

However, according to his sovereign design, he does ordain that Satan, demons, or other human agents tempt us, and God uses those temptations for his own wise and holy purposes (Job 1–2; Luke 22:31–32; 2 Cor. 12:7–10). In accord with the categories listed in 1 John 2:16, Satan tempted Jesus with hunger as one of “the desires of the flesh” (Matt. 4:2–3; 1 John 2:16), with putting God to the test as an exhibition of “the pride of life” (Matt. 4:5–6; 1 John 2:16), and with the possession of the kingdoms of the world and all their glory to fulfill “the desires of the eyes” (Matt. 4:8–9; 1 John 2:16). Through this specific time of testing, as throughout his earthly life, Jesus was tempted “in every respect . . . as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). Jesus was able to be tempted but was unable to sin.

The Bible is explicit that Jesus *did* not sin (1 John 3:5). But *could* he have sinned, whether in thought or deed? This raises the question of the peccability or impeccability of Christ.³² Those who argue for peccability—that Jesus was able to sin even though he did not actually sin—focus on two main points. First, they argue that because the Son of God took upon himself a complete human nature, and because the original humans had the ability to sin even when they were unfallen (cf. Genesis 3), therefore the incarnate Christ must have been able to sin. To argue otherwise, they claim, is to undermine the genuine humanity of Christ. Second, peccability advocates argue that the inability to sin would undermine the genuineness of Christ’s temptations. If there is no ability to sin, then there can be no true temptation. Thus, to argue that Jesus was unable to sin is to compromise the clear biblical teaching that he was “in every respect . . . tempted as we are” (Heb. 4:15).

The Scriptures, however, testify that Christ was not able to sin. In the first place, Jesus states that the ruler of this world (Satan, cf. Eph. 2:2; 1 John 5:19) “has nothing in [Christ]” (John 14:30 NASB). That is, there was nothing in Jesus but perfect purity and eager readiness to do the Father’s will (John 4:34). For Jesus to have been able to sin, Satan would have had to have something in Christ—a wrong desire or willingness to sin—to exploit with external inducements, but there was no such thing. Second, in John 5:19, Jesus says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing.” Since it is beyond dispute that the Father could never sin, for Jesus to say he “can do nothing” but “what he sees the Father doing” is to explicitly affirm his own inability to sin.

This does not undermine Jesus’s genuine humanity, as advocates of peccability claim. Though Adam and Eve were able to sin before the fall, their humanity, unlike Jesus’s, was not hypostatically united to the divine nature. But because Jesus was *both* fully and truly human *and* fully and truly divine, and because God cannot sin (James 1:13), Jesus could not have sinned. To argue otherwise is to suggest that, for the sake of being truly human, Jesus was able not to be truly God. This is to circum-

32. The following summary of the two views replaces the section in the original 2017 edition of this book, which included material from Michael McGhee Canham, “*Potuit Non Peccare or Non Potuit Peccare: Evangelicals, Hermeneutics, and the Impeccability Debate*,” *MSJ* 11, no. 1 (2000): 94–97. In the original edition, the authors credited the source but adapted the material without obtaining the permission of Dr. Canham, who takes a different view from the one presented in this volume. His “both/and” view sees impeccability as a divine attribute and peccability as a human attribute of the incarnate, preglorified Christ. We have replaced the entire section with this new material. We apologize to Dr. Canham and regret the error.

scribe Jesus's deity by his humanity and to deny the fundamental principle of the hypostatic union. The ability to sin is not absolutely *essential* to humanity; otherwise, we would cease to be human in our glorified state, when we will not be able to sin.

Nor does the impeccability view undermine the genuineness of Christ's temptations. The peccability view conceives of temptation as if the one tempted must always be attracted to or allured by the sin in question. But to be attracted to or allured by sin is itself sinful; a desire for an illicit end is itself an illicit desire (cf. Matt. 5:27–28; Col. 3:5). Because Jesus was tempted “in every respect . . . as we are, yet *without* sin” (Heb. 4:15), Jesus's temptations never included the internal pull to disobedience that so often characterizes our temptations (cf. James 1:14), for Jesus regarded it as his “food”—his nourishment and sustenance—to do the Father's will (John 4:34). Rather than enticements from within, Jesus's temptations were inducements to sin from without (cf. Matt. 4:1–11). The perfect purity of his thinking, affections, and desires meant that Jesus could not but have emerged victorious over his temptations. Scripture often speaks of our trials as refining our faith by fire, as gold is refined (cf. 1 Pet. 1:7). If the gold is genuine, however, there is no possibility that it could be consumed by the fire of testing. The test proves the purity of the gold, and the gold's inability to fail the test does not make the fire any less real or intense. In the same way, neither does Jesus's impeccability render his temptations any less genuine.

In fact, since he never yielded to the temptations, he endured their full force. Thus, temptation for Jesus was more real and more powerful than for any other human being. A comparison of Adam's temptation and Jesus's temptation reveals great differences and makes Jesus's victory all the more remarkable:

1. Adam faced temptation in the best of settings, the garden of Eden; Jesus faced temptation in a harsh environment, the wilderness of Judea.
2. Adam lived in the perfection of the prefallen world; Jesus lived in a deeply corrupt and sinful fallen world.
3. Adam gave in to the first temptation he faced; Jesus faced repeated temptations throughout his earthly life and ministry (Heb. 4:15) but never yielded.
4. Adam entered his time of temptation adequately fed in a delightful garden filled with fruit and fresh water; Jesus was weakened by forty days of fasting before his temptation in the wilderness.
5. The consequences of Adam's fall to temptation were lethal to the entire human race; the consequences of Jesus's triumph over temptation allowed him to complete the program of redemption successfully.

DEPENDENCE ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

The account of Jesus's temptation raises the matter of Jesus's relationship to and dependence on the Holy Spirit. Several Old Testament prophecies foretold that the Messiah would depend on the Holy Spirit: