

The Temptations of Christ

Part One
of Two

Their Nature and Christ's Response

This study is keyed to the enclosed letter by the present writer, printed on pages 3 and 4 of this tract. Please read it first. Then read the additional analysis by the same writer, on pages 1 to 3. Then read the additional quotations on Part 2.

Did Christ desire to do perverted acts? Did He have rebellion in His heart against God? Did He barely hold back intense hatred?

No.

Unfortunately, over the years, some of those advocating the fallen-nature view of Christ's human nature have made very exaggerated statements about the inner thoughts and feelings of Jesus.

This present statement, one of the first of its kind, is an attempt to clarify certain aspects of Christ's earthly life, such as these: What were the limiting aspects of those temptations? Were any of His thoughts and feelings evil?

Fortunately, we know the perimeters—the outer limits—for this study. They consist of five points:

- 1 - Christ took our nature, fallen after 4,000 years of sin.
- 2 - Satan did everything possible, everything imaginable to tempt, harass, and overcome Christ.
- 3 - Christ was tempted in all points like as we are.
- 4 - Christ never sinned.
- 5 - Christ is our example in all things. He is the perfect example.

On the basis of those five points, we can gauge the extent and scope of these temptations, which Christ experienced, and His reaction to them.

1 - Christ took our nature. He took the very nature we have, with all its limitations and weaknesses. He became, in verity, a human being just like us.

From His Incarnation onward, Christ was fully God and fully man. But, while on earth, Christ never used His divinity to aid His humanity. His only assistance was guidance and strength from His Father. His only source of help was that which we can have.

2 - Every temptation common to mankind was pressed upon Christ by Satan. The ferocity of those temptations can hardly be imagined. Satan did everything in his power to overcome the Son of God. Yet he was totally unsuccessful.

3-4-5 - (1) Christ was tempted in all points like as we are, (2) yet without sin. These are the two great

balancing points. In addition, we have the fact that, in all things, He is our perfect Example; one which we can safely follow. We will follow the Lamb through all eternity; we can safely follow Him now.

Satan tempted Christ to take every possible bad attitude, think every possible bad thought, say every possible bad thing, and do every possible bad action. But Christ did not do so. There was nothing in Him which responded to Satan's temptations.

Were the temptations fierce? Yes, more than anything you and I have or will ever experience. But was Christ sullied by these temptations? Did they bring evil into His thoughts, His feelings, His life? No. How can we know? Because we are told hundreds of times in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy that Christ was without sin.

"Oh," but someone will reply, "it is not sin to be tempted." It is not sin to be tempted, but it is sin to invitingly respond to temptation. This Christ never did, so there was no evil within Him.

He had all our frailties, weaknesses, and leanings toward sin,—but He did not respond to those leanings, and this made all the difference.

We are safe only as we remain within the perimeters: Christ took our nature; was tempted; never sinned.

If any of these three aspects are missing or flawed, then Christ is not our Example, our perfect Sacrifice, our Atonement, our Mediating Priest, and our Saviour.

Christ had to fully take our nature, be fully tempted, and never sin. And that is exactly what He did.

When a temptation comes to the soul, it may come suddenly and it may come with great power. But one thing is certain: When it arrives, the individual experiencing it will respond. That response will be his choice in the matter. It may be a light, passing temptation, and he may reject it by just ignoring it and turning his thoughts to something else. It may be very strong and he may fight it fiercely, and overcome.

But, instead of resisting it, the soul may consider it with interest and delight. The contamination of the temptation fills his mind, and he yields to the desire which has been aroused.

The response to the temptation is crucial. Christ's response was always a negative one. Temptations and sinful thoughts never lingered in His mind. He instantly repulsed them. He did that

through the same power available to every child of God. That which Christ did, we can do.

Here is an example of how it works: A person is tempted to have thoughts of rebellion against God. Christ was tempted with that thought also. But the temptation came to Him even more powerfully than it does to us.

But, when the temptation came to Christ—He instantly cast it out. He repulsed it, just as we may do.

But when the temptation comes to a person who has had rebellious thoughts before, that person is also free to reject the temptation or accept it.

