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TEMPTATION, SINLESSNESS, AND IMPECCABILITY

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Temptation, Sinlessness, And Impeccability

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ABSTRACT: Hebrews 4:15 says that Jesus was tempted like other human beings yet never sinned. Sinlessness is not the same as impeccability. Chalcedonian Christology or some variant of it seems necessary to show that Jesus was metaphysically unable to sin. Metaphysical impossibility to sin, though, appears to rule out temptation as experienced by ordinary human beings. This paper argues that Oliver D. Crisp, T. A. Hart, Brian Leftow, and Gerald O'Collins all fall short in trying to show how Jesus was both impeccable and tempted as we are.

KEYWORDS: Chalcedonian definition, Christology, divine kryptis, dyothelitism, hamartia, hypostatic union, impeccability, incarnation, kenosis, temptation

MANY OF US have long meditated on a sinless Jesus who is tempted as we are, yet mindful that some wonders are beyond our scope (Ps. 131:1). Together three passages in the New Testament—Hebrews 4:15, James 1:13–15, and Philippians 2:7—invite speculation about whether Jesus was tempted as human beings are. Speculation quickly thrusts us into the problem of whether Jesus was impeccable or merely sinless. I advance the thesis that it is hard to see how Jesus, though sinless, was both impeccable and tempted as we are.¹ I do not claim to prove that Jesus was not both impeccable and tempted as we are. Nor do I claim that Oliver D. Crisp, T. A. Hart, Brian Leftow, and Gerald O'Collins say that it is easy to see how Jesus was both impeccable and tempted as we are. I do argue that each falls short in trying to show how Jesus was both impeccable and tempted as we are. Their positions differ subtly from each other and I engage them across Sections 2 and 3. Over all, this essay offers an account of temptation and gently questions some Chalcedon-related formulations of impeccability.

¹On the possibility that Jesus was not sinless, see, e.g., Jeffrey Siker, “The Sinlessness of Christ and Human Perfection,” in *Impeccability and Temptation: Understanding Christ's Divine and Human Will*, edited by Johannes Grössl and Klaus von Stosch (London and New York: Routledge, 2021), 15–32. That possibility is outside the scope of this paper.

1. COMPLEXITIES OF TEMPTATION

To fix ideas, temptation broadly speaking is an allurements or enticement to an act or object that is in some way bad, imprudent, evil, morally wrong, or sinful for the person so allured or enticed. This study makes room for the experiential and the metaphysical in regard to temptation. The experiential dimensions of temptation fall into four groups that are not rigidly distinct: epistemic, psychological, affective, and spiritual. Epistemically, temptation involves the knowledge or belief that, for example, one can succumb, that one's risk of succumbing is great or small, and that one can take steps to avoid temptation. Psychologically, a tempted person feels a "pull" or "draw" to do something bad or wrong. Contemporary academic psychologists often think of temptation somewhat neutrally as a conflict between short-term desires and long-term goals.² Affectively, temptation often involves a feeling of some sort: for example, a sense of victory in successful resistance or of defeat in giving up, or emotions of regret, remorse, guilt, or shame after falling prey to temptation. Spiritually, temptation is a struggle between good and evil. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, preeminently, marks this struggle: in temptation, which objectively has its "origin in the devil," the Christian is "abandoned by all his powers—indeed, attacked by them—abandoned by all men, abandoned by God himself. His heart shakes, and has fallen into complete darkness."³ All four experiential dimensions of temptation are in a sense subjective and are often psychologically accessible to humans, who may nevertheless grasp them imperfectly.

The metaphysics of temptation, in this exposition, interlocks with the epistemic dimensions of experiential temptation. Consider four compound statements (CS). The first half of each statement is modal, namely that Jesus is impeccable. The second half is epistemic in that it concerns Jesus's knowledge, belief, or absence of belief. (CS1) Jesus is impeccable and he knows that he is impeccable. (CS2) Jesus is impeccable and he believes but does not know that he is impeccable. (CS3) Jesus is impeccable and he believes that he is peccable. (CS4) Jesus is impeccable and it has never occurred to him whether he is impeccable or peccable.

Assume for the sake of argument that Jesus is tempted to sin. (CS1) seems confused, for if Jesus is both impeccable and knows that he is impeccable, then it would make little sense to say that he is tempted. (CS2) seems problematic, for Jesus's belief that he is impeccable might make him confident that he will successfully resist all temptations that beset him. That would make him different from most human beings, who do not believe they are impeccable and seem unlikely to be sure that they will successfully resist all temptations. So opponents of my thesis may prefer something like (CS3) or (CS4). Although (CS3) and (CS4) are not always distinguished in the literature, they are central to issues about Jesus's inner life.

²E.g., Ayelet Fishbach and Benjamin A. Converse, "Identifying and Battling Temptation," in *Handbook of Self-Regulation: Research, Theory, and Applications*, 2nd ed. Edited by Kathleen D. Vohs and Roy F. Baumeister (New York and London: Guilford, 2011), 244–60.

³Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Temptation," in *Creation and Fall: Two Biblical Stories*, ed. Eberhard Bethge and trans. Kathleen Downham (New York: Macmillan, 1959), 98, 111.

Some theologians may reject (CS3) as unorthodox on the ground that it ascribes a false belief to Jesus. And some theologians may prefer variants of (CS4), such as: (CS4a) Jesus is impeccable, has no belief that he is peccable, but sometimes worries that he might be peccable.

Metaphysical temptability is a susceptibility to behave badly, wrongfully, imprudently, evilly, immorally, or sinfully. It reflects objective facts about human beings. These facts need not be psychologically accessible to human beings. At least by the time Jesus attained the age of reason, it would comport with traditional Christology to hold in accordance with Heb. 4:15 that he could experience temptation like ordinary humans. However, to say that Jesus was “tempted as we are” is not to say that he was tempted in every single possible way that other humans are tempted. There are some implicit restrictions on his having been tempted as are other human beings. For illustration, Jesus was not tempted to steal a neighbor’s wrist watch.

Peccability is a metaphysical susceptibility to behave immorally, sinfully, evilly, or with great imprudence. It is therefore narrower than metaphysical temptability. Because peccability ordinarily applies just to the ability to sin, here I am using “peccability” in a wider way. Further, peccability as understood here reflects objective facts about human beings. Later it will be important to focus on whether Jesus could have succumbed specifically to a temptation to sin, which would involve “peccability” in its usual, narrow sense. Peccability, like metaphysical temptability, reflects objective facts about human beings at an appropriate age of development. These facts may not be psychologically accessible to these human beings.

Heb. 4:15 says: “For the high priest [Jesus] we have is not incapable of feeling our weaknesses with us, but has been put to the test in exactly the same way as ourselves, apart from sin.”⁴ But debate exists over whether Jesus was also impeccable, i.e., unable to sin.⁵ Given that impeccability is an inability to sin, it would exist in the divine nature, and would exist in Jesus only through the hypostatic union (if at all). If Jesus was able to sin but never sinned, he might have been tempted “in exactly the same way as ourselves.” Yet if he was impeccable, there are questions about whether, and if so how, he could have been tempted as we are. I use “succumbing to temptation” and “yielding to temptation” interchangeably.

The Greek word for temptation is *peirasmos* and for sin it is *hamartia*. For simplicity of expression, this study understands sin mainly as an act that is contrary to morality or divine law and command; but it also assumes that some omissions and some intentions are sins. However, it does not discuss original sin or sin as either a

⁴See also Heb. 2:17–18: “It was essential that he [Jesus] should in this way be made completely like [*kata panta*, in every respect] his brothers so that he could become a compassionate and trustworthy high priest for their relationship to God, able to expiate the sins of the people. For the suffering he himself passed through while being put to the test [*peirastheis*, tempted] enables him to help others when they are being put to the test [*peirazomenois*, being tempted].” Biblical quotations are from *The New Jerusalem Bible* unless otherwise indicated. The New Revised Standard Version translates the relevant part of Heb. 4:15 as “in every respect [Jesus] has been tested [or tempted] as we are, yet without sin.”

⁵Oliver D. Crisp, “Was Christ Sinless or Impeccable?,” *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 72 (2007): 168–186, examines some of the main views. There are a few changes in Oliver D. Crisp, *God Incarnate: Explorations in Christology* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2009), ch. 6, also titled “Was Christ Sinless or Impeccable?”

state or a character trait. Nor does it inquire whether Jesus had a fallen or an unfallen human nature, or whether under some assumptions Jesus was both peccable and impeccable.⁶ Although English translations of the New Testament almost always render *hamartia* as sin, sometimes the Greek word in New Testament contexts may be closer to a wrong, misdeed, shortcoming, transgression, or improper behavior.

Here is a roadmap. Because some theologians invoke ecumenical councils to suggest that Jesus was impeccable, Section 2 explores the Chalcedonian Definition (CD) and some later ecumenical conciliar Christological formulations I call *Chalcedon Plus*. Section 3 argues that Jesus's ability to believe that he is peccable requires a plausible model of psychological restriction (whether kenotic or non-kenotic), and that leading recent attempts to offer such a model seem unsuccessful. Section 4 argues that there are at least four boundaries to temptation and that temptation is a rich epistemic, psychological, affective, and spiritual phenomenon that may require temptability to experience it. The arguments throw doubt on the claim that an impeccable Jesus was tempted as we are. Section 5 concludes.

2. CHALCEDON AND ITS LIMITS

A case against my thesis might invoke the Council of Chalcedon (451 AD) as well as Heb. 4:15.⁷ The core conciliar proclamation is the Chalcedonian Definition (CD),⁸ which reads:

Following, therefore, the holy fathers, we all in harmony teach confession of one and the same Son our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and the same perfect in manhood, truly God and the same truly man, of a rational soul and body, consubstantial with the Father in respect of the Godhead, and the same consubstantial with us in the manhood, like us in all things apart from sin, begotten from the Father before the ages in respect of the Godhead, and the same in the last days for us and for our salvation from the Virgin Mary the *Theotokos* in respect of the manhood, one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, acknowledged in two natures without confusion, change, division, or separation (the difference of the natures being in no way destroyed by the union, but rather the distinctive character of each nature being preserved and coming together into one person and one hypostasis), not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, Only-begotten, God, Word, Lord, Jesus Christ.⁹

I quote the CD because some scholars invoke it for the claim that Jesus is impeccable. The CD relies on Heb. 4:15 for the proposition that Jesus was sinless. The CD does

⁶On the last, see Timothy Pawl, *In Defense of Extended Conciliar Christology: A Philosophical Essay* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 151–64.

⁷For the Acts, see Richard Price and Michael Gaddis, eds., *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005, reprinted with minor corrections 2007) (trans., intro., and annot.), 3 vols. [hereinafter *Acts*].

⁸The Greek and Latin texts of the CD, along with an English translation, are available at ccel.org/ccel/schaff/creeds2.iv.i.iii.html.

⁹Price and Gaddis, *Acts*, vol. 1, 68 (footnote omitted and an earlier version on p. 64 omitted).

not state that Jesus was impeccable. It does, however, supply ideas for arguments that Jesus was impeccable, such as: Jesus is God incarnate; so there is one person who is God the Son and Jesus of Nazareth; because God the Son is all good and therefore impeccable, Jesus is all good and impeccable, for they are the same person. Whether one or more Chalcedon-related arguments for Jesus's impeccability are sound is a matter of debate.

Perhaps few are as careful and evenhanded as Timothy Pawl who, in his defense of conciliar Christology, states that for his project he "need not settle whether the scriptural or conciliar evidence implies the truth of the Impeccability Thesis," namely that "Christ was unable to sin."¹⁰ Pawl scrupulously examines arguments for and against the Impeccability Thesis, and he is sympathetic to the claim of traditional Christology that Jesus was impeccable despite being tempted as we are. To him Chalcedon is central for incarnational theology ("one person and one hypostasis" in two natures) and for possible arguments that Jesus was impeccable.¹¹

Pawl writes as a philosopher, or philosopher-theologian, not as a church historian. From the standpoint of church history, the Acts of Chalcedon and the CD may seem unattractive to some.

