

the very moment of His existence as man so united in one person with the Word of God, that the very person who was Son of man was at the same time Son of God, and the very person who was Son of God was at the same time Son of man; and by the adoption of His human nature into the divine, the grace itself became in a way so natural to the man as to leave no room for the entrance of sin.”

The temptation in the desert.

Temptation is a test or trial. Specifically, it is an invitation or an allurements to sin, which manifests the moral fiber of one who experiences it. Temptation is, either (a) *external only*, and then it is an invitation or suggestion from without, with no tendency whatever, in the person tempted, to respond to it; or (b) *internal*, and then it is a weakness, passion, or tendency in the person tempted. Now the temptation of Christ in the desert (Matt. Chap. 4) was entirely *external*. Our Lord’s human nature was perfect and without unruly tendencies, and his Person is divine. The temptation of Christ was a test or experiment on the part of the devil. The devil wished to know for sure whether this man Christ was God Incarnate; for the divinity of Christ had been manifested to the demons only in so far as Christ willed it to be made known to them. Satan suspected; he wished to be sure. In making his proposals or temptations, Satan twice employed the phrase, “If thou be the Son of God...” It is interesting to note that our Lord, in rebuffing the tempter, did not tell him what he was eager to know. Now, our Lord endured what may be called the indignity of the temptation

in the desert, for good reasons: (a) to bear, at least outwardly, all that his followers have to endure; (b) to show us, and warn us, that not even perfect sanctity is immune from the assaults of the devil; (c) to set us an example of prompt and unhesitating rejection of temptation; (d) to show up, for our benefit, the devil’s method of assault, namely, first suggesting something apparently good or at least harmless (“make these stones bread”). And moving quickly on to what is most vile, even to devil-worship; (e) to assure us that all temptation can be successfully resisted, and to make us turn to him with confidence in our own temptations.

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Pamphlet 565

Could Jesus Sin?

Christ’s Sinlessness and Impeccability

The perfection of our Lord before His birth.

The human soul of Christ was sanctified in the first instant of His conception by its union with the Word of God. From the first, Christ as man had the fullness of grace sanctifying both his body and his soul.

From the first instant of his conception, Christ had a perfect human nature and complete use of reason, that is, with perfect intellect and will.

Therefore, the sanctification of Christ’s human nature included the complete conforming of his human will to the divine will, this act is meritorious; hence, Christ merited perfectly in the first instant of his conception. And this perfect merit is complete. God made man cannot possibly *increase* in merit.

From the first instant of his conception Christ’s human nature was taken into the unity of Person. Therefore, from the first, Christ was a comprehensor, that is, he had perfect beatitude in the possession of the beatific vision of God.

Jesus Christ was free from all sin, from original sin as well as from personal sin. (*De fide.*)

Christ’s freedom from original sin is expressed in A Decree in Behalf of the Jacobites of the Council of Florence (1441); “it firmly believes, professes, and teaches that no one conceived of man and woman

was ever freed of the abomination of the Devil, except through the merit of the mediator between God and men, our Lord Jesus Christ; He was conceived without sin, was born and died, through His death alone laid low the enemy of the human race by destroying our sins, and opened the entrance to the kingdom of heaven, which the first man by his own sin had lost with all succession; and that He would come sometime, all the sacred rites of the Old Testament, sacrifices, sacraments, and ceremonies disclosed.”

According to Luke 1:35, Christ entered into his earthly existence in a state of holiness, “And the angel said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.’” As original sin is propagated by natural generation, and since Christ entered life in a supernatural manner through conception by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18; Luke 1:26) it follows that he was not subject to the general law of original sin.

From freedom of original sin there flows the freedom from concupiscence. As Christ was not subject to original sin, there was no need for him to take on himself this consequence of original sin, nor was it demanded by his redemptive task. Christ’s sensual nature was, therefore, completely subordinate to the direction of reason. The Fifth General Council of Constantinople (553) rejected the teaching of Theodor of Mopsuestia, that Christ “was burdened with the passions of the soul and with the desires of the flesh” (D 224).

St. Augustine declared, “Let everyone that believes that the flesh of Christ revolted against his spirit, be excluded” (*Opus imperfectum* c. Iul, IV 47).

Christ’s freedom from all personal sin (and at the same time from original sin) is expressed in the 10th Anathema of St. Cyril: “for He did not need oblation who was entirely free from sin” (D 122), and in the decision of faith of the Council of Chalcedon: “similar to us in all things, except sin” (D148).

Christ was sinless.

It is not perhaps so remarkable that Judas, Pilate, and Pilate’s wife declared that Christ was a holy man (Matthew 27:4, 19, 24); but even the Apostles who had lived familiarly with Him for a long time, and had Him continually under their observation, openly testified to His perfect sinlessness (Acts 3:14; 1 Peter 1:18-19, 2:22; 1 John 2:1, 3:5; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 7:26). Finally, Christ Himself, who taught all men to pray: *forgive us our debts*, never displayed any consciousness of sin, or asked forgiveness for His sins; even though He was utterly humble. He confidently stated, “Which of you can convict me of sin?” (John 8:46), and “the prince of the world is coming, and in me he has nothing” (1 John 14:30), and elsewhere He exclaimed, “I do always the things that are pleasing to him [the Father]” (1 John 8:29).

Christ has not merely not actually sinned, but also could not sin. (Sent. *Fidei proxima*.)

The Fifth General Council of Constantinople (553) condemned the teaching of Theodor of Mopsuestia, which asserted that Christ only became completely impeccable after the Resurrection. (D224). It follows from this that He was already impeccable.

The intrinsic reason of Christ’s impeccability lies, as the Fathers stress, in the Hypostatic Union (The union of Christ’s human nature to the hypostasis or person of God the Word). Since the Word is the *principium quod* (operating source) of his human activity, it follows that his human actions are actions of a Divine Person. Obviously, it is incompatible with God’s absolute sanctity that a Divine Person should be the responsible subject of a sinful deed. Further, the Hypostatic Union effected an intrinsic penetration and control of Christ’s human will by the Divine Will. (D 291).

From the Hypostatic Union there arises a physical impossibility of sinning and from the Beatific Vision a moral impossibility that is, it involves such a close connection with God in knowledge and love that a turning away from God is actually excluded. The Fathers and the early councils of the Church unanimously uphold the impeccability of our Divine Redeemer and trace it to the Hypostatic Union.

St. Cyril of Alexandria, e. g. says, “All those who maintain that Christ was able to commit sin — I know not how — are foolish and destitute of reason.” St. Augustine teaches that the Hypostatic Union makes it impossible for Christ to sin. “It was by this [the grace of God],” he says, “that a man without any antecedent merit, was at