the holy thing" (Luke 1:35) at the time of conception or when Mary gave birth to "the holy thing"? Some believe that the Son of God became the Son of Man when Mary delivered the fully developed embryo. They rely on the double meaning of the verb *gennaō*, which means to either conceive or bring forth. Thus, the verb in Hebrews 1:5 (NASB) — "Today I have begotten [*gegenneka*, perfect active indicative of *gennaō*] thee," — is taught to mean "to bring forth" rather than "to conceive." They base this view on the next verse: "And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him" (Heb. 1:6). Connected with this verse, Luke 2:9-14, they say, proves that the angels worshipped Jesus Christ not at His conception but at His birth. Those who embrace this view say the conception was a secret matter lest Satan might interrupt the Divine program. On the surface, this may seem to be irrefutable, but a close examination of the text and the context will refute the argument.

Recognizing the controversy over Hebrews 1:5-6, let us neither shirk our duty to study this passage nor be frightened by so-called scholarly works. Hebrews 1:5 consists of two Old Testament quotations: "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee" is a quotation from Psalm 2:7; and "I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son" is quoted from II Samuel 7:14.

The word "begotten" of Psalm 2:7 has caused much controversy. The Hebrew word for "begotten" can mean to beget as a father or to bring forth as a mother. Our concern in this study is the way the word is used in Hebrews 1:5. The context indicates that it refers to the Son's being "brought into the world" by means of the incarnation because reference is made in verse 6 to the "firstbegotten" being brought into the inhabited earth again. The Greek word for "begotten" is *gegenneka*, perfect active indicative of *gennaō*, which means to beget or to bring forth. The word for "firstbegotten" is *prototokos*, which means "firstborn." The word for "again" is *palin*, an adverb which means back, again, or back again. The Father brought forth His Son into the inhabited earth by way of the virgin's womb, and He will bring the "firstborn" back again—the second coming.

But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom (Heb. 1:8).

"The angels worshipping God" of verse 6, therefore, will be fulfilled at Christ's second coming rather than having been fulfilled at His first advent.

The reference to "the heavenly host praising God" of Luke 2:9-14 is not the fulfillment of Hebrews 1:6. The former refers to Christ's first advent and the latter to His second.

Instead of the conception being kept a secret from the angels, the very opposite is true. An angel told Joseph about the conception (Matt. 1:20). Furthermore, the angel Gabriel told Mary that she would conceive (Luke 1:26, 31). The Biblical truth of God's absolute sovereignty is completely ignored when one says the conception was kept secret lest Satan interrupt God's purpose. God "is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth" (Job 23:13). As the purpose of God was not thwarted by the fall, Satan cannot interrupt God's program because God said, "...My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure...I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it" (Is. 46:10, 11).

The time the fetus became personalized is important to consider. If the human nature of Christ was not personalized until Mary brought forth the nature in birth, its personalization differs from others mentioned in Scripture.

Nature and person are not the same. One nature cannot be distinguished from another, but one person can be distinguished from another. Nature denotes the sum total of all the essential qualities of a thing. Person is a nature with something added. The added properties are independent subsistence and individuality. Christ's human nature was not impersonal. It was personalized in the Son of God. It can be said that human nature is not actually personal, and that is the reason for the neuter participle being used in the statement "that holy thing which shall be born of thee" (Luke 1:35). The Greek reads *to gennomenon hagian*. It could be translated "the holy thing being begotten."

An illustration of the differentness between nature and person may be seen in a lump of clay differing from the vessel (Rom. 9:20-23). The potter must intervene by taking a piece of clay from the lump and molding it into a particular vessel, having its own peculiar shape and figure. Likewise, human nature, as a whole existing in Adam, possessed all the properties that are requisite to personality, although it was not yet personalized. The difference, then, between nature and person is virtually between nature and form—substance and personality.

The title "God-Man" means the second Person in the Godhead took not the person of a man but the nature of man into subsistence with Himself. The human nature of Christ previous to His assumption thereof was not a person. The Son of God did not unite Himself with the depraved human nature of Adam but only with "part of the same." In reference to the incarnation, the writer of Hebrews said:

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil (Heb. 2:14).

This text states plainly that the Son of God shared with the children "in like manner [*paraplesios*, adverb meaning in like manner and is used only in this text] the same things" (translation). Sharing (*meteschen*, second aorist active indicative of *metecho*, which means to share in or partake of) flesh and blood, He did not share in or partake of Adam's depravity—original sin. The text restricts His sharing to "flesh and blood." Human nature, therefore, may signify what it is as it exists in the descendants of fallen Adam or in its unfallen condition in the God-Man. The terms "Son of God," "the man Christ Jesus," and "a man approved of God" do not express the

personality of a mere man. They express the personality of the God-Man. The Spirit of regeneration is necessary to see something more than a mere man in the theanthropic Person.

The personalization of human nature takes place at conception:

If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished... (Ex. 21:22).

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me (Ps. 51:5).

...thou hast covered me in my mother's womb (Ps. 139:13).

As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child... (Eccl. 11:5).

Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet... (Jer. 1:5).

And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb....the babe leaped in my womb for joy (Luke 1:41, 44).

Those who believe the personalization of Christ's human nature took place at birth are saying that His birth and His begetting were different from all others. However, as it has already been shown, the begetting was miraculous, but the conception, gestation, and birth were like others. Mary was passive in the begetting, but she was active in the conception, gestation, and birth.

There are some who say that the leaping of John the Baptist in Elisabeth's womb did not indicate life. They call it fetal movement in the sphere of the mother's emotions. Those who favor abortion are glad to hear "theologians" talk in this manner.

Scripture does teach that the Son of God was twice begotten of the Father. He was eternally begotten by the Father, and He was begotten as He entered into the inhabited earth (Ps. 2:7; Matt. 1:20). In His eternality, the second Person in the Godhead received not Deity but Sonship from the Father. In His incarnation, the Son of God received a body prepared for His earthly sojourn as Redeemer of the elect by the Father through the Holy Spirit (Heb. 10:5; Luke 1:35).

## THE GOD-MAN LACKED KNOWLEDGE

Many say Christ's ignorance and temptability are important issues in the study of Christology. Having dealt with the so-called "temptability" of the God-Man, a study of His "ignorance" is now in order. "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark 13:32). Many theologians have said this verse has always presented serious difficulties. Some say there was a real ignorance in Christ during His humiliation, and others advocate a holy unwillingness to know.

The following are various views of Jesus Christ's not knowing the day of the Lord: (1) As Man, Jesus Christ knew not the time of His coming; as God He knew that men did not know. (2) Christ knew not because He had no instruction to declare that day. (3) In the incarnation, Christ voluntarily accepted human limitations, including His not knowing the day and hour of the "day of the Lord." (4) The fact that even the Son, according to His human nature, did not know is in harmony with "He emptied Himself" (Phil. 2:7). (5) Christ as the Son of Man did not know, but as the Son of God He knew all things. What knowledge He had of future things in His humanity He had from His Deity. (6) The word "knoweth" is sometimes used in the sense of to make known or reveal. Thus, in that sense, Christ did not make known or reveal the day and the hour. (7) Christ's not knowing the day and the hour is to be understood in the same sense as Christ's sleeping, fearing, obeying, learning, etc.

There are some serious pitfalls that must be avoided in the proper interpretation of Mark 13:32, which states that the God-Man did not know the day and the hour of the day of the Lord. One pitfall is dualism. Jesus Christ is not both a human and a Divine Person. He is a Divine Person who assumed a human nature. The Infinite did not become the finite, but the Infinite did assume the finite. God's eternal Son did not divest Himself of eternity, but He assumed a nature adapted for time. God is invisible in His Divine nature, but He is made visible in human nature. The Son of God did not empty Himself of the form of God, but He assumed the form of a servant. Furthermore, He did not strip Himself of His Divine attributes. He put them under restriction as the Son of Man. In His human nature, Christ accommodated Himself to the feebleness, growth, and development of that nature. Thus, dualism is proved to be false.

The great question has been how the "Word became flesh" and remains the Word (John 1:14). Scripture is clear concerning the fact that the Son of God became the Son of Man while remaining the Son of God. Both titles "Son of God" and "Son of Man" are used throughout the New Testament to speak of Jesus Christ. The title "Son of God" is associated with the Divine nature, and the title "Son of Man" is united to His human nature. The Lord Jesus said:

I and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God (John 10:30-33).

The Jews thought that Jesus Christ was a mere man who was trying to convince the people that He was God. Their depraved minds blinded them to the Old Testament Scriptures that spoke of “a child being born” and “a son being given” who shall be called “The mighty God” (Is. 9:6), the One who “shall grow up before him as a tender plant,” and God’s righteous servant who shall “justify many” (Is. 53:2, 11). The Jews were blind to the Biblical fact that the One they accused of blasphemy was “God... manifest in the flesh” (I Tim. 3:16), not a mere man claiming to be God.

The Bible answers the question of how God can become the God-Man. Man had communion with God when God originally made him. Adam was capable of existing in harmony with God before the fall because he was made in God’s image, after His likeness (Gen. 1:26). However, that harmony was broken by the fall. The fall made the incarnation necessary for the redemption of the elect out from among the depraved posterity of Adam. Hence, the Son of God was made in the “likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom. 8:3). At the same time, He retained the image of the Father:

Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. 1:3).

A seemingly contradictory coexistence in one Person of a human nature—subject to birth, growth, and development—with a Divine nature—not subject to the same development—is to Christians the God-Man. The developing child “filled with wisdom” (Luke 2:40) coexists with “increased in wisdom” (Luke 2:52). The mature God-Man is the One “in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3). Coexisting with Him is the one who said He knew not the day and the hour of the day of the Lord (Mark 13:32). The natural mind looks upon these facts as intellectual dualism. They are thought to be inconsistent with any conception one can form of a simple personality. However, these Biblical facts furnish the foundation for the Christian’s hope in the God-appointed God-Man.

The one personality in the God-Man has two spheres of existence. The Divine nature is omnipresent, but the human nature is restricted. The Son of Man told Nicodemus that “...no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven” (John 3:13). This statement refutes not only the denial of Jesus Christ’s preexistence but the affirmation of a duality of persons. The human nature the Son of God assumed enabled the God-Man to speak of either nature under whatever name He chose. In His discourse with Nicodemus, He chose to use the name “Son of Man” when speaking of what is proper to the Son of God. He who was invisible in heaven became visible upon earth. He who was restricted in His human nature was unrestricted in His Divine nature; therefore, He spoke of being in heaven while He was upon earth.

The omnipresence of the Divine nature and the restriction of the human nature of the God-Man are not more comprehensible than His omniscience in the Divine nature and the limitation of knowledge in the human nature. The following are some Biblical examples of the two spheres of the God-Man: (1) In the God-Man’s infancy, He was “filled with wisdom”; and “Jesus increased in wisdom” (Luke 2:40, 52). Thus, wisdom was restricted in only one sphere. (2) Christ said to Nathanael, “Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee” (John 1:48). The omniscience of the Divine nature enabled the God-Man to see Nathanael; whereas,

His human nature separated the two by the distance of several miles. (3) Before He reached the grave of Lazarus, Jesus Christ told Martha and Mary that their brother, Lazarus, was dead: "Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead" (John 11:14). Later, when Christ "was not yet come into the town," Mary came to Him, fell down at His feet, and said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." The Lord Jesus asked, "Where have ye laid him?" (John 11:30-34). The Divine nature of the God-Man knew Lazarus was dead; however, His human nature did not know where Lazarus was buried. (4) Christ hungered in His human nature (Matt. 4:2). In His Divine nature, He said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever..." (John 6:51). (5) Christ thirsted in His human nature (John 19:28); but in His Divine nature, He said, "...whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst..." (John 4:14).

Coming now to the God-Man's lack of knowledge concerning the day of the Lord, the question is often asked, Is not Christ's lack of knowledge equivalent with His capability to sin? To affirm that they are equivalent is heresy. The capability to sin, but not lack of knowledge, would indicate corruption of His human nature. The imputation of Adam's sin to all his posterity cannot apply to Jesus Christ because He is not a human person. He is the Son of God. His human nature is not from fallen Adam; therefore, His Person cannot be counted in Adam. Since guilt is imputed to the person rather than the nature, guilt could never be reckoned to the Divine Person of the Son of God. Having assumed a holy human nature, Christ was not subject to the sentence of death. On the other hand, the God-Man's lack of knowledge does not indicate any corruption in His human nature. Christ's conception, birth, and growth were not the fruit of corruption in the human nature.

Infallibility does not imply omniscience. According to the Scriptures, infallibility was conferred on the apostles who possessed limited knowledge:

For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away (I Cor. 13:9, 10).

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (II Pet. 1:21).

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (II Tim. 3:16).

