

THE PERSON
AND
SINLESS CHARACTER
OF
OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

BY

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LORD JESUS CHRIST.

THE design of the following pages is not to engender controversy, but rather to quiet an uneasiness felt by not a few plain and serious Christians. It would give the author real pain, if he thought anything here said should diminish the high esteem in which any of his brethren are held. If any of the opinions commented on admit of an explanation, which would quite relieve the minds of pious men, it would be doing a public service to bring it out. If this little treatise should accomplish so much good, it would not be in vain.

We should not forget that true piety cannot fail to be interested in suitable teachings respecting the person and character of our Saviour. How could it be otherwise? He is the Life of men, the Prophet, Priest, and King of all the

saints. His lips shall pronounce the final award to angels and men. To all believers He is made of God wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. All truth respecting Him is precious. Let us look at some matters of great importance, chiefly relating to this inquiry,

WAS OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IMPECCABLE?

Let not the reader be offended at the subject thus announced. Our Saviour either was or He was not capable of sinning. If the truth on this matter can be learned, like all other truth, it is valuable. Let us not lightly esteem anything which God enables us to know respecting Himself or His Son. But before entering at large on the subject, it will be found convenient to consider some preliminary matters.

WHAT PROPHETS SAID.

The evangelical prophet foretold that Messiah should not only "be for a sanctuary;" but also, "for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence." Blessed Simeon, with the infant Saviour in his arms, said: "Behold, this child is set

for the fall and rising again of many in Israel." Isaiah viii. 14; Luke ii. 34. With these views, many other Scriptures well agree. Church history fully confirms the truth of these predictions. The doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of the Person of Christ are both great mysteries. But they are not contradictions. They are the mysteries of godliness, in which the righteous glory. 1 Timothy iii. 16. No one should be offended at them. The best writers admit these things. Turretin says: "There are in the Christian religion two matters more difficult than others. The first relates to the unity of three persons in one essence in trinity. The other refers to the union of two natures in one person in the incarnation. These questions are quite different from each other. For in the first we treat of unity of essence and trinity of persons; in the other, we treat of unity of person and diversity of natures. As the divinity of Christ has been furiously assailed by many heresies, so Satan has stirred up many enemies against the doctrine of Christ's humanity." For eighteen hundred years the great stumbling-block of the world has been God in Christ, Christ incarnate, or

Christ crucified. A plurality of the heresies that have disturbed the Christian Church, have related in some way to the person, natures, grace, or glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Both His divinity and humanity have been stoutly denied.

DR. SHEDD'S STATEMENT.

In his history of Christian doctrine, Shedd says: "Four factors are necessary in order to the complete conception of Christ's person: 1. True and proper deity; 2. True and proper humanity; 3. The union of deity and humanity in one person; 4. The distinction of deity from humanity, in the one person, so that there be no mixture of natures." Against one or more of these truths, Arians, Nestorians, Eutychians, Apollinarians, Patripassians, Monothelites, and various others have laid out their strength.

THE WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY

Thus states the true doctrine: "The Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did when the fullness of time was come, take upon Him men's nature, with all the

essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin; being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary of her substance. So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the Manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only mediator between God and man." This is the true, catholic faith on these matters. The person, incarnation, character, and work of our Lord Jesus Christ are the common inheritance of all Christians. No man, no sect, no century can claim any exclusive right to them. If they are assailed, any man is at liberty, and every watchman is bound to give warning to the friends of truth, and to defend the Scriptural doctrine at all hazards and by all appropriate arguments.

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

No sound or orthodox man denies or doubts the divinity of Christ. How could he? Isaiah and Joel call Him Jehovah. Compare Isaiah vi. 5, and John xii. 41, Joel ii. 32 and Romans x. 13.

He is called God, the mighty God, the true God, and Eternal Life, over all God, blessed forever, Lord of all and Lord of glory. John i. 1; Isaiah ix. 6; 1 John v. 20; Romans ix. 5; Acts x. 36; 1 Cor. ii. 8. No name of honor is given to the Father more fitly expressing divinity, than those given to the Son. He is even called the everlasting Father, literally the Father of Eternity. Isaiah ix. 6. Christ has also the attributes of God. He was in the beginning with God. He was before John the Baptist, though not born for months after His forerunner. He was before Abraham. He was before all things. John i. 2; i. 15; John viii. 58; Pr. viii. 22, 23; Col. i. 17. He is everywhere present. Matt. xviii. 20; xxviii. 20. He knows all things. He knows the human heart. He knows the whole nature of God. He knows all contingencies. John xxi. 17; ii. 24, 25; Rev. ii. 23; John x. 15; Matt. xi. 21, 23. Jesus Christ is also immutable. "Thou art the same, and Thy years fail not," is a statement of an old prophet, applied to Christ by an inspired apostle. Ps. cii. 25-27; Heb. i. 10-12. Paul says in so many words, that Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever."

Heb. xiii. 8. In like manner we establish His omnipotence. Phil. iii. 20, 21; Rev. i. 8; John v. 19, 21. He is the Almighty.

We also argue Christ's Godhead from the fact that He is the Creator of all things. John i. 3; Col. i. 16. And that He is the preserver and governor of all things. Isa. ix. 6; Heb. i. 8; Col. i. 17; 1 Cor. xv. 25. Even when on earth He claimed and exercised that high and awful prerogative of God—the power of pardoning sin. Luke v. 20; Matt. ix. 6. Compare Luke xxiv. 47. And he is appointed the final Judge of quick and dead. John v. 22, 27; Rom. xiv. 10; Rev. i. 7. Besides, He is properly a fit object of religious worship. Heb. i. 16; Matt. ii. 2; Rev. v. 9–13. In short, what evidence have we that the Father is divine? Seek, and you shall find that the same, or something as decisive, proves the Son to be very God.

CHRIST'S HUMANITY.

Jesus Christ had a true, proper, and entire human nature. In His humanity was no defect, making Him less than a man. The Apostles' creed says: "He was conceived by the power

of the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary." The Athanasian creed says: "He is not only perfect God, but perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting." That our Lord Jesus Christ was truly incarnate is very clear. The very first time He is spoken of in Scripture He is called "the seed of the woman." Gen. iii. 15. He could not be the seed of the woman, unless He derived His nature from her. In like manner He is called the seed of Abraham and the seed of David, both men, from whom He was lineally descended. See Gen. xii. 3, 7; xvii. 7, 8; Gal. iii. 16; 2 Sam. vii. 12; John vii. 42; Acts xiii. 23; Rom. i. 3; 2 Tim. ii. 8. Besides, Matthew gives His lineage from Abraham, and Luke gives his lineage from Adam, both of whom were men; one, the father of a nation; the other, the father of the human race. Then even in the Old Testament He is prophetically called a man—"a man of sorrows;" "the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord." Isa. liii. 3; Zech. xiii. 7. In the New Testament, also, He is called a man—"that man whom He hath ordained to judge the world;" "by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead;" "there is one Media-

tor between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." Acts xvii. 31 ; 1 Cor. xv. 21 ; 1 Tim. ii. 5. More than sixty times He calls Himself the Son of man. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." He did not deny that Mary was His mother. He still has our nature. Eph. iv. 10; Rev. i. 18. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same." Heb. ii. 14. If Jesus Christ did not take the flesh of Mary, if He is not the seed of the woman, He is not our brother, our kinsman, and so He is not our Redeemer. Merely to have a body without a soul would not make any one our brother. Dods: "The fathers maintained that there was the same reason for Christ's taking a soul as for His taking a body ; for the soul had sinned and needed redemption as well as the body." His manhood was real and complete. Few will deny that our Lord Jesus Christ possessed human nature true and entire. He was verily a man. His manhood had the innocent infirmities which belong to human nature. He hungered ; He thirsted ; He was weary ; He was grieved ; He keenly felt reproach ; but none of these sensations or emo-

tions were sinful. He was finite, but "finiteness is no sin." He thought, He felt, He wept, He hoped, He rejoiced as really and as truly as any other man. Liddon: "Christ's manhood is not unreal, because it is sinless." We have among us a few Apollinarians; but they need not now be particularly noticed. The great body of professing Christians among us firmly believe that Christ had a true body and a reasonable soul, and so was verily a man. "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." 1 John iv. 2, 3. This is the true doctrine of the Incarnation of Christ.

IS CHRIST DIVIDED?

There is a class of writers who delight in separating the personal name Jesus from the official name Christ, and from all his titles as Lord, Saviour, Redeemer, etc. They love to speak of Jesus as if He was in some sense different from the Christ of God. One writer calls Him "the magnificent Jesus." Some use other magniloquent words, but carefully avoid the language

by which God's people have long spoken of their good Shepherd. Christ's humanity and divinity are forever united. We may fitly call Him by any scriptural name or title; but it is no good sign when one studiously excludes any appropriate name or title of the Son of God. He who was born in Bethlehem was not only the child Jesus; He was also the Christ of God and our precious Saviour. One well says: "To apply to the humanity of Christ language which it would be held not only improper, but even blasphemous, to apply to Christ Himself, is to divide Christ, more clearly and more violently than Nestorius ever did." It was our Lord Jesus Christ that was born, baptized, tempted, mocked, crucified, raised from the dead, and glorified. Marcus Dods says: "The ancient writers, especially after the time of Nestorius, would apply no term to the humanity of Christ which they would not apply to Christ. . . . While you say that the flesh of Christ was sinful, do you say also that Christ Himself was sinful? . . . Nestorius attributed all that was good and great to the flesh of Christ; he was, nevertheless, a Nestorian still." Christ and Jesus are the same per-

son. 1 John ii. 22; iv. 15; v. 5. In no sense is Christ divided. Ancient heresy found it necessary to separate Jesus and Christ. Dods: "The Gnostics made a distinction between *Jesus* and *Christ*. Jesus they maintained to be a mere man,—many of them, indeed, that He was only a phantom,—that Christ descended upon Him at His baptism, and left Him when He was affixed to the cross. In this way they completely evacuated the doctrine of the resurrection, a doctrine which they denied. They were willing enough to admit, with the modern Socinian, that *Jesus* was raised from the dead. The resurrection of *Christ* they denied; and the Catholic writers easily saw, what indeed the Gnostic did not attempt to conceal, that while the resurrection of *Christ* was denied, the resurrection of *Jesus* proved nothing whatever as to a general resurrection. Now to maintain that the death of our Lord was not perfectly voluntary, at the moment when it took place, is just to teach as clearly as any Gnostic ever taught, that the divinity was separated from Him at that time, and thus effectually to destroy both the atonement and the doctrine of the resurrection. . . . The resurrec-

tion of *Jesus* is no security that we shall rise.”
The Incarnation, p. 147.

Paul's language is wholly opposed to all these Gnostic dreams, ancient and modern. He says: “Know ye not that your bodies are the members of *Christ*?” “*Christ* died for our sins according to the Scriptures.” “If *Christ* be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.” 1 Cor. vi. 15; xv. 3, 17. It is as dangerous to separate between *Jesus* and *Christ* to support modern dreams as it was to favor Gnostic heresy.

OF LATE MUCH HAS BEEN WRITTEN OF CHRIST JESUS.

Ever since His incarnation much has been thought, spoken, and written of our Lord Jesus Christ. By Him the thoughts of many hearts have been revealed. During the present century the press has teemed with essays, articles, and volumes on the person and character of the Son of Mary, who was also the Son of God. In this century many a man has sent forth a “Life of Jesus,” or a “Life of Christ,” or made some contribution to this branch of literature. Some of these writings have been of sterling worth, and

have made glad the hearts of God's people. Some of them have been feeble, fanciful, and unsafe. Others have been not only somewhat rationalistic, but grossly infidel. These productions prove that Jesus Christ now occupies the minds of men to a great extent. He is a sign spoken against by some. Others cleave to Him. The virgins love Him.

THE SINLESSNESS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Many have in some form given to mankind their views of the moral character of our Saviour. In this matter the pious and intelligent feel a lively interest. The Church has always felt this to be an important branch of her faith. Ullmann truly says: "Every theological system must take notice of the doctrine of the sinlessness of Jesus. . . . The sum of the spiritual life of Jesus is the central point of the whole Christian system. . . . In the Middle Ages, the controversy respecting the immaculate conception of the Virgin was designed principally to affect the question of the sinlessness of Christ." But the grounds taken respecting the sinlessness of our

Lord are not always the same. On this subject there is considerable diversity.

THE FIRST VIEW.

Except rank infidels, such as Pecaut, most writers seem ready to admit that Christ did not sin ; and with that factual statement, many seem satisfied. What they admit is true, is weighty. In his thirty-eighth homily on 1st Corinthians, Chrysostom utters a great truth : " He who died for sinners, must Himself be sinless ; for, if He Himself sinned, how could He die for sinners ? But if He died for the sins of others, He died being sinless himself." Symington says : " The testimony borne to the innocence of the Saviour's life is most complete and decisive. Prophets spake of Him as the ' Holy One,' who had done no violence, neither was deceit in His mouth." Hodge : " The Mediator between God and man must be sinless. . . . A sinful Saviour from sin is an impossibility." To say that Jesus Christ was a sinful man is clearly to renounce Christianity. Dorner : " The Church has nourished itself for many centuries on the life-

portrait which the Gospels have drawn of Jesus. . . . It is clear, in the most decided moments of His life, that He is conscious of no sin. . . . It would have been an insane and absurd thought to wish to redeem and reconcile others, if He had been conscious of needing redemption Himself." The death of Jesus Christ could be no covering against sin, if He was a sinner. It might warn men against transgression. But the death of every sinner does that. If Christ Jesus had not been innocent, His sufferings might have evinced that God was holy, hated sin, and would punish it, but it would have proved no more. Dods: "It was necessary that He who made atonement for the sins of men, should Himself be perfectly holy." It is only the baser and coarser kind of men who even hint that our Lord was not sinless. Himself says: "I do always those things that please my Father." John viii. 29. *εγὼ τὰ ἀρεστὰ ἀδτῷ ποιῶ παντοτε*. Paul says that our High-priest is *οσιος*, pure, right, holy; *ακακος*, harmless, blameless, without evil; *αμικτος*, unstained, unsoiled, undefiled; *κεχωρισμενος ἀπο των αμαρτωνων*, removed, different, separate from sinners. Heb. vii. 26. Thus many agree that Jesus Christ *non peccavit*,

did not sin. Many Scriptures, some of which will be quoted hereafter, evince His sinlessness.

Not many good men will deny that "it was necessary that Christ should possess all the perfection of holiness,—a holiness not resulting from the motions of sin in the flesh, but a holiness resulting from the absence of any such motions." Is not this so?

IS FURTHER INQUIRY PROPER?

There is a class of thinkers who seem to regard it as unwise, perhaps unlawful, to go further, and inquire into the cause and reason of the sinlessness of Christ Jesus. They say He did not sin, and there we ought to rest. Some admit that Christ proved Himself able to resist seduction, but contend that it is irreverent for us to go further. They say of Jesus, that He was able not to sin, *posse non peccare*, but that we know not and need not care how His life and soul came to be and to continue spotless. They say that such an inquiry is beyond the limits of the human understanding; that we really need to know no more; and that discussions on such subjects must be hurtful in gendering controver-

sies. If all this is true, we ought to pause right here. But there is no solid ground for such assertions. We cannot be too reverential, too modest, too careful not to assert anything respecting our Saviour beyond what God has made known to us. But by every good rule of conduct we are bound to receive all the light God gives us. We must be reverent; we must adore; but we must inquire. Ignorance is the mother of nothing good. We may not be wise above what is written, but we must labor to be wise up to what is written. If the Lord has spoken, let us give good heed to it all. If God's word, rightly interpreted, gives us fuller and clearer views on the subject than these men suppose, let us not be afraid to learn them. It is as contrary to piety wilfully to shut our eyes to truths sufficiently revealed, as it is to search into things not made known. It is fair and proper to ask, Has God taught us that His Son, Jesus Christ, was not capable of sinning? This question cannot be disposed of by clamor. It is a question of fact. We may always safely follow the rule given in the early days of inspiration: "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things

which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever." Deut. xxix. 29.

We might be the more inclined not to stop short of Divine teachings on this subject, because of the transcendent excellence and inestimable value of the truth touching our Lord's character. Dr. J. W. Alexander has well said: "It is my sincere persuasion, that no argument goes so profoundly to the heart, or so irrefragably reasons down the prejudices of scepticism, as the person of Jesus as it shines out from the evangelical pages." And we are greatly aided in this work by the fact that the narratives of the life of Christ seem now to be fully accredited by all sober men. If sin is in us a strong, a resistless power, in Christ is one stronger than the strong man, who kept his goods in peace.

That one class of modern thinkers do discourage inquiries on this subject, is apparent from the language of Farrar in his *Life of Christ*, pages 123, 124: "The question as to whether Christ was or was not *capable* of sin—to express it in the language of that scholastic and theological region in which it originated, the question as to the peccability or impeccability of His human

nature—is one which would never occur to a simple and reverent mind. We believe and know that our blessed Lord was sinless—the Lamb of God without blemish and without spot. What can be the possible edification or advantage in the discussion as to whether the sinlessness sprang from a *posse non peccare* or a *non posse peccare*? Some, in a zeal at once intemperate and ignorant, have claimed for Him not only an actual sinlessness, but a nature to which sin was divinely and miraculously impossible. What then? If His great conflict were a mere deceptive phantasmagoria, how can the narrative of it profit us? If we have to fight the battle clad in the armor of human free-will which has been hacked and riven about the bosom of our fathers by so many a cruel blow, what comfort is it to us if our great Captain fought not only victoriously, but without real danger; not only uninjured, but without even a possibility of wound? Where is the warrior's courage, if he knows that for him there is but the semblance of a battle against the simulacrum of a foe? Are we not thus, under an appearance of devotion, robbed of One who, 'though he were a Son, yet learned obedience

by the things which He suffered?' Are we not thus, under the guise of orthodoxy, mocked in our belief that we have a High-Priest who can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, 'being tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin?' Those who would thus honor Him, rob us of our living Christ, who was very man no less than very God, and substitute for Him a perilous Apollinarian phantom enshrined 'in the cold empyrean of theology,' and alike incapable of kindling devotion or of inspiring love!" Dr. Schaff uses language of the same import in his "Person of Christ," pages 51, 52: "Had Jesus been endowed with absolute impeccability from the start, He could not be a true man, nor our model for imitation; His holiness, instead of being His own self-acquired act and inherent merit, would be an accidental or outward gift, and His temptation an unreal show." The language of both these able writers is certainly very strong, and some of it strange; but we need not now dwell upon it. It is cited to show that there is no discretion left us as to whether we will defend our Lord's impeccability. If we do not, we must be denounced and ridiculed as dreamers and robbers.

ANOTHER STEP FORWARD.

Some, who admit the fact of Christ's immaculate character, defend His sinlessness simply on the ground that He was in some way able not to sin, and not on the ground that He was incapable of sinning. They admit that He never was corrupted, but they will not say that He was incorruptible; that He did not sin, but not that He was incapable of sinning. Thus Ullmann: "We by no means, however, understand by the term sinlessness an absolute impossibility of sinning. Not the non *posse* peccare, but only the *posse non* peccare, and the non *peccasse* should be attributed to Jesus." P. 10. So, Dr. Hodge: "The sinlessness of our Lord does not amount to absolute impeccability. It was not a non *potest peccare*. If He was a true man, He must have been capable of sinning. That He did not sin under the greatest provocation; that when He was reviled, He blessed; when He suffered, He threatened not; that He was dumb as a sheep before her shearers, is held up to us as an example. Temptation implies the possibility of sin. If from the constitution of His

person it was impossible for Christ to sin, then His temptation was unreal, and without effect, and He cannot sympathize with His people." *Theology*, Vol. II., p. 457.

The author of *Ecce Deus*, pages 56-58, also says: "The temptation of the Blessed Son is important as an historic fact, but infinitely more important as a doctrine giving hope to men who are tempted by the devil to some degree of the same enormities. Could Christ have been overthrown? Most certainly; otherwise His temptation has no message to man, except one of despair. Whatever is less than infinite is temptable and peccable; Christ's humanity was less than infinite; therefore, His humanity might have been overthrown. Sympathy can proceed only from community of situation. To say that Christ could not have been successfully tempted, and that the result of His temptation should comfort men, is equal to saying that because no man can blow out the sun, therefore no man can blow out a taper. The record of temptation is an act of cruelty, if it has no bearing on human strife; but an analysis of the temptation shows that the methods of assault are fundamentally

the same, and that every answer is available for every tempted man.

“When, however, it is affirmed that Christ could have been successfully tempted, the words require to be carefully considered. The possibility relates, of course, entirely to the human side of His nature. So far as the weakness of the flesh was concerned, Christ was open to all the results of diabolic seduction; but there was in Him that spirit of perfect trust in God, which rendered the fiercest assaults of the enemy simply futile. He did not come upon the tempter as Eve did; she could not foresee the result of disobedience; Christ had the history of the world as a living illustration of the course of diabolic policy immediately before Him, so that He could give the lie to every diabolic suggestion.

“A common illustration will simplify the idea that the spirit of perfect trust which was in Christ, taken in connection with the results of sin which abounded everywhere, rendered temptation utterly futile. Take the most respected man of a given neighborhood—a man whose honor and integrity are known to be above suspicion,—and it may be affirmed of that man that it is impossi-

ble to persuade him to defraud his neighbor of a penny. The idea of his doing so, would be regarded by those who knew him best as an imputation not to be tolerated for a moment. But why? The man is only human, like other men, why then this indignation at the idea of fraud? Simply because the spirit of honesty within him is too strong to succumb to such a temptation. But increase the force of the temptation; raise it from a paltry penny to ten thousand guineas, and multiply the ten by ten, and add the assurance that no human being can ever be cognizant of the fraudulent deed; and if that amount will not reach to his full moral stature, add to it according to his integrity; and thus a tremendous rival force may be set up, with which the man may find it difficult or impossible to contend. In the case of Christ, the Devil pursued this climacteric course, rising from the mere satisfaction of hunger to the rule of all kingdoms. Still the Messianic spirit towered far beyond the pretentious offer. The deceiver could not attain the overshadowing height; other men had been measurable and conquerable, but this man was of gigantic stature, and his shield was impenetrable.

While, then, looking strictly to the human side of Christ, it may be affirmed that He was exposed to all the risks of temptation, it may be affirmed with equal truth, looking at His spirit, that it was impossible that Christ could fall. There is a great truth in each representation, and the combination of the two can alone give us the reality of the case."

On these quotations a few remarks are here offered :

It is not intended to convey the impression that all the writers cited in this and preceding sections, agree with each other in all their views on the subject in hand. Doubtless they widely differ in some things. Another is, that they are here quoted that the reader may see the state of the question in the public mind, and not at all for the purpose of now replying to them at length. This will be done further on in the discussion.

A third remark is, that the last writer cited does after all concede, and in strong terms too, the main point at issue. He admits that Christ's purity was immeasurable and unconquerable, and His spirit impenetrable to all the fiery darts

of Satan, and that it was impossible that Christ could fall. After all, then, does he mean to assert more than that the Lord Christ was really and sorely tempted, and that His trials were so great that perhaps no one of less strength of virtuous principles could have triumphed over them?

If any should say, when men assert that if Christ's person was so constituted that He was incapable of sinning, then His temptation was not real, that nothing more is meant than that if in the constitution of Christ's complex person there was no nature of any kind through which a temptation could assail Him, then His temptation was in appearance only; the answer is, that if this is all that is intended to be taught, it would be a relief to many to have it so stated. For no one denies that human nature, even in innocence, was weak, and till confirmed in holiness may fall. But while we unhesitatingly admit this of any merely human person, it is not true of the theanthropic person of the Redeemer. Man may sin, but the God-man cannot sin.

ANOTHER VIEW OF THE MATTER.

If Schaff and Dorner are not misunderstood,

they hold that our blessed Lord was not at first impeccable, but at length became so. The language they use is perhaps not as clear or full as it might be, but it seems to teach what is here stated. Schaff's words are : " His sinlessness was at first only the *relative* sinlessness of Adam before the fall ; which implies the necessity of trial and probation, and the peccability, or the possibility of the fall. Had He been endowed with absolute impeccability from the start, He could not be a true man, nor our model for imitation. . . . Christ's *relative* sinlessness became more and more *absolute* sinlessness by His own moral act, or the right use of His freedom in perfect, active, and passive obedience to God. In other words, Christ's original *possibility of not sinning*, which includes the possibility of sinning, but excludes the actuality of sin, was unfolded into the *impossibility of sinning*." Accordingly in his notes he speaks of the *impeccabilitas minor*, and *the impeccabilitas major*. But on this view one is ready to ask, Where is any such doctrine taught in Scripture? Does God's Word speak of a less and a greater impeccability as inhering in the same person?

Dorner speaks in the same strain. He says: "Growth points back to previous deficiency, or, what is the same thing, forwards to an absolute goal, to which the reality approaches only by degrees. Now, if deficiency in entire perfection were identical with sinfulness, then certainly all real humanity and sinfulness would be identical. But the ethical goal of perfection prescribes a gradual attainment, and excludes the finishing stroke from the beginning. Absolute normality consists well enough with the reality of progress. If the complacency of God rests on every stage of a normal progress, it surely may also be said that it rests upon it in a higher degree, the nearer it has come to the goal of perfection, because abnormal possibilities have been in the same degree overcome, and the condition of immutable confirmation of the absolute union of ethical freedom and of the ethical necessity has already advanced so much nearer . . . His later conflicts were only assigned Him because He remained the pure One, had become morally harmonious in the midst of moral anarchy." Much more is said to the same effect.

No one denies that Christ grew in wisdom, and

in favor with God and man. But where does the Bible speak of our Lord so attaining the goal of perfection, as to approach the condition of immutable confirmation? When did our Lord pass from a state of liability to sin by overcoming abnormal possibilities? God was ever well pleased with Him. Ages before His incarnation the Father said: "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance." Ps. ii. 7, 8. The voice from heaven uttered the same language before His great temptation in the wilderness as at the transfiguration. Compare Matt. iii. 17; xvii. 5. Indeed divinely interpreted prophecy did the same before He was born. Compare Isa. xlii. 1, and Matt. xii. 18. Christ was ever "morally harmonious." In Him there was never any discord.

YET ANOTHER VIEW.