First, the technical language of the CD does not do justice to the simpler language concerning Jesus spoken by those put outside the fold at Chalcedon. It was not Pope Leo, bishops in the Latin West, or bishops in the Greek East who sought a new definition of faith (creed or "symbol"), but rather the Greek Emperor Marcian and to a lesser extent the Roman Emperor Valentinian III.¹² After the Second Council of Ephesus (449 AD) (the "Robber Council"), the bishops were open only to a reaffirmation of the creed issued by the Council of Nicaea (325 AD).¹³ It was Marcian who wanted them to sign off on a new conciliar definition of faith because it would be binding on all Christians whereas a fiat by him could be overturned by a later emperor, and perhaps because he thought only a new ecumenical council could reverse Ephesus II.¹⁴ Pope Leo assumed that his Tome would govern at the council, but Marcian outmaneuvered Leo by not disclosing his agenda well in advance and by making sure the council took place at Chalcedon, near Constantinople, rather than at Nicaea or Ephesus.¹⁵ A draft definition, which has not survived, was submitted and, upon Marcian's insistence, later amended despite opposition from many bishops—showing that "even on a doctrinal issue episcopal wishes had to yield to imperial policy."¹⁶ The CD is in some ways a model of compressed writing

¹⁰Pawl, *In Defense of Extended Conciliar Christology*, 132 (footnote omitted), 134.

¹¹Cf. *ibid.*, 16, 25–26, 28, 75, 93, 105, 133–34, 176.

¹²Price and Gaddis, *Acts*, vol. 1, 37–51; vol. 2, 1–28, 183–205; Hagit Amirav, *Authority and Performance: Sociological Perspectives on the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 30–38.

¹³Price, "The Theology of Chalcedon," in *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005, reprinted with minor corrections 2007) (trans., intro., and annot.), 3 vols. *Acts*, vol. 1, 56–59.

¹⁴Price and Gaddis, *Acts*, vol. 1, 89–91.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, vol. 1, 87–110.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, vol. 2, 183. On the draft definition and its revision, see *ibid.*, vol. 2, 184–91.

yet its language glosses over subtleties important to Miaphysites and moderate Nestorians.¹⁷ Few Christological differences exist between these two groups and Chalcedonian churches; non-technical language to the effect that Jesus “fully and eternally is God and human, and that he is this as One” accepts that ecclesiastical dogmas never wholly comprehend the incarnation.¹⁸ “With hindsight the church historian is bound to judge the production of a definition a tragedy for Christian unity, leading as it did to the schism between Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian churches that has continued to this day.”¹⁹

A second point is substantive: Chalcedon leaves the hypostatic union under-developed. It supplies a functional unity between the divine and human natures in Jesus. The CD contains some ontological statements about the hypostatic union but does not provide an adequate ontological exposition of that union. Only with the Second Council of Constantinople (553 AD) do we receive further ecumenical clarification between Chalcedon and moderate Nestorianism: the *hypostasis* of the Son of God assumed a human nature such that, without it, there could have been no incarnation. The Third Council of Constantinople (680–681 AD) declared that Jesus had both a human will and a divine will (dyothelitism). The net effect of these clarifications is mixed. On the one hand, they pull together dogmatic positions that reduce some shortcomings of Chalcedon itself. There seems now to be a joining, in one person, of a human nature consisting of a physical body, a human mind, and a human will, and a divine nature consisting of an immaterial substance (the Son), a divine mind, and a divine will. On the other hand, the clarifications do not solve all dogmatic issues. If Christ has both a divine mind and a human mind, he seems to have two centers of consciousness with separate mental states.²⁰ Nor do the clarifications preclude new issues about a possible contrivance in having two minds and two wills. A contrivance could both impair a unity of consciousness in Jesus and allow a temptation to sin in Jesus’s human mind and human will that his divine will extinguishes just after his human will has decided to succumb but an instant before he can act.²¹

I apply the term *Chalcedon Plus* to the ecumenical conciliar Christological consensus around Chalcedon and Constantinople II and III. The imperial pressure leading to the CD does not show that its propositions about God the Son and Jesus

¹⁷Price, “The Theology of Chalcedon,” in *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005, reprinted with minor corrections 2007) (trans., intro., and annot.), vol. 1, 56–75.

¹⁸Dorothea Wendebourg, “Chalcedon in Ecumenical Discourse,” *Pro Ecclesia* 7, no. 3 (1998): 307–32, 316 (1995 lecture with English translation by Byron Stuhlman and Beth Schlegel).

¹⁹Price and Gaddis, *Acts*, vol. 2, 191.

²⁰For a perceptive discussion, see R. T. Mullins, “Classical Theism, Christology, and the Two Sons Worry,” in *Impeccability and Temptation: Understanding Christ’s Divine and Human Will* (London and New York: Routledge, 2021), 164–82.

²¹Pawl, *In Defense of Extended Conciliar Christology*, 82, 120–21, 125–31, 133–35, offers a gentler reading. For a clear argument for dyothelitism over neo-monothelitism, see Oliver D. Crisp, “The Divine and Human Will of Christ,” in *Impeccability and Temptation: Understanding Christ’s Divine and Human Will* (London and New York: Routledge, 2021) 199–215. Crisp’s claim that the “vast majority of Christians agree” with dyothelitism as proclaimed by “ecumenical” councils on doctrines “central to the faith” (*ibid.*, 208–09) seems false. Most Christians are unaware of fine distinctions between dyothelitism and neo-monothelitism.

are false. Nor do the circumstances in which the Christological consensus was produced show that propositions which make up that consensus are false. But neither do this pressure and these circumstances help to demonstrate that these two sets of propositions are true. The case for saying that Jesus was both impeccable and tempted as we are remains incomplete, even if much traditional theology claims or assumes he was both impeccable and tempted as we are.

3. KENOSIS, PERSPECTIVALISM, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL RESTRICTION

The ability of Jesus to believe that he is peccable depends on a limit to his knowledge. Kenosis, perspectivalism, and psychological restriction are three candidates for limiting his self-knowledge. Kenotic theories originated in the nineteenth century. Biblically, they rest on Phil. 2:7 (“he [Jesus] emptied himself [*ekenosen*] . . . becoming as human beings are”). Of what did Jesus empty himself, literally or metaphorically? In this context the answer is that Jesus relinquished his divine knowledge of his inability to sin when he was tempted. Perhaps the main criticism is that kenotic theory seems compatible with Jesus having a false belief that he can sin (as in [CS3]), and it may be hard to square this belief with his divine nature, especially his omniscience.