If Paul, who possessed a fallen nature, spoke infallibly when inspired to give us the Holy Scriptures, although he spoke from a limited knowledge, what about the Son of God who did not possess a fallen nature? Christ spoke nothing but truth, although His human nature possessed limited knowledge. Limitation of knowledge and capability of error are not the same. In the sphere of Christ's human nature, there was a lack of knowledge, but there was no capability of error. His human nature was subject to His Divine nature.

We know that two natures were united in the one Person of Jesus Christ. But to what extent the Divine nature did not overshadow the human is impossible to either know or explain. This is why the incarnation is called a mystery (I Tim. 3:16). Some things remain a mystery after the incarnation. We do know the human nature was not the residential subject of omniscience. We



also know Christ's first advent was not for the purpose of making known either the day or the hour of the day of the Lord. He was not commissioned as Prophet to make known the time. Christ's manhood is spoken of as a condition of His prophetic office (Deut. 18:15-22).

Christ's "not knowing the day and hour" of the day of the Lord is better understood if we view the subject in its proper context. The kingdom is covenanted to David's Son, the Son of Man. The time of the kingdom's establishment and its consequences are in the Father's hand (Acts 1:6, 7). Therefore, Christ spoke of His lack of knowledge in connection with His messianic relationship to the covenant. The Father had reserved to Himself the times and seasons as a revelation unsuitable for the Son of Man to make known during the time of His first advent. Revelation of the day and hour of the kingdom's establishment would have prevented the expectation of Christ's second coming. Faith and hope, with their practical results, are the fruits of the uncertainty of that time.

On the other hand, one cannot deny that Jesus Christ had knowledge of the kingdom and its establishment. Predictions are given concerning the Jewish nation and Gentile domination (Matt. 24; 25; Luke 21). These predictions were also given during the days of His humiliation. Moreover, after His ascension, these same prophecies were verified by the apostles and finally by Jesus Christ in the revelation of Himself.

There is an absolute interpenetration of knowledge of the Son with the Father. The knowledge of each was so infinite that each knew the other to perfection: "...no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him" (Matt. 11:27). In the Son of Man, who is also the Son of God, the Divine and human consciousness stand side by side without either suppressing or qualifying the other. The God-Man, therefore, could speak out of either consciousness without any confusion or conflict.

Whatever was either said or done by the human nature of the God-Man never had to be stopped or corrected by His Divine nature. Furthermore, whatever was either said or done by the Divine nature was never questioned or resisted by the human nature. Moreover, the Divine nature did not provide some necessary skill to enhance the human nature because it was perfect in its sphere.

## TEACHERS OF IMPECCABILITY ARE NOT GUILTY OF DOCETISM (PART 1)

Jesus Christ was not able to sin during the days of His first advent on the earth. Many professing believers say that all the references to Christ's temptations prove that He was able not to sin. Thus, the issue is between the often heard and read statement of whether Christ "was able not to sin" or "not able to sin." To some this may seem to make little difference, but the difference is between heresy and truth. The issue could be stated differently. Was there a superior incapacity for sin in Jesus Christ, or did His overcoming of constant temptation prove Him to be the holy One of God?

The major point in the life of Christ was the fact that He could not sin. There is unanimity among various denominational creeds concerning the fact that Jesus Christ did not sin, but the Biblical fact that He could not sin is controversial. Diligent students will find great differences of opinion expressed in theological works. Those differences are also found in Reformed works. The fact that Christ could not sin must be approached from Christ's Person rather than from His human nature.

Approaching a study of the Person of Christ by beginning with His human nature is a manifestation of humanism. Does the Bible begin with creation or with the Creator? The Bible begins with God: "IN the beginning God created..." (Gen. 1:1). This statement is neither history nor invention. It is not history because no one was present to record the events for posterity. Furthermore, it was not the work of man's imagination. Therefore, it had to be a revelation. Humanism starts with a question, but the Bible begins with an assumption. Moreover, the deduction from the assumption is that all truth is a revelation from God, and God does not prove Divine principles to depraved minds.

The Person of Christ is a Divine revelation. As the fact of God's existence is not causally grounded upon the abstract laws of human logic, the impeccability of Christ is not grounded upon humanism. Thus, the subjective idea of God is less a reality than the objective fact. To put it simply, God has more of existence than the thought of Him has existence. As a perfect and infinite Creator cannot be derived from imperfect and finite minds, the absolutely perfect and impeccable Savior cannot be understood by depraved subjectivism. Hence, the heresy of those who argue from what they call the reality of temptation to the ability to sin is evident. They conclude by saying the sinless One associated Himself with the sins of the world.

Those who believe Jesus Christ was peccable accuse all who believe He was impeccable of Docetism. There are different forms of Docetism. These forms range from believing Christ had only a phantom body to speaking of Christ's human nature in such a way as to discredit it from being truly human. Promoters of peccability accuse promoters of impeccability of teaching the latter. The accusation by persons who think Jesus Christ was altogether one as themselves is not difficult to understand.

Man's humanistic concept of God is nothing new. The Psalmist was inspired to testify against Israel:

Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God....thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes (Ps. 50:7, 21).

Since the fall of Adam, man has been impersonating God by saying, "Let us make God in our image, after our likeness." While those who say Jesus Christ was prone to sin accuse us of speaking incorrectly about Christ's humanity, the fact is they speak incorrectly about Christ's Person. The Scriptures will settle the issue.

Scripture clearly teaches the following:

...Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God... (I John 4:2, 3).

Christ's "flesh" (human nature) was not a phantom—an appearance without material substance. Christ was not a ghost walking among the sons of men for more than thirty years. His birth, development, hunger, thirst, and death were not ghostly appearances or apparitions. John spoke not only of seeing but handling the Word of life (I John 1:1). Christ was seen as the Word in His oneness with the eternal Father. He was not only seen but handled in His human form as the revealer of the Father (John 1:18).

Christ's human nature was in the "likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. 8:3) because the form of a servant which He assumed "was made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:7). The Greek word for "likeness" in both verses is *homoionoma*, which means likeness or resemblance. This noun is used in other Scriptures (Rom. 1:23; 5:14; 6:5; 8:3; Phil. 2:7; Rev. 9:7). Does this word mean that Christ's human nature was exactly like man's fallen human nature, or did it have the resemblance of fallen human nature? Opponents to Christ's impeccability argue that if His human nature was only similar, it was not a true human nature. One might as well argue that fallen man is not truly man since the fall because fallen human nature is not exactly what it was before that fall. Human nature does not have to be fallen to be real. Furthermore, Christ's human nature, conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin, was real even though it was not brought into existence the same way as that of Adam.

Jesus Christ shared the flesh and blood of human nature in the incarnation, but He did not share human nature's depravity. Christ's sharing nature's "flesh" was that He might be "put to death in the flesh" (I Pet. 3:18). His sharing nature's "blood" was for the purpose of redemption (Rom. 3:24-26; 5:9; Heb. 9:22; 10:10-14; Rev. 1:5). On the other hand, if Christ had shared nature's depravity, He would have been disqualified as the redeemer of the elect. There is a great difference between the descendants of Adam coming into the world "in sinful flesh" and the eternal Son of God coming into the world "in the likeness of sinful flesh." One must know the difference between words with the prefixes *homo* (same) and *homoi* (like). This reminds us of the truth proclaimed by Athanasius and the heresy by Arius.

Docetism is the proclamation of a Christ that was incapable of being the Mediator between God and men because He would not be the “man Christ Jesus [*anthropos Christos Hiesous*]” (I Tim. 2:5). Peter’s message on the day of Pentecost was “Jesus of Nazareth, a man [*andra*] approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs...” (Acts 2:22). Unlike those who embrace Docetism, those who embrace the heresy that Jesus Christ was peccable proclaim a “Jesus” who is incapable of being Savior because he himself was in need of salvation. Hence, both views are heretical because they fail to proclaim the Biblical view of the one Mediator between God and men. The true Mediator must possess two absolutely holy natures in order to represent both God and man. Those who teach Docetism deny the incarnation, and those who teach peccability deny Christ’s holy human nature.

Opponents to the impeccability of Christ can get no comfort from quoting Hebrews 4:15 — “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are....” The Greek word for “tempted” is a perfect passive participle of the verb *peiradzo*, which means to test, try, or tempt. Since Jesus Christ cannot be tempted, because the word has an evil connotation, the perfect passive participle can be translated “having been tested or tried.” The word that must not be overlooked is the Greek word *homoiotēs*, which means “likeness.” Hence, Christ was tested in the “likeness” (in a similar manner) but not in exactly the same way we are. Proof of this is seen in the fact that we have been “planted together in the likeness [*homoioia*]” of Christ’s death. This means that our death “to” sin is not identical with Christ’s death “for” sin. Furthermore, the statement that it was necessary for Christ “to be made like [*homoioo*] unto his brethren” of Hebrews 2:17 does not mean that He was made exactly like His brethren.

Those who believe Christ was susceptible to sin teach that He was “made like unto His brethren” when it comes to a nature capable of sinning. Furthermore, they say He was tempted in the same way that fallen men are tempted. To say Jesus Christ was made a sinner like depraved men is blasphemy. Furthermore, to say that Christ could not sympathize with us unless He was tempted as we are is also blasphemy.

Jesus Christ must partake of flesh and blood in order to die. Moreover, He must be the “seed of the woman” to be our kinsman Redeemer (Gen. 3:15; Gal. 4:4), the “seed of Abraham” to inherit the promises (Gal. 3:16), and the “seed of David” to claim the theocratic throne (I Chr. 22:10; Luke 1:30-35). Does this sound like Docetism?

## TEACHERS OF IMPECCABILITY ARE NOT GUILTY OF DOCETISM (PART II)

Docetism can never yield to the incarnation and crucifixion of Christ. Scripture is clear concerning the importance of the incarnation. Thus, the human nature of Jesus Christ cannot be considered as something unimportant in God's purpose of redemption. Humanism is nowhere so strongly condemned as it is in the Biblical facts of the incarnation and crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

Two holy things were united in the incarnation. Clearly, two unholy things cannot make a holy thing. Furthermore, one holy thing and one unholy thing cannot make a holy thing. This brings us to consider two important verses in the study of the incarnation:

But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost (Matt. 1:20).

And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God (Luke 1:35).

Both participles in "conceived in her" of Matthew 1:20 and "born of thee" of Luke 1:35 are from the verb *gennao*, which means to beget or to generate. The Greek word *gennethen* of Matthew 1:20 is a first aorist passive participle which means "having been begotten." The Greek word *gennomenon* of Luke 1:35 is a present passive participle, which means "being begotten." The passive voice means the subject is acted upon rather than acting or participating in the action.

The angel Gabriel told Mary that she would conceive in her womb and bring forth a Son: "...behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS" (Luke 1:31). The verb "conceive" is future middle indicative of *sullambano*, which means to conceive or become pregnant. The middle voice means that Mary participated in the conception. There is no contradiction between this verse and Matthew 1:20. Matthew used the word for "begotten" and Luke used the word for "becoming pregnant." Mary would not only conceive a Son but carry Him during the period of gestation and give Him birth. The Greek word for "bring forth" is future middle indicative of *tikto*, which means to bear or bring forth. Furthermore, when Mary would give birth to her unique Son, she should call His name Jesus. The Greek word for "call" is future active indicative of *kaleo*, which means to call. Hence, Mary would call His name Jesus.

The conception by Mary did not violate biological law. The Holy Spirit beget, and Mary conceived. The same Greek verb (*sullambano*) is used when speaking of not only Mary but her cousin, Elisabeth, who "...conceived a son in her old age..." (Luke 1:36). The angel could not tell Mary that the "holy thing" would be "begotten" by her, but he could tell her that the "holy thing" would be "conceived" by her.

In the biological sense, the impregnation of Mary was miraculous. The begetting by the Holy Spirit and the conception in Mary's womb produced "that holy thing." In biological conception, the male sperm is received by the female ovum. There is no question as to the holiness of the sperm provided by the Holy Spirit. But what about the ovum provided by Mary, who spoke of Jesus Christ as her Savior? (Luke 1:46, 47). God brought the first man into the world without either a male sperm or a female ovum. Therefore, it is not unbelievable that God could bring the God-Man into existence without a human male sperm. (See Rom. 5:15-19; I Cor. 15:47.) In order for two holy things to be united in conception, Mary's ovum had to be made holy by the Holy Spirit. This was accomplished by the Holy Spirit coming upon her and the power of the Most High overshadowing her. The verb for "overshadow" is the future active indicative of *episkiadzo*, which means to overshadow or shed influence upon. This verb is used in connection with not only the impregnation of Mary but the "overshadowing cloud" on the mount of transfiguration (Matt. 17:5). The sperm and the ovum were both holy before they came together in conception. Hence, God united what the Holy Spirit produced with what Mary produced by her sanctified reproductive organs thus forming the God-Man. From this point, faith must venture no further, but God-given faith rests its case with the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit upon the virgin, Mary.