Others think that the correct view of Christ's sinlessness is that He was incapable of sinning, *non potest peccare*; that it was impossible for Him to sin; in short, that He was truly and certainly impeccable. This is the old doctrine. This is

the belief of far the greater part of the Christian world. The announcement of any view short of this has caused real distress in the Church of Christ. At this very time lectures in theological schools are receiving a shape which is given them by the fact that doubt of Christ's impeccability has been expressed by great, learned, and honored servants of the Lord Jesus. Nor ought it to offend any one for us to say that it was impossible for Christ to sin. The Word of God says: "It was not possible that he should be holden of death." Acts ii. 24. Where, then, is there any rashness in our saying, that it was impossible that He should be bound by the bonds of iniquity? Perhaps no serious reader of Scripture will express a doubt that Christ is now impeccable. I know no man who holds or hints that our Saviour is now capable of sinning. When did He become impeccable? He was Prophet, Priest, and King to His Church before His incarnation. None will be so bold as to say that it was possible for Him to sin before His incarnation. Did He by taking our nature become peccable?

Before entering on the whole question, it may

be well to spend a short time in considering a few other matters.

THE TERM ABSOLUTE.

Several amiable and learned men, some of whom have been already cited, in denying Christ's impeccability, prefix to it a qualifying term. They deny to Christ "absolute impeccability." Does that word *absolute* modify the denial of Christ's impeccability? If so, to what extent? One of the meanings of the word absolute is the opposite of relative. Sometimes absolute means without relation. Schaffevidently uses it in this sense, for he sets the words over against each other. But he seems to use the term relative, as *relating* to trials, and absolute, as referring to the time when trials should cease. If this is not his meaning, it is not easy to tell in what precise sense he uses these terms. Commonly the term relative used on this subject is supposed to refer to the relation of Christ's human nature to His divine nature and to His official character. Some speak of Christ as impeccable, because of the constitution of His person, or the union of His divine and human natures. But

Hodge forestalls any disposition on our part to interpret *not absolute* as equivalent to relative by saying: "If from the constitution of His person it was impossible for Christ to sin, then His temptation was unreal," etc. So that we are not at liberty to seek relief from this quarter. Should any teach that Christ's impeccability as a man arose from the relation of His human and divine natures, from the indwelling of the Spirit, and from His relation to the covenant of redemption, and to the system of mediation, no one would have cause to enter into any lengthened discussion. But will it be admitted that He had even this relative impeccability? Perhaps not.

The other meanings of the word *absolute* are complete, unconditional, not limited, positive. But it must be evident that an incomplete, conditional, limited, or negative impeccability is no impeccability at all. It is therefore hard to find room for the words *not absolute* in this connection. Some have spoken of Adam as having had a relative impeccability; but he had no impeccability at all. He fell under slight temptation. What then can be the meaning of *absolute* as used by Ullmann and others?

SIN NOT ESSENTIAL TO HUMANITY.

Neither sin, nor the possibility of sinning, is essential to the entireness of human nature. Enoch and Elijah, at this time in glory, have the sum, the whole, the fulness of manhood; yet it is not possible for them to sin. They are not only men, but they are complete men, each having both soul and body. They lack nothing essential to their humanity. They are as certainly and entirely human as was Adam before or after the fall. They are now in full possession of all that is essential to their being men. And yet they are now, and for long ages they have been, not only unsinning and perfect, but not liable to sin. In like manner all the redeemed shall, after the resurrection, have the totality of human nature, soul and body entire, and yet it will not be possible for them to sin. So our Lord, now in glory, has an entire human nature, yet no one believes that He is now peccable.

SINLESSNESS IS NOT MERE WANT OF AN
OCCASION.

Nor is the sinlessness of Christ and of His people in glory owing merely to the absence of an

opportunity of sinning. This would be but a low attainment. The thief in his solitary dungeon steals not. The drunkard, far removed from his cups, drinks not. It is true that Christ and His people in glory are for ever done with temptation. No longer are vile suggestions made to them. Their warfare is ended. God has bruised Satan under them, so that he shall annoy them no more. But if it were permitted to the great adversary to spread his snares for them, it would be all in vain. They are for ever and unchangeably holy. It is not necessary now to argue and defend the belief of the Christian world, that there is such a thing as confirmation in holiness, when probation and trial are ended.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF IMPECCABILITY.

There are three kinds of impeccability: *a.* There is the impeccability of God. This belongs to Him by nature. It is ever and every way true that God cannot lie, cannot practice injustice, cannot do wrong, cannot approve moral evil, cannot look upon sin in any sense implying sanction of it, or indifference towards it. To teach the opposite is blasphemy. The Judge of

all the earth cannot but do right. God is infinitely, eternally, and unchangeably true and holy. He is altogether righteous. His impeccability is natural, eternal, necessary. *b.* There is the impeccability of saints and angels in glory. This is not natural in the same sense as God's impeccability; for some angels and all mere men are or have been sinners. But the angels who stood in their probation, cannot now fall. They are forever confirmed and established in unchanging rectitude. How this is done may not now be certainly known to us. That it is done, no sound writer doubts. So also glorified men can never fall. This impeccability in the creature flows from the kindness, power, and faithfulness of God. It is a privilege conferred on all elect angels, and on all redeemed men, who have received the crown of life. It wonderfully illustrates the benevolence of God. It is perpetual. *c.* There is the impeccability of Christ Jesus the Lord. No one contends that His divine nature could sin. It would be as blasphemous to assert peccability of the second person of the Godhead, as to assert it of the Father or of the Spirit. The only question regards the peccability of

the human nature of our Lord. His impeccability has been generally received in the Church of God, and on good grounds, which shall in due time be set forth.

AN EVIL INCLINATION DOES NOT HEIGHTEN
VIRTUE.

No actual inclination to evil, great or small, is necessary to a virtuous and praiseworthy rejection of seductive appliances. The less one is disposed to yield to occasions of sinning, the more virtuous he is. Perfection of holiness instantly rejects all seductions, and that with abhorrence. If this is not so, then the man who meditates theft, slander, or murder, but does not actually commit either, is a purer and better man than he who never had such wicked thoughts, but always hated every false and wicked way. So to hate sin as never to be inclined to it, never to dally with it, never to parley with temptation, is perfect purity. It is not safe, therefore, to say that real temptation implies peccability. It cannot be proven to be true. It is begging the whole question at issue.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF TEMPTATION.

It may help us in our inquiries to consider with some care the different meanings of the words *tempt* and *temptation*. *A.* When it is said (Gen. xxii. 1) that God did tempt Abraham, the whole sense is that God did try or prove Abraham. God does not seek thus to inform Himself of the real character of His people, for He knows it altogether. Ps. cxxxix. 1-7. In thus proving His chosen, God's plan is to exercise their graces, to let them see their need of help, and to show to all the power of holy principles in the heart. Job i. 8; 1 Pet. i. 6, 7. Often does God thus tempt or try His people on earth; and they are in His Word called upon to count it all joy when they fall into divers such temptations. James i. 2, 3. This trying of their faith works patience, and when patience has her perfect work, the work of grace is perfect and entire, wanting nothing. Many of these temptations are fiery trials, but they are "more precious than gold, that perisheth, though it be tried with fire," and shall "be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ." 1 Pet.

i. 7. When the Lord tempts or tries His people, He infuses no evil into their hearts. He stimulates no vile inclination. He practices no seduction. Yet God tempts or proves His people. In the case of Abraham, God called on the patriarch to sacrifice his son, his only son Isaac, the child of promise, and so “tried him by the holy affection which a man like him must have cherished for the child of his faith and of his prayers; and still more, perhaps, by that fervent and sublime concern with which the father of the faithful must have viewed the multitude of his spiritual offspring, when the hope seemed upon the point of vanishing forever with the expiring breath of the heir of promise. These were the pious, and pure, and noble sentiments, in the strange and painful effort of repressing which, as soon as they came in opposition to the divine command, the whole temptation consisted. The more successfully these had been cultivated, and the longer they had been indulged, the more powerful inducements would they naturally prove to misunderstand, evade, or disobey the injunction with which it seemed impossible to reconcile them. Yet so far from being sins—so

far from being even weaknesses—they were virtues of the highest kind ; and though they might, if not duly guarded, have led to the most fatal consequences, yet, as if intentionally to exclude all idea of sinfulness from our views of this temptation—no rebellious murmur—no shrinking reluctance—not the slightest movement of any unholy feeling is ever imputed in the Scriptures to the patriarch's conduct under the trial ; but, on the contrary, it is everywhere made the theme of unqualified applause, and celebrated as the very triumph of a pure and unfaltering obedience." This case proves beyond dispute that "*temptation* and *sin*, however closely related, are yet things entirely and essentially distinct, so that there may be real and true temptation where there is no sin whatever." Compare Ps. xvii. 3 ; Pr. xvii. 3. God can and will carry His believing people through such temptations and trials as He sends, and will show that His grace is sufficient for them, and so will strengthen their good habits and principles. They shall come out as gold. Job xxiii. 10.

B. Men are said to tempt, try, or prove God, when they wickedly, capriciously, or unbeliev-

ingly call upon Him to manifest His presence, power, or kindness. In this sense the Israelites tempted, proved, and provoked God in the desert. Ex. xvii. 2, 7; Ps. xcv. 8, 9. Compare Deut. vi. 16; Isa. vii. 12; Heb. iii. 8, 9. When God is doing for us all we really need, we have no right to call upon Him to do more. Nor are we at liberty, even under sore trials, to prescribe to Him when or how He shall deliver us. To this very sin Satan tempted our Lord in the wilderness. After long fasting, Jesus felt the sensation of hunger. Then the tempter invited Him to make a selfish display of His miraculous power to relieve His own wants. But Jesus said, "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." God was sustaining Him without bread; and so Christ let Him do as He pleased. Men also tempt God when they presume upon a miraculous preservation, and rush unbidden into danger. Thus if Christ had cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, He would have tempted the Lord His God. Matt. iv. 6, 7. Men also tempt God, that is, unwarrantably prove Him, when casting His cords

asunder and restraining prayer they sin without stint, as if to see whether He will punish them, whether He can bring on them threatened evils. Mal. iii. 15. Thus men rush madly on, despite warnings and threatenings, till they are suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy. They perish in tempting God.

C. Satan tempts men, and bad men tempt their fellows, both saints and sinners, when they endeavor to seduce them from truth, piety, charity, humility, or any right course, to error, pride, ambition, or any other sin. In this sense of the word, God tempts no man, nor can He be tempted. James i. 13. God is holy, and cannot be seduced or prevailed upon to do evil. Nor does He ever set traps and snares to involve upright souls in evil; nor does he seduce them. These seductive temptations are either successful or unsuccessful. They never succeed except when men are drawn away of their own lusts and enticed. James i. 14. That is, they prevail only when there is in men some weakness of the virtuous principle, or somewhat congenial to the seduction. In no sense are good men compelled to sin by yielding to temptation. God always

provides a way of escape. 1 Cor. x. 13. That way may be through a lion's den, a fiery furnace, a shower of stones, or death itself. But it is not wicked to be stoned or burned to death. To suffer for righteousness' sake is glorious. Some temptations are wholly unsuccessful, as when Satan undertook to prove Job a hypocrite, or attempted to bring to naught the whole work of Christ the Mediator.

D. If any ask, What does the apostle mean when he says, "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed?"—James i. 14,—is not this another use of the word tempt? The answer is, that in this place to be *tempted* seems to mean to be *successfully tempted*, or *actually seduced*. The word here rendered *lust* is sometimes used in a good sense. In Luke xxii. 15, both the noun and the cognate verb are to be taken in a good sense, expressing vehement desire: "With desire have I desired to eat this passover." So Paul says he had "a desire to depart and be with Christ." But commonly the word is taken in a bad sense, and is rendered *lust*, *concupiscence*, and in the plural, *lusts*. In this verse it is certainly to be taken in a bad sense. In Rom. vii. 7, the same

word is synonymous with *ἀμαρτία*, or sin. But none will contend that Christ was ever tempted in this way. This sort of temptation is expressly excepted in Heb. iv. 15. He was never *drawn away* from the right path. He was never *enticed* to sin or error. Pool: "James shows the great cause of sin; that lust hath a greater hand in it than either the devil or his instruments, who cannot make us sin without ourselves; they sometimes tempt and do not prevail; but when lust tempts, it always prevails, either in whole or in part, it being a degree of sin to be our own tempters."

The words tempt and temptation do not seem to be used to convey any other ideas than those already explained.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS ON TEMPTATION.