Hart offers a perspectival theory designed either to avoid this difficulty or to enlarge what counts as kenosis. He distinguishes between Jesus’s ontological status as both God and man and Jesus’s felt moral experience in struggling with temptation. Ontologically, the theory says, Jesus was impeccable. Yet according to a kenotic Christology, the theory continues, he could have divested himself so fully of his divine nature that, as a man living on earth before the resurrection, he was ignorant of his impeccability. Like an ordinary person, Jesus would have encountered temptations and other moral problems. As Hart puts it, “viewed ‘from above’ Christ was not free to sin; viewed ‘from below’ he seemed to be, and had to engage in moral struggle just as if he had been” free to sin.²²

However, Hart’s position is dubious. It presupposes that there are two viewpoints—from above and from below—that concern whether Jesus was both impeccable and tempted. Nevertheless, the underlying issue remains whether Jesus *is* both impeccable and tempted as we are, not whether Jesus *seems* so from one point of view but not another. Hart might respond that his kenotic claim separates two interpretations: metaphysically Jesus is impeccable, and yet psychologically Jesus is still vulnerable to feeling the pull of temptation. This response in effect uses the distinction between peccability and temptability to avoid a plausible anti-perspectival objection. However, the response works only if Jesus experienced temptation as we do without being peccable. Later in this section and in Section 3 I raise doubts about whether he, if impeccable, experienced temptation as we do.

²²T. A. Hart, “Sinlessness and Moral Responsibility: A Problem in Christology,” *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 48 (1995): 37–54, at 42. Hart discusses kenosis on pp. 40–41, 44.

Stephen T. Davis advances a kenotic theory that interprets Chalcedonian Christology and avoids problems that beset Hart's position.²³ Jesus, as the Word incarnate, emptied himself temporarily of various divine properties so that he could be truly human while keeping enough divine properties to remain truly God. To illustrate, Jesus as the Word incarnate was, as human, able to die but he was not, as divine, able to die. Davis does not try to show how Jesus was both impeccable and tempted as we are. Still, one can develop his position to say that Jesus as the Word incarnate was, as human, able to be tempted but he was not, as divine, able to be tempted. However, this development is a frame or placeholder, not an articulated theory of how Jesus as the Word incarnate was both impeccable and tempted as we are.

As a different way of grappling with Heb. 4:15 and James 1:13, psychological restriction theories confine Jesus's knowledge while on earth prior to the resurrection.²⁴ Such theories may posit that God the Father or the Holy Spirit excluded Jesus's knowledge of his impeccability from his human mind. Jesus's knowledge of his impeccability existed only in his divine mind. Insofar as psychological restriction theories hold that Jesus himself did not exclude such knowledge from his human mind, these theories raise another pair of possibilities about Jesus's beliefs concerning his peccability. On the one hand, Jesus might have believed that he was peccable. On the other, he might have had no belief that he was either peccable or impeccable.

As to the first possibility, the language of Heb. 4:15 indicates that Jesus shared human weaknesses (*astheneiai*). One of the weaknesses could have been having some false beliefs, e.g., that the sun orbits the earth. Some will find this possibility disturbing. Perhaps more disturbing would be possible false beliefs about Jesus's own nature, e.g., that Jesus believed he was peccable, as in (CS3). Some theologians might urge that a false belief about his peccability is contrary to Christian orthodoxy.

The second possibility avoids ascribing a false belief about peccability to Jesus. Either the matter of his peccability never occurred to him or he was uncertain whether he was peccable, as in (CS4). If he was uncertain, this part of Jesus's divine nature was opaque to him. In that case, he would not have a false belief, but either he would be ignorant about his nature or he would lack conscious access to knowledge about his nature. The temptation narratives of Mk. 1:12–13, Matt. 4:1–11, and Luke 4:1–13 (the encounters with Satan in the desert) suggest that Jesus was tempted in ways that other human beings might have been tempted. For example, hunger plus Satanic enticement to get nourishment from someone other than God is tempting even if Jesus brushes the ploy aside. However, in light of James 1:13 ("God cannot be tempted by evil"), it is unclear how Jesus in his divine nature could think of his incarnate self as in principle temptable by evil. This unclarity appears to make the temptation narratives a record of something other than temptation as experienced by other human beings.

²³Stephen T. Davis, "The Metaphysics of Kenosis," in *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation*, edited by Anna Marmodoro and Jonathan Hill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 114–33.

²⁴John E. McKinley, *Tempted for Us: Theological Models and the Practical Relevance of Christ's Impeccability and Temptation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 227–244.

The narratives of Mk. 14:32–42, Matt. 26:36–46, and Luke 22:39–46 (the agony in the garden of Gethsemane) raise a problem of interpretation. If the distress of Jesus was an understandable fear of a painful death by crucifixion, then these passages are not narratives of temptation. If his distress came from a strong pull to disobey the Father’s command to die on the cross to save humans from their sins, then these passages are narratives of temptation and can be dealt with in the same manner as Mk 1:12–13, Matt 4:1–11, and Luke 4:1–13. I leave aside whether the Gethsemane passages might involve both temptation and a fear of death, either simultaneously or sequentially.

Quite apart from Jesus, humans might experience temptation in diverse ways. Experiencing a temptation to lie might differ from experiencing a temptation to steal. Moreover, any given human being might experience temptation differently on separate occasions even if the temptation has the same content and circumstances. Yet across these manifold temptations, human experiences generally involve a degree of uncertainty: it is uncertain to human beings (other than Jesus, perhaps) whether they will succumb. I develop this point in Section 3.1. But for the moment observe that if Jesus is impeccable, his succumbing is never objectively in doubt. It is unclear whether Jesus in the temptation narratives can experience something akin to temptation unless he believes that he is peccable,²⁵ which would require a plausible account of psychological restriction.

Leftow occupies a subtly different position from Hart. Leftow might appear to offer a version of psychological restriction that avoids concerns about Jesus’s experiencing temptation differently from other human beings.²⁶ Now Jesus would be blameworthy for having temptations only if he is responsible for having desires for evil things. Further, as Leftow points out, if Jesus has desires for evil things, then he seems not to be a morally perfect being while incarnate before the resurrection. He might even be tempted to disobey the Father’s command to undergo crucifixion. This line of thought emphasizes the humanity of Jesus. His humanity is important not only because of his suffering and death on the cross but also because of the anguish in Gethsemane and the distress he experienced in being tempted in the wilderness.