If he is trusting in Jesus, God will give him grace to repulse it as Christ did—even though he may earlier have indulged in rebellious thoughts. It is in that sense that Christ has no advantage over us in meeting temptation. The strength He received to meet them, we too can have.

But, if the man chooses to linger on the temptation for a moment, then it strikes an answering chord in his own mind. He lingers over the temptation as Eve lingered about the forbidden tree.

But Christ never lingered.

Someone will say, “Well, then, Christ had no answering chords, but we do.” Yes, but the answering chords—the sympathies with sin—are only there when we linger. Christ did not linger, and neither need we. If you do not linger over it, when the temptation comes, there will be no answering chord to worry about. In the strength of Christ, repulse it immediately. Refuse it instantly. In addition, as you continue doing that, the answering chords tend to fade away.

I speak from experience. I am sure you have experienced it also. It is an experience we can all have, from day to day. In the strength of Christ we can overcome all the power of the evil one. Thank God!

(Yet, as we draw closer to our Creator, we will continually feel more and more our deficiencies and our weakness apart from Him. There will be no vaunted pride, “Hey, look at me! I have overcome, and am living without sin!” Flee from anyone who claims to be without sin. Earnest Christians do not consider themselves sinless and worthy of eternal life. Men, such as those from LOR (see our tracts on that cult), have hypnotized and overcome Advent believers by telling them that, if they accept them as spiritual guides—they could tell them how to overcome sin, once and for all, that same evening.)

But, from time to time, those strong temptations will come again. Yet, just as Jesus did, we can as quickly resist them—and cast them out.

Why do we do this? because we love Jesus with all our hearts, more than we love the evils of earth.

Our loyalty is to the God of heaven, not to the devilish trinkets Satan presents to us.

Thus, we find that Jesus did not have evil feelings, evil thoughts, evil words, or evil actions. He was sinless. He harbored nothing evil.

Did He have evil tendencies or propensities? He inherited weaknesses just as we all do. But He yielded to none of them. He entertained none of them in His thoughts. Thus it is clear that Christ did have inherited tendencies, but He had no evil propensities such as we do. To say that again: He inherited weaknesses and tendencies as we do, but, because he did not respond favorably to any of them when tempted, He did not change it into an evil disposition, or liking, in His mind. He did not transform the potential immorality into actual immorality. He did not respond favorably to inherited or environmental negative factors. Because He did not accept them, He did not make them His own.

In view of all that we have discussed, it is clear that Christ is our perfect Example. He is the great Exemplar, the Pattern Man, the One we can safely follow in every way.

He was tempted in every way we are, yet He never once yielded to the temptations. He did not have the blood of raging rebels burning in His veins; He did not have rebellious thoughts against God; He did not have pride, stubbornness, and evil desires overwhelming Him.

But someone will say, “But I do!” Well, the same strength available to Him is now available to you. Read the little book, *Steps to Christ*, carefully and you will find it all outlined in clear detail.

Keep in mind that Christ was also tempted more than you will ever be tempted.

First, He was tempted incessantly by Satan. No human being was ever tempted as constantly as was Christ. Why? Whether Satan conquers you or me is of some importance to him.—But whether he could overcome Christ was a life-or-death issue to him! If the devil could win Christ to his side, he, Satan, would not have to perish someday in the lake of fire! There would be no lake of fire! So the temptations experienced by Christ were utterly devastating in strength and in constancy.

In this life, Christ was continually harassed by evil relatives, associates, priests, and people—to a degree you and I will never experience. Satan did no idling while Christ walked this planet.

Second, Christ experienced the forty-day Wilderness temptations for our sakes, and He went through Gethsemane and the agony of the cross.

Third, Christ was tempted to call upon His divine nature to come to His aid. But He never did

that. That alone was a powerful temptation.

So then, the temptations of Christ were far greater than any experienced by mankind. Yet, through it all, He never once yielded. Never once was His mind tainted by the evil of this world.

How can we know it? Because God's Word tells us so. When we believe the Word, everything else falls into place.