It is clear that it is not wicked to be assaulted by the devil; but it is wicked not to resist him, that he may flee from us. James iv. 7. The Saviour thus resisted him, and with the word of God drove him off. One of the quotations made under the preceding head was from an anonymous writer, said to be Dr. McLagen, whose

sermon, founded on Hebrews iv. 15, is given at length in Dods "On the Incarnation." To the same clear and modest divine the reader is indebted for several of the remaining thoughts of this section. Seeing that temptation is not itself sin, and may be without sin, it may be safely asserted that "those temptations which are the most sifting, severe, and terrible in their nature, may be precisely those which are the farthest removed from being sinful." The more an honorable merchant abhors base gain, the more agonizing is it to him to have base proposals made to him, and to have them repeatedly urged upon him, especially by persons whom he has long regarded as truly virtuous. If with all this urgency, beggary to himself and family is made to stare him in the face, unless he departs a little from the path of perfect rectitude, we can see how great his anguish must be, although he is unfalteringly purposed all the while to do right; and wonders how men of reputation dare approach him with seductions so abhorrent to his mind, and urge them with a pertinacity like that of a powerful, besieging foe. True, wicked men are tormented by the unhallowed passions, which

burn and rage within them, and their shame, remorse, and despair are often frightful. But their conflicts with sin itself are as nothing compared with those of the pure in heart, who are not under the dominion of sin, and yet have certain lofty and noble desires and purposes, which may require checking lest they become excessive. How sore the trial of David, when he was called to give up his cherished plan of building a house for the Lord! Such cases might be indefinitely multiplied, and they "show how the temptations of our Lord, without being sinful in the least degree, might, notwithstanding, be what we know they were, more sharp and terrible than any other. What though He had no irregular or exaggerated passions to restrain? He had holy, just, pure, heavenly affections, strong in proportion to the greatness of His soul, and warm in proportion to the brightness and dignity of their objects; which He was called upon, by the nature of His undertaking, not only to control, but for a season to thwart so painfully, that He must have needed to exercise a persevering strength of self-denial altogether matchless: and must have had in His heart experiences far beyond

what mere mortality could have endured, of the profoundest sorrow, the keenest anguish, and the harshest mortification. What feelings but such as these could He have experienced in those hours of temptation, when with a spirit feelingly alive to all the requirements of celestial purity and love itself, He had to hear the loathsome suggestions, and encounter the detestable impulses of diabolical wickedness and pollution? or, still more, when with a heart that was completely absorbed in the love of God, and that found its highest delight in the sense of His fellowship and favor, it behooved Him, by His own consent, not only to feel Himself forsaken of God, alone and desolate; but also to endure in His spirit the whole expression and effect of God's infinite wrath, when roused to execute the utmost vengeance of sovereign justice upon the sins for which, though He did not commit them, it was His lot to suffer. No trial, it is evident, could be more holy or more terrible than this. Nay, in the very perfection of its holiness, its terror was consummated." In full accord with these views is Christian experience. Lot's greatest conflicts and sorrows, when he dwelt in Sodom, arose

from his piety, not from his depravity. 2 Pet. ii. 8. Yet he was a sinful man, but partially sanctified. How much more, then, must the spotless soul of Jesus Christ have been wrung with anguish at the horrid suggestions of wicked men and fallen angels, coming upon Him too at times when His nature was exhausted with vigils, fastings, preaching, and the greatest cares ever laid upon a human soul!

In his *Life of Christ*, page 97, Hanna, speaking of the closing scene of Christ's temptation in the wilderness, says: "Satan knew not with whom he had to do. The eye of Jesus may for a moment have been dazzled by the offer made, and this implied neither imperfection nor sin, but it refused to rest upon the seducing spectacle. It turned quickly and resolutely away. No sooner is the bribe offered than it is repelled. In haste, as if that magnificent panorama was not one on which even His pure eye should be suffered to repose; as if this temptation were one which even He could not afford to dally with; in anger, too, at the base condition coupled with the bribe, and as if he who offered it could no longer be suffered to remain in His presence, He

calls the devil by his name, and says: 'Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.' Satan had wanted Jesus to give him some proof of His divine power, and now He gets it; gets it as that command is given which He must instantly obey. At once all that glittering illusion that he had conjured up, vanishes from the view. At once his hateful presence is withdrawn, the conflict is over, the victory is complete. Jesus stands once more alone in the wilderness, but He is not left alone: angels come and minister unto Him."

These things being so, it follows that "the temptations of Christ, notwithstanding His sinlessness under them, were such as to give Him a most thorough experience and feeling of human infirmity in the hour of trial." Whatever suffering came on the Redeemer was foretold in ancient prophecy. Hear His words in a strictly Messianic ode: "Be not far from me; for trouble is near: for there is none to help . . . I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax: it is melted like wax in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like

a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to the roof of my mouth . . . Be not thou far from me, O Lord: O my strength, haste thee to help me. Deliver my soul from the sword, my darling from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion's mouth." Ps. xxii. in several places. A like prophecy is found in Ps. xl. Surely more than is here expressed could not be desired by any to assure him of our Saviour's acquaintance with grief, pain, insult, and temptation.

Let us briefly consider two or three passages of Scripture in the New Testament. The first is in Heb. ii. 10: "It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." As a man, Christ was always sinlessly perfect. But as a Captain (or Author) of salvation He was made perfect through sufferings. Our Lord Himself says, "I shall be perfected," Luke xiii. 32. His Father bore ample and public testimony to the excellence of His character, as a Son and as a man. But it became, behooved Him as a Saviour to suffer, not only for atonement, but that He might have a personal experience of affliction and

temptation. He shook hands with grief. He said to sorrow, "Thou art my sister." His sufferings were of every kind that personal innocence could endure. They were from the imperfections of good men, from the blindness, malice, and perversity of bad men, from the audacity and temptations of Satan, from poverty, from reproach, from betrayal, from denial, from weariness, from watchings, from taunts, from mockings, from hunger, from thirst, from crucifixion, from the agony of His soul under the hidings of His Father's face, and from the wrath of God. In Heb. v. 7, 8, speaking of our High-Priest, Paul says: "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; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." "In the days of His flesh," that is during His life on earth. "Prayers and supplications" denote the humblest and most earnest beseechings. Calvin: "By tears and strong crying the apostle means to express the intensity of His grief; even as it is common to denote things

by signs." "Strong crying," literally, mighty outcry. Some refer to Matt. xxvi. 38; xxvii. 46. "To save him from death," means to save Him out of death, that is, to raise Him from the dead. The Peshito well gives the sense: "Likewise when He was clothed in flesh, He presented supplication and entreaty, with intense invocation, and with tears, to Him who was able to resuscitate Him from death; and He was heard." Most commentators take the same view in the main. "In that He feared," means because of His pious fear, His godly reverence. So most expositors. But many think the meaning is, He was saved from the agitating emotion of fear. And from this our Lord seems to have been quite delivered before He came to His trial and death. And He "learned obedience" by His sufferings. Glorious as He was, He practiced unparalleled self-denial. Another verse of God's Word bearing on the same subject is found in Heb. iv. 15: "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, yet without sin." The rendering of this verse is very good, and the whole bearing of it seems to

be clear. In His temptations the Lord Jesus entered into great conflicts, had a clear perception of the pit into which the enemy desired Him to fall, and felt His principles subjected to the severest possible test, yet *without sin*. Christ's humanity was not absorbed by His divinity. His human nature was sustained by His divine nature, but it did not cease to be human nature, capable of suffering and of temptation, though He was not capable of being seduced into sin. Thus our Lord had His rectitude put to a trial, a severe trial. "According to the Scriptures it was the work of His divinity which is mysteriously united with manhood in His person,—not to raise His suffering nature to such a height of glorious power as would render all trial slight and contemptible; but to confer upon it such strength as would be infallibly sufficient—I say *infallibly sufficient*—but not more than sufficient, just to bear Him through the fearful strife that awaited Him, without His being broken or destroyed—so that He might thoroughly experience, in all the faculties of His soul and body, the innumerable sensations of overpowering difficulty, and exhausting toil, and fainting weak-

ness, and tormenting anguish, though by the Holy Ghost preserved from sin, and might touch the very brink of danger, though not be swept away by it, and feel all the horror of the precipice, without falling over it."

Thus the Saviour was prepared to enter into the case of all His tempted, suffering ones. "This *feeling of infirmity* lays an ample foundation for a true and perfect sympathy with His people in all their trials. . . . The sympathy of Christ is secure to those who believe in Him—who acknowledge Him as their High-Priest—and who hold the same attitude in which He was found on earth, striving against sin." Christ's compassions for the perishing are amazing. True, He shares not the sentiments of those who live in sin and love to have it so. "He can have no fellowship with their love of sin. Their impure, unrighteous, ungodly thoughts and feelings are utter strangers to His heart. There can be no concord of Christ with Belial. But is this any disadvantage to those unhappy persons in seeking salvation from Him? Quite the contrary. If He *could possibly* have a fellow-feeling with their sins, yet to what end would they wish for the existence of such a

feeling? *That*, instead of promoting their salvation, would be deepening their destruction. Is it that He might the better mortify and expel their sins? But how could such an object be promoted by His concurring in their sins and entering into the spirit of them? Surely His invincible abhorrence of even the least iniquity, and His infinite love of holiness and unspotted righteousness, are the very best pledges that sinners can desire of His most earnest readiness to aid them in renouncing their transgressions." The sinner needs no countenance in his iniquities, but tender and efficient help in escaping from them. It is evil-disposed men who make Christ the minister of sin, the fautor of vileness.

IMPECCABILITY DOES NOT MAKE TEMPTATION
IMPOSSIBLE.

Nor is it true that if Christ was not peccable, He was not capable of being tempted. Without repeating what has been said in preceding sections, it may be safely asserted that the reality of a temptation does not in the least depend on the actual power it has over one to lead him astray. In other words, moral evil and an invitation to

commit moral evil are not identical. To us temptation is either mere trial without any seductive power, or it is an invitation to us to do wrong, presenting in a seductive way considerations or objects, which, if we are not firmly settled in righteousness, may lead us astray. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were sorely tempted, though they never faltered, nor for a moment thought of yielding. Their language is strong and decisive: "O, Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter." Dan. iii. 16, and onwards. In common language, temptations are enticements to commit sin. Their reality depends on their presentation, and not in their actual controlling power over one. Peter tempted Christ not to die. The temptation was real, but it did not in the least incline our Lord to evade death. "He turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." Matt. xvi. 23. In his Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. I., p. 1042, Smith says: "As the baptism of our Lord cannot have been for Him the token of repentance and intended reformation which it was for sinful

men, so does our Lord's sinlessness affect the nature of His temptation; for it was the trial of One who could not possibly have fallen. This makes a complete conception of the temptation impossible for minds wherein temptation is always associated with the possibility of sin."

WHY WAS OUR LORD TEMPTED?

Does any one ask, Why was our Saviour subjected to temptation? It is a proper question. It may be answered negatively, that He was not tempted in order to prove that He was capable of sinning. It evinced no such thing. If on this subject it proved anything, it was that all the devices of the Devil were unable to cause Him to swerve in the least from spotless rectitude. But, positively, there were good reasons for our Lord's temptations. Those assigned by good writers are commonly four: 1. He thus set an example of condescension and humiliation, which is full of instruction to His people. He voluntarily submitted to this great annoyance. 2. He set an example of firmness and constancy, which we ought to imitate. 3. He proved that He was greater than all the powers of darkness, stronger

than the strong man armed that kept his goods in peace. He showed that His virtue was impregnable. 4. He thus evinced that He was no stranger to any of the trials, from the power of which we needed help from a sympathizing Redeemer. *πεπειρασμενον κατα παντα καθ' ομοιοτητα.* He was tempted in all points like as we are.

CHRIST'S WORK DEPENDED ON HIS CHARACTER.

While it is admitted that by the aid of the Holy Ghost one may be an unerring teacher, though he is personally a sinful and fallible man, as was proven in the case of the prophets and apostles; yet it is not true that we can consistently say that Christ was either peccable or fallible; for His whole work depended on His personal character. Jesus Christ was not a truth-seeker, nor a truth-finder. He was the Truth itself, the very truth which makes men free. He did not go through life in quest of light or finding light. He himself was "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Liddon: "This is the full and solemn truth, that Jesus Christ is not merely the Teacher, but the substance of Christianity; not merely the Author of

the faith Christians profess, but its central object." The author of the last gospel says, "In Him was Life, and the Life was the Light of men." John i. 4. He was Himself the source, sum, substance, and author of all that can guide the lost soul to God. The old prophets spake by His Spirit. 1 Peter i. 11. We cannot say that He was either peccable or fallible; for then, how could He be a perfect pattern, a spotless sacrifice, a glorious King, an adorable Redeemer? Ullmann: "The supposition of Christ's unspotted virtue is sustained by the fact that such a supposition meets our highest spiritual necessities, which without it must remain unsatisfied." If Christ could have either erred or sinned, it would not have befitted Him to say, "I say unto you;" "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." Jesus taught in His own name. Others spoke in the name of Jehovah or of the Lord Jesus. If they had been the sources, the authors, and the substance of their own messages, their infallibility would have depended on their impeccability: for He who can sin may surely err. Sin is the worst form of evincing fallibility. If impeccability did not always belong to our Lord Jesus Christ, neither

did infallibility; and if He was not an infallible teacher, our faith is vain.

UNCERTAINTY NOT NECESSARY TO FREEDOM.

