

What Is Not Saved Is Not Assumed: Thomas Weinandy, Julian of Eclanum, and Augustine of Hippo on Whether Salvation Requires Christ's Temptations to Sin

JOSHUA EVANS
Regis University
Denver, CO

TOWARD THE END OF THE LAST BOOK he ever wrote, Augustine of Hippo asks a crucial question that should resonate in today's Christological debates: "Did . . . that assumption of a human nature which made God and man one person contribute nothing to that man toward the excellence of the righteousness which you say he had from voluntary action?"¹ While the question was originally put to Julian of Eclanum, Augustine's Pelagian archenemy, the question continues to be relevant, in large part because a number of theologians today adopt the same Christological principle advanced by Julian: "A different nature could not furnish an example. . . . Remove the basis of the example, and the basis of the price which he became for us will also be removed."² That is, according to both Julian and a number of theologians today, if Jesus had a human nature that was importantly different from our nature, then he was not truly human and we are not truly saved.

Recently, some theologians have framed the issue in a quasi-Augustinian manner by arguing that Jesus possessed fallen human nature. While there

¹ Augustine of Hippo, *Contra Iulianum opus imperfectum* [hereafter, *Contra Iul. imp.*] 4.84, in English as *Unfinished Work in Answer to Julian*, from *Answer to the Pelagians III*, trans. Roland J. Teske, S.J., The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century [WSA] I/25 (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 1999), 450.

² Quoted by Augustine in *Contra Iulianum* [hereafter, *Contra Iul.*] 5.15.57–58, in English as *Against Julian*, from *Answer to the Pelagians II*, trans. Roland J. Teske, S.J., ed. John E. Rotelle, O.S.A., WSA I/24 (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 1998), 468.

are certainly a number of concerns motivating this trend in Christology, the primary concern is soteriological. The guiding star here is Gregory Nazianzen's principle, "what is not assumed is not saved."³ As Gregory argues, "if only half Adam fell, then that which Christ assumes and saves may be half also; but if the whole of his nature fell, it must be united to the whole nature of Him that was begotten, and so be saved as a whole."⁴ Those who say Jesus had a fallen human nature are concerned above all to establish that Jesus truly took on our human nature. According to this viewpoint, if Christ did not assume our fallen human nature, then we who inhabit that nature are not saved.

One of today's most notable advocates of the claim that Jesus possessed fallen human nature is Father Thomas Weinandy, who advances the following thesis: "Our salvation is unconditionally dependent upon the Son's assuming a humanity disfigured by sin and freely acting as a son of Adam."⁵ One of the major soteriological concerns of thinkers like Weinandy has to do