Here are several interesting statements:

"There are many who in their hearts murmur against God. They say, 'We inherit the fallen nature of Adam, and are not responsible for our natural imperfections.' They find fault with God's requirements, and complain that He demands what they have no power to give. Satan made the same complaint in heaven, but such thoughts dishonor God."—*Signs, August 29, 1892.*

"Since the sin of Adam, men in every age have excused themselves from sinning, charging God with

their sin, saying that they could not keep His commandments."—*Australian Signs, September 14, 1903.*

"The will is the governing power in the nature of man, bringing all the other faculties under its sway . . . It is the deciding power."—*5 Testimonies, 513.*

"While Satan can solicit, he cannot compel to sin . . . The tempter can never compel us to do evil . . . The will must consent."—*Desire of Ages, 125.*

"There is no excuse for sinning."—*Desire of Ages, 311.*

"Let the children bear in mind that the child Jesus had upon Himself human nature, and was in the likeness of sinful flesh, and was tempted of Satan like all children are tempted."—*Youth's Instructor, August 23, 1894.*

"Just that which you may be He was in human nature."—*Letter 106, 1896.*

May Jesus give us strength to live His life.

Dear _____,

When your letter was shown to me, I decided to carefully read the booklet in question. This is my critique of the booklet and the book it discusses:

1 - Paragraph One of the booklet is not correct. Whatever may or may not be in the criticized book, no one would be responsible for what was written in it, other than the author of the book himself.

2 - The controverted book was published in 1985. Only a few passages are cited and, although they are not good, I do not see reason to condemn the author for all he has done in a variety of lines to defend historic beliefs. He has worked effectively for God and continues to do so. I do not see that we need to raise a hue and cry regarding the man, *yet it would be well to clarify in the minds of the people that there is an area of speculation which we should avoid: We should not seek to implant sinful aspirations, hopes, and desires in the mind of Jesus.*

3 - The disputed passages in the book should never have been written! This type of thing can result in most startling errors. We should remain with the Words of God, as found in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy. Our strength will be found in staying close to Scripture, not in wandering from it. We should be careful how we discuss the nature of Christ, so as not to lead minds away from basic truths, and into speculative errors.

Christ took our fallen human nature. The Bible definition of His humanity is wonderfully accurate. It is equally wonderful for its simplicity: "He was tempted in all points as we, yet without sin." Why is it thought necessary to delve into that mystery—so that we place sinful thoughts in the mind of Jesus? To do so is terrible. Let us remain with the simplicity in which Scripture endows the subject.

Disputed book quotation #1: "Why did Jesus say, 'I seek not mine own will' (John 5:30), and 'I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will' (John 6:38)? Why would it be necessary to say this if His own will was faultless and pure, and holy? But if His own will and His own inclination were tending toward the negative, then it would make sense for Him to ask His Father's will be done."—*page 59.*

Our comment: It is clear, from both the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy, that Jesus was the unblemished Sacrifice. His own will was faultless, pure, and holy. As our example, He submitted to the Father as we today should submit to the Godhead. It is totally unnecessary to declare Him weak in willpower and almost overwhelmed by temptation, as is implied in the above statement. This is not the portrait of Jesus that we find anywhere in the Inspired Writings! His will was never tending toward the negative.

Disputed quotation #2: "He knew what it was like to go wrong. He knew what it was like to feel the temptation to rebel against God, and that temptation arose from within His own nature."—*page 60.*

Our comment: Jesus was fully God, and He became fully man. He took the fallen nature of mankind, after 4,000 years of sin. In that nature, He was fully tempted by Satan, His surroundings, and associates. In exactly what way He was tempted, we are not necessarily told. It is not for us to presume to delve into such matters. But the sentence, “He knew what it was like to go wrong,” is totally abhorrent! Jesus knows what we are all like, and He can read the mind of a criminal—but He Himself was no criminal in mind, and He never went wrong! He did no evil.

Equal in sacred status with the statement, “He took our nature,” is the teaching, “He never sinned.” We are not to cancel the second, in order (supposedly) to add strength to the first.