It never can be proven that uncertainty of action is necessary to free-agency. God is both free and independent in all His acts; yet He is subject to no law of contingency. To Him no fact and no issue can be doubtful. Jesus the Mediator always did proceed with inflexible determination and infallible certainty to make His enemies His footstool; yet no one can doubt His entire freedom. The angels in heaven and the saints in glory are, and ever have been, in every good sense, free agents; and yet they never go after folly; there is no unsteadiness in their obedience, and no uncertainty as to its continuance. Free-agency does not consist in an equal bias or adaptation to good and evil, nor in indifference to both. In stating the views of Socinus concerning foreknowledge, Hodge, Vol. I., p. 400, well says: "This whole difficulty arises out of the assumption that contingency is essential to free-agency. If an act may be certain as to its occurrence, and yet free as to the mode

of its occurrence, the difficulty vanishes. That free acts may be absolutely certain is plain, because they have in a multitude of cases been predicted. It was certain that the acts of Christ would be holy, yet they were free. The continued holiness of the saints in heaven is certain, and yet they are perfectly free." Elsewhere in opposing the doctrine that God cannot prevent sin in a moral system, the same writer, Vol. I., p. 434, says: "It assumes that certainty is inconsistent with free-agency. Any kind or degree of influence which renders it certain how a free agent will act, destroys his liberty in acting." This is the objection. The answer given is: "This doctrine that God cannot effectually control the acts of free agents without destroying their liberty, is so contrary to the Scriptures, that it has never been adopted by any organized portion of the Christian Church." Again, Vol. I., p. 403, he says: "An agent is said to be free: (1) When he is at liberty to act or not to act, according to his good pleasure. This is liberty in acting. (2) He is free as to his volitions, when they are determined by his own sense of what is wise, right, or desirable." Now if in the case of men, of

angels, and of God, contingency is not essential to free-agency, why should contingency (or liability to do wrong) be thought necessary to the glorious actions of our sinless Lord Jesus Christ? And "if with all the fulness of the Holy Ghost, he 'all but yielded,' how can I possibly hope that a smaller measure of the Holy Ghost is capable of doing for me, what all His fulness had just enough to do to accomplish for Him, under much more favorable circumstances?"

CHRIST'S HOLINESS WAS VOLUNTARY.

Christ's holiness was not only perfect, and, in fact, perpetual, but it was personal and of choice. He delighted to do and suffer all God's will. Ps. xl. 8. Hear His own words: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me and to finish His work." John iv. 34. Christ's impeccability did not destroy His liberty. He had the power of choice and He exercised it. He had no reluctance, no hesitancy in doing and suffering the whole will of God. If, in its innocent weakness, His human nature cried out, His holiness hushed all these perturbations. Matt. xxvi. 39, 42. That the will of our Lord on earth was perfectly free,

is not only taught by history, but it was foretold by prophecy: "Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall He eat, that He may know to refuse the evil and choose the good." Isa. vii. 14, 15. Some would make the prophet teach no more than that the child Jesus was capable of distinguishing between good and evil, but surely this is not explaining, but explaining away God's word. Other children go astray from the womb, choosing the evil and refusing the good. But the holy child Jesus always refused the evil and chose the good, and that perfectly and perpetually. In acting and suffering, Christ's obedience was intelligent and voluntary, nor will any deny that the choices He actually made were wholly inconsistent with choices of an opposite nature. In this shone forth His spotless innocence. His impeccability in no way impaired the freedom of His action, or the excellence of His piety and holiness.

THE HISTORY OF THIS DOCTRINE.

It may be well here to give a brief view of the history of the doctrine of Christ's peccability, or

impeccability. Among those who doubt or deny it, I have found none more ancient than a writer who flourished in the second century. Ullmann says Basilides "found it difficult to reconcile the sinlessness of Christ with his system, according to which every sufferer bears the punishment of his own sins; though he used every possible means to conceal this defect in his scheme." This man's whole system was a grief and an offence to the Catholic Church. If every one suffers for his own sins alone, Jesus Christ must have been both peccable and sinful.

Scotus maintained "*humanam naturam Christi non fuisse*" *αναμαρτητον*, that the human nature of Christ was not beyond the reach of sin; and yet (strange to tell) he maintained the immaculate conception of the Virgin.

Socinus held Christ's peccability, and with a fearful consistency maintained his fallibility. He who may sin may surely err. Of himself, Priestley says, that he "was once a Calvinist of the strictest sect; then a Socinian, and in a little time a Socinian of the lowest kind, in which Jesus Christ is considered as a mere man, the son of Joseph and Mary, and naturally as fallible and peccable as Moses or any other prophet."

The Remonstrants generally, Limborch in particular, embraced the doctrine of Christ's peccability.

Then comes Doederline, who seriously attempted to lead the Protestant churches away from the doctrines of the Reformation. He says: "Although we deny that Jesus ever sinned, the value of His merit is doubtless much greater if it were possible for Him to sin." His very words are: "Quodsi tamen Jesum peccasse unquam negemus, maius profecto hujus laudis momentum est, si peccare potuit." Vol. 2, p. 49. He does not say that His temptation was not a reality, if He could not sin; but he says His merit was greater if He could sin.

In his Lectures on Christian Theology, Knapp says that Christ's sinlessness is frequently represented as if it would have been impossible for the man Jesus to sin; and as if His virtues and holiness were absolutely necessary. If he means what is commonly known as philosophical necessity, that is certainty, the doctrine is accepted. For if it had been possible for Christ to sin, the whole plan and purpose of God touching men's salvation would have been liable to defeat. So

intent is this writer in maintaining his position that he makes this monstrous assertion: "The Scripture nowhere teaches that the possibility of sinning would have ceased in Adam and his posterity if Adam had not fallen. The possibility of erring and transgressing would belong to man, even if he had no natural depravity." That is, man's probation would never have ended! He adds: "If it should be *impossible* for a man to live otherwise than virtuously, or if his virtue should be necessary, it would have no value and no merit. All freedom in that case would vanish and man would become a mere machine." But is not God free? Yet it is impossible for Him to lie or to be unholy. Are all the angels and redeemed in heaven mere machines? Are they not as free creatures as God ever made? Cannot the Almighty secure to a reasonable creature everlasting holiness without making him a machine? Is not the obedience of saints and angels in heaven pleasing to God, now that they are beyond the possibility of sinning? One is painfully startled when Knapp says: "We are frequently exhorted to imitate the example of Jesus in His virtue, His conquest of sinful desires, etc. But

could this be done if He had none of those inducements to sin which we have, and if it had been impossible for Him to commit it?" What does he mean by *sinful desires* and *inducements to sin*? Christ never had any sinful desires to be conquered. "Inducements to sin" commonly conveys a bad sense. "The love of ease is an inducement to idleness." Surely Knapp could not have used these terms as implying that evil motives were ever found in our Saviour's holy soul. No one denies that base proposals were made to Christ, and that He fully understood their nature and tendency. But He manifested no inclination to them. He abhorred them all, and never in Him were there any "stirrings of the germ of evil." "It was," says Dorner, "no disorder in Him, but the disorder and sin without Him, which occasioned Him the contests, temptations, sufferings, which filled His life."

In 1788 an amiable clergyman in North Carolina, Rev. Henry Patillo, published a small volume of sermons. In a note to one of them he thus speaks: "Having a half-sheet to spare, I shall fill it with a note on the peccability of the man Christ Jesus; or in other words, whether it

was possible for our Saviour, while on earth, to have been guilty of sin. Every Christian, at first hearing, starts back with horror from the thought, and is ready to pronounce it the height of presumption and blasphemy to imagine such a thing. But a man of liberal sentiments, who indulges a rational freedom of thought, as he would not lightly embrace an opinion merely because it runs in the beaten track, so neither would he reject a sentiment only because it is new, or sounds harsh at first hearing. He will bring the object near, view it on every side, weigh what may be said for and against, and embrace that side to which the weight of evidence preponderates. In attempting to solve this question, I would run the parallel betwixt the first man Adam and Jesus Christ, the second Adam. 1. They were both men. For He that was born in Bethlehem was a real man, though not a mere man. 2. They were both public persons: the first at the head of all his posterity; the second at the head of all His spiritual seed. And thus to each of them matters of infinite importance were intrusted. 3. Both were endowed with such gifts and strength as were suited to the trials they were to

meet with. 4. Both had a perfect freedom of will to choose or reject whatever should offer at their own pleasure. 5. Both were to meet with such trials and temptations as were likely to put their virtue to the fullest proof. 6. The trials and temptations of the second Adam far exceeded those of the first Adam in number, strength, and duration. Now, I apprehend every Christian will grant each of these postulata: and if he does, he grants all I desire to prove, the affirmative, that Jesus Christ could have sinned if He had chosen to do so. If He had a perfect freedom of will, He could certainly choose as He pleased. For example: Could not Jesus, when hungry, have shewed impatience enough to turn stones to bread, as the tempter suggested; or could He not have accepted the government of the Roman Empire, which Satan offered Him on the mountain? Might He not, had He seen fit, have worn that crown His disciples were for compelling him to assume? Or could He not, at His own pleasure, have concealed Himself, and avoided His sufferings? Did Jesus Christ meet with temptations? Were these temptations real, and great trials of His virtue? The Apostle

assures us, 'He was in all things tempted like as we are.' But nothing could be called a temptation, had it been impossible for Him to comply with it. I expect that every enlightened Christian believes his Master had more and greater trials than Adam, or any man ever had or will have. But if persons will fix their attention on the Divinity of our blessed Saviour, and keep in their mouth that assertion, God cannot be tempted with evil: and again, if Jesus Christ could have possibly sinned, then the person that was God might have sinned; they will prove too much, and far more than their piety, or the honor they have for Christ, will allow. For in which nature do we consider the blessed Jesus, as born of a woman, tempted in the wilderness, as hungry and weary, as agonizing in the garden, dying on the cross, and rising from the dead? No one believes that any of these can be true of His Godhead, and yet they are all true of the person that was God, in His human nature. Now He declares to the world, that He had power to lay down His life, and power to take it up again! He had equal power to comply with a temptation or to resist it. And Christians should be

extremely cautious of asserting that their Master *could not* sin; as this thought naturally follows, then, perhaps He *would* have sinned if He could: And surely, it is infinitely more honourable for the blessed Jesus to believe and assert that He had a perfect freedom of will to chuse sin or duty at His pleasure; but that, notwithstanding all the temptations He met with, yet His virtue was proof against them all, and He came off a glorious conqueror over greater temptations than ever man was tried with. How could He know how to succour them that are tempted, from His own experience, had He never felt the force of temptation? Were a child, with a straw in his hand, to attack an armed giant, would any one call it a trial of the giant's skill or valour to repel so feeble an adversary? But everybody knows, or ought to know, that the word temptation signifies a trial. If ever the blessed Jesus, then, was tempted, His virtue was put to the trial. That He was tempted His whole life testifies; and sometimes He complains of it: 'Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?' It is not good divinity to say His Godhead preserved Him from sin. For God cannot be tempted with evil. It might well

be expected that when the Messiah made His appearance in the flesh, sinners of earth and hell would, like Bulls of Bashan, beset Him round to draw Him into sin, and mar the work of salvation, for which *the wicked enclosed Him*. But by the most steady perseverance in a glorious course of perfect virtue, He convinced a thousand worlds that the first Adam might have maintained his standing with comparative ease; whose trials were but as a rill, while those of Christ were like *the swellings of Jordan*."

This extract is given at length that all fairness may be shown in quoting the opinions of others, and that the reader may see at length the fullest and strongest statement that has yet been made on that side of the question. On this long *note* the following observations are now offered: 1. Many things here stated are true, but the bearing and scope of the note seem to be founded in misapprehension. 2. Many things here stated have been already answered, and others will be met in subsequent parts of this work. 3. The author is perfectly right in admitting that the general view he takes fills the mind of the Christian "with horror." This witness is true. Not

only *at first hearing*, but after all hearings, will it be found that the Christian world turns away from the doctrine here maintained. It does commonly give great pain to a pious heart to hear it stated that our Lord was capable of sinning. 4. One cannot but notice the difference of statement here found from one made by Paul in speaking of the first and second Adam. He says: "The first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. . . The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven." 1 Cor. xv. 45-47. Note this. 5. Freedom of will does not consist in indifference, nor in an equal inclination of the soul to good and bad. 6. This note is pretty full, and gives most of the points involved in a statement of the wrong side of the question. 7. It is much to be regretted that the terms here employed are not more exactly defined. Witness his use of the term *power*. He quotes a verse, in which the word has the sense of authority or right, (the Greek is *εξουσια*), and then immediately adds that Christ "had equal power to comply with a temptation, as to resist it." 8. This *note* grieved good people at the time. Dr.

Archibald Alexander, who knew the writer, deplored his publication of such doctrine, and informed me that the Rev. John Blair Smith, D.D., of blessed memory, earnestly besought the venerable preacher not to print the note.

In the unabridged *Life of Dr. Archibald Alexander*, p. 152, we read: "Late in life, Mr. Patillo became an author. His principal work was an abridgment of Leland's *Deistical Writers*; a very seasonable production, at a time when French infidelity was rife. The other was a series of plain sermons. A note appended to one of these broached the same doctrine concerning Christ's human nature which has since been so offensively taught by the famous Edward Irving." This is the writing of Dr. James W. Alexander, and sufficiently indicates his view on the main subject in hand.