Without His incarnation, there could have been no crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God, for the sins of the elect (Acts 2:22, 23). God with man in the Person of the God-Man condemns humanism. He will be "with us," the elect, until the end of the age because He was with us in His sacrifice on the cross. Thus, He reconciled us to God by His satisfaction of Divine justice. This Biblical view of the incarnation and crucifixion is as far removed from Docetism as light from darkness.

Job asked a question and immediately answered it: "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one" (Job 14:4). Job had a sense of the need to be clean, but he also knew that neither he nor any other man could make him clean. Bildad asked the same question with a more direct reference to the subject of the incarnation: "...how can he be clean that is born of a woman?" (Job 25:4). Bildad was concerned about how man could be justified with God. He asked, "How then can man be justified with God?" No doubt Bildad knew that man might be justified with man but not with God. He knew the importance of man being justified with God. When man is justified with God, no man can condemn him (Rom. 8:33, 34). God's justification of man is on the basis of the impeccable Savior's word (Rom. 3:24-26).

The important question is not what man can do to be justified with God but what the eternal Son had to become and do in order for man to be justified with God. We know that a Divine Person had to be united to a human nature (Heb. 2:11-14; I Tim. 3:16; Gal. 4:4; Rom. 1:3, 4; 8:3; 9:5). That human nature is called "that holy thing" (Luke 1:35). The question is often asked, why is the participle *gennomenon* (being begotten) neuter? The only answer that can be given is that it refers to the nature. Thus, *to gennomenon hagion* is translated "the holy thing which is being begotten" shall be called the Son of God. The eternal Son was not "being begotten," but the nature He was assuming was. Jesus Christ was the "only begotten Son" (John 3:16) before His human nature was begotten for the "only begotten God" (John 1:18 NASB) to assume.

The Person of Jesus Christ is one, but His Divine and human natures are distinct. This is not difficult to understand. For example, man has material and immaterial natures. The material is

not the immaterial and vice versa. Therefore, the God-Man has two natures, but the natures are preserved without disorder, and His Person is complete without division. Hence, the God-Man may be designated by either Divine or human titles—Son of God or Son of Man. Furthermore, attributes of one nature are attributed to Jesus Christ while His Person is designated by a title applying to the other nature. Divine titles and human actions are attributed to Him:

...feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood (Acts 20:28); ...they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (I Cor. 2:8); God...gave his only begotten Son (John 3:16); He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all... (Rom. 8:32); And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest...(Luke 1:31, 32).

On the other hand, Divine attributes are ascribed to Jesus Christ who is designated by human titles:

And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven (John 3:13); What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? (John 6:62); Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen (Rom. 9:5); ...Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing (Rev. 5:12).

Jesus Christ was no less God-Man when He died, and He was no more than God-Man when He performed His miracles. There was never any conflict between His two natures. The attributes of both natures were accredited to the one Person, but it must be emphasized that what was peculiar to one nature was never attributed to the other. For example, hunger, weariness, sleep, and death could never be assigned to the Divine nature. Furthermore, walking on water, stilling the storm, and raising the dead could never be ascribed to the human nature. These are actions of the one Mediator between God and men performing acts that pertain to both natures. This is not dualism.

Christ's actions as Mediator are in both His Divine and human natures. Some actions involve the attributes of the Divine nature and some the human nature. Whatever actions He performed in either nature could never conflict with His essential nature as the Holy One of God. Therefore, the actions involving the Divine nature are performed in conformity to the inherent principle and power of His Divine nature. Moreover, His actions involving the human nature were performed in conformity to the inherent principle and power of His human nature. Thus, the one Person of the God-Man performed the actions of both natures. Understanding this Biblical fact, one sees the heresy of both Docetism and the belief that Jesus Christ was peccable.

## EXEGESIS OF SCRIPTURE PROVES IMPECCABILITY

Anyone who gives a correct exegesis of any passage of Scripture will find that his interpretation will agree in principle with everyone else who does the same. An exegete is one who disregards subjectivism and relies on the objective truth in the passage according to its grammatical construction. The grammatical construction of the Biblical text never changes. But ideas formed subjectively change with every “gut feeling,” an expression often heard in our generation. On the other hand, when anyone reads into a passage a meaning which the text will not grammatically allow, it is called eisegesis. An eisigete is one who is either filled with prejudice or follows his “gut feeling.” This is subjectivism.

Paul said, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (I Thess. 5:21). The word for “prove” is present active imperative of the verb *dokimadzo*, which means to prove by trial, to examine or scrutinize, or to approve after trial by discernment. The Greek word was derived from the testing of metals. Thus, it not only means to test but also carries the idea of approving as a result of the test. However, testing is insufficient unless that which is approved is embraced and maintained.

There is only one effective way to arrive at the truth. David said that God will teach the “meek.” “The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way” (Ps. 25:9). The word “meek” carries the idea of humility. The meek or humble prefer suffering wrong to doing wrong. There are two Hebrew words for meekness, one applying to those who patiently suffer without resistance and the other to those who willingly endure with submission what they might escape. Meekness is not weakness. It comes with the knowledge of one’s total dependence upon God. The elect have something to learn, and God has something to teach them. Therefore, the humble person alone is teachable. Christians need to know the difference between passive and meek church members. Those who are merely passive are passive not only to Biblical principles but to putting into practice those to which they have been subjected.

Realization that God is the Teacher eliminates pride. Man’s intelligence has assumed a superb confidence in itself, thinking it can solve all problems and surmount all obstacles. Manifesting humility is not in the power of such ignorance because true humility is the fruit of Divine grace. In fact, such ignorance nourishes pride. One who possesses grace has no problem understanding that pride is a manifestation of lack of knowledge. The degree of pride is determined by the degree of destitution of knowledge. The ignorance under discussion is not academic but spiritual. The meek person recognizes that truth is both personal and purposeful. It is not only for us but will have an effect on us. This is the reason the Christian goes from faith to faith, strength to strength, and glory to glory. Thus, “...the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Prov. 4:18).

Temptation is not a synonym for trial, although both come from the same Greek word. A synonym is a word having the same or nearly the same meaning as another. Although the Greek verb *peiradzo* means, according to Greek lexicons, to test, to try, or to tempt, to test cannot be used as a synonym for to tempt in certain cases. The difference between the two is too great, as



James 1:2 and 1:12-14 prove. Some may think this writer is laboring to prove a point, but before this discourse is completed the student of Scripture will see the value of such scrutiny.

A diligent study of the noun *peirasmos* and the verb *peiradzo* is needed because of the way they are used in their translations. Even those who believe and teach that Christ could not sin use the terms “temptation” and “trial” indiscriminately. In many works on Christology, one will find such statements as “Christ could not be tempted because God cannot be tempted.” The same writer may discuss the purpose of Jesus Christ being subjected to the “testings” of Satan. Following this, one may come to reasons why Christ was “tempted.” Such reasons as the incarnation, humiliation, and being able to sympathize with His own who are being tempted are discussed.

The writer can sympathize with those who use the terms of “temptation” and “trial” indiscriminately. He, too, has done the same thing. However, after a diligent study of James 1:2-15, the writer saw the need for making a study of the Greek noun *peirasmos* and the verb *peiradzo* in every passage where they are used in the New Testament. After such a study, one cannot help seeing the difference between the terms “temptation” and “trial.” Although the writer has never believed Christ was peccable, he has taught that Christ’s temptability does not imply susceptibility. A deeper study into the subject shows one that Christ was not tempted.

The verb *peiradzo* is used in the sense of either to try or test or to solicit someone to do wrong. This verb is used 39 times in the New Testament. In 31 of the 39 times, it is translated “tempted,” “to be tempted,” “tempting,” and “tempt.” In the other eight references, it is translated “prove” (John 6:6), “assayed” (Acts 16:7), “hath gone about” (Acts 24:6), “examine” (II Cor. 13:5), “tried” (Heb. 11:17; Rev. 2:2, 10), and “to try” (Rev. 3:10). In sixteen of the references where the verb is used, Jesus Christ is involved, and two speak of God (Acts 15:10; Heb. 3:9).

The noun *peirasmos* is used 21 times in the New Testament. It is translated “temptation” in all but one place. It is translated “trial” in I Peter 4:12. There are only two verses where the word is used in reference to Jesus Christ (Luke 4:13; 22:28).

Since James said, “...God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man” (James 1:13), what is the meaning of the statement “lead us not into temptation” of Matthew 6:13 in the model prayer Christ taught His disciples? The verb “lead” is *eisenegkes*, first aorist active subjunctive of *eisphero*, which means “to bring in or into.” The active subjunctive means “do not bring us into.” Would God, who does not solicit men to do evil, teach His disciples to pray “do not lead us into solicitation to do evil”?

Since it is contrary to Scripture for God to bring His people into temptation, the noun *peirasmos* can also mean trial. Is one incorrect to pray that he may be saved from trial? Trial is the common lot of God’s people (James 1:2, 12; I Pet. 1:6, 7; 4:12). The verb “bring” (*eisenegkes*) of Matthew 6:13 is active. Thus, it represents God as the active Agent who subjects His people to trials but not to solicitation to evil. When this verse is seen in its proper context with the coming kingdom, it is proper to say the Jews will pray to be spared “the hour of trial” (*horas tou peirasmou*) (Rev. 3:10). That “trial” is not the same as the “common trial” of all saints for all

time, Old and New Testament believers alike. This proves that a correct concept of eschatology is necessary for the interpretation of many Scriptures.

Since all Scripture is God-breathed (*theopneustos*), the Spirit of God would not direct inspired penmen to use words that would not apply to either the Son of God or His people. Like many English words, Greek words also can be used in more than one way. The context determines their usage.

In all of Christ's "trials" or "testings," He had to deal only with that which came from without. Hence, His trials or testings in the wilderness were Divine attestations. The challenge came from God. This is the reason we are told, "Then was Jesus led up by [*hupo*] the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by [*hupo*] the devil" (Matt. 4:1). The verb "led up" is aorist passive indicative of *anago*, which means to lead up or convey up from a lower to a higher place. The verb in Mark 1:12 is present active indicative of *ekballo*, which means to thrust forth or to send forth. The verb in Luke 4:1 is imperfect passive of *ago*, which means to lead or to bring. When a country is united, its only thought is to oppose the enemy without and prove the unity of the country. However, if the country is divided, the first thing is to look for traitors within.

There are two natures within Christians. They are described as "...the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. 5:17). (See Rom. 7:14-25.) Christians, therefore, have a divided house. There is an inward conflict between the Spirit and the flesh. There is a traitor within as well as without.

Jesus Christ had two natures, but both were holy; therefore, there was no conflict within. God's challenge to Satan, or those working under his direction, was a Divine testimony that nothing but absolute unity of the two holy natures would be found. Wood tested by fire turns to ash. Water tested by fire evaporates. But pure gold tested by fire remains gold. Pure gold has nothing to be eliminated. Christians lose their dross when they are tested, but who will be guilty of blasphemy by saying there was any dross in the God-Man that had to be eliminated by a "fiery trial" (*purosis*, a fiery test of trying circumstances) (I Pet. 4:12)? There are two laws within Christians (Rom. 7:22, 23), but there is only one law, the law of God, in Jesus Christ.

## CHRIST AFFIRMED HIS IMPECCABILITY

The first lesson on the exegesis of Scripture was an introduction to a number of key passages dealing with Christ's impeccability. Scriptures concerning Christ's personal claims and claims by the inspired penmen concerning Christ's impeccability will be exegeted.

No apology is in order for disputing with those who believe and teach that Jesus Christ was peccable during the days of His humiliation. The Greek verb *dialegomai* means to discourse, argue, reason, dispute, or contend. It is translated "reasoned" (Acts 17:2; 18:4; 24:25), "disputed" (Mark 9:34; Acts 17:17; Jude 9), "disputing" (Acts 19:8, 9; 24:12), "preached" (Acts 20:7), "preaching" (Acts 20:9), and "speaketh" (Heb. 12:5). Although controversy is often heated and one-sided, it is not an unhealthy sign. Some of the greatest books ever written or sermons ever preached were the result of controversy. Furthermore, some of the greatest experiences in life are the products of controversy. This, however, is no justification for confusion and turmoil in the local assembly. (See Eph. 4.)

There is no way to avoid controversy in the Christian life. If ordinary life is made up of endless controversy, how much more the Christian life. The believer has controversy in the natural and the spiritual life. However, without a self-evident principle to determine on which side lies the burden of proof, controversy could be endless. This brings us to the importance of semantics.