Disputed quotation #3: “Are not our problems basically self and pride and the desires that come from our fallen nature? Do we not fall most often because of the inner desires that lead us astray? If Jesus did not have any of these, could it really be true that He was tempted in all points as we are?”—page 59.

Our comment: According to this statement, Jesus had self, pride, and sinful desires. Why are not the grand words of Inspiration on this subject thought sufficient for us? Why must we insert the suspicion that Christ had sinful desires? We fully agree that He was tempted, but Christ did not have sinful desires!

Hundreds of times the Spirit of Prophecy confirms the Bible truth that Christ took our fallen nature, but hundreds of times those writings attest to the fact that, in that nature, He never once sinned in any way—in thought, word, or action. Indeed, those sacred books go on to say that, because in our nature He never sinned or in the slightest yielded to temptation, therefore we can avoid sin in our lives just as fully. But, if in His life Jesus was locked into selfish and prideful desires, then we are too.

Jesus had pure desires, not sinful desires. Yes, He was tempted to accept the sinful desires. But, in the strength of His Father, He instantly repulsed the thought. Although tempted to do so, He did not accept the temptation.

Disputed quotation #4: “If Jesus’ life is to have any meaning as an example for us, then it is crucial that He inherit just what I inherit.” [We agree with that, but not with this:] “We do inherit badness, weakness, and corruption from Adam.”—pages 55, 27.

Our comment: We inherit weaknesses, but we do not inherit badness. That would be tantamount

to inheritance of sin. We inherit a sinful nature, but we do not inherit sinfulness; there is a difference. Jesus inherited a fallen nature; He did not inherit badness. Such a view is not Scriptural. Let us stay with the simplicity of God’s Word, rather than trying to reshape it.

A corollary erroneous statement is cited next. It comes from Alonzo T. Jones, who tended to be flamboyant in his speeches:

Disputed quotation #5: “Then Satan took Jesus upon an exceeding high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them too—the glory, the honor, the dignity,—He showed Him all that. And there, at that moment, there was stirred up all the ambition that ever appeared in Napoleon, or Caesar, or Alexander, or all of them put together. But from Jesus still the answer is: ‘It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.’ ”—1895 *General Conference Bulletin*, Number 7.

Our comment: A.T. Jones is here attributing evil ambitions to Jesus—stronger than those that were in three of the most devilishly ambitious men who ever lived. Note that, according to Jones, Christ was not presented with those ambitions; they were stirred up within Him.

For shame, for shame, that a man must, for the sake of making a more startling speech, reduce Jesus to a sinful man, barely able to control His feelings and thoughts. Yet, in the Spirit of Prophecy, we are told that “the thoughts and feelings combined make up the moral character.”

Men are willing to attribute evil thoughts and feelings to Jesus, in order to strengthen a Scriptural truth which is already clear enough. Jesus was tempted as we are, but, because He never once yielded, the temptations did not awaken memories of past indulgences. One may say then, Was He tempted as strongly as we are? Yes, for He was tempted incessantly, far beyond anything we are subject to. Second, He underwent the agony of the Wilderness temptation, and the crisis of Gethsemane and the Crucifixion—which none of us will ever face to the degree He did. Third, He was tempted to use His super-powerful divine nature, which He never did.

Thanking you for your kind attention to this, I remain

Very sincerely,
Vance Ferrell

Continued on the next tract

More WAYMARKS - from —
PILGRIMS REST

HCR 77, BOX 38A - BEERSHEBA SPRINGS, TN 37305 USA

The Temptations of Christ

Part Two
of Two

Their Nature and Christ's Response

Continued from the preceding tract in this series

The following quotations are selected from the book, *Redemption, or the Temptation of Christ in the Wilderness*, By E.G. White:

"The unsullied purity of the childhood, youth, and manhood, of Christ which Satan could not taint, annoyed him exceedingly. All his darts and arrows of temptation fell harmless before the Son of God."—*Redemption, or the Temptation of Christ in the Wilderness*, 26.

"That there should be one who walked the earth with moral power to withstand all his temptations, who resisted all his attractive bribes to allure Him to sin, and over whom he could obtain no advantage to separate from God, chafed and enraged his satanic majesty."—*Redemption*, 26.