At Annan, Scotland, was born in 1792, Edward Irving. He was a man of great eloquence, and seemed to be devout and devoted. But he became wild in his statements of doctrine. Of him Andrew Thompson said: "Happily for man, he is capable of being inconsistent with himself." His errors may have sprung from a disordered

mind, for at times he was doubtless insane. But in works, which bear marks of genius, he used language very grating to pious ears. A few specimens will suffice: "To the end He might suffer for the kind and not for individuals of the kind, He came not by ordinary generation; but by the Holy Spirit did He take up a portion of all the fallen substance before Him out of which to make his body, as He had taken up a portion of the earth to make Adam's body in the beginning. . . . There was united in Jesus Christ the Godhead in the person of the Son, and the manhood in its fallen and sinful state. . . . How can any one be tempted unless he is liable to sin? . . . It is the work of God the Father, and God the Holy Ghost, so to operate on the fallen humanity of Christ as that it shall be ever harmonious with the Godhead of Christ. . . . Conceive every variety of human passion, and every variety of human affection, and every variety of human error, and every variety of human wickedness, which hath ever been realized, or is possible to be realized, inherent in the humanity and combined against the holiness of Him who was not only a man, the heir of all the infirmities which man en-

tailleth upon his children which He took freely and fully upon Him, all to bear, and bearing all to annihilate all."—*Collected Works*, Vol. V., pages 153, 157, 158, 160, 276. On these quotations take a few thoughts. 1. Irving so far agrees with others less erroneous than himself, that he, and at least some of them, hold that Christ could not be tempted unless He was capable of sinning. The rest is deduction from this first error, perhaps not fair, but not surprising, for here is a crumbling precipice. 2. Irving's teachings awakened great distress in the Christian world. Good men were shocked by his assertions. 3. Marcus Dods' first remark in the Preface to his work on the Incarnation, is: "That the 'Word was made flesh,' and that He was not made sinful flesh, are propositions which lie at the very foundations of Christianity."

The foregoing is a very brief, but not unfair outline of the history of the opinions of men who have maintained that Christ was peccable.

HEAR THE OTHER SIDE

On the other hand, Christ's impeccability has from the beginning been commonly held by the people of God. When for ages the Church has read Rev. iii. 7, 14. "These things saith he that is holy, he that is true . . . the faithful and true witness," the common impression of the saints has been that they were reading of one who not only was true in fact, but could not lie or deceive; who not only was faithful, or trustworthy, but so faithful that it was impossible for Him to disappoint the trust reposed in Him; not only that He was holy, but that He was incorruptibly pure.

In his "History of Doctrines," Hagenbach, Vol. I., p. 171, says: "The intimate connection subsisting between the divine and human natures of Christ, which was held even by the primitive Church, excluded every idea of the existence of sin in Him who was the image of the Deity. Hence Irenæus, Tertullian, Clement, and Origen assert the sinlessness [*αναμαρτησια*] of Jesus in the strongest terms; and even those of the fathers, who do not expressly mention it, at least pre-

suppose it. In the scheme of the Ethonites and the Artemonites, this sinlessness was not a necessary feature of His character, although we do not meet with any intimations to the contrary." The language of Tertullian is strong: "Solus enim Deus sine peccato, et solus homo sine peccato Christus, qui et Deus Christus." Let it be noted that when the early writers speak of the sinlessness [*αναμαρτησια*] of Christ, they use the word in the sense in which they apply it to God, not only as excluding actual, but possible sinfulness. The early Christians rejected "every idea of the existence of sin" in Christ, even its possible existence.

In his "Medulla," Marck says: "With human nature Christ assumed also its qualities." This he explains as embracing those imperfections and miseries which have come on our nature by sin, as sadness, hunger, thirst, and weariness; and he cites Matt. iv. 2; xxvi. 38; John iv. 6; xix. 28, as explaining and confirming his meaning. One evangelist says: "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." Matt. viii. 17. The word rendered *infirmities* is the same as in Luke v. 15; John v. 5; 2 Cor. xii.

5, 9, 10. The word rendered *sicknesses* is also rendered diseases, infirmities. If either of these words ever mean sin or moral impurity, it is not its proper, but its figurative meaning. Marck says that the Remonstrants and others object that unless Christ could sin, He could not obey freely. His answer is, that it is not true that liberty consists in indifference. A second objection adduced by the Remonstrants is, that if Christ could not sin, He was tempted in vain. To this Marck replies: "This by no means follows, for thus His impeccability is established." A third objection brought forward by the Remonstrants is, that with the exception of actual sin, Christ was made like unto us. Marck's answer is, "That except all sin, even possible sin, which would place a disgraceful imperfection in Christ, He was made like unto us."

In his work on the "Incarnation," a book highly commended by Dr. Chalmers, and greatly approved by the orthodox world, Marcus Dods says: "I deny that Christ, or the humanity of Christ, was peccable . . . I shall not limit my remarks to such points as may be necessary to prove that Christ was not fallen nor sinful, nor

capable of falling or sinning. This may be proved in a few sentences to any person capable of forming an opinion upon the subject, and willing to listen, either to the authority of Scripture or the dictates of reason. But while the proof of our Saviour's perfect sinlessness and impeccability will be with me a primary object," etc., etc. Preface, page viii.; Work, pages 1 and 2.

In short, it is certainly true that the great mass of God's people in every age of the Christian Church have maintained Christ's impeccability. To this day the members of evangelical churches everywhere in the world generally hold to the unconditional sinlessness of our Lord Jesus Christ. Luther: "He could not sin."

IS CHRIST JESUS THEN IMPECCABLE?

This is the great question, to which all that has been said was preliminary. The truth on this subject is ascertainable. It can be reached. God has made it known. Nor is there any risk in espousing the affirmative. Let us calmly and candidly weigh the whole matter. Let us look at the reasons for believing that Christ was impeccable.

FIRST STEP IN THE ARGUMENT.

The first argument for believing that Jesus Christ was incapable of sinning is that the great body of orthodox writers, and the great mass of God's people in every age, have so believed. This is not the strongest and most powerful kind of argument. But it is worth more than some suppose. Hodge: "The Bible is a plain book. It is intelligible by the people, and they have a right, and are bound to read and interpret it for themselves, so that their faith may rest on the testimony of Scripture, and not on that of the Church." It is noticeable, too, that the more a people are given to the devout study of the Bible, the more are they united in believing our Lord was incapable of sinning. Thus the errors of Irving filled Scotland with great fear, because the people thought his views so erroneous that they led to such tormenting doubts on the great truths of salvation. Now, if God's Word is intended and suited to the common people, and the great body of believers are of one mind, how does it come to pass that so many serious Bible students are misled as quite to misunderstand

the teaching of the divine oracles on this great subject? In a lifetime neither short nor cloistered, I have not known five men in any evangelical church, who avowed the belief that our Lord Jesus Christ was peccable. The further progress of this discussion will tend to evince the force of this argument.

SECOND STEP IN THE ARGUMENT.

None, to whom this treatise can probably be useful, will deny that Christ Jesus was born in spotless innocence. All but blasphemers so admit. To assert that our Lord took to Himself sinful flesh or a fallen nature, is shocking impiety. The Scriptures do, indeed, assert that that which is born of the flesh is flesh. John iii. 6. And this is invariably true when that which is born is according to the order of nature; for "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." Job xiv. 4. Turretin well says that a corrupt nature is always derived from sinful parents when the birth is "*secundum naturæ ordinem, et modo naturali, seu generatione ordinaria et univoca, non vera extra ordinem, et modo supernaturali, quod hic factum.* Hinc licet Christus

ex Adamo peccatore ortum duxerit, non tamen peccatum ab eo traxit vel imputatum, vel inhærens; quin non descendit ab ipso ex vi promissionis generalis: Crescite et multiplicamini; sed virtute promissionis specialis de semine mulieris. Et licet fuerit in Adamo quoad naturam, non tamen personam et statum moralem, seu fœderalem rationem, per quam fit ut posteri Adami omnes, excepto Christo, peccato ejus participent." Jesus Christ was born of a Virgin, a thing that never occurred but once in all time. He was made of a woman. Mary was truly His mother. But He came not into the world by ordinary generation. The great wonder of His conception was effected by the power of the Highest. Christ descended not from David, from Abraham, from Adam by *ordinary generation*. So that He was not represented in Adam, and so was not born in the guilt or in the corruption of our fallen nature. From conception He was without taint. Thus spake the angel to Mary; "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore, το γεννωμενον αγιον, that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the

Son of God." Luke i. 35. The only necessity for a miracle in the birth of Christ (besides meeting the demands of prophecy) was that He might have a human nature both entire and sinless. In the highest sense He was from the womb without sin. Owen: "Being not begotten by natural generation, the human nature of Christ derived no taint of original sin or corruption from Adam, that being the only way and means of its transmission. And being not in the loins of Adam morally before the fall, the promise of His incarnation being not given until afterward, the sin of Adam could on no account be imputed unto Him. All sin was charged on Him as our Mediator, and Surety of the covenant; but, on His own account He was obnoxious to no charge of sin, original or actual." Symington: "This is what constituted the incarnation the greatest miracle of godliness." P. 165. Gill: "Christ was made of a woman, took flesh of a sinful woman, though the flesh He took of her was not sinful, being sanctified by the Spirit of God, the former of Christ's human nature; however, he appeared *in the likeness of sinful flesh*; being attended with infirmities, the effects of sin,

though sinless, and He was traduced by men as a sinner, and treated as such."

Dods: "If in Christ's generation the Holy Ghost failed to generate Him holy, He failed either through lack of power, or through lack of will. If He failed through lack of power—supposing this to be possible—then He could not afterwards regenerate Him, as He could assuredly bring no additional power to the work. And if He failed through lack of will, then He, by His own immediate act, chose to produce a being who not only was capable of regeneration, but who actually needed and received regeneration . . . If the flesh of Christ was fallen and sinful, then was a miracle wrought to produce that which would have been, with unerring certainty, produced without it." P. 39.

THIRD STEP IN THE ARGUMENT.

The human nature of our Lord never existed separately from His divine nature. The man Christ Jesus was from conception in union with the Son of God. That "holy thing" conceived and born of Mary was from the first "the Son of God." The union of the two natures in the per-

son of the Son of God from the time that He had a human nature, was immediate, inseparable, indissoluble. Though for a time His death on the cross separated between His soul and His body; yet it did not impair the union of the assumed nature with the person of the Son of God. Owen: "This was necessary and indissoluble, so that it was not impeached, nor shaken in the least, by the temporary dissolution of that nature, by the separation of the soul and body. For the union of the soul and body in Christ did not constitute Him a person, so that the dissolution of them should destroy His personality, but He was a person by the uniting of both unto the Son of God." Dwight: "Christ was always a divine person, never a human person." Liddon: "Christ's manhood is not unreal, because it is impersonal. At His incarnation Christ took on Him human nature, not a human Personality. The *ανυποστασία* [impersonality] of our Lord's humanity is a result of the Hypostatical union. To deny it is to assert that there are two Persons in Christ, or else it is to deny that He is more than man." *Bampton Lectures*, pages 34, 35. Hooker: "Jesus took the very first element of our nature, before it was

come to have any personal subsistence, and the flesh and the conjunction of the flesh with God began both at one time ; His making, and taking to Himself our flesh, was one act, so that in Christ there is no personal subsistence but one, and that from everlasting . . . Between Nestorius and the Church of God, there was no difference, saving only that Nestorius imagined in Christ as well a personal human subsistence as a divine ; the Church acknowledging a substance both divine and human, but no other personal *subsistence* than divine, because the Son of God took not to Himself a man's person, but the nature, only, of a man."

Hopkins: "The personality of Jesus Christ is in His divine nature, and not in the human. Jesus Christ existed a distinct, divine person from eternity, the second Person in the adorable Trinity. The human nature which this divine person, the Word, assumed into a personal union with Himself, *is not, and never was, a distinct person by itself, and personality cannot be ascribed to it, and does not belong to it, any* otherwise than as united to the Logos, the Word of God." In his review of Bushnell, Hodge says: "Who ever

heard of two distinct subsistences in Christ?" Dods: "The union between the divinity and humanity took place at the moment of His conception in the Virgin's womb. It would utterly subvert all our views of Christ to suppose that His manhood was first formed, and the divinity then united to it."

That "holy thing," thus born of the Virgin, never existing separate and to itself, and richly endowed, was from the first in hypostatical union with the second Person of the Trinity. No union was ever closer. It was personal. It was unchangeable. It was indissoluble. The Athanasian Creed says: "Although He be God and Man, yet He is not two [Christs], but one Christ." There were not two persons, nor two Christs. Andrew Fuller: "Christ, as man, possessed no being *on His own account*. He was always in union with the Son of God; a public person, whose very existence was for the sake of others." John xvii. 19. Leonard Woods: "The common orthodox theory teaches that the person of Christ is constituted of divinity and humanity; that He who was God became man by taking to Himself a true body and a reasonable soul. This

union of divinity and humanity, which I consider to be a well-supported fact, is in my view liable to no valid objection." Dick, Vol. II. p. 19, says: "It was not a human person which our Saviour assumed, but a human nature." The Son of God took not a man, but a human nature, into His one eternal inseparable personality. Thus was constituted the personal union of Christ's natures, and thus "the second man was the Lord from heaven." 1 Cor. xv. 47. Charnock: "He was infinitely holy in regard of His deity; holy by the hypostatical union in His humanity; holy by the residence of the Spirit." Christ became man, *αληθως* truly, *τελειως* perfectly, *αδιαιρετως* indivisibly, *ασυνθετως* unconfusedly. Thus we get the last explanation of that sublime and difficult passage in John vi. 62: "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before?" The same person who was now the Son of man was from everlasting enthroned in glory.

THE FOURTH STEP IN THE ARGUMENT.