Although Leftow never uses the word “kenosis” or cites Phil. 2:7, he tacitly pursues a kenotic theory in writing, “While on earth, the Son voluntarily foreswore use of His distinctively divine powers.”²⁷ These powers would have included the power to know whether he was peccable or impeccable. Foreswearing requires action rather than non-action. A non-action is an omission, even if one has thought about whether to omit or not. Foreswearing in this context would not be an omission but a decision by the Son not to use his distinctively divine powers.

²⁵Here we are talking about the adult Jesus. When I was 4, I was tempted to lie to my mother and I succumbed. I did not believe that I was peccable, for I was years away from having the concept of peccability.

²⁶Brian Leftow, “Tempting God,” *Faith and Philosophy*, 31 (2014): 3–23, p. 14, titles one section “Restricted Temptation.” It is unclear whether Leftow uses this phrase to mean what I call “psychological restriction,” for as we shall see he sometimes uses kenotic language.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 22–23.

Leftow's rich paper throws light on how Jesus's responses to temptation may differ from those of most humans in at least two ways, but the illumination comes at a price. First, under Leftow's state-desire and act-desire analysis, Jesus resists temptation earlier than we do. "If Christ never formed the necessary act-desires, He never entered a full state of temptation, though he had something functionally similar."²⁸ Second, Leftow asks "How much did Christ have in His human toolkit before the Resurrection, and did it give Him any advantages in resisting temptation?"²⁹ Suppose the answers are "a lot" and "yes." "If the goal [of the Incarnation] is in part to give us as we now are an exemplar, one may suspect that the more Christ had in his toolkit that we do not, the less He meets that goal."³⁰ If these two points are sound, then Jesus was in some measure not tempted or tested "in all ways as we are."³¹

I turn now to Crisp who in his book *Divinity and Humanity* advances a subtle account which he calls "divine krypsis,"³² and which differs somewhat from the views of Hart and Leftow. The word *kryptos* means hidden or secret. Divine krypsis, as Crisp defines it, "places a restriction upon the access the human nature of Christ has to (at least some of) his divine attributes."³³ An important question is whether divine krypsis depends on an action by Jesus or happens automatically upon the Word's assuming a human nature.

At times Crisp seems to favor the former alternative. He refers to divine krypsis as "divine self-concealment," and writes that "the krypsis account only declares that the Word restricts the access to divine attributes the human nature of Christ has during the Incarnation."³⁴ However, self-concealment by the Word means that the Word would know in advance that the human mind of Jesus would be ignorant of the concealment. Thus, it would appear to hide Jesus's human knowledge of his invulnerability to temptation and hence of his impeccability. His apparent resistance to sin seems to involve something other than temptation as other humans experience it.

The latter alternative is suggested by Crisp's remark that "It is only the human nature, in hypostatic union with the Word, which does not have access to (certain) divine attributes."³⁵ Still, prior to the incarnation, the Word would have known that he was impeccable and that his taking on a human nature would result in the automatic loss of his knowledge of his imperviousness to temptation and thus of his impeccability. The net result is that under both alternatives it is the Son *qua* incarnate Word who appears to do the hiding or concealing from Jesus *qua* incarnate son of Mary, which threatens to plunge us back into a kenotic theory.

²⁸Ibid., 14.

²⁹Ibid., 23.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid., 11 (citing Heb. 4:15).

³²Oliver D. Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity: The Incarnation Revisited* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 147–53. Crisp takes pains to distinguish divine krypsis from current forms of kenosis.

³³Ibid., 151.

³⁴Ibid., 148, 152.

³⁵Ibid., 152.

Elsewhere Crisp offers the analogy of “an invincible pugilist battling it out in the ring with an opponent. The outcome is a foregone conclusion if our pugilist is invincible; but that does not mean he does not need to put up a real fight in the ring.”³⁶

The analogy is unconvincing because it is under-described, and not merely because it fails to specify what counts as a real fight. To improve the analogy, assume that Crisp’s invincible pugilist seeks a win—not a draw, a technical draw, or a majority draw. Assume also that his pugilist wins by knockout or decision, not (say) by his opponent’s being disqualified for a foul. Still, what more might be added to make the analogy convincing as a real fight? If both boxers are doing their best to win, if Crisp’s boxer has decidedly superior boxing skills to those of his opponent, if the opponent never catches Crisp’s boxer with his guard down, and if Crisp’s boxer must expend considerable energy and suffer great pain to win, then it might seem that we have a real fight.

But the expanded analogy, even if it amounts to a real fight, does not show that Crisp’s pugilist is *invincible*. Suppose a computer runs through all possible bouts between Crisp’s pugilist and his opponent and determines that the opponent would win only once in every 1,000 bouts. Improbability is not impossibility. In the expanded analogy, Crisp’s pugilist is quite formidable but not invincible. The possible worlds in which his opponent wins are very few, yet under Chalcedon Plus there is no possible world in which Jesus succumbs to temptation.

4. DEEPER INTO TEMPTATION

Hart, Leftow, and Crisp are formidable thinkers, and I do not take issue with them lightly. Part of the difference between them and me lies in their resort to Chalcedon and sometimes Chalcedon Plus without plumbing the depths and nuances of ordinary human experiences of temptation. To make good on this claim, I amplify the sketch of temptation in Section 1. I first identify some plausible boundaries of temptation, next distinguish temptation as humans experience it from simulated temptation and mistaken temptation, and then argue that some temptations may provoke imprudence that does not rise to the level of sin. The amplification underscores the difficulty in concluding definitively that an impeccable Jesus was, or was not, tempted as we are.³⁷

Temptation is not the same as either impulse or desire. Clearly, *temptation* does not have the same meaning as either *impulse* or *desire*. It is central to temptation that it has something to do with what is bad or evil. Impulse is a sudden spontaneous inclination of short duration exerted on the mind that prompts some usually unpremeditated action. One could have an impulse to help someone who has been injured or an impulse to comfort a grieving person, and those impulses are hardly bad or evil. Also, an impulse is sudden and lasts but a while, whereas temptation

³⁶Crisp, *God Incarnate*, 133 (omitting “the” before “he”). This passage does not appear in his 2007 article “Was Christ Sinless or Impeccable?”