"He [Satan] now feared that his empire over the world was to be contested, his right disputed, and his power broken . . . He knew that everything which concerned his prosperity was pending upon his success or failure in overcoming Christ with his temptations in the wilderness. He brought to bear upon Christ every artifice and force of his powerful temptations to allure Him from His allegiance."—*Redemption*, 29.

"It is impossible for man to know the strength of Satan's temptations to the Son of God. Every temptation that seems so afflicting to man in his daily life, so difficult to resist and overcome, was brought to bear upon the Son of God in as much greater degree as His excellence of character was superior to that of fallen man . . . He met the strongest force of Satan. His most wily temptations Christ has tested and conquered in behalf of man: It is impossible for man to be tempted above what he is able to bear while he relies upon Jesus, the infinite Conqueror."—*Redemption*, 29.

"In the desolate wilderness, Christ was not in so favorable a position to endure the temptations of Satan as was Adam when he was tempted in Eden. The Son of God humbled Himself, and took man's nature after the race had wandered four thousand years from Eden, and from their original state of purity and uprightness. Sin had been making its terrible marks upon the race for ages."—*Redemption*, 30.

"In behalf of the race, with the weaknesses of fallen man upon Him, He was to stand the temptations of Satan upon all points on which man could be assailed."—*Redemption*, 30.

"Christ had entered the world as Satan's destroyer and the Redeemer of the captives bound by his power. He would leave an example in His own victorious life for man to follow, and thus overcome the temptations of Satan."—*Redemption*, 34.

"Christ, in behalf of the race, was to overcome appetite, by standing the most powerful test upon this point. He was to tread the path of temptation alone, and there must be none to help Him—none to comfort or uphold Him. Alone He was to wrestle with the powers of darkness."—*Redemption*, 35.

"In man's behalf, He must show self-denial, perseverance, and firmness of principle, paramount to the gnawing pangs of hunger. He must show a power of control stronger than hunger and even death . . . He was emaciated through long fasting, and felt the keenest sense of hunger."—*Redemption*, 35, 36.

"Although Christ was suffering the keenest pangs of hunger, He withstood the temptation."—*Redemption*, 42.

"As soon as the long fast of Christ commenced, Satan was at hand with his temptations . . . Satan had manifold temptations prepared to ensnare Christ, and obtain advantage of Him; if he failed in one temptation, he would try another."—*Redemption*, 37-38.

"Christ could have worked a miracle in His own behalf; but this would not have been in accordance with the plan of salvation . . . By a miracle of mercy, He fed five thousand at once with five loaves and two small fishes. Therefore He had the power to work a miracle, and satisfy His own hunger."—*Redemption*, 39.

"Satan hoped that he could insinuate doubts . . . This was indeed a temptation to Christ. But He cherished it not for a moment."—*Redemption*, 40.

"Christ did not appear to notice the reviling taunts of Satan."—*Redemption*, 40-41.

"The life of Christ was a perfect pattern."—*Redemption*, 43.

"Satan was expecting that the Son of God would, in His extreme weakness and agony of spirit, give him an opportunity to obtain advantage over Him by provoking Him to engage in controversy with him . . . The Saviour of the world had no controversy with Satan."—*Redemption*, 43-44.

"But Satan was not willing to cease his efforts until he had tried every means to obtain victory over the world's Redeemer. He knew that with himself all was at stake, whether he or Christ should be victor in the contest."—*Redemption*, 44.

"The Redeemer of the world wavered not from His integrity, and showed that He had perfect faith in His Father's promised care."—*Redemption*, 48. [Think that sentence through; it is a key point in resisting temptation.]

"The eye of Jesus for a moment rested upon the glory presented before Him; but He turned away, and refused to look upon the entrancing spectacle. He would not endanger His steadfast integrity by dallying

with the tempter.”—*Redemption*, 52.

PROPENSITIES AND PASSIONS—We may have propensities and passions but, in the strength of Christ, they can be placed under firm control. Thus it was also with Jesus, while He was here.

“Not for one moment was there in Him an evil propensity.”—*Letter to W.L.H. Baker*, 1895.