Semantics is the study of signification, classification, and changes in meaning. A good semanticist will be diligent in his research of meaning. Therefore, a study of words is most important in polemics, the art of controversy. False principles and false rules of interpretation lie at the foundation of false doctrine. However, the most important issue in regard to religious questions is not whether they are useful or injurious but whether they are founded on Scripture. Therefore, so-called religious tradition or success is unimportant. Everything which claims validity must submit its exegetical evidence before it can be rationally received. Furthermore, everything believed must rest on Biblical evidence; otherwise, it cannot be rationally retained. The Bible is our only standard; therefore, anything not found in the Scriptures cannot be proved by the Scriptures.

Jesus Christ proved His impeccability in His debate with the religious Jews when He said, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" (John 8:46). The Jews brought ten accusations against the Son of God in John 8 — (1) "thy record is not true" (v. 13); (2) "Where is thy Father?" (v. 19); (3) "Will he kill himself?" (v. 22); (4) "Who art thou?" (v. 25); (5) "how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?" (v. 33); (6) "Abraham is our father" (v. 39); (7) "We be not born of fornication" (v. 41); (8) "thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?" (v. 48); (9) "Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead?" (v. 53); and (10) "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" (v. 57). The Jews had no indignation against adultery, nor any love for the law, but they had intense hatred for the Son of God.

During the running debate with the Jews, Christ said, “Which [who] of you convinceth me of sin?” (John 8:46). The Greek verb for “convinceth” is *elegchei*, present active indicative of *elegko*, which means to put to test; to convict; to refute; to detect, lay bare, or expose; to experience conviction. Hence, the word means more than the accusation of sin. Sin was never experienced by Jesus Christ in all of His trials. Moreover, sin never penetrated His holy conscience. The Jews must go beyond their accusation to prove their charge against the Son of God. The fact that Christ could not be convicted of sin proves His impeccability.

The case of Christ’s impeccability is made stronger by the use of a noun rather than a verb in John 8:46. It is not who of you convicts me of “sinning,” but “Who [*tis*] of you convicts me of sin?” Christ made it plain not only by the verb *elegcho* but the noun *hamartia* that sin had never entered His holy conscience. He gave the reason why sin did not enter. The Jews were also challenged to detect or expose any corruption in His holy nature.

One of the main points in the debate between Christ and the Jews was with respect to Christ’s human nature. The Jews did not know that Christ was the Son of God and that God was His Father. They asked Him: “Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also” (John 8:19). The Jews boasted of God, but they did not know Him. The knowledge of the Son and of the Father go together. Ignorance of Christ and of God go together. The climax of what the Jews thought of Christ’s human nature is in their seventh accusation: “We be not born of fornication” (v. 41). This was their way of saying Christ’s conception was illegitimate. Their next accusation is understandable: “...thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?” (v. 48). Unable to answer Christ, the Jews, like all enemies of truth today, resorted to ridicule and blasphemy.

One does not fully state the truth of Christ’s glorious Person by saying, “He was able not to sin.” Such a statement is based on the concept that since temptation and sin are distinct, to be tempted is not to sin. The conclusion of this concept is that temptability does not imply depravity. However, the fallacy of this theory simply makes Jesus Christ sinless. One must affirm that Christ was not sinless because He refused to sin but He refused to sin because He was incapable of being tempted. Furthermore, He was incapable of being tempted because He was absolutely holy.

No one is lured, enticed, inveigled, or tempted unless he has a weakness within. The aforementioned verbs describe a person whose right way is questioned by suggesting a wrong way. Lure implies the action of an irresistible influence, like the fishing lure used by sportsmen. Entice adds to lure a strong suggestion of artfulness. Inveigle implies the use of deceit and flattery. Tempt means to entice into evil through hope of pleasure or gain. Satan is the master tempter, but to suggest that the Person of Christ could be lured, enticed, inveigled, or tempted “inwardly” is a denial of His absolute holiness. To say that temptation is not sin is failure to distinguish between outward enticement and inward desire. Inward desire is sinful before the outward act is committed. Since there was no inward desire, due to absolute holiness in Christ, everything suggested by Satan was so repugnant He could not entertain such an idea. The holiness of God is opposed to sin in every form and degree: “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity...” (Hab. 1:13). Jesus Christ could not be convicted of sin; therefore, no outward evil suggestion could penetrate the holy Person of Christ.

Christ's statement to the Jews who questioned His nature is applicable to all who do the same today:

He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God (John 8:47).

The Lord Jesus had already told the Jews that they could not understand His speech because they could not hear His word (v. 43). Now, He stated the reason: "because ye are not of God." Hence, the word of God must never be watered down to satisfy depraved minds. Hearing God's word implies the attention of the body, intention of the mind, and retention of the memory, all of which are the fruit of grace.

The fourteenth chapter of John is one of the favorite chapters of Christians. After comforting the disciples concerning His second coming, Christ promised them the Holy Spirit who would be their Comforter between His first and second advents. The Holy Spirit comes not only to regenerate the elect but to promote our hearts in affections, which were formed in us by the communication of God's love in regeneration. As the Captain of our salvation, Jesus Christ is leading the elect unto glory (Heb. 2:10). What greater assurance could the Captain of the elect's salvation give to His own than "...for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me"? (John 14:30).

The Savior of the elect knew that Satan was already gathering his forces to apprehend the Son of God as though He were a common criminal. Judas was at hand, and in him Satan was beginning to make his move. Satan's one purpose was to thwart God's redemptive act. The appearance of victory for Satan turned out to be his defeat:

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil (Heb. 2:14).

And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it (Col. 2:15).

Christ's assertion, "Satan has nothing in me," is another proof of His impeccability. The Greek text reads, *kai en emoi ouk echei ouden* — "And in me he has nothing." In all men, even Christians, there is corruption with which Satan may fasten his suggestions and inflame their corrupt desires. Contrarily, there is nothing in Christ upon which he may fasten his evil suggestions. This verse is not talking about Christ resisting temptation but the fact that Satan has nothing in Christ's Person that could receive any solicitation to do something wrong. This is impeccability.

## THERE WAS NO SIN IN THE INCARNATE CHRIST

Exegesis of Scripture relating to Christ's impeccability given by His disciples has a significant order. John spoke of Christ's impeccability in relation to the incarnation: "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins, and in him is no sin" (I John 3:5). He had no sin nature. Peter spoke of Christ's impeccability in relation to His earthly life: "...Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (I Pet. 2:21, 22). He did no sin. Paul spoke of Christ's impeccability in association with His death: "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor. 5:21). He knew no sin. This order will be followed in the remaining lessons on Christ's impeccability.

The apostle John placed great importance on the correct concept of the incarnation:

...Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God... (I John 4:2, 3).

The Greek word *eleluthota* is a perfect participle of the verb *erchomai* which means to come. Thus, the perfect participle means "having come" in the flesh, a past completed act with continuing results. The force of the perfect denotes the oneness of His Divine-human Person as an abiding certainty. To confess Jesus Christ "having come in the flesh" is to confess the Godhead dwelling "bodily" in the second Person in the divine Triunity. The word "flesh" is *sarki*, locative singular of *sarx*, which refers to Christ's human nature. The negative clause in the Greek does not use the name "Christ." John used "Jesus" with the definite article to stress that it was "the Jesus" whom the apostles preached that the spirit of antichrist rejected.

Confessing that Jesus Christ has come to the inhabited earth in human nature involves a very important subject. Was Christ's human nature peccable or impeccable? The verb "confesseth" is *homologeï*, present active indicative of the verb *homologeō*, which means to confess, speak in accordance with, or adopt the same terms of language. One who believes that Christ's human nature was impeccable speaks in accordance with Scripture which says: "...he was manifested [*ephanerothe*, first aorist passive indicative of *phaneroō*, which means to be personally manifested, Col. 3:4; I Pet. 1:20; I John 3:5] to take away our sins; and in him is no sin" (I John 3:5). The word "sin" is a noun, and it means that Jesus Christ was not personally manifested in a sinful nature.

Persons who teach that Christ was peccable do not speak in accordance with or adopt the language of Scripture. They believe He could sin; therefore, they are not of God. The Holy Spirit does not apply the work of a "peccable christ" to the hearts of men. Furthermore, He does not lead unregenerate men to embrace a peccable savior in what religionists call "a salvation experience."

Truth never appears without its counterfeits. Tares are found mixed with wheat; hypocrites are found among Christians; false teachers are found working among true ones; and the antichrist will mimic Jesus Christ. Many false prophets had gone out into the world in the days of John's ministry. Therefore, he was led by the Holy Spirit in his general Epistle to warn believers: "BELOVED, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (I John 4:1). He said the church in Ephesus had tried them who said they were apostles and found them to be liars (Rev. 2:2). There were many false prophets in John's day, but their number has increased since that time.

Apart from the Biblical assurance that God's sheep hear the voice of the true Shepherd and will not listen to the voice of strangers (John 10:1-7), a novice would not know what course to take, which one to adopt, or with which congregation to associate. However, this does not mean that warning is unnecessary. "Beloved," John interjects, "don't be believing every spirit [\"believe\" is a present active imperative of *pisteuo*, to believe], but test [present active imperative of *dokimadzo*, to prove, try, test, examine] the spirits." Hence, God has given His people a formula whereby they may test the reality of the Christian message, the Christian messenger, and the Christian life. John was saying that we should try before we trust.

"Don't be believing every spirit." There is the spirit of time and the Spirit of eternity. The spirit of time speaks boastfully of man, the world, and life. The Spirit of eternity speaks of sin, righteousness, and judgment. The spirit of the age applauds, flatters, and pleases men. The Spirit of God reproves, rebukes, and convicts. The spirit of the age talks of the greatness of man, the sufficiency of temporal things, and of a reckless life without responsibility. On the other hand, the Holy Spirit speaks of God's sovereignty, man's depravity, and free grace provided for the elect in the Person and work of Jesus Christ who has come in impeccable flesh.

There are false philosophies taught by false teachers. The spirit of error falls under the following heads: (1) religious traditions, whether Jewish, Roman Catholic, or Protestant; (2) subjectivism, whether new revelations or personal opinions unsubstantiated by Scripture; (3) neglect of the whole counsel of God by majoring on fragments of Scripture used out of context. Every philosophy must bear the test of Scripture. The Bureau of Standards in Washington is important for our physical lives. God's bureau of standards for our spiritual lives is much more important.

All ministers must be tested. One should "try the spirits" to see if they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. The persons themselves must be tested, not their skill, talent, or conduct. False teachers transform themselves into the apostles of Christ (II Cor. 11:13). They masquerade as Christ's apostles. The Greek word for "transforming" of II Corinthians 11:13 is *metaskematidzomenoi*, present middle participle of *metaskematidzo*, which means to change the figure of or to transform. This compound verb is made up of *meta*, which means "with" in the genitive case or "after" in the accusative case, and *skematidzo*, which means to fashion or transfigure (I Cor. 4:6; II Cor. 11:13, 14, 15; Phil. 3:21). The noun *skema* is used in I Corinthians 7:31 and Philippians 2:8. Satan was an angel of light before his fall into a position of eternal darkness. He is now directing his servants to transform themselves into angels of light to prepare the world for his own transformation as an angel of light again when he appears as the false messiah. His servants become mighty preachers of philosophy, morality, expediency, rites, ceremonies, humanism, etc.

Those who deny that Jesus Christ has come in impeccable flesh are not of God, and this is the spirit of antichrist. Three things are stated about such teachers: (1) “They are of the world...”; (2) “...therefore speak they of the world...”; and (3) “...the world heareth them” (I John 4:5).

1. False teachers are of the world. The preposition “of” (*ek*) proves that they are out of the world as a source. This is not the world for which Christ died, the world that is being reconciled to God. The source of false teachers is the world that is lying in the evil one (I John 5:19). This is the world that believers are admonished not to love (I John 2:15). The world’s system is hostile to God, because its arrangement, adornment, and order have been made evil by depraved men.

2. False teachers speak of the world. They speak of the wisdom that is suitable to depraved minds. It is said that water does not rise above its source. Therefore, false teachers, whose standard is the world’s system, can have nothing to give but a worldly viewpoint. Peccability is a humanistic concept of Jesus Christ that originated in the world. Every unscriptural doctrine is man-made. The Bible speaks of the “doctrines of men” (Col. 2:22; Mark 7:7). The “doctrines of men” have no place in them for the “doctrine of Christ” — “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God...” (II John 9). The Greek word for “doctrine” is *didache*, which denotes either that which is taught or the act of teaching. The doctrine of Christ in this verse refers to Christ as the standard of teaching given by inspired penmen of God.

John did not condemn theological progress in the use of “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ” (II John 9). The Greek word for “transgresseth” is *proagon*, present active participle of *proago*, which means that everyone who goes beyond the teaching of Christ is not of God. He goes beyond the limits of sound doctrine. Is teaching the doctrine of peccability going beyond the doctrine of Christ? Jesus Christ said, “Which one of you convicts Me of sin...?” (John 8:46 NASB). Since there is always more in Christ than we have experienced, there is progress in our understanding of the doctrine of Christ. Progress in understanding, however, does not mean that one ceases to “abide” (*menon*, present active participle of *meno*, to stay, continue, or dwell), but it means the one who remains not in the aforementioned teaching of Christ can make no claim of knowing God.

3. The world hears false teachers. Unregenerate men of the world listen to their ministry, approve what they hear, and receive it with pleasure. The quality of those who teach and those who listen is expressed. False teachers teach with the approval of false listeners, and they give false listeners what they want to hear. False listeners refuse what they need, because it is not compatible with their nature. They receive what they like, because it is in harmony with their depraved natures. Moreover, they give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons (I Tim. 4:1).

Christians have the responsibility of testing every person who poses as a representative of God: “...mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Rom. 16:17). The two words that stand out in this text are (1) “mark” and (2) “avoid.” The word “mark” (*skopein*) is a present active infinitive of the verb *skopeo*, which means to look at, observe, or beware; to mark. The word “avoid” (*ekkliete*) is a present active indicative of the verb *ekklino*, which means to turn away from or avoid. False teachers are to be avoided, because they have leprosy of the head. Head leprosy is worse than bad morals. Such a



leper is unfit for either communion or companionship. Under the Levitical system, this leper was pronounced “utterly unclean,” and he was to dwell alone outside the camp (Lev. 13:44, 46).

## CHRIST DID NOT SIN DURING THE DAYS OF HIS FLESH

Jesus Christ was "...a lamb without blemish and without spot" (I Pet. 1:19). The Greek word for "without blemish" is *amomou*, genitive masculine of *amomos*, which means blameless. It is used seven times and is translated "without blame" (Eph. 1:4), "without blemish" (Eph. 5:27; I Pet. 1:19), "unblameable" (Col. 1:22), "without spot" (Heb. 9:14), "faultless" (Jude 24), and "without fault" (Rev. 14:5). The word refers to Christ's complete sinlessness in the two places it is used in connection with Him. Peter used another word for amplification in speaking of Christ's sinlessness. Hence, the word *aspilou*, genitive of *aspilos*, means spotless, unblemished, or pure (I Tim. 6:14; James 1:27; I Pet. 1:19; II Pet. 3:14). It is translated "without spot" and "unspotted." Metaphorically, the word means free from censure (I Tim. 6:14) or free from vice (II Pet. 3:14).

Christ did not sin in word or deed during the days of His flesh on the earth. Furthermore, not having a sinful nature, He could not entertain a sinful thought. Sinful thoughts always precede either a sinful word or deed. A person is solicited to sin when he is "being drawn out" (*exelkomenos*, present passive participle of *exelko*, which means to draw out, away; to lure forth) and "being enticed" (*deleadzomenos*, present passive participle of *deleadzo*, which means to bait, catch by a bait; to beguile, allure, entice, or deceive) by his own craving (James 1:14). Jesus Christ in His absolutely holy nature could never crave anything evil in His holy thoughts. Therefore, the sinless life of Christ in the flesh proves He had no sin nature. Hence, He did not sin because in Him was no sin (I Pet. 2:22; I John 3:5).

No guile (*dolos*, which means craft, deceit, or guilt) (I Pet. 2:22) was ever found in the mouth of Christ because sin was never conceived in His holy human nature. An internal craving for an external solicitation to some evil is necessary for sin to come into external existence. I Peter 2:23 states that when Christ was reviled, He reviled not in return. The Greek word for "reviled" is *loidoroumenos*, present passive participle of *loidoreo*, which means to reproach, rail at, or heap abuse upon. When Jesus Christ was made the object of abuse and ridicule, He never retaliated (*anteloidorei*, imperfect active indicative of *antiloidoreo*, which means to reproach or revile in return). This compound verb is used only in this verse. The imperfect tense used by Peter denotes the continuous negative reaction of Jesus Christ to all the reproach and abuse heaped upon Him by wicked men during the days of His earthly sojourn.

An unholy world hates the holy Savior. Christ said to His disciples:

If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you (John 15:18, 19).

There are two different worlds and loves. One is from heaven, and the other is from hell. The world that lies in darkness loves darkness rather than light:

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved [*elegchthe*, first aorist passive subjunctive of *elegcho*, to show one his fault, rebuke, lay bare, or expose] (John 3:19, 20).

The light of Christ has a twofold effect on all those on whom it shines. The night birds flee from the morning light, while the birds of the day welcome the light with singing. Thus, while the child of darkness flees from Christ, the recipient of light “cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God” (John 3:21).

The world’s hatred for Jesus Christ resulted in His suffering by the world. The climax of His suffering was Calvary. Christ said, “When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he...” (John 8:28). “Then shall ye know” is a phrase which denotes recognition of the true character of the holy One of God. His holy character was convincingly manifested in the time of His suffering on the cross. Peter spoke of the impeccable life by showing that He did not sin in I Peter 2:22-23. There was no deceit in His mouth. He did not retaliate when He was abused; and when He suffered He threatened (*epeilei*, imperfect active indicative of *apeileo*, to threaten—used only here and in Acts 4:17) not, but delivered Himself to the One judging righteously.

Suffering is the key word of Peter’s epistle. Christ’s suffering is mentioned in every chapter of I Peter. Suffering preceded His glory (1:11). Christ did not retaliate when He was abused (2:23). A puritan preacher said, “To return good for evil is God-like, good for good is man-like, evil for evil is beast-like, and evil for good is devil-like.” The suffering of Christ was substitutionary (3:18). The just One suffered for the unjust. Christ’s suffering has a practical character for Christians (4:1). The death of Christ for sin applied by the Holy Spirit to the elect results in a practical death of Christians to sin. Finally, the sufferings of Christ have a ministerial character for all ministers of God (5:1). Ministerial suffering is the result not of a general proclamation of some subjects but of the whole counsel of God.

In I Peter 2:21, Peter states that the impeccable Christ has left His people an example: “...Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example [*hupogrammos*, a copy to write after. It is from the verb *hupographo*, to trace letters for copying. Metaphorically, the word is used only in this verse as an example for imitation]....” If Christ had been a peccable person, as many believe, His example would have been no different from anyone with a depraved nature. One might as well pattern his life after a mere man. Jesus Christ is more than a mere man. He is the God-Man, our perfect example. The goal of the Christian life is absolute perfection—not mere human imperfection:

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:12-14).

Paul desired an experimental knowledge not only of the power of Christ’s resurrection but His sufferings (Phil. 3:10). Paul entered the Christian race by the righteousness of Christ, after which

he sought to run the race successfully by knowing experientially the power of Christ's resurrection, the joint participation in His sufferings, and the life that would radiate a likeness to His death. Paul spoke three times in Romans 6 of knowing the experimental value of union with Christ. The power of that experiential knowledge always results in one's counting himself dead indeed to sin and alive unto God. Therefore, he yields his members unto God (Rom. 6:1-13).

Every regenerated person is given a perfect position in Christ. Although his condition is imperfect, he has as his goal the example of the impeccable Christ. Throughout his Christian life attainment falls short of the goal, but immaturity does not lessen his responsibility to keep his eyes on the goal. Paul discussed the completion of the Christian race:

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself (Phil. 3:20, 21).

Paul at the outset expressed his confidence that Christ would complete what He had begun (Phil. 1:6). Some never give any thought to the completion of their salvation until death strikes someone close to them. Others remain in a state of uncertainty. Scripture, however, has commanded us to give diligence to make our calling and election sure (II Pet. 1:10). The Greek word for "diligence" is an aorist imperative of *speudo*, which is a command to urge on or to hasten to make our calling and election sure. The Greek word for "sure" is *bebaios*, which means firm, steadfast, sure, or certain. (See Rom. 4:16; II Cor. 1:7; Heb. 2:2; 3:6, 14; 6:19; II Pet. 1:10, 19.) Being confident of what God has begun, Paul led us to its glorious consummation.

Since the present is not the believer's principle state, it should never be viewed separate from the future. The present bears the same relation to the future as incompleteness does to completion. Three things are emphasized in Philippians 3:20-21 — (1) Believers possess a precious fact. Our citizenship is in heaven. The word for "citizenship" is *politeuma*. It is from *politeuo*, which means to be a citizen. Here it means to be a citizen in heaven. Hence, our citizenship on earth is in the form of pilgrims and strangers. Therefore, our lives on earth are those of suffering for the cause of Christ, because we cannot conform to this world system (Rom. 12:2; II Tim. 2:12; 3:12). (2) Believers have a present continuous hope: "We eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (NASB). Dissatisfaction with this world causes us to eagerly wait for the coming of our Savior, the perfect example for believers. In His character as "Savior," saints wait for Him. The "blessed hope" of the saints is the coming of Christ (Titus 2:13). This hope has purifying qualities (I John 3:2, 3). (3) Believers have a prospective glory. It will be the consummation of our salvation, which is the redemption of our bodies and being like our perfect example, Jesus Christ our Savior, Surety, and Priest.

## CHRIST WHO KNEW NO SIN WAS MADE SIN

Every Christian is constantly reminded just how little he knows concerning the Bible. On the other hand, he is amazed that he knows even a little. The only “smart” Christians this writer has ever known, over a period of nearly 50 years in the Lord’s service, have been those who only thought they were. To put knowledge of Divine things in its proper perspective, consider what Paul said to the Ephesian saints: “And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge...” (Eph. 3:19). Paul’s statement that Christians know the unknowable is not contradictory. Christians know by grace what they could not know by nature. They know by faith what they could not know by reason. Furthermore, believers know increasingly what they cannot know perfectly.

Having considered some key verses in which Jesus Christ affirmed His own impeccability, let us now study some passages given by inspired penmen.

Paul declared that Christ’s impeccability and sacrificial work are inseparable. The first gives validity to the second: “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (II Cor. 5:21). Christ’s holiness and His being made sin are inseparably connected. In order for the apostle to protect himself against saying that God is the author of sin in any form, he affirmed that Christ was without sin. If Christ could have sinned, He would not have been absolutely holy. Furthermore, if He had not been absolutely holy, He could not have provided the redemption necessary for the elect to be reconciled to God.

The inseparability of impeccability and redemption is associated with the inseparability of the messenger and his message:

And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin: that we might be made the righteousness of God in him (II Cor. 5:18-21).

The messenger of God loves truth for truth’s sake. He always seeks to have a better understanding of truth in order to be a more effective witness for his Lord and Master.

The messenger is called an ambassador for Christ. The Greek word for ambassador is the verb *presbeuo*. It means to be an elder or an ambassador. It is used only twice in the New Testament, and it is translated ambassador in both II Corinthians 5:20 and Ephesians 6:20. The office of ambassador is one of not only distinguishing honor but importance. This office takes precedence over everything else in one’s life. The ambassador’s message is a trumpet that does not give an uncertain sound: “For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?” (I Cor. 14:8). His message gives a certain sound because God has not only “given” to

him the “ministry of reconciliation” but He has also “committed” to him the “word of reconciliation.”

The verbs “given” and “committed” differ. The verb “given” is second aorist active participle of *didomi*, which means to give or bestow. The ambassadors of whom Paul spoke had been reconciled by God through Christ; furthermore, God had given them the ministry (*diakonia*, work or office) of proclaiming the message of reconciliation. The verb “committed” is second aorist middle participle of *tithemi*, which means to assign, appoint, or commit as a matter of charge. God had given them the office, and now they were to participate in the word of reconciliation that had been assigned them. Hence, they were to perform the duties of ambassadors.

God’s grace and peace are discovered by the regenerate in hearing the message of one occupying the office of preaching. Satan knows this, and he opposes that office. He succeeds by persuading religionists to substitute flesh-tingling and ear-pleasing activities for the office of preaching. However, recipients of grace know the importance of the office and will submit to no substitute. They rely on what Christ said to the seventy: “He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me” (Luke 10:16). In Christ’s prayer to the Father, He said, “As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world” (John 17:18). Although everyone does not occupy the office of ambassador, all Christians should be witnesses on behalf of Christ. Hence, those who have been reconciled to God do not speak theoretically. They speak from lives of experience.

There is a difference between objective and subjective reconciliation. Distinction must be made between what Jesus Christ did for the elect on the cross and what takes place within them. The former is objective reconciliation, and the latter is subjective reconciliation. Paul spoke of objective reconciliation when he said, “...God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them” (II Cor. 5:19). Objective reconciliation was finished when Jesus Christ died. Therefore, reconciliation began with the offended God rather than the offenders. Objective reconciliation presupposes alienation which has been satisfied by the death of Jesus Christ, thus enabling God to look with favor upon the elect. Objective reconciliation was also the subject of Paul’s statement to the Roman Christians: “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Rom. 5:10).