³⁷The guardedness of this sentence finds a counterpart in Pawl, *In Defense of Extended Conciliar Christology*, 139: “For my part, I do not see that the ability to sin is analytically required for the very notion of temptation.”

sometimes comes upon a person gradually or abides for a long time. A desire is a feeling or emotion directed to the possession of some object from which pleasure or satisfaction is expected. Desires are often neutral though occasionally are either good or bad. By contrast, temptation concerns something bad or evil. Therefore, temptation is not equivalent to either impulse or desire. These observations are broadly compatible with a sequence in James 1:13–15 that goes from a desire (*epithumia*) that is bad (*kakon*) to temptation (*peirasmos*) which, if not successfully resisted, leads to sin (*hamartia*) and death (*thanatos*).

Boundaries of Temptation. Here are four boundaries of temptation, where a boundary is a rough limit that helps to differentiate temptation from related concepts such as desire. None of the boundaries identified here rises to the level of a conceptual truth about temptation. The first is that the object of temptation generally has to be in some way bad, imprudent, evil, morally wrong, or sinful for the person tempted.³⁸ It would ordinarily be odd to say that a man was tempted to save a cat from drowning at no risk to himself. His act is praiseworthy. But suppose that a woman who has no reason to restrict sugar intake says, upon being offered a choice of cake or fruit for dessert, “I am tempted to have a piece of cake.” For her, cake is not a temptation at all, and her use of “tempted” is etiolated or ironic. Her act of choosing cake is neither praiseworthy nor blameworthy.

A second boundary is that a person must have at least some modest level of resistance if one is to speak of temptation. Only in unusual situations would anyone want to say that a newborn is tempted to cry. In *Lady Windermere’s Fan* Lord Darlington remarks, “I can resist everything except temptation.”³⁹ Theatregoers find his remark witty partly because even highly akratic individuals resist temptation every now and then.

A third boundary is that at least on occasion almost all ordinary humans do succumb to temptation. The English writer Anthony Hope penned this brief dialogue: “‘You oughtn’t to yield to temptation,’ ‘Well, somebody must, or the thing becomes absurd.’”⁴⁰ If people always resisted temptation, there would be little point in bringing up the matter of temptation. Indeed, it is unclear what it could even mean to bring it up. Still, the ability to succumb seems necessary for temptation. For Jesus it appears that perhaps he must have the ability to succumb if he is to experience temptation, and yet if traditional Christology is correct then he is unable to sin.

A fourth boundary is that temptation requires at least a dispositional belief that one can succumb. A belief is occurrent if it is consciously endorsed and is dispositional if it is not consciously endorsed but available to mind. So the idea is not that each time one is tempted there is an explicit thought that one can succumb. Rather, it is that each time one is tempted one is prone to believe that one can succumb. If an occurrent belief is wanting, then a dispositional belief suffices.

³⁸This boundary reflects the somewhat broad and varied nature of *hamartia* noted in the Introduction.

³⁹Oscar Wilde, *Lady Windermere’s Fan: A Play about a Good Woman* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1893), Act I.

⁴⁰Anthony Hope, *The Dolly Dialogues* (London: Victoria House Printing Co., 1894), ch. XIV.

This fourth boundary is related to the second and third boundaries just discussed. It is also related to my point, in Section 3, that human experiences of temptation involve a degree of implicit uncertainty, namely whether humans will successfully resist. No participants in current debates about whether Jesus is both impeccable and tempted as we are dispute that, for ordinary humans who have reached a degree of psychological maturity, there is a dispositional belief that they can succumb to temptation.

The root question is how Jesus might have come to believe, dispositionally if not occurrently, that he can succumb to temptation. Three answers come to mind. None satisfies. One answer is that Jesus believed he was solely human and that his experience of temptation was just like ours. In that case, he had false beliefs, viz. that he was solely human and that he was peccable. Another answer is that Jesus believed both that he was impeccable and that he was able to sin—which is a contradiction. A final answer is that Jesus was ignorant of at least some of what was entailed by his divine nature. But in that case he was ignorant about whether he could succumb to temptation, which seems to generate a dilemma. Either Jesus was wholly ignorant of what was entailed by his divine nature, which conflicts with NT textual evidence that he knew some of his divine attributes. Or he was ignorant just to the extent that he was dubious of his ability to succumb, which made his experience of temptation different from that of ordinary humans. Even the final answer is unsatisfactory in part because it may be incorrect to ascribe ignorance to Jesus.

Temptation, Deceit, and Mistake. I have suggested that if Jesus was impeccable, then perhaps he could not have experienced temptation as do other humans but only something else. It would, though, be incorrect to say that Jesus experienced only temptation that was simulated, feigned, or pretend. These adjectives suggest that Jesus might have been deceitful in giving the impression of experiencing temptation. Or they could suggest that the Father or the Holy Spirit restricted Jesus's knowledge of his impeccability so as to limit Jesus's grasp of temptation and possibly deceive both Jesus and the author of Heb. 4:15. Introducing deceit on the part of any person of the Trinity would misrepresent what I want to say about experiencing temptation. So there remains an issue concerning how, if at all, an impeccable Jesus could experience temptation as do other human beings.

It seems possible that Jesus could have been mistaken, rather than deceived, in experiencing temptation. Notice that two different causes might create the same feeling. For instance, suppose that two different medical conditions, Disease A and Disease B, produce the same physical symptom: a sharp pain in the liver. A person who experiences this pain believes he has Disease A. In fact, he has Disease B. His belief that he has Disease A is false. By parity of reasoning, it seems possible that a person might have the same feeling whether she experiences temptation or something else. In that case, she might believe that she was tempted when she was not. Suppose that Jesus was tormented by hunger while fasting in the desert and could have assuaged his hunger by making bread and eating it. Suppose also that, because of his impeccability, he was experiencing something other than temptation. Jesus could have falsely believed that he was both peccable and tempted to make

bread and eat it. There was no deceit in his erroneous belief. Some might object that making and eating bread are morally licit and doubt that they can be made wrong by being a focus of the tempter. But the objection and doubt might miss the mark, for some theologians might see the three enticements in the wilderness as effectively a single temptation to disobey God the Father.⁴¹

O'Collins provides a more sophisticated form of the mistake argument. It goes like this. Jesus in his human mind was unaware that he was necessarily incapable of sinning. In fact, either he thought he could sin, as in (CS3), or it never occurred to him whether he was impeccable or peccable, as in (CS4) or perhaps (CS4a). O'Collins states that "the metaphysical impossibility of sinning did not rule out the psychological or epistemological possibility of being tempted. Hence, we can praise and honour Christ for not sinning, because, although he could not possibly have sinned, he did not know this at the time."⁴² His variant of (CS4) may be called (CS4b).

