

**Guillaume Bourin – *Divine Omniscience and the Problem of Incarnate Temptation.***

The various accounts of Jesus overcoming Satan’s temptations are among the most comforting passages of the Gospel for believers, and at the same time an aspect of the life of Jesus that has most baffled philosophers. Many have seen a conflict between these passages and some of the most prominent features of classic theism, foremost among which are divine incarnation and Anselmian perfect being theology. In this essay, I shall argue that the temptations Christ had to experience do not entail the incoherence of the traditional doctrines of divine incarnation and omnipotence. I will first set the stage by providing a concise definition of omnipotence. Then I will introduce the argument of C.B. Martin, who argues against the coherence of divine incarnation from the ground of the temptation of Jesus-Christ. Finally, I will provide two sets of answers to Martin’s claim: firstly, I will address the concepts of divine temptations and Christ’s possibility to sin, and secondly, I will examine carefully the proposition of Thomas V. Morris known as “the two-minds view.”

**Divine Omnipotence**

As the issue of divine temptation is regularly brought, together with other charges,<sup>1</sup> against the coherence of omnipotence, it is necessary to begin with a clear definition of this doctrine. If “power” is understood as an ability to perform a task or to exert a will, then divine omnipotence (all-powerful, *omni potens*) must be God’s capacity to do anything that he chooses to do. Such a definition is consistent with Scriptures

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<sup>1</sup>Nicolas Everitt, “Problems with Omnipotence,” in James Porter Moreland, *Debating Christian Theism* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 147-57.

statements according to which God can do anything (Luke 1:37; Matt 19:26; etc.).

However, several passages seem apply restrictions to omnipotence. For example, it is impossible (ἀδύνατος) that God should lie (Heb 6:18; see Tit 1:2) and in fact “he cannot deny himself” (2 Tim 2:13). Christian theologians have been adamant in claiming that God is unable to die, to be corrupted, or to make what is true to be false. If God was able to do such things, Anselm argues, this would prove his impotence rather than his omnipotence.<sup>2</sup> According to Augustine, “it is precisely because he is omnipotent that for him some things are impossible.”<sup>3</sup>

The restrictions to divine omnipotence generally fall in two categories regarding God’s ability: (a) God does not have to be able to bring about any state of affair that is logically impossible and (b) he does not have to be able to bring about any state of affair that is inconsistent with his essential nature. These two sets of restrictions lead to the following definition of omnipotence:

(DO) God is able to bring about any state of affairs that is (a) logically possible and (b) consistent with his essential nature.<sup>4</sup>

Since apparently God cannot be tempted (Jas 1:13), it seems that any hypothetical temptation experienced by God may conflict either with (a), (b), or both. Therefore, the various accounts of the testing of God the Son (Matt 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13; Hebrews 2:18) tend to prove (DO) to be inconsistent.

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<sup>2</sup>*Proslogion*, VII. Anselm and S. N. Deane, *Basic Writings: Proslogium; Monologium; Gaunilon's on Behalf of the Fool; Cur Deus Homo*, 2d ed. (La Salle, Ill.,: Open Court Pub. Co., 1962).

<sup>3</sup>Augustine and Marcus Dods, *The City of God*, Hendrickson Publishers ed. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009). V, 10.

<sup>4</sup>Paul Gould, “Divine Omnipotence” (*Philosophy of Religion*, class handout).

## The Martin Argument

C.B. Martin in his monograph, *Religious Belief*, attacks the ascription of deity to Christ from the angle of his necessarily goodness:

Theologians admit freely enough that if the goodness of Christ is in doubt then his divinity must be in doubt, and, of course, if the goodness of Christ is denied then it must also be denied that he is God. However, they think there is nothing contradictory remaining if the goodness of Christ is asserted without qualification and he is called God, the Perfect Good. I have been at pains to point out that a contradiction of an irresolvable sort remains still. The contradiction is: Christ can be conceived to have been other (that is, not good) than he was, yet as God it would be not false but *inconceivable* that he should have been not good.<sup>5</sup>

According to Martin, incarnate temptation entails that it is conceivable that Christ not be good, because it implies that it is at least possible that Jesus sin. Morris summarizes Martin's argument as follow:

Christian theists of the Anselmian stripe hold it to be true both that

(1) Jesus is God the Son

and that

(2) No individual is God unless he is necessarily good.

Given the orthodox Trinitarian commitment that

(3) God the Son is God

it follows that

(4) God the Son is necessarily good.

But then, from (1), (4), and the principle of the indiscernibility of identicals, it follows that

(5) Jesus is necessarily good.

An of course, (5) entails

(6) It is impossible that Jesus sin.

But (6), Martin could argue, is the logical contradictory of an obvious truth,

(7) It is possible that Jesus sin.<sup>6</sup>

So given the "obvious truth" of (7), divine incarnation seems inconsistent in at

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<sup>5</sup>C. B. Martin, *Religious Belief*, Contemporary Philosophy (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1959), 40.

<sup>6</sup>Thomas V. Morris, *The Logic of God Incarnate* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1986), 140.

least two ways. Firstly, (7) is inconsistent with (2), and this even can be taken as an argument against (1), that is the incarnational identity claim. Secondly, the account that God the Son may possibly sin seems to conflict with his essential nature, that is his necessary goodness expressed in (4) and (5), and thus entail the inconsistency of (DO).

### **Divine Temptations and Christ's Possible Sin**

So far, we have said that incarnate temptations seem to be inconsistent with (DO) for at least two reasons: (y) God cannot be tempted (Jas 1:13) (z) incarnate temptations entail the possibility for Christ to sin, that is premise (7), which conflicts with the necessarily goodness of God, and thus with his essential nature. However, for each of these propositions, a legitimate question needs to be raised: (Qy) Does Jas 1:13 really establish that God cannot be tempted *in any way*? (Qz) Does temptation automatically entail the existence of possible sin?

Regarding (Qy), one must recognize that the clause ὁ γὰρ θεὸς ἀπειραστός ἐστιν κακῶν in Jas 1:13 is particularly difficult to translate. Interpreters have generally understood this sentence in three different ways: “God cannot be tempted with evil,”<sup>7</sup> “God is inexperienced in evil,”<sup>8</sup> or “God ought not to be tested by evil men.”<sup>9</sup> The majority of commentators accept the first translation, which is consistent with the classic

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<sup>7</sup>See Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James: An Introduction and Commentary*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1985), 75.

<sup>8</sup>Fenton John Anthony Hort, *The Epistle of St. James: The Greek Text with Introduction, Commentary as Far as Chapter IV, Verse 7, and Additional Notes* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1909), 23.

<sup>9</sup>Friedrich Spitta, *Der Brief Des Jakobus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1896), 31-32. Peter Davids defends brilliantly this interpretation in his commentary. See Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1982), 30.

argument against (DO). However, this interpretation raises some logical and grammatical problems that are difficult to overcome.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the prohibition of tempting God in Deut 6:16 seems to imply that it is possible for one to do so, at least to some extent (cf. Num 14:22; Ps 95:9; Heb 3:9). The term  $\text{נסו}$  ( $\text{\pi\epsilon\iota\rho\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omega}$  in the LXX) may be translated either by “testing” or “tempting.” Since Jesus applies the commandment of Deut 6:16 to his own temptation by Satan (Matt 4:7; Luke 4:12), I don’t think that the meaning of  $\text{נסו}$  should be restricted to the mere unbelief of the Israelites at Massah (*contra* Christensen<sup>11</sup>). Merrill provides a helpful explanation to the concept of testing God in the Pentateuch:

To test God...is to make upon him demands or requirements that are inappropriate either to his nature and character or to the circumstances. Jesus quoted this text in responding to Satan’s overtures that he cast himself from the pinnacle of the temple (Matt 4:7; Luke 4:12). The point is not that God could not have rescued him but that such an act would trivialize the power of God and his care for those he loves.<sup>12</sup>

Whatever the meaning of  $\text{נסו}$  and  $\text{\pi\epsilon\iota\rho\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omega}$ , the action of the tempter focuses on God’s nature and character. It seems to me that the possibility that God may be tried or tempted to some extent constitutes a problem for adopting the majority understanding of Jas 1:13. However, if we follow Peter Davids’ translation, “God ought not to be tested by evil men,” then James is not only consistent with Deuteronomistic theology but also