Objective and subjective reconciliation are both of God. The objective is through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross, and the subjective is by the Holy Spirit in regeneration. Since there is a difference between the two, how can reconciliation be compatible with universal redemption? Jesus Christ did not die for all men without distinction. Persons who deny distinctive redemption believe there is a reconciliation which of itself reconciles no one but is the basis for the reconciliation of all who will believe. The word of reconciliation, however, teaches that all who were objectively reconciled at the cross will be subjectively reconciled in the time of God’s love by the Holy Spirit (Ezek. 16:8; John 3:8). The Son of God who became the Son of Man accomplished His legal work, making it possible for the Father to look upon the elect with favor. Moreover, the Holy Spirit works in the elect, regenerating, maintaining, and completing salvation which is of God. Therefore, all who have been objectively reconciled to God have been

or will be subjectively reconciled by the Holy Spirit. Their sins will not be imputed to them, and they shall be made righteous (II Cor. 5:19, 21).

The exhortation by ambassadors, “be ye reconciled to God,” was not an invitation for the unregenerate to cooperate in their subjective reconciliation. God is the Reconciler both objectively and subjectively. Like the correlation between faith and justification, it was an exhortation for God-given faith to acknowledge the act of the sovereign God in their reconciliation.

This brings us to the very heart of God’s reconciling work. The foundation of reconciliation is the One not knowing sin made sin. “Not knowing sin” of II Corinthians 5:21 in the Greek text reads *me gnonta hamartian*. The word “knowing” is second aorist active participle of *ginosko*, which means “to know.” The word for “sin” is *hamartian*, accusative of the noun *hamartia*. Christ was not personally acquainted with sin because He could not know it experientially. The indication is not that He does not know what sin is because God knows all things. Paul was inspired to amplify Christ’s question: “Which [who] of you convinceth [convicts] me of sin?” (John 8:46). He said Christ had not a personal acquaintance with sin. The reason is that He did not have a nature that could relate with sin. Adam knew Eve intimately, but Jesus Christ knew not sin intimately.

Two focal points stand out in II Corinthians 5:21 — (1) the incarnation and (2) the crucifixion. Because of Christ’s unnatural begetting, He did not possess man’s natural depravity caused by the fall. The virgin birth explains His impeccable human nature and life, which qualified the Son of Man to be the representative of the elect at Calvary. Thus, the sinless Christ became identified with the sinfulness of the elect as their Substitute. That identification was retroactive because it affected all the elect who came before the incarnation and substitutionary death of the Savior. Furthermore, that identification was prospective because it affects all the elect who come after the incarnation and death of Christ. (See Rom. 3:24-26.) Therefore, the purpose of the incarnation and crucifixion was that the elect might be made the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ.

The verbs for “made sin” and “made righteous” differ. The verb for “made sin” is *epoiesen*, first aorist active indicative of *poieo*, which means to make, form, create, declare, or appoint. Jesus Christ was “appointed” by the Father to be the representative at the cross for the elect. The same inflected form of the verb is used in Acts 2:36 — “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made [*epoiesen*] that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.” The Son of God was not only “appointed” to be our substitute, but He was “declared” both Lord and Christ.

The Father did not make Jesus Christ sinful, but He made Him sin. It would be blasphemous to say Christ was made a sinner, because He knew no sin. He was not guilty because He was not a transgressor. However, the Son of God was treated as though He were a sinner because sin was imputed to Him.

Since the reconciling work of Christ accomplished at Calvary was objective, the imputed sins which He carried up in His body to the cross were also objective. Sin always involves guilt, but objective guilt must not be confused with subjective depravity. Christ’s human nature was not

subjectively depraved, but by imputation He could bear the objective guilt of the elect upon the cross. As Christ had imputed guilt without depravity, Christians have depravity without guilt.

One must demand an interpretation of “Christ made sin” by those who embrace peccability. II Corinthians 5:21 is a favorite verse used by followers of modern Pentecostalism, who have so much to say about “divine healing.” One man said as Christ was made sin for us who knew no sin (of His own); likewise, He was made sick for us who knew no sickness (of His own). Another said he will maintain until death that the flesh of Christ was as rebellious and fallen as ours. He said human nature which is corrupt to the core and black as hell is the human nature the Son of God took upon Himself. Others—not Pentecostals—name a catalog of evil things connected with the word “sin.” Such statements are repugnant to Christians. They know from the text and context that “Christ made sin” refers to His redemptive work on the cross and not to the human nature He assumed in the incarnation. Moreover, His human nature was not made sick or corrupted with evil at the cross. The writer of Hebrews used the word “sin” when speaking of judgment:

So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation (Heb. 9:28).

The two words “without sin” (*choris hamartias*) mean without any reference to His personal judgment upon sin. This took place at His first advent, when He stood in the place of the elect of God and was judged for their sins. There will be a judgment upon nonelect sinners for their sin at Christ’s second coming. This advent will not be related to a sin offering.

The verb for “made righteous” is *genometha*, second aorist subjunctive of *ginomai*, which means to come into existence, to become, to be changed or converted. Christ was “appointed” to be judged for us at Calvary that we might “become” righteous in that righteousness provided in His death. As the payment of our debt was imputed to Christ who became our debtor, His righteousness was imputed to us for whom the debt was paid. As Christ did not deserve the punishment, we do not deserve the glory.



## OPPOSITE IMPUTATIONS ARE INSEPARABLE

The inseparability of both Christ's impeccability and His vicarious work on the cross and His holiness and His being made sin have been studied. A deeper study of these truths plus the added inseparability of the opposite imputations of sins of the elect to Christ and Christ's righteousness to the elect will now be made.

The spiritual horizon of most Christians is very small. Hence, the limit of their perception is due to a lack of growth in grace and knowledge of Christ (II Pet. 3:18). Peter was a striking example of his own inspired statement. A long time expired before Simon grew into Peter. The Lord Jesus Christ said to Peter, "...Thou art Simon the son of Jona; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone" (John 1:42). Life is the best visible commentary upon the effect of the truths of the gospel. Grace and spiritual knowledge grow side by side—the practical and the theoretical. Progress is God's ordained preventive against falling from steadfastness (II Pet. 3:17).

When Peter said, "...grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," he placed grace before knowledge because it is the means of knowledge. The way to "stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11) and to "withstand [to resist] in the evil day" (Eph. 6:13) is to "grow" (*audzanete*, present active imperative of *audzано*, which means to grow or increase) in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. There is neither standing nor resisting apart from progression. The imperative mood is not only a command. It is the furthest mood from reality. Growth is possible because of grace; however, Peter contrasted this with one's fall from his own steadfastness. A person can never be too far advanced in knowledge to live the Christian life without the necessity for being on guard. Peter knew this by experience.

There is a sense in which no one can grow in grace. Grace considered as God's free favor toward the elect in regeneration cannot grow. The regenerated person can never be in grace more tomorrow than he is today. Consequently, there is neither progression nor retrogression in one's position in grace. On the other hand, there is a sense in which the Christian grows "in" but not "into" grace. Progressive sanctification is growth in grace. The Divine principle within is grace, which enables one to grow. There are degrees in the development of grace in those positionally sanctified by grace. There is no place in the Christian life where one reaches a spiritual plateau from which there is no further progress. Since Jesus Christ is the object of the Christian's knowledge, one should have no problem understanding that the infinite Savior can never be comprehended, although by grace He is apprehended.

Some have the heretical view that Christ was made guilty by being made sin. Two things are associated with guilt: (1) The guilty person has merited his guilt. (2) The guilty person is guilty because of his depraved condition. To say that Christ is connected in a personal way with either is heretical.

The sinless Christ was made sin. It was impossible for the sins of the elect to have been transferred to Christ in such a way as to make Him either subjectively sinful or guilty. He was not involved with depravity. First, Christ could not be made either “sin” as such or “a sinner.” Sin is a personal act which affects oneself and others. Christ “who knew no sin” (II Cor. 5:21), “who did no sin” (I Pet. 2:22), and in whom “is no sin” (I John 3:5) could not be made a sinner. Second, guilt is personal and is incapable of being transferred to Christ. No one is truly guilty who is not personally a transgressor. If Christ was in any sense guilty, He deserved to die and His death could have no merit. He was not guilty and could not be made guilty. However, He was treated as though He were, because He was willing to stand in the place of guilty sinners.

A view held by others is that the Greek word *hamartia* cannot be translated “sin offering.” According to them, it can only be translated “sin.” They do not deny that Jesus Christ was made a sin offering, or a sacrifice for sin; but to them, that is not the same as Christ’s being made sin of II Corinthians 5:21. They believe Paul’s statement goes deeper into the problem of human sin; hence, human sin is the reason for Christ’s being made a sacrifice for sin. Christ’s being made sin justifies His being made a sin offering.

Another view is that the Greek word for “sin” and the corresponding Hebrew word denote both “sin” and “sin offering.” Hence, “They eat up the sin [sin offering] of my people...” (Hosea 4:8). Those who hold this view conclude that Christ was made a sin offering: (1) by imputation, for our sins were made to meet upon Christ — “the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Is. 53:6); and (2) by reputation, for He was reckoned among malefactors — “...he was numbered with the transgressors...” (Is. 53:12).

There is a threefold reason why God’s judgment must come upon sinners: (1) God’s judgment must come upon sinful men because of what they are by nature: “So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men...” (Rom. 5:18 NASB). Men are sinful before they sin. Therefore, their antecedent sinfulness is not misfortune but real guilt. They sinned in Adam (Rom. 5:12). (2) God’s judgment must come upon sinful men because of what they have done. Men are judged according to their works (Rev. 20:12). Like the thief on the cross, all men will recognize that they receive the due reward of their deeds (Luke 23:40, 41). (3) God’s judgment must come upon sinful men because of what they have not done:

And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it (Matt. 7:26, 27).

Sin, therefore, is more than failure to do right. Both omission and commission are because of what men are by nature—sinful.

There is also a threefold judgment upon sinful men because of what they are, what they have done, and what they have not done. Jesus Christ, having never sinned (I Pet. 2:22), was qualified to stand in the place of the elect who have sinned. Moreover, He in whom there was no sin (I John 3:5) was able to stand in the place of the elect for what they have not done.

Now comes the real test of one's Biblical concept of Christ's substitutionary sacrifice. If Jesus Christ was peccable, which means He had a nature capable of sinning, He would not have been competent to stand in the place of the elect who are sinners by nature. Therefore, those who believe in peccability do not have a Savior who can stand in their place because their savior needs one to stand in his place. What a horrible concept of Jesus Christ. Those who believe Jesus Christ was impeccable have a Representative who stood for them at Calvary. In His holy human nature, He was the Substitute for us who have depraved natures. "...He was manifested to take away our sins..." (I John 3:5). His sacrifice was perfect because He "offered one sacrifice for sins for ever" (Heb. 10:12). He was our Substitute because He suffered on our behalf — "the just for the unjust" (I Pet. 3:18). He was also identified with us because He "bare our sins in his own body on the tree" (I Pet. 2:24). Jesus Christ, who needed no reconciliation, objectively reconciled the elect to God at Calvary.

Finite man cannot make satisfaction to the infinite God who has been injured by his sin. Sin against the infinite God merits infinite punishment. When one speaks of the Infinite becoming finite in the incarnation, he should consider the effect such a theory has on the substitutionary work of Christ on the cross. The infinite Son of God did not become finite in the incarnation. He assumed a finite human nature. Therefore, the infinity of His Person qualified Jesus Christ to compensate for the eternity of retribution which the sin of finite man against the infinite God demands. If Christ had become finite in the incarnation, He could not have made infinite retribution. Hence, the man-made doctrine of peccability has no one who can satisfy Divine justice for sinful men. On the contrary, the Biblical truth of Christ's impeccability represents Him as the infinite Savior who by one offering for sin made infinite retribution which suffices for the eternity of punishment. The extent of any crime depends on the relation between the offender and the offended. No crime can be greater than sin against God, against whom all sin is committed.

As the representative of God's people, Jesus Christ stood in the place of the elect at Calvary. He was imputatively appointed sin. The sins of the elect were imputed to Christ, and He was made to bear the penalty in their place. The elect who were as lacking of righteousness as Christ was of sin had the righteousness provided by Christ imputed to them. Christ who knew no sin was appointed sin that the elect who knew no righteousness might become righteous in Him. Imputed righteousness becomes the judicial ground for the bestowal of grace. Christ's obedience provided a righteousness, thus qualifying the recipients for eternal fellowship with God.

The righteousness the elect receive through grace is not God's inherent righteousness. God's inherent righteousness refers to His unalterable character. The imputed righteousness of Christ to the elect is the grace righteousness provided by Christ in His work at Calvary. The statement "made sin" cannot mean that Christ became inherently sinful. Furthermore, to be made righteous does not mean the reception of God's inherent righteousness.

## SINS ARE FORGIVEN AND SIN IS CONDEMNED

Proper distinction must be made between “sin” and “sins.” Sin is the root of which sins are the fruit. The sinful heart is the source of all kinds of evil:

For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man... (Matt. 15:19, 20).