This position is unpersuasive. The temptation of ordinary humans involves the possibility of succumbing. For Jesus to be tempted as we are, it would appear that he too could succumb, except that traditional Christology may rule that out. The metaphysical impossibility of Jesus's sinning allows nothing more than mistaken temptation, or as O'Collins says "the psychological or epistemological possibility of being tempted." It is only with qualification that one can praise and honor him for not sinning. One can of course praise and honor him for resisting what might be a cousin of temptation. But one must discount his psychological or epistemological "resisting" a temptation to which he could never have succumbed.⁴³ It is unclear whether the discount should be large or small. The temptation of ordinary human beings is normally veridical, whereas to the extent that Jesus might have experienced something only akin to experiential temptation, it might have been illusory.

At bottom, the issue here is whether knowing or believing it is possible for one to succumb is built into the very concept of being tempted. It may be so for ordinary humans who have reached a certain level of conceptual maturity. O'Collins's mistake argument means that Jesus's ability to experience temptation comes at the expense of Jesus's ability to accurately represent both the world and his own psychology. Either he is fooled from the outside (e.g., by psychological restriction imposed by God the Father or the Holy Spirit) or he is fooled internally by his own psychology. Either way, to maintain that Jesus is like us insofar as he experiences human temptation, O'Collins must make Jesus unlike us in a radical way—namely, that he lives in partial illusion.

⁴¹Cf. Bonhoeffer, "Temptation," 105: "Jesus is tempted in his flesh, in his faith, and in his divine sonship. All three are the one temptation—to separate Jesus from the Word of God."

⁴²Gerald O'Collins, *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 284, credits Thomas V. Morris, *The Logic of God Incarnate* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986), 150–62, for this argument.

⁴³See David Werther, "The Temptation of God Incarnate," *Religious Studies* 29 (1993): 47–50. Morris, O'Collins, and Werther seem to oscillate between God's being necessarily good and God's being essentially good. Werther, 50, concludes that "either Jesus is not necessarily good or he is not responsible for resisting temptation."

One does not cure the unpersuasiveness of O'Collins's position (CS4b) by saying, for example, that it is legitimate to praise God without qualification for being good. This move would trade on a contextual ambiguity in the notion of being good without qualification. When we praise God for being good, we mean that God is all good, and this is why we praise God's goodness without qualification for being impeccable. In contrast, O'Collins in the passage quoted focuses on the humanity of Jesus and refers to a human good or virtue of resisting temptation. Here we can praise Jesus's resisting temptation only with qualification, for he would be mistaken in thinking he is vulnerable to succumbing and does not realize that he is unable to sin. Or at least so this inability would appear to Jesus's human mind unless corrected by his divine mind, and the correction would disturb his unity of consciousness.

Imprudence and Sin. Let us now shift from experiential temptation and mistaken temptation to imprudence, moral wrongdoing, and sin. I start with mild imprudence and hope that my example does not seem disrespectful. Suppose that Jesus was tempted to eat spicy food because it would taste good to him even though he knew, from past experience, that this food would cause him indigestion two hours later. If he succumbed to this temptation to eat spicy food, he would advance his ultra-short-term self-interest by enjoying the spicy food for (say) thirty minutes but go against his short-term self-interest by experiencing indigestion in two hours. Suppose that Jesus ranked his short-term self-interest above his ultra-short-term self-interest. Given this ranking, Jesus would have been imprudent in eating the spicy food. Yet he would not have committed a sin or a moral wrong.⁴⁴ This example shows that Jesus, even if impeccable, could have had some subjective sense of what temptation and weakness of the will are like.

The portrait of Jesus that emerges from the gospels does not suggest that he was tempted to do anything that was greatly imprudent. If Jesus was continent in that way, he might have lacked a psychological sense of what such a temptation is like, or what yielding to that particular temptation would be like. If that is correct, then one might wonder whether Jesus would have been able to triangulate from temptation to act with mild imprudence to, firstly, temptation to act with great imprudence and, secondly, temptation to act immorally or to sin.

What are the prospects of such triangulation? For persons living today, the prospects could be attractive. Philosophers who are inclined to enlarge slightly the territory of morality, while contracting slightly the territory of prudence, could warm to the idea that Jesus had a good sense of triangulation. It is less clear whether Jesus would have been impressed by the spicy-food example. He would have been concerned with *hamartia*, not with imprudence as that concept is used by contemporary philosophers or theologians. But imprudence is close to the biblical notion

⁴⁴The line between sins and moral wrongs, on the one hand, and imprudence, on the other, is fuzzy. However, a Kantian could argue that there is a duty to self not to do some frivolous act (e.g., ingest a recreational drug) that could leave one no longer capable of reason. To ingest the drug could also be wrong under some natural law theories. Even some thinkers sympathetic to consequentialism consider *great* imprudence to be immoral. E.g., Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 318–20.

of folly (*anoia*), which covers a wide range of cases, from financial to moral, and seems well within the ambit of a first-century audience.

Jesus understood adultery to be a sin. He would have known how powerful the urge to commit adultery sometimes is. He would also have known that his contemporaries sometimes acted on or resisted that urge. If Jesus cashed out the urge as a desire (*epithumia*) in the language of James 1:15, he would understand how that desire could move a man or woman to commit adultery. Nowhere does the NT state that Jesus ever felt such a desire. However, Heb. 4:15 says he had weaknesses (*astheneiai*) like those of other human beings. One cannot, of course, appeal to the further comment in verse 15 that Jesus felt temptations as other human beings do, for that would beg the question. How we interpret Heb. 4:15 turns on the nature of the distinctions between desires, weaknesses, and temptations. Furthermore, Jesus would likely have noticed instances in which people acted imprudently—for instance, wasting money or drinking wine to excess, even if he did not think of this behavior as sinful.

An important issue here is whether Jesus, who knew so many things, was also empathetic. If he was empathetic, as I imagine he was, he would have known how others feel in a non-inferential way. If he did know in this sense, he would have known the feelings of others. He would have known, non-inferentially, these feelings only by having them through identification. In this way he would have known temptation, resistance to temptation, and the mix of gratification and guilt attendant on yielding to temptation. Although his empathetic knowledge was non-inferential, it was not experiential as elaborated in this section or in Section 1. Identification does not support the claim that Jesus was experientially tempted or resisted experiential temptation.