When our Lord took to Himself a true body and a reasonable soul, from that time in the man Christ Jesus dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead

bodily. Col. ii. 9. This was in accordance with the eternal counsel of God. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell." Col. i. 19. This *παν το πληρωμα*, this all fulness is not a limiting phrase. It includes fulness of divinity as well as fulness of grace. Christ Jesus had all the perfections of divinity and all the moral excellences of which man is capable. All this was from the pleasure of God. This fulness *dwelt in Him*. It dwells in Him for ever. On earth He said: "I and the Father are one." "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." None are ready to contend that the Father is or ever was peccable; yet Christ and the Father are one. He counted it not robbery to be equal with God. "The Word was God." How was it possible for the second Person of the Trinity, though incarnate, to err from the truth? Should any ask, If our Lord's divinity did not save Him from suffering, how could it infallibly preserve Him from sinning? The answer is easy: It is condescension to suffer as He did. It is always degradation to sin. Divinity could agree that His humanity should suffer. But it could not consent to His committing moral wrong. He

had a right to suffer. "This commandment have I received of my Father." John x. 18. But He could have no command, no authority to do wrong, for that is contrary to the infinite holiness of God.

THE FIFTH STEP IN THE ARGUMENT.

Prophecy required and history records the amazing indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the man Christ Jesus. Compare Ps. xlv. 7, Heb. i. 9, Isa. xi. 2, 3, lxi. 1-3, John i. 32, iii. 34, Luke iv. 1, 16-21. All these scriptures are clear. Some of them compel a conclusion. Let us look a moment at one or two of them. "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots; and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord . . . and righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins and faithfulness the girdle of his reins." Thus spake Isaiah in prophecy. Christ's forerunner, John Baptist, a great prophet, gives witness to

the facts of history, when he says: "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him." John iii. 34. Thus the Father fitted and furnished His Son Christ Jesus with all things, making Him fairer than the sons of men, and pouring grace into His lips. Ps. xlv. 2. If the Holy Spirit poured without measure on the person of our Lord did not render Him incapable of sinning, how can any believer on earth, having the Spirit only in measure, have the least confidence that He will not make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience?

THE SIXTH STEP IN THE ARGUMENT.

Many promises are made to Christ, and through Him to the Church, which are utterly inconsistent with His peccability, or fallibility. Let us briefly consider one: "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles; . . . he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth." Isa. xlii. 1-4. It is not easy to find words stronger than these. If omnipo-

tence *upholds* Him, if He is God's *elect*, if the Lord's soul *delights* in Him, if Jehovah puts His *Spirit* upon Him, and pledges that He shall bring forth judgment unto truth, surely there can be no failure at any time. If He "shall not fail nor be discouraged," He must be infallible and impeccable. "The first Adam failed. He shone in purity of nature as he came from the Creator's hand, but he *failed*; he waxed dim; the whole innocence of his nature being exhausted by sin, all mankind in him lost their spiritual beauty. But the second Adam failed not." *Boston on the Covenant*, p. 93. How could He fail? He was girt with omnipotence. He was the Almighty, who never faints, never changes, never grows weary, is never defeated.

THE SEVENTH HEAD OF ARGUMENT.

It was not possible for Christ to sin, because it was not possible to subvert God's system of mediation; because God could neither make nor permit a breach of the covenant of redemption; because the eternal purpose of God, which He purposed in Christ Jesus, cannot be foiled; and because a general failure of the prophecies

of Scripture is impossible. We know that God's counsel shall stand, and that He will do all His pleasure. Isa. xlvi. 10. We are no less sure that the Scripture cannot be broken. John x. 35. The awful oath of God is unimpeachable. Ps. cx. 4. And by that He has pledged before the universe that the glorious priesthood of His Son shall be after the power of an endless life. But were Christ stained with the least sin, the shame of Adam in Eden would be as nothing compared to the confusion and horror that would reign wherever Christ's undertaking had been made known and joyfully accepted. Glory be to God, there not only has been no failure in our Head, but there could be none. He is tender, loving, compassionate, but not fickle, nor fallible. Owen: "Whatever our defilements are, or may be, He is not defiled by them. They adhere only unto a capable subject, which Christ is not. He was capable to have the guilt of our sins imputed to Him, but not the filth of one sin adhering to Him. He is able, *συμπαθησαί*, *compati*, *condolere*, He suffers with us in His compassion; but He is not liable, *συμμολυνεσθαί*, to be defiled with us or for us." In like manner Crawford, in his work on the

Atonement, p. 318, says: "What fellow-feeling could the Son of God have with us as regards *our sins*? With these as a *sinless* man, He was surely incapable of taking part in the way of sympathizing with them. He could not by mere sympathy make our sins His own; when in Himself there was nothing in the least akin, but rather everything uncongenial and repugnant to them. Rather may we say of Him that, like His heavenly Father, to whom in all moral excellences He was perfectly conformed, 'He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity.'" In no way does it aid one in pitying, or relieving the vile to be like them vile. It is not necessary ever to have had the least liability to sin, in order to compassionate the sinner. When Paul says our Lord has "a feeling of infirmity," the Greek verb used means to condole with one, to suffer with him, to compassionate him, and not in any wise to tolerate or approve of the wrong conduct of another, or in the least to incline to it. The Greek word, from which our word sympathy comes, expresses a concord of nature, an agreement in affections. If the sympathy of our Lord, in order to be perfect, required Him to be capa-

ble of sinning, then by the same line of argument one might show that it behooved Him to be somewhat affected with the motions of sins in His faculties. But such a view would destroy all our comfort, for "both as the victim offered and as the Priest who offered it, it was necessary that Christ should possess all the perfection of holiness,—a holiness not resulting from a successful resistance of the motions of sin in the flesh, but a holiness resulting from the total absence of any such motions. For an inclination to sin, however successfully resisted, and however completely repressed from going forth into actual transgression, is itself criminal, and totally incompatible with the holiness of the 'Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' If such inclination was in Christ, then was He under the same necessity as the Levitical high-priest, to prepare Himself for appearing before the Lord, by offering first a sacrifice for His own sins."—*Dods*, p. 103.

Scott: "Our Lord 'suffered, being tempted.' In proportion to His perfect holiness, His soul would be the more distressed by the detestable suggestions of the enemy; and that which pre-

served Him from defilement, exposed him to suffer; but to this He willingly submitted, that He might have an experimental sympathy with His people under their temptations, and be able to succor them." Jesus was never under "the law of sin and death." He did not die because He could not live longer, if He had chosen to do so.

THE EIGHTH HEAD OF ARGUMENT.

Jesus Christ never on any occasion felt remorse, never regretted any act of His life, never exercised repentance, and never did anything indicating a sense of sin. This proves that He never did sin, for all admit that He very wonderfully possessed a discernment of moral turpitude whenever exhibited before Him. But our Saviour never was in the least anxious about His own salvation. Not only did He never ask for forgiveness for any error; but He never asked to be cleansed from secret faults. If He had been liable to fall into sin, what would have been more proper than prayer for restraining grace and for help to keep Him from the evil that is in the world? It is true this is a negative kind of argu-

ment, but it is fair, and, rightly carried out, has no flaw in it. And although we know but little of the early life of Christ, yet all we do know is perfectly consistent with spotless perfection; and the immaculate holiness of His latter years demonstrates that His childhood and youth were without a stain and beyond just suspicion.

NINTH HEAD OF ARGUMENT.

Our Lord declared His own sinlessness when upon earth, and that under the most solemn circumstances, and in immediate prospect of His greatest temptations: "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." John xiv. 30. The Greek is: *και εν εμοι ουκ ουδεν*, a double negative; Vulgate: In me non habet quidquam; Wiclif: Hath not in me any thing; Tyndale, Cranmer, and Geneva: Hath naught in me; Rheims: In me He hath not anything. Christ was never under that law of the members, which warreth against the law of the mind. Satan had in Christ no right by which he could control Him. There was in Him no guilt by which to oppress His conscience; no corruption to incline Him to side with temptation. Satan had no part

in Him; no element on which he could work to inflame his nature; and so, as Scott says, he "could obtain no permanent advantage against Him; he would find Him in every respect invulnerable, and must therefore experience an absolute defeat in the conflict." Diodati: "As he hath no right in me that am without sinne, so hath he no actual power to doe with me according to his will." Guyse: "Satan is just now making his last effort by stirring up his evil instruments to unite stratagem and force for murdering me. And after all he can find no corruption in me to work upon by his temptations, or to give him power over me." Steir and Lange say that Satan could find "no point of seizure" in Christ. Alford: "Has nothing in me—no point of appliance, whereon to fasten his attack." Henry: "There was no corruption in Christ to give advantage to the Prince of this world in his temptations; he could not crush his undertaking by drawing Him to sin, because there was nothing sinful in Him, nothing irregular for His temptation, to fasten upon, no tinder for Him to strike fire into; such was the spotless purity of His nature that He was above the possibility of

sin." An eminent living minister writes me: "Satan's temptations fall into a wicked heart like mine as a spark of fire falls into a keg of gunpowder; but when Satan came to our Lord, there was no powder to ignite."

A GREAT FACT.

Christ demonstrated His impeccability by never sinning, though tried by all the arts and malice of earth and hell. He perfectly did all that was required of Him. He was tried so as no one else ever was. He wholly gave up His own will to the will of His Father, when such surrender involved the greatest shame that innocence could suffer, and the greatest pain a holy nature could endure. Ullmann says: "In no one thing is the strength of a man's will so manifested, as in his having no will of his own;" and he quotes, approvingly, Orelli thus: "A man who was subject like other mortals to every temptation to sin, and still fell not, was not defiled by the slightest breath of iniquity, wandered not once in His life, not even a hair's breadth, from the path of virtue; such a man is indeed no less a wonder in the moral world than one

raised from the grave and lifted up with a visible body to heaven is a wonder in the physical world."

SEVERAL TEXTS OF SCRIPTURE.

In 2 Cor. v. 21, Paul says of Christ, that He *knew no sin*. The Greek is *τον γαρ μη γνοῦτα ἁμαρτιαν*. It does not mean that He had not perfect intelligence of the existence of sin in others, for He knew what was in man. John ii. 25. Nor does it mean that He did not understand the true nature of moral evil. Objectively He knew it perfectly; subjectively not at all. He was a stranger to its power. Any scholar will agree that the negative here used has the force now claimed for it. It is not *ου* but *μη*. Language could not more clearly oppose the thought that Jesus Christ had the slightest personal experience of even the first motions of sin. The leaven was never in Him.

Of like import is our Saviour's challenge, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" John viii. 46. That challenge has never been taken up by any one, except it be in the coarsest spirit of a bald infidelity.

In like manner the apostle to the circumcision says: "He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." 1 Peter ii. 22. Very diligent search has been made for some flaw, some deceit in His life or character; but the defect has not been found. Leighton: "All Christ's words, as well as His actions, and all His thoughts, flowed from a pure spring that had not anything defiled in it; and, therefore, no temptation, either from men or Satan, could seize on Him. Other men may seem clear as long as they are unstirred; but move and trouble them, and the mud arises; but He was nothing but holiness, a pure fountain, all purity to the bottom."

Most men will admit the unchangeableness of Christ Jesus. No believer in the Bible can doubt it. Heb. i. 10-12; xiii. 8. Now do not these passages forbid the idea of the possibility of such a change in Christ at any point of His existence, as would be involved in His erring from righteousness? No one denies that in childhood and youth He grew in wisdom, but he never was under the power of folly, and He never could be subject to it. Now the worst folly is sin. From His conception He was God's

Holy Child Jesus, and will be so for ever. He could not be anything else.

If any should say that to the young ruler our Lord admitted that He was peccable, when He said, "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God," Matt. xix. 17; the answers are ready: 1. If this proves Christ peccable, it also proves Him sinful, and this proposition is abhorred by all Christians. 2. The word good in this place seems to point to original and exhaustless goodness. When God is called *the Holy One*, it is not denied that there are holy angels and holy men, but it is taught that God is the fountain of all purity—He is originally and infinitely holy. 3. The young ruler evidently regarded our Lord as a mere man, and Christ would remind him that men are sinners. Dörner: "The first thing needful to the young man, as Jesus perceived from his light and liberal use of the word 'good,' was self-knowledge, not the preaching of Christ's mission and dignity, for the comprehension of which the prerequisites were still lacking; and upon these, according to the method which He evidently followed in other cases, Jesus was silent." 4. That our Lord in-

tended to teach His own want of goodness is impossible, for He elsewhere and often teaches the contrary. 5. He may have designed to reprove that adulatory spirit which the scribes and pharisees encouraged in the people when they came to worship, seek instruction, or make offerings.

If Jesus Christ was ever peccable and fallible, when did He become impeccable and infallible? That question goes on the presumption that no man doubts that now and henceforth Jesus cannot sin, cannot err. If any has doubts on this point, this book is not addressed to him. But admitting that Christ is now and for ever immutably pure and holy, when did He become so? at His baptism? at His death? at His resurrection? at His ascension? If any shall be bold enough to take ground on this subject, it is probable some one will be found bold enough to show the utter insufficiency of his reasonings.

If these things are so, where is there any room for error, or even for doubt on this great subject? What right has any one to unsettle, or to try to unsettle, the faith of the great body of believers by maintaining that it was possible for our Saviour to sin, and so to fail in His work? To

Pilate, Jesus said: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." John xviii. 37. Was it possible for that *end* to be defeated and that *cause* to fail? Surely not. Yet if Jesus had sinned, all would have been lost. O how can any say of Him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, that it was possible for Him to err, fail, or sin? John x. 36. Was He not a Lamb without blemish and without spot? O yes! But if in anything He had failed, redemption would have failed, and Jehovah would have been defeated.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS.