Sin is condemned but never forgiven; whereas, sins of the elect are forgiven but the elect are never condemned:

THERE is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh (Rom. 8:1-3).

God remembers the sins of the reconciled no more; but sin, being a constant companion of the reconciled, can never be forgotten until it is removed in death. One of seven things God promised to do for Israel was this: “I will remember their sin no more” (Jer. 31:34). On the other hand, Paul spoke of the law of sin in his members which constantly opposes the law of his mind (Rom. 7:23). The law of sin which constantly opposes the law of the mind in the Christian is continually known by God.

One must not regard the “old nature” or the “new nature” as the man himself. An informed Christian would not regard either Christ’s “Divine nature” or His “human nature” as the God-Man. Nature and person are different terms: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6). The unbelieving ego is identified with the old nature — “that which is born of the flesh is flesh.”

The person united to the “new nature” by regeneration is responsible to mortify the deeds of the “old nature” (Col. 3:5) — “that which is born of the flesh.” The man who was born of the flesh (unregenerate) is the same man who was born of the Spirit (regenerated).

The Spirit of regeneration dwelling in the Christian does not make any change or improvement in the flesh. The regenerated person is associated with conditions brought about by grace. Furthermore, the Spirit never leads him to regard himself in the flesh:

...ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his (Rom. 8:9).

He is not in the flesh, but the flesh is in him. Moreover, the Spirit does maintain the Christian in self-judgment and personal cleansing:

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.... For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged (I Cor. 11:28, 31).

HAVING therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (II Cor. 7:1).

“Perfecting holiness in the fear of God” touches all of the Christian life until Christ’s return. How can one perfect that which is holy? The goal of this perfection must be viewed eschatologically. Absolute perfection in the Christian life will never take place until the great consummation of all things by the King of kings. Therefore, neither the “perfecting” nor the “fear of God” may be neglected in this life. God has chosen us “that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (Eph. 1:4). Christians are to be established in order that they may be “...unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints” (I Thess. 3:13). They can never slacken their vigilance, in view of the return of Christ. For this reason the Bible never speaks of antecedent absolute perfection apart from the return of Christ.

The fluctuating course of the Christian life is not easy to explain. We observe a fluctuating condition of life in Peter; whereas, there was in Paul, for the most part, an unwavering condition of life. The same Holy Spirit possessed both men, but one was more steadfast than the other. Scripture is reticent on why one was more vacillating than the other. However, we must beware of a reckless logic that would make God responsible for sin. True faith does not reason in a manner to blame God for one’s vacillating condition of life but ever presses toward the goal:

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:12).

Throughout Scripture, we run into the idiom of struggle. Hence, a confession of guilt by men in grace who have mountaintop experiences with God is common:

If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? (Ps. 130:3).

Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.... I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes (Job 40:4; 42:5, 6).

Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts (Is. 6:5).

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief (I Tim. 1:15).

Guilt reveals itself before the throne of grace. Therefore, believers who understand their justification and view their lives against the backdrop of grace are those who have a deeper consciousness of their own sinfulness. Observe the difference in Peter when, after his obedience to Christ following a night of toiling in the energy of the flesh, he said, “...Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luke 5:8); and his boastful statement, “...Though all men shall be

offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended” (Matt. 26:33). Peter, like many today, wanted the Lord to bathe in his glory, rather than Peter bathe in Christ’s glory. Too many want to encompass the Lord Jesus Christ with their fidelity and love. However, when believers are enveloped with Christ’s love and faithfulness for His own, they will, like Peter as an obedient saint, say, “I am a sinful man, O Lord.”

Job came to a new understanding of God. True self-abhorrence does not come from self-examination but from looking away from self to the God of all grace. Job was satisfied with himself until he, through the mystery of suffering and his complaining against God, was silenced by the sovereign God. God asked Job, “Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? he that reproveth God, let him answer it” (Job 40:2). Job, silenced by God, said, “Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee...” (Job 40:4). The patriarch acknowledged God’s greatness and was well-pleased that God was justified when He spoke and overcame when He was judged (Rom. 3:4).

The root of all sin, of both saved and unsaved, is the old sin nature — “that which is born of the flesh is flesh” (John 3:6). The old nature with which every person is born will never be anything but flesh. Although the old nature is capable of doing good things, it is not capable of being good. There is no difference between the old nature of a regenerate and an unregenerate person. The impartation of the new nature makes the distinction. Regenerate man has the restraint of grace; whereas, the unregenerate man is without grace. The old nature of the unregenerate may be restrained by culture, but it remains the old nature.

Since “freedom” is a favorite topic today, it should be viewed from four perspectives. First, Adam was free to do either good or evil. In his peccable nature, he chose to do evil. Second, the descendants of Adam are free to do only evil. All the religious talk about man’s free will is a misnomer. Free will can be applied only to God; therefore, to apply free will to man is a misapplied designation. Free will is a Divine term which signifies Divine power. There is no law to restrain God because He is His own law. Moreover, there is no power to overcome Him because He is omnipotent. If God acted by any will other than His own, it would cease to be God’s will. If God’s will were determined by man’s will, God’s will would not be free. Those who ascribe salvation to man’s free will know nothing of grace. The first principle the recipient of grace learns is that he has neither will nor power, but God gives both. Hence, the descendants of Adam are free to do according to their fallen nature which is only evil. Third, Christians are free to do good, but they also have freedom to do some evil. If the latter were not true, Christians would not be constantly warned by Scripture. They would not have their own experiences and Bible examples of believers’ sinning. Fourth, consummation of redemption when the old nature is put off in death will render saints free to do only good in heaven.

Sins of the elect are forgiven, but sin is condemned. Man is a material and an immaterial creature—body and soul. His fall resulted in spiritual and physical death. Therefore, man’s redemption includes his soul and body. Man’s sins prove to be the fruit of his sin nature. On the other hand, Christ’s being made an offering for sins and sin proves the impeccability of His human nature. Christ did no sin because in Him was no sinful nature. As the God-Man, Jesus Christ was the sacrifice and the priest who offered the sacrifice. He died spiritually and physically for the elect.

Christ passively atoned for sins the elect actively committed by being made an offering for sins. The verbs “stricken,” “smitten,” “afflicted,” “wounded,” and “bruised” of Isaiah 53 signify that Christ was passive. On the contrary, men are passive but Christ was active in death. The verb Paul used when he said he was “ready to be offered” of II Timothy 4:6 was the present passive indicative of the Greek verb *spendo*, which means to be in the act of being sacrificed in the cause of Christ. Jesus Christ used an active verb to speak of His death (John 10:17, 18; Heb. 7:26). How do we reconcile the use of passivity and activity in Christ’s being made an offering for sins and for sin?

The two aspects of Christ’s sacrifice are seen in His passivity when the Father “made him sin” (II Cor. 5:21), and in His activity when He laid down His own life (John 10:18). There is no contradiction between Christ’s passivity and His activity. The debt of sins was paid by His three hours of suffering in total darkness. At the end of the darkness, Christ cried, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34). Following this, Christ received the vinegar and said, “It is finished” (*tetelestai*, perfect passive indicative of *teleo*, which means “it has been finished”) (John 19:30). Some students of Greek say it means “paid in full.” One more redemptive act remained for Christ to accomplish. This act would reflect His activity. “And He bowed His head, and gave up His spirit” (John 19:30 NASB). The verb “gave up” is *paredoken*, first aorist active indicative of *paradidomi*, which means to give over, deliver up, commit, yield, or dismiss. The sinful nature resident in every Christian results in physical death, but death has been conquered for Christ’s people by His own death. Hence, the sin nature that has been condemned but not forgiven has been actively conquered in the “death of death in the death of Christ,” as stated by John Owen.

Paul manifested a holy boldness when he said, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1 NASB). Legal condemnation is behind Christians, but it is before those who die in their sins. Christ’s substitutionary work at Calvary for the elect has positionally placed Christians outside the range of legal condemnation. Hence, according to Romans 8:2, “...the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free [first aorist active indicative of *eleutheroo*, which means liberated once for all] from the law of sin and of death” (NASB). This verse is to be understood in the sense of a power that is operating in believers, thus delivering them from the power of indwelling sin rather than the guilt of sin. The freedom from condemnation of verse 1 embraces more than freedom from guilt. Furthermore, since sin is not destroyed but condemned in Christians, condemnation of sin in the flesh embodies more than legal judgment in the flesh (Rom. 8:3). All who are engaged in the conflict between the spirit and the flesh know the ruling power in them is the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

Knowing that past sins are forgiven and will never be remembered is wonderful. Furthermore, to know that the sins which we commit in the Christian life, because of the power of the sin nature that resides in us, are not imputed to us is amazing (Rom. 4:8). Knowledge that the power of indwelling sin, as well as the penalty of sin, has been once for all judged is awesome.

## **CHRIST WAS BOTH PRIEST AND SACRIFICE**

The expression “Christ’s passive and active obedience” has been a source of much controversy. There are extreme views of the passive and active obedience of Christ. With proper explanations, nothing is wrong with the phrase. Some have said if there is anything in Christ’s intervention for man’s salvation that may be called “passive,” it must be His death. This is the very opposite to the clearness of Scripture that Christ did not die until He gave Himself in death:

He poured out himself to death (Is. 53:12 NASB).

I lay down My life for the sheep.... I lay down My life that I may take it again.... I lay it down on My own initiative (John 10:15, 17, 18 NASB).

And He bowed His head, and gave up His spirit (John 19:30 NASB). Christ...loved the church and gave Himself up for her (Eph. 5:25 NASB).

When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. 1:3 NASB).

He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb. 9:26 NASB).

The body Jesus Christ assumed in the incarnation was completely under His control not only in His death but after His death. For that reason Christ said, “No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again” (John 10:18 NASB). Jesus Christ was both Priest and Sacrifice.

Christ was seen in a variety of types in the Old Testament. For example, the sacrificial lamb, as it was offered by the priest, was a type of the sin-bearer. But, as it has been said, types are the best interpreters of New Testament truths only if one bears in mind that the antitype is always of a higher order and superior nature to what prefigured it, as the substance must excel the shadow. Hence, the Christian has no problem recognizing the superior nature of the God-Man Priest, who offered Himself, over the Aaronic priests, who offered up unblemished lambs. The antithesis is between the priests “standing” daily offering their imperfect sacrifices and Christ “sitting” after having offered one perfect sacrifice (Heb. 10:1-18).

The prayers of Christ during the days of His flesh must be viewed in connection with His priestly office (Heb. 5:1-10). Many take for granted that Hebrews 5:7 teaches that Christ prayed to be saved from death:

Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared (Heb. 5:7).



Hebrews 5:7-9 must never be read or studied apart from other verses included in verses 1-10. Verses 7-9 are closed between two affirmations of Christ's priesthood after the order of Melchisedec. Therefore, His prayers must be recognized as the discharge of His priestly function. The passage does not affirm that Christ prayed to be saved from death but that He offered up prayers "unto him that was able to save him from death." He prayed for that which God was able to give—salvation from death. What Christ actually prayed for is not stated in Hebrews; but the writer, in stating the substance of the prayer, says the prayer was "heard because of His piety" (NASB). The Greek word translated "feared" in the King James Bible is *eulabeias*, which means reverence to God. The God-Man did not pray to be saved from "dying," but He prayed to God who was able to raise Him out from the state of death.

Matthew records two prayers by Christ in the garden of Gethsemane: (1) "...O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt (Matt. 26:39). (2) "...O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done" (Matt. 26:42). The first prayer was spoken out of His sinless human consciousness. The language was that of His sinless fear of separation from the Father; but at the same time, it was the submission of His human will to the Divine will. Christ learned obedience by the things which He suffered (Heb. 5:8). To say He learned to be obedient is to admit He was a sinner. Obedience is learned in the school of experience. Hence, Christ learned experientially the meaning of obedience. "Being made perfect" of Hebrews 5:9 was not moral perfection because that was always His. However, this perfection was the appointed end of His human experience in the work to which He was ordained. Christ's second prayer shows that beyond the submission of the human will to the Divine will lies the silencing of the human will.

We learn from Luke 22:42 that Christ's prayer was one of submission to the Father's will. Shortly after the Lord Jesus prayed, He said, "...the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it" (John 18:11). Isaiah foretold of Him, "I was not rebellious, neither turned away back" (Is. 50:5). Christ's human will was revealed in the garden of Gethsemane, as His human soul was revealed many times during the days of His flesh. The High Priest, who was also the Sacrifice, was resigned to the will of God, which was known to Him before the foundation of the world. He had already begun to taste of the bitter cup in the garden and had accepted this bestowment from the Father's hand. The sins He would bear were those of the elect by commission, but they would become His by imputation.