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<sup>10</sup>One of the most difficult issues to deal with in interpreting is the translation of  $\text{\acute{\alpha}\pi\epsilon\iota\rho\acute{\alpha}\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma}$ , a *hapax legomenon* that is otherwise relatively rare in extra Biblical materials. See Peter H. Davids, “The meaning of  $\text{\text{A}\text{P}\text{I}\text{E}\text{I}\text{P}\text{A}\text{S}\text{T}\text{O}\text{S}}$  in James I.13,” *New Testament Studies* 24 no 3 (Ap 1978): 388.

<sup>11</sup>Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 1:1-21:9*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 151.

<sup>12</sup>Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 172.

certainly alludes to it.<sup>13</sup>

One final comment regarding (Qy): the context of James 1:13 makes clear that there is a huge difference between our experience of temptations and Christ's. According to James, "each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire" (Jas 1:14). Such inward disposition to sin is sinful in itself<sup>14</sup> and does not exist in the Godhead. The various proof-texts demonstrating the impeccability of Christ<sup>15</sup> are consistent with this proposition. Thus, the temptations Christ had to suffer during his earthly incarnational experience were external to him, unlike those experienced by mere humans. It follows that, in and of themselves, (a) these temptations are not logically impossible and (b) they do not conflict with the essential nature of God the Son. Consequently, until they do not lead to sin or to the possibility of it, incarnate temptations do not conflict with (DO).

Now, Christ's impeccability being unambiguously established in Scriptures, those who want to prove the inconsistency of (DO) with incarnate temptation are forced to demonstrate that the answer to (Qz) is positive. Orthodox theologians have reacted strongly against the idea of Christ's possible sin.<sup>16</sup> However, in fact, the notion of

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<sup>13</sup>Davids, "The meaning of ΑΠΕΙΡΑΣΤΟΣ," 391.

<sup>14</sup>Dan McCartney, *James*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2009), 106-7. Henri Blocher even sees in it a violation of the tenth commandment. See Henri Blocher, *La doctrine du Christ*, Collection Didaskalia (Vaux-sur-Seine: Edifac, 2002), 154.

<sup>15</sup>For example Is 53:9; Ac 3:14; 7:52; 22:14; 2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15; 1 Pet 1:19; 3:18; 1 John 2:1; 3:5.

<sup>16</sup>Berkouwer reports the strong reaction of reformed theologians such as Herman Bavinck or Abraham Kuyper against any possibility for Christ to sin. See G. C. Berkouwer, *The Person of Christ*, Studies in Dogmatics (Grand Rapids, W. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1954), 259.

possibility is prone to equivocation. John Calvin, for example, argues that since future contingencies are uncertain to us, we consider them as possibilities. Still, however, “nothing will happen which the Lord has not provided.”<sup>17</sup> Therefore, it is necessary to be sure that Martin is not guilty of equivocation when his premise is stated in (7).

There are two senses that are relevant to assess the meaningfulness of the incarnate temptation situation: one is *categorical possibility*, and the other is *conditional possibility*. I deny that Christ had any categorical possibility to sin: given (5) and the external nature of temptations stated in answering (Qy), it is metaphysically impossible that Christ could sin. As a compatibilist, I reject that a categorical possibility is necessary for moral responsibility and hence for the temptation to be meaningful. However, a much more modest conditional possibility to sin, which even compatibilists admit is necessary for moral responsibility, is so mild that it could be affirmed of Christ without denying (5). It is merely the claim that “if”, hypothetically, conditionally, contrary to fact, Christ did desire to sin, then nothing would prevent from doing so: no coercion, or manipulation, or hypnosis would stand in his way. This counterfactual statement is perfectly compatible with the fact that Christ cannot desire to do so. Therefore, if Martin’s premise (7) implies categorical possibility, I reject it, but if conditional possibility is in view, I affirm it and it does not conflict with (2) and (5).