“A man of like passions as ourselves, the pen of inspiration describes him [Daniel] as without fault.”—*Prophets and Kings*, 546.

“The appetite and passions should be restricted and under the control of an enlightened conscience.”—*3 Testimonies*, 491.

“Every true Christian will have control of his appetite and passions.”—*3 Testimonies*, 569-570.

“That your passions and appetites may be subject to the control of reason . . . Our natural propensities must be controlled, or we can never overcome as Christ overcame.”—*4 Testimonies*, 235.

“All animal propensities are to be subjected to the higher powers of the soul.”—*Adventist Home*, 128.

“When this [the grace of Christ] is implanted in the heart, it will cast out the evil passions that cause strife and dissension.”—*Desire of Ages*, 305.

THE BAKER LETTER—In this study, we have opposed a tendency to suggest that Christ was corrupt in mind and thought. The one who appeared to suggest it, probably did not intend to say that, yet we should be aware of the danger; hence this two part tract study.

However, a full century ago there was a man who was speculating that Christ had, indeed, more than our fallen nature;—He also had our sinful thoughts and corrupt feelings. The man’s name was W.L.H. Baker, a pastor in Tasmania. In 1895, E.G. White wrote a letter to him warning him away from the direction in which he was headed. Included below are all the crucial statements in that letter:

“Be careful, exceedingly careful as to how you dwell upon the human nature of Christ. Do not set Him before the people as a man with the propensities of sin . . . He could have sinned; He could have fallen, but not for one moment was there in Him an evil propensity . . . Avoid every question in relation to the humanity of Christ which is liable to be misunderstood . . .

“Never, in any way, leave the slightest impression upon human minds that a taint of, or inclination to corruption rested upon Christ, or that He in any way yielded to corruption. He was tempted in all points like as man is tempted, yet He is called that holy thing. It is a mystery that is left unexplained to mortals that Christ could be tempted in all points like as we are, and yet be without sin . . . Let every human being be warned from the ground of making Christ altogether human, such an one as ourselves; for it cannot be . . .

“ ‘The prince of this world cometh, and hath noth-

ing in Me’—nothing to respond to temptations. Not once did Christ step on Satan’s ground, to give him any advantage. Satan found nothing in Him to encourage his advances.”—*Manuscript Release*, 414; the letter to W.L.H. Baker, 1895.

THE BASIS OF OUR SALVATION—The fact that Jesus Christ become fully like us and, in our human nature, met and overcame every temptation of Satan is basic to our salvation. Through His strength, we also can overcome all the power of the evil one.

“Therefore he [Satan] is constantly seeking to deceive the followers of Christ with his fatal sophistry that it is impossible for them to overcome.”—*Great Controversy*, 489.

“The characters formed in this life will determine the future destiny. When Christ shall come, He will not change the character of any individual.”—*4 Testimonies*, 429.

“Let no one say, I cannot remedy my defects of character. If you come to this decision, you will certainly fail of obtaining everlasting life.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, 331.

“When He comes He is not to cleanse us of our sins, to remove from us the defects of our characters, or to cure us of the infirmities of our tempers and dispositions. If wrought for us at all, the work will be accomplished before that time.

“When the Lord comes, those who are holy will be holy still. Those who have preserved their bodies and spirits in holiness, in sanctification, and honor will then receive the finishing touch of immortality. But those who are unjust, unsanctified, and filthy will remain so forever. No work will then be done for them to remove their defects and give them holy characters. The refiner does not then sit to pursue His refining process and remove their sins and corruption. This is all to be done in these hours of probation. It is now that this work is to be accomplished for us.”—*2 Testimonies*, 355.

Christ took our fallen nature, and in that nature never personally fell into sin. He took our weakened humanity, but was always strong to do right. He bore our sins and died for our sins, but He never personally sinned. Through faith in the Father’s enabling strength, He overcame as we can overcome.

On the cross, and by His intercession now in the Sanctuary above, He supplies everything needed to save us. Will mankind accept it?

Thank God for His Inexpressible Gift! Jesus Christ—our Lord and Saviour! —vf