Jesus Christ's intense suffering began as He entered the garden of Gethsemane, and it did not cease until He dismissed His spirit and left the body for the tomb. Christ invited the disciples to watch with Him, but He did not ask them to pray with Him. He never besought the prayers of men for Himself. Why? There is a different approach for them to God. The sinner must come as a penitent, but Christ was impeccable. There was an essential difference in nature between Christ and men. Christ could go directly to the Father, but men can approach the Father only through Christ and by the Spirit of regeneration.

The evidence of Christ's Deity was greatly manifested when He went into the agony of Gethsemane alone, without fellowship with men in prayer. He had on one occasion asked certain disciples if they were able to be baptized with the baptism with which He was baptized (Matt. 20:22, 23; Mark 10:38, 39; Luke 12:50). The folly of the disciples' affirmative answer, "We are able," can only be comprehended in the light of Christ's suffering in Gethsemane. He had a

baptism to be baptized with, and His soul was “straitened [*sunechomai*, to be hard pressed from every side] till it be accomplished” (Luke 12:50). Christ’s prayer in the garden was to the Father for the benefit of the elect.

Some say Christ’s prayers in the garden of Gethsemane reveal the tension between His human and Divine natures. Was there a strained relationship between them? Admittedly, Christ speaking out of His human consciousness desired life, but one must not overlook the truth that His human will was controlled by His Divine will. This shows that although His human will was different from His Divine will, it was not contrary to it. There was no tension between them. Jesus Christ was like man and at the same time very much unlike man. Submission of the human will silenced it. Conclusively, there was no conflict between the human and Divine wills of the unique Person, the God-Man.

Since Christ was both the Sacrifice and the Sacrificer in the office of Priest, as the Sacrificer, He wanted no interruption of His office in death. Hence, “having been made perfect [*teleiotheis*, first aorist passive participle of *teleioo*, to reach the end of; to advance to final completeness; to reach the end of one’s course]” (Heb. 5:9 NASB) as Priest, He reached the completion of His experiential training and actively became the Author of eternal salvation. Jesus Christ’s doing the will of His Father by being subjected to death was not passive endurance. In the volume of the book it was written of Christ, “...Lo, I come...to do thy will, O God” (Heb. 10:7). Christ not only offered Himself to God as a sacrifice for the elect but, in the offering, He offered the elect with Himself. Hence, it can be said the elect died with Christ when He died. The aorist tenses used in Romans 6:1-11 denote a single and completed past act of Christ’s substitutionary work and the identification of the elect with Him in that work.

Some teach that Christ could not be a Priest on earth. They say He was saluted as the Son of God at His incarnation (Ps. 2), and He was saluted as a Priest forever at His ascension (Ps. 110). Their proof text is Hebrews 8:4 — “For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law.” One must note, however, that Scripture does not say that when Christ was on earth He was not a Priest (Heb. 2:17; 5:7-10), but had He remained on earth He could not have discharged His priestly functions. He was not a priest after the order of Aaron. The first tabernacle was not false, but it was incomplete. It was a shadow of the reality.

The perfection of the sacrifice is derived from the Person of Christ, the Divine Son of God. He was “obedient unto death” (Phil. 2:8). The word for “unto” is *mechri* (*mechris* before a vowel), an adverb meaning unto, even to, until, or till. It has the force of a preposition with the genitive case of *thanatou* (death). Does this mean that Christ was obedient up to the point of His death but not in His death? Such belief would be synonymous with Christ’s exhortation to the church in Smyrna to be “faithful unto death” — *achri thanatou* (Rev. 2:10). Jesus Christ, unlike men, was actively obedient up to the point of death, and as the Conqueror of death, He “cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost [*edzepneusen*, first aorist active indicative of *ekpneo*, to breath out, to expire, or to die]” (Mark 15:37). If Christ’s active obedience had stopped short of going through death, He would have failed to bring His righteousness through death for the benefit of the elect. Christ who offered Himself not only satisfied Divine justice by bearing the sins of the elect but He also brought His righteousness through death for the benefit of those for whom He died.

## JESUS CHRIST IS HIGH PRIEST FOREVER

The Hebrew priesthood was instituted because the people were not qualified to draw near to God in person. Although the priests were ordained to dwell in God's habitation, their personal consciousness of sin made them afraid. The erection of a special place of worship carried with it the necessity for setting up an order of service. Any deviation from that order resulted in God's judgment upon them. Hence, the failure of Nadab and Abihu represents the public failure of the priesthood as committed to man's responsibility. Notwithstanding such public failure, God would have a priesthood maintained by two younger sons, Eleazar and Ithamar (Lev. 10). Outside failure never destroys inward maintenance of all that is truly of God. Therefore, Paul's key word to Timothy, "nevertheless" of II Timothy 2:19, came after his description of public failure:

Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity (II Tim. 2:19).

As the remaining sons of Aaron show how the priesthood was to be maintained in a remnant, Timothy and all remaining faithful servants of God in every age are to earnestly contend for the faith in the midst of public failure.

The name "priest" denotes the idea of a familiar friend of God. The distinctive function of the office was to receive and present to God that which belonged to Him. Before Aaron there was no separate order of priesthood. Every father was the priest of his family. For example, Job is believed to be the most ancient book of the Bible. This patriarch acted as high priest of his family, which was not allowed after the exodus.

Aaron was the first high priest of the nation of Israel. As the first, he did not have in himself the proper qualifications for shadowing forth the Lord Jesus Christ, the great High Priest. Therefore, the requisite beauty and glory were placed on him symbolically (Ex. 28). Arrayed in those beautiful, costly, and Divinely appointed garments, he was symbolically what Jesus Christ is in reality. Thus, Aaron could minister about the tabernacle as a type of Him who is the true High Priest made after the order of Melchisedec, not after the order of Aaron.

Jesus Christ is greater than Aaron. His priesthood was after a higher order than the Aaronic. It was after the order of Melchisedec (Heb. 5:6). The order of Melchisedec is an everlasting one (Heb. 7:16, 17). Jesus Christ is the sinless Son of God. Aaron was sinful. He had to offer a sacrifice for himself before he could offer one for the people (Lev. 16:6, 11). If Jesus Christ had been peccable, as many religionists advocate, He would have been no greater than Aaron. Thus, the "better things" of Hebrews would be meaningless, and the author could not have been inspired. Jesus Christ is the forerunner of His sheep (Heb. 6:20). He was made a High Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec. Conversely, Aaron was not a priest after the order of Melchisedec. Therefore, he could not be a forerunner of Israel. He was only a type of Christ. Jesus Christ was the Surety of the new covenant (Heb. 7:22), but Aaron was not the surety of the

old covenant. Christ served the realities (Heb. 8:1-5); whereas, Aaron served the shadows. Lastly, Jesus Christ offered a better sacrifice than those offered by Aaron. He offered Himself (Heb. 10:1-14).

Every high priest under the old economy was (1) called by God, (2) taken from among men, (3) appointed in things pertaining to God, (4) to function in behalf of men, (5) to offer gifts and sacrifices, (6) to be compassionate toward the ignorant and those who were out of the way, (7) to offer a sacrifice for personal sins, and (8) not to take the honor of the office unto himself. The great High Priest met every element required in the new covenant. Unlike Aaron under the old covenant, there was no personal weakness in Jesus Christ that required a personal sacrifice. Therefore, Christ was the Surety of the elect not only of the new covenant but also under the old covenant.

The covenant God made with Israel made nothing perfect, “but the bringing in of a better hope did” (Heb. 7:19). This is not difficult to understand, since types were never meant to accomplish that which only the antitype—Jesus Christ—could perform. The legal side of suretyship is even stronger when the Surety becomes the Substitute for the original debtor by having the debt charged to the Surety and the debtor released. For example, Onesimus was legally released before the debt was actually paid to the creditor. This was made possible by Paul assuming the debt. In this way, only, could the Old Testament saints be forgiven before the death of the Testator (Heb. 9:15-17).

In order to understand the greatness of Jesus Christ over Aaron, the following facts must be considered: Jesus Christ was not an accessory with His people for the payment of their debt. Payment of the debt was not conditioned on the idea that His people pay, but that He would pay in case they failed. The Surety must be capable of fulfilling all the obligations of the covenant. The covenant must be kept and the debt paid. Since the Creditor demands payment, the Surety is bound by the covenant and the debtor goes free. Hence, Christ gives assurance that all for whom He is Surety are acquitted. The greatness of Christ’s Person, the sufficiency of His sacrifice, the authority behind His resurrection, the superiority of His priesthood, and His ascension to the Father are a complete pledge of the validity of the better covenant.

Jesus Christ was not self-elected but God-appointed as High Priest. He did not take the honor unto Himself. No man has a right to take such an office without God’s appointment. Korah sought the priesthood, but he was not ordained by God (Num. 16:10). Advantage to oneself is no justification for that which is unlawful. Grasping for unlawful authority is setting aside Divine authority. Every man in his appointed place was important for Israel. It is also important for the church.

God is orderly in all His works. Therefore, God called Aaron to be Israel’s first high priest (Ex. 28:1). Concerning His incarnate Son, He also said: “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec” (Heb. 5:6). It is in direct opposition to anyone taking this honor unto himself — “...but he that is called [*alla kaloumenos*, present passive participle of *kaleo*, to call; means “but being called”] of God as was Aaron” (Heb. 5:4). As all lawful priests descended from Aaron, the common priesthood of believers descend from Jesus Christ. The glory of the High Priest was conferred on Christ by God the Father. It was a glory which He did not have before His incarnation. Hence, we see that the purpose in the Word becoming flesh was for the High Priest

of the elect to be taken out of men. Jesus Christ possessed a human nature — partook of flesh and blood (Heb. 2:14) — which enabled Him to “be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people” (Heb. 2:17).

Jesus Christ prayed, feared, learned obedience, and was made perfect “in the days of his flesh.” Christians would be indignant at anyone who would diminish the glory of Christ’s Godhead, but we should manifest the same disapproval toward anyone who would take away from His impeccable human nature. The term “the days of his flesh” (Heb. 5:7) is used to distinguish His life on earth from His former state in glory. Christ’s human nature is represented by the term “flesh” (John 1:14; Rom. 1:3, 4; 8:3; I Tim. 3:16). The word “days” demonstrates the brevity of His relationship to time, but it in no way means the conclusion of His “days” would terminate His union with the flesh He assumed. The Son of God began His relationship with time by being “made flesh,” but the flesh He assumed enabled Him to be not only the sacrifice for sins of the elect but the Priest who sacrificed Himself. His priesthood did not cease at Calvary because He is a Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.

Jesus Christ prayed as the High Priest. Since the High Priest was taken from men, Christ prayed as the God-Man; because as God absolutely considered, He could not pray. He is presenting Himself before the Father in the office of High Priest. In Hebrews 5:7, the word “prayers” comes from the Greek word *deeseis*, the plural of *deesis*, a derivative of the verb *deomai*, which means to need. The noun is used 19 times and is translated prayer, supplication, and request. The verb is used 22 times and is translated prayed, I beseech, and I besought. The word “supplication” is *hiketerias*, plural of *hiketeria*, which means supplication and is used only in this verse. The text says Christ offered up prayers “unto him that was able to save him from [ek] death.” Some say the preposition *ek* can be translated either “out of” or “from.” This is true, but the context enables us to know which is the correct translation. It is not a question of the Father’s ability but a question of His purpose. If God the Father were to save Christ from the death of the cross, He was able to save the elect without the cross. However, since the Father had given the elect grace in Jesus Christ before the world began (II Tim. 1:9), that grace was given on the basis of Christ’s death. Therefore, Christ prayed unto Him who was able to raise Him out from the state of death (Heb. 5:7). He did not pray that He would keep Him from dying.

Christ was heard on account of His *eulabeias*, genitive singular of *eulabeia*, which means reverence or piety. Hence, Christ’s prayers were never in vain. The word translated “heard” is a compound verb *eisakoustheis*, first aorist passive participle of *eisakouo*, which means to accept one’s petition. When Christ raised Lazarus, He said, “Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always” (John 11:41, 42). Christ was not only heard but His petition was granted. He was not saved from dying, but He was saved out of the state of death.

Christ as High Priest learned obedience from the things which He suffered (Heb. 5:8). The Greek word for “learned” is *emathe*, second aorist active indicative of *manthano*, which means to learn or to be taught; to learn by experience. Hence, there are two ways one may learn something: (1) learn something he did not know before, or (2) learn experientially what he knew before. Christ learned experientially what priesthood, suretyship, death, etc., were.

Christ as High Priest was made perfect (Heb. 5:9). “Being made perfect” is one word in the Greek. It is *teleiotheis*, first aorist passive participle of *teleioo*, which means to advance to final completeness in preparation for the office of Savior. Therefore, having been brought to the place of completeness, Christ became the Author of eternal salvation.