### **The Two-Minds Approach**

Thomas V. Morris, in his monograph *The Logic of God Incarnate*, offers a different approach that I believe is worth noting. His proposition relies on the old view

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<sup>17</sup>Jean Calvin, *Institutions de la religion chrétienne* (Aix-en-Provence: Kerygma, 2009), 158.

that there exist two distinct range of consciousness in God Incarnate. This proposition is consistent with the doctrine of the two natures of Christ officially defined at the Council of Chalcedon (451) and with the general rejection of monothelitism at the Third Council of Constantinople (680-681). Morris defines the two minds approach this way:

There is first what we can call the eternal mind of God the Son with its distinctively divine consciousness, whatever that might be like, encompassing the full scope of omniscience. And in addition there is a distinctly earthly consciousness that came into existence and grew and developed as the boy Jesus grew and developed... We can view the two ranges of consciousness (and, analogously, the two noetic structures encompassing them) as follows: The divine mind of God the Son contained, but was not contained by, his earthly mind, or range of consciousness. That is to say, there was what can be called an asymmetric accessing relation between the two minds.<sup>18</sup>

This view offers various advantages, such as allowing what seems to be an intellectual growth of Jesus (Mark 11:13). It constitutes also the basis of explaining from an orthodox standpoint Christ's apparent limited knowledge (Mark 13:32) or even the cry of dereliction (Mark 15:34).

Morris develops a foundational argument regarding the humanity of Christ. According to him, "Jesus was *fully human* without being *merely human*."<sup>19</sup> Basically, this means that Christ had all the properties constitutive of human nature but also higher properties. For Morris, there are some human properties that are logically incompatible with divine incarnation. For example, contrary to God, a merely human will not have existed from eternity as divine and will not have a necessary existence. Morris rightly argues that these kinds of properties incompatible with divine incarnation are, at most, essential to being merely human. However, the orthodox Chalcedonian claim is not that

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<sup>18</sup>Morris, 102-3.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 66.



Jesus was merely human, but rather that he was fully human in addition to being divine.<sup>20</sup>

Drawing from this categorization, Morris explains that, although Jesus possessed a human nature, he “need not be such that he possibly sins, since he is not, in the traditional view, merely human.” Since the Martin argument is relevant only if it can be shown that orthodox Christian theists are committed to premise (7), the short answer is to reject it. However, Morris refuses to take this road, mainly because he believes that the temptations of Jesus require the possibility of sinning.<sup>21</sup>

Now, another shortcut to answer the Martin argument is to draw a distinction between the goodness of Christ’s divine nature and that of his human nature. According to this view, Christ is necessarily good *qua* God but only contingently good *qua* man. As far as I am concerned, there are several potential dangers in this approach, the first of which being the Nestorian pitfall, a too sharp division between the two natures of Christ. Of course, it is not required for being fully human that Christ be necessary good *qua* man. However, affirming that anything may follow from his human nature alone concerning his goodness would prove to be inconsistent with orthodox Chalcedonian Christology.

Morris is aware of the Nestorian pitfall, and he rejects the contingent goodness

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<sup>20</sup>The Symbol of Chalcedon states: “We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable [rational] soul and body; consubstantial [coessential] with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning [have declared] concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.” Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 3 vols. (1877), vol.2, 64.

<sup>21</sup>Morris, 146.

of Christ *qua* man as an impossibility. Consequently, given that incarnate temptations require the possibility for Christ to sin and that (5) prevents any broadly logical, metaphysical, or physical possibility, he argues that Christ possessed an *epistemic* possibility of sinning. Morris explains this proposition with several illustrations. Here is one of them:

Suppose...that a certain form of time-travel is impossible, but that Brown, a great scientist with eccentric ways who loves a practical joke, approaches Jones with an elaborate-looking apparatus about the size of a telephone booth which she tells Jones can effect that form of time travel, an invention of hers as yet unknown to the world-at-large or even to the scientific community. Jones, believing brown, can be tempted to travel in the machine in order to commit some evil deed otherwise impossible. The reality of this temptation does not require the broadly logical, or metaphysical, possibility of what he considers doing. It requires only that the imagined deed not be an epistemic impossibility for him. He must think it possible, and within his power to do. It need not actually be so.<sup>22</sup>

In the same way, Jesus could be tempted to sin if it was epistemically possible for him to do so. For Morris, concerning Christ, this means that “if...the full accessible belief-set of his earthly mind did not rule out the possibility of his sinning, he could be genuinely tempted, in that range of consciousness, to sin.”<sup>23</sup> Of course, this implies that (4) and (5) were not part of the information contained in that belief-set, so that Christ was not aware *qua* man that he was necessarily good. Thus, on the two-minds view, the non omniscient earthly mind of Jesus entails that it was epistemically possible for Christ to sin, since (4) and (5) were not contained in his human range of thoughts. According to Morris, this allowed for his temptations.