If Jesus was peccable, he could have experienced temptation to sin in the same way as other human beings, and he could have yielded to that temptation. To illustrate, suppose that Jesus at age ten found a younger, smaller boy to be intensely annoying, was tempted to push the boy to the ground, and on one occasion yielded to this temptation by pushing him to the ground and injuring him slightly. Succumbing to this temptation would seem to have been a minor sin, but it looks like a sin rather than merely an imprudent action or merely a fault that did not rise to the level of a sin. This illustration shows how Jesus could have been tempted “in exactly the same way as ourselves” if we read no further in Heb. 4:15.

But the last clause of this verse adds “apart from sin.” If we interpret this verse in one way, it means that Jesus did not sin, but scarcely means that he was unable to sin. If, instead, we interpret this verse to mean that Jesus could not sin, then he was impeccable.

So what does *choris hamartias* (“apart from sin”) in verse 15 mean? A large literature exists on this question. Space permits mention of only two acute exegeses. One is that Jesus might not have been sinless from birth to death in light of Heb. 2:10 (“make perfect”) and 5:8 (“when he had been perfected”). The idea is that the incarnate Jesus, though the Son of God, needs to be made perfect through sufferings and by obedience to the Father’s command to die on the cross. “[T]he author of

Hebrews did not intend,” writes Ronald Williamson, “to speak of Jesus’s sinlessness in a way that excluded the human experience of sinning within a struggle against temptation.”⁴⁵ Differently, David Peterson argues that although the sinlessness of Jesus “must not be divorced from the idea of his overcoming temptation, it also seems valid to argue that the judgement ‘without sin’ could be made about Christ, at every stage of his earthly struggle.”⁴⁶ Seemingly, Jesus struggled specifically against disobeying his Father, but according to Peterson he encountered the “full scope of human temptation.”⁴⁷ Peterson sees Jesus as a unique individual not only because of his salvific role but also because he was free not to sin in a way in which as a practical matter other adult humans are not thus free. At the same time, Peterson rejects the idea that it was metaphysically impossible for him to sin.⁴⁸

Here one might think of Jesus, not so much as exposed to time-sliced episodes of temptation, but as soteriologically tested over his entire life such that only at his death would it be possible to say that he never succumbed to temptation. For both Williamson and Peterson but to different degrees, it appears to be an open question whether Jesus ever sinned before his death on the cross. It is not an open question for me. I accept that Jesus was sinless. My thesis is that it is hard to see how Jesus was both impeccable and tempted as we are.

Dominikus Kraschl offers a careful discussion of temptation, sin, and the lifelong mission of Jesus. In an insightful article, he suggests that “God’s self-manifestation and self-communication are not only constituted by Jesus’s human nature as such but by a proper life testimony . . . ending with his martyrdom.”⁴⁹ A “backwards constitution model of the incarnation and hypostatic union,” writes Kraschl, “generates a revised understanding of Conciliar Christology,”⁵⁰ and Chalcedon Plus. If Jesus never sinned despite temptation, the Word would have hypostatically assumed not only Jesus’s human nature but the salvific role of his life and death. If, instead, Jesus had exercised his libertarian freedom to choose sin in the face of temptation, Kraschl contends, then the Word would have dissolved the hypostatic union.⁵¹

In cleaving to the sinlessness of Jesus, I am mindful that some may object that it is cheap for me to negate a conjunction: i.e., it was not the case that Jesus was both impeccable and tempted as we are. Quit beating around the bush and just tell readers whether he was impeccable or whether he was tempted as we are! I would gladly oblige the objectors if I knew which it is. I do not. This paper nevertheless deepens

⁴⁵Ronald Williamson, “Hebrews 4:15 and the Sinlessness of Jesus,” *Expository Times* 86, no. 1 (1974): 4–8, at 7.

⁴⁶David Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection: An Examination of the Concept of Perfection in the “Epistle to the Hebrews”* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 188–89 (italics omitted).

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 190.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹Dominikus Kraschl, “Peccable as Son of Man, Impeccable as Son of God: An Attempt to Reconcile Freedom and Impeccability,” in *Impeccability and Temptation: Understanding Christ’s Divine and Human Will* (London and New York: Routledge, 2021), 193–98, 194.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 196.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 189–90, 193–96. Kraschl’s argument depends on a backwards constitution model of the incarnation, which some will reject. However, his argument has an ontological discussion that renders it invulnerable to the anti-perspectival criticism leveled earlier against Hart.

our understanding the knotty issues surrounding Jesus's inner life by showing why efforts of some distinguished philosophers and theologians to reconcile temptation and impeccability fail. It also suggests why a generally accepted proof of their irreconcilability has not emerged.

5. CONCLUSION

I am not the first person who finds unconvincing the claim that Jesus was both impeccable and tempted in all respects as we are. Even under the CD and Chalcedon Plus, the case for holding that Jesus was both impeccable and tempted as we are remains incomplete. Those who see imperial interference in and a lack of serious philosophical and theological debate at the Council of Chalcedon have additional grounds for thinking that case incomplete.

Furthermore, if Jesus resisted temptation earlier than we do, perhaps he never entered a full state of temptation, only something similar. As Leftow also argues, if Jesus has more in his human "toolkit" than we do, he appears in some measure not to have been tempted in all respects as we are.

Jesus in his human mind could have been mistaken in thinking he was tempted. Hence he could have been unable to represent accurately the world he inhabited and his own psychology. To ascribe to Jesus both a human mind and a divine mind, and both a human will and a divine will, threatens to undo a unity of consciousness in Jesus that most human beings possess most of the time.

Insofar as Jesus knew the feelings of human beings who are tempted only through identification rather than experience, his knowledge of temptation differed from that of many other human beings. And insofar as Jesus resisted temptation, he merited praise only with qualification, for, if unknowingly impeccable, he would not realize that he was unable to sin.

In sum, on both metaphysical and experiential grounds, it is hard to see how Jesus, though sinless, was both impeccable and tempted as we are. This conclusion is compatible with Heb. 4:15, for it does not reject the claim that Jesus could have been both sinless and tempted as we are. The idea of impeccability comes from post-biblical and post-conciliar theological speculation.⁵²

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