Should any ask, Is not this whole discussion a mere strife of words? Do not all the orthodox, who have written on the subject, really mean very much the same thing? In reply, it may be asked, Will it satisfy good men, who assert that Christ was peccable, if we admit that our Saviour was tempted, sorely tempted, tempted of the Devil, and was so affected by His trials that He has the deepest and tenderest sympathy with poor tempted souls, that look to Him for succor?

Is this all they contend for? If it is, let them say so, and discussion may safely cease.

On the other hand, if we be asked, Was Christ temptable? The prompt answer is, Certainly He was. He was not only liable to be tempted, but He was actually tempted. The Bible records both the fact and the nature of His temptations. But let there be no play on words. It is not admitted that He was seducible or corruptible; He was not capable of being drawn aside from the path of rectitude.

Should any say, All I mean by saying that Christ was peccable, is that He had human nature entire, understood the nature of the base proposals made to Him, and was affected by them all the more because He unspeakably abhorred them; then, too, the discussion should cease; but cease under a modest protest against using terms in so loose a way. For certainly peccable involves liability to commit moral wrong, capability of sinning.

If any ask, Of whom do orthodox writers speak when they say He was peccable? Are they speaking of the Logos, the second Person of the Trinity? All say, No. The Son was as impec-

cable as the Father. Do they assert that the God-man, the Mediator, was peccable? Some perhaps say, No. Others hesitate. Will they agree that in no proper sense was the Mediator either peccable or fallible? Will they admit that the person of the Redeemer could neither sin nor err? Then if we ask, Precisely what was it that was peccable? The reply is, The human nature of Christ was peccable. But the human nature of Christ was impersonal. It never had a personal subsistence. From the first it was in indissoluble and personal union with the Logos. Christ's two natures are and for ever must be distinct, though they are ineffably and inseparably united. If the position maintained was that the human nature of Christ was truly and properly humanity, and that, if it had existed by itself without union with the Logos, it might have sinned; the answer is, That is not the matter under discussion. The human nature of our Lord did never so exist, and will never so exist, and a discussion of what might have been, or would have been in a fictitious case, is idle. It is pleasant to add that sound divines, whatever may be their views on Christ's impeccability, are quite agreed on these great points:

1. OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST NEVER DID SIN. He was, in fact, as pure and as holy as the broad, perfect, and infinite law of God required. His sinlessness was perfect and indisputable.

2. IT WAS ALWAYS PERFECTLY CERTAIN THAT HE WOULD NOT SIN. The purpose of God, the plan of redemption, and the sure word of prophecy unalterably determined that though Christ should act freely, He should not act uncertainly.

3. JESUS CHRIST HAD IN HIS HUMAN NATURE NO TAIN OF ORIGINAL SIN. He did not assume sinful flesh. He had no wrong bias, no evil inclinations. There were no motions of sin in Him.

4. THE HUMAN NATURE OF OUR LORD FROM ITS CONCEPTION WAS AND EVER SHALL BE IN INSEPARABLE UNION WITH HIS DIVINE NATURE. For a time death dissolved the union between the soul and body of the Redeemer; but even death did not in the slightest degree impair the union between His divine and human natures.

5. THE HOLY GHOST, THE PARACLETE, THE SANCTIFIER, WAS GRANTED TO THE MAN CHRIST JESUS IMMEASURABLY. He could not have sinned or erred without acting counter to the infinite

grace and amazing love and omnipotent power of the Spirit.

It is delightful to see good men rallying round these precious truths; and yet some who admit all these things maintain that it was possible for Christ to sin. If all they mean to teach is that the humanity of our Lord was, from the first, human nature entire, with all its essential properties, let them say so, and the discussion may cease. It is highly probable that this is what some mean. And it is not fair to hold a class of writers responsible for what one or two of their number may say. But if this is all they mean, they ought very distinctly to say so.

It may fitly be asked, for what purpose do good and sober men assume the position that Christ was peccable? What is supposed to be gained by such an assertion?

1. Some say, It makes His temptation a reality. But no one denies that He was really and variously tried and tempted. God's word so teaches. None more honestly believe that our Lord was sorely tempted than those who maintain His impeccability. If it be said that a blind man cannot be tempted by the lust of the eye,

nor a deaf man be tempted to waste his time in frequenting musical entertainments, because they have not the faculties upon which such temptations are predicated; the answer is, that Jesus Christ lacked no faculty of mind or body, rendering it impossible for any temptation to be presented to Him. His deafness to the siren song of the deceiver was His irreprehensible holiness. His blindness to the charms of worldly grandeur was not that He could not see the beautiful, but that He saw Him that is invisible and enthroned in glory. Infinite rectitude abhors and defies sinful thoughts and acts. The holiness of our Lord threw off temptation as an impenetrable shield throws off the darts hurled against it. Jesus felt the power of the temptation, but His virtue was far stronger than the strong man armed.

2. Some may say that maintaining the peccability of Christ preserves the completeness of His humanity; the answer is, that His humanity is complete now in heaven, and yet no one will say that He is now peccable. He is very God and very man precisely as He was on earth, no more so and no less so than when He dwelt on

earth. One of the glories of the bodies of those who shall have part in the first resurrection—the resurrection of the just—shall be that their bodies shall be *spiritual*, that is, fitted and fashioned by the Holy Spirit to be temples of the Holy God. But in His whole human nature from its first conception, Christ had the abundant indwelling of the Holy Ghost. He had the Spirit *not by measure*.

3. If any say that the value of Christ's obedience was increased by the possibility of His sinning; the answer is, that the praiseworthiness of good actions or a good life does indeed depend upon their voluntariness, but in no degree on a bias towards evil, or even a capability of sinning. No one holds that Christ's obedience was not of choice. He *delighted* to do God's will.

4. Some may say that Christ's peccability secures to us His warmest sympathy. But it has already been sufficiently shown that neither fellowship in crime, nor a bias to wrong, nor a possibility of sinning, is necessary to secure the tenderest compassion. If this were not so, we could not be secure of the tender mercies, the kind compassion of the Father, or of the Holy Ghost.

The opinion is perhaps entertained by some that Christ was temptable, but not peccable, and that such a view would harmonize all. State the matter thus, and the author of this piece will not strive for anything more. Such a statement maintains the reality of our Lord's temptation, the entireness of His humanity, the value of His obedience, and the strength of His sympathy, while at the same time it admits His impeccability. But will this ground be admitted? Pretty certainly not. Therefore, until men admit what seems to have been the doctrine of the great body of believers in all ages, that our Lord Jesus Christ was impeccable when on earth as He now is in heaven, there will be uneasiness felt. In Christ Jesus His ascension to heaven has made no change in this respect. He is the same immutably and infinitely holy person yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. What the human nature, which is in indissoluble union with the Logos, might have been or might have done, had no such union existed, it is worse than idle to inquire. None will deny that mere human nature, without support, is very weak. But human nature upheld by infinite and omnipotent holiness is a very different thing—is impeccable.

Some have thought that if it was not possible for our Lord to sin, He could not be tempted. But surely this is not so. An army may be invincible, but it does not follow that it cannot be impetuously attacked. So the unconquerable resistance to evil solicitation exerted by Christ seems to have induced the great adversary to assault the Redeemer with a vehemence and intensity, to which none else was ever exposed. Christ's impeccability was evinced by His omnipotent and victorious resistance of evil; and this, instead of being a reason why He could not be tempted at all, or but slightly, was the very reason why He was assailed with the severest of all temptations.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

FOR some time the Christian world has acknowledged its obligations to the Rev. Hugh Martin, of Edinburgh. His work on the Atonement has edified many. His work on "Christ's Presence in the Gospel History" has also been read with much interest. In the second edition of this latter work is an additional chapter on "the dogmatic element in Ullmann's 'sinlessness of Jesus.'" On the 321st page of that work, and onward, he says: "Had Ullmann proposed to himself the task of demonstrating that the sinless humanity of Jesus was not the humanity of a human person, but of a Divine person, He would have seen how hopeless it must be to prove this from the mere fact of its sinlessness.

"It is highly important, also, to observe that, had Ullmann believed this fundamental doctrine concerning the Divine person of Christ, and in-

telligently and consistently applied it, it would have saved his beautiful monograph from the serious blemish that pervades it. We refer to his unfortunate assertion of the peccability of Christ, or in other words, the possibility of sin existing in *Him*.

“ This admission is peculiarly unfortunate, inasmuch as it is altogether ultroneous, being in no respect called for by the exigencies of his argument, and being, in fact, irrelevant to the apologetical discussion of the subject. All that requires to be postulated—or, if not postulated, proved—is the historical fact of Christ’s actual sinlessness. At this stage, it is premature either to affirm or deny on the question of His peccability. But when the apologetic treatment of the subject is closed, and a right has been established for the Sinless One authoritatively to announce His own claim to true and proper Godhead, this question also is then virtually closed, and no alternative in deciding on it is left. For if the man Christ Jesus is admitted to be the second Person of the Godhead, and if the admission is made without palpable confusion of thought, to affirm the possibility that He could sin is knowingly to

affirm the possibility that God could sin. Any hesitation to admit the identity, or, at least, the full equivalence of these two affirmations, can originate only in a misapprehension of the fundamental idea implied in the incarnation of the Eternal Word. Our author asserts 'that the possibility of sin can never be severed from human nature, created as it is, and placed under a law of development.' But we must meet this assertion with its direct contradictory; for the possibility of sin *has been* severed from human nature, inasmuch as in the Sinless One human nature is severed from human personality, and presented to our view, not as the human nature of a human person, but the human nature of a Divine person—the eternal Son of God, found in fashion as a man, as God's Holy Child Jesus; and human nature, too, in this Divine person, placed under the law of development as much as in any human person, for "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." The only possible evasion, therefore, of the doctrine of Christ's impeccability is to claim a right to distinguish between the human nature and the Divine person whose human nature it

is, and then to assert that human nature, considered in itself, is peccable. This, of course, *on the assumption*, is grammatically intelligible, but the assumption, for the purpose in view, is absurd. Peccability and impeccability are attributes of persons, and it is impossible to affirm either of them concerning any nature, and not to affirm it of the person or persons to whom the nature belongs. It is quite true, that in a loose and incorrect sense, human nature is said to be corrupt. But this phraseology is endurable only because, in the use of it, there is an obvious and acknowledged confusion in thought between the nature and the persons or race whose nature it is. To eliminate that confusion, and instead of confounding, expressly to distinguish between the nature and the person, as the evasion we are considering proposes to do, renders such expressions utterly intolerable; as any one in the trustworthy exercise of his intellect will find who attempts to conceive the idea of a peccable nature where there is no peccable person. To affirm the peccability of Christ's human nature is to affirm the peccability of Christ Himself; and inasmuch as He is the Second Person of the Godhead, this is seen

to be the affirmation of what is absolutely false and impossible. In support of his unhappy notion, Ullmann refers to the passages in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which Jesus is said to have been made perfect through suffering. (Heb. ii. 9, 10.) But it is a gratuitous assumption, that the "perfection" which Jesus is thus said to have attained consisted merely or even chiefly in any subjective development of moral and spiritual excellence; though no doubt it is true that His humanity—ever pure—was toned, through the sufferings He underwent and the obedience in suffering which He rendered, alike into growing strength and delicacy of moral and spiritual capabilities. But that this "perfection" consisted in His being elevated, as the result or reward of His suffering and obedience, from the sphere or region of peccability to that of impeccability, is an idea still more completely without the shadow of foundation. And the striking verbal equivalence of the *τελείωσαι* and *τελειωθείς*' of these passages with the *τετελεσται*, "It is finished," of Calvary—not to mention the contexts of the passages themselves, and the argument that the writer to the Hebrews has on hand—proves very convincingly that it is

not subjective personal perfection that is intended, but the official perfection of Christ in that objective work of atonement and reconciliation which, through suffering and on the cross, He conclusively achieved.

“But the strength of the case on behalf of the notion of Christ’s peccability seems to be perilled on the assertion that the opposite doctrine renders His temptation Docetic or unreal, (p. 48). Now, we can deal with this only as with an objection to demonstrated and certain truth. We hold that Christ’s impeccability is demonstrated by the simple enunciation of what is implied in the incarnation—namely, that in the Sinless Man we are not contemplating the nature of a human person, but the human nature of One who is God. That this Man was really tempted, not in semblance and outward show merely, but so as that “He suffered,” and suffered intensely, “being tempted,” is a truth that rests on abundant Scriptural assertion. To propound, therefore, either of these truths as an objection against the other, on the ground that they are inconsistent, when they are both demonstrated, each on its own appropriate and sufficient evidence, is irra-

tional. The objection, accordingly, ought to be given up *as an objection*, seeing that it amounts simply to an acknowledgment of intellectual infirmity, and propounded only as a difficulty in reference to which the objector, abandoning it as a weapon of controversy, solicits in the spirit of humility a brotherly conference for instruction—mutual instruction, if you will. Approaching it in this spirit, we would—we trust with emulous humility—neither despair of giving nor of receiving some measure of light into what is really a deep, but demonstrated and intensely interesting mystery, being, indeed, but one department or corollary of thought and of fact in the great mystery of Godliness—God manifest in the flesh. In any other spirit we would not consent to attempt elucidating the inner harmony between Christ's impeccability and the reality of His sufferings from temptation; and as the scope of this discussion does not require further consideration of it, and the limits of the space at our disposal preclude *ex abundante* argument, we must pass on to another portion of our subject."

FINIS.