I think Morris’ proposition goes in the right direction, especially because I

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid, 148.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

believe it describes accurately the framework in which incarnate temptations have certainly occurred. Moreover, this explanation sets the ground for answering most of the attacks against the consistency of divine incarnation. However, because Morris does not interact in depth with the concept of divine temptation, I think his approach is exposed to criticism. Werther, for example, denies that the epistemic possibility of temptation is a sufficient condition for genuine temptation.<sup>24</sup> He points out that all the illustrations provided in *The Logic of God Incarnate* to support the two-minds view depict human beings whom at one point conceived the intention to sin. Yet, as I have already stated, such intentions constitute metaphysical possibilities and are sinful in themselves (a truth with which Morris agrees<sup>25</sup>). Because of his necessarily goodness, Christ would never have been able to experience them. Werther is aware of this potential weakness, and argues the following:

Unless Morris can provide an example in which an agent is genuinely tempted, even though it is metaphysically impossible for him to intend the evil action in question, there does not seem to be any reason for thinking there does not seem to be any reason for thinking that Jesus' temptation ought to be understood in terms of epistemic possibility. It must be remembered that Jesus, unlike Jones, could not even intend to do wrong...If Jesus could not have intended to perform an evil act, then there seems to be no reasons for thinking that he experience temptation.<sup>26</sup>

For Werther, an incarnate temptation is meaningful if and only if Jesus could have formed a wrong intention. However, I have demonstrated above that there is a kind of temptation that is meaningful without necessitating an inward disposition in the one

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<sup>24</sup>David Werther, "The Temptation of God Incarnate," *Religious Studies* 29 (1993): 48.

<sup>25</sup>Morris, 124.

<sup>26</sup>Werther, 49.

who is tempted. I agree with Werther that Morris illustration falls short of demonstrating the two-minds approach, since the kind of temptations mere humans experience always involve at least a spontaneous desire.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, the difficulty is overcome by recognizing that the case of Christ is unique: he was not merely human, and his experiences of temptation did not have to be exactly equivalent to those of mere human beings.

Werther also raises the question of Christ's freedom to resist temptation. In order to secure his libertarian position, Morris argues that Christ's decision not to sin derived from his earthly consciousness and was not causally imposed by his divine nature.<sup>28</sup> It follows from this that Jesus was freely responsible (in the libertarian sense) for overcoming temptation, and both his moral responsibility and his necessarily goodness are preserved and mutually consistent. I believe this is another weakness in Morris argumentation, and Werther, who did not miss it, objects the following argument:

- (8) Jesus' divine nature, which includes the property of essential goodness, would prevent him from ever failing prey to temptations.
- (9) Either there is a possible world in which Jesus becomes incarnate and only his divine nature prevents him from succumbing to temptations, or there is not.
- (10) If there is, then Jesus cannot be necessarily good.
- (11) If there is not, then Jesus could not possibly fall prey to temptation and therefore could not be praiseworthy for overcoming it.

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<sup>27</sup>The "spontaneous desire" is generally recognized by theologians to be the very first step of inward temptations. Discussing the tenth commandment, Douma rejects successfully the Roman Catholic view that this initial step is not sinful. Frame, in his massive volume on ethics, extends rightly this approach to all sins. Jochem Douma, *The Ten Commandments: Manual for the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Pub., 1996), 340. John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life, A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Pub., 2008), 846.

<sup>28</sup>Morris, 150. Morris also believes that this formulation allows him to avoid monotheletism. However, this Christological doctrine condemned at the third Council of Constantinople implies that every act of Christ was accomplished in virtue only of his divine nature. If one holds that a human act of Christ, let's say learning first century-Hebrew, was determined by his divine nature, he is thus not guilty of monotheletism. In other word, it is not necessary to hold to libertarianism in order to avoid monotheletism.

(12) Therefore, either Jesus is necessarily good or he is not responsible for resisting temptation.<sup>29</sup>

Premises (8) and (9) are pretty much secured. Premise (10), according to Werther, is also true because an individual could be prevented from acting immorally only if it is possible for him to act immorally (wrongful intentions included). And if it is possible for an individual to act wrongly, he could not be necessarily good. Werther defends premise (11) by arguing that, if there is no possible world in which the incarnate Christ is prevented to fall prey to temptation by his divine nature, then in every possible world he does so by relying on his human nature. From this, Werther demonstrates that the property of resisting temptation if tempted is included in God the Son's human nature. Since the incarnate Christ's divine nature includes the property of essential goodness –and thus also the property of resisting temptation- and since God the Son exemplifies his divine and human natures, he could not possibly succumb to temptation and thus cannot be responsible for overcoming it. Therefore, Werther believes (12) to be a secured conclusion.

I have already explained why I think both Werther and Morris are wrong on the nature of incarnate temptations. This argument alone allows me to reject both (11) and (12). Now, regarding (10), I have also stated that a conditional possibility to sin is amply sufficient to affirm Christ's responsibility and the meaningfulness of any incarnate temptation.<sup>30</sup> Such a conditional possibility is absolutely consistent with Christ's

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<sup>29</sup>Werther, 50.

<sup>30</sup>I should clarify that the conditional analysis is not in itself fully sufficient for moral responsibility, since classic manipulation examples would seem to exclude that: a person manipulated by a nefarious brain surgeon to kill the president seems to have the conditional ability to do otherwise, but is not responsible in respect to the human manipulator. It thus follows that moral responsibility requires more

necessarily goodness, and consequently I reject (10) and (12) on this ground: Jesus is both necessarily good and responsible for resisting temptation.

However, I have to admit that the dichotomy Morris introduces between Christ's divine and human consciousness on that point seems odd to me. On one hand, he is very careful not to fall into the Nestorian pitfall, but on the other hand, he is ready to acknowledge that Christ's divine nature had no role to play in resisting temptations. In my opinion, by holding to this, Morris exposes himself to Werther's criticism and is in danger of falling into another variant of Nestorianism (and consequently to go out beyond the boundaries of the Chalcedonian orthodoxy which he is nevertheless wishing to defend). There is no need for such a sharp distinction if we hold that conditional possibility is a sufficient ground for moral responsibility. If the epistemic possibility is based on the ignorance of the future causes that would lead Christ to act as he would under temptation, then Christ would consider that succumbing to temptation is in fact possible. However, considering these causes, sinning is not categorically possible. Thus, the two-minds view and Chalcedonian orthodoxy are secured by holding to compatibilism.

### **Conclusion**

In this paper, I have argued that the temptations Christ had to suffer do not entail the incoherence of the traditional doctrines of divine incarnation and omnipotence.

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than the conditional ability to do otherwise, but the modest claim at hand is that whatever else is needed, it is not the categorical ability to do otherwise. In other words, as a compatibilist, I affirm that moral responsibility requires more than a conditional ability, but less than the categorical ability. And since it is the categorical ability to sin which Jesus lacks, the compatibilist view perfectly solves the present dilemma of incarnate temptation: Jesus need not have a categorical ability to sin in order for the temptation to remain meaningful.

A proper definition of omnipotence coupled with a Biblical understanding of the temptation of God shows that (DO) is never really in danger. The coherence of the doctrine of divine incarnation is preserved if we hold that God the son possessed a conditional possibility to sin: this compatibilist approach allows for the meaningful incarnate temptations consequent with Christ's moral responsibility and his necessary goodness. The two-minds view sets the framework in which incarnate temptations most likely occurred. However, one should be very careful, whilst using it, to remain within the boundaries of Chalcedonian orthodoxy. Therefore, I affirm that the two-mind view may be a legitimate answer to the problem of incarnate temptation if and only if Christ's epistemic possibility to sin is understood in a compatibilist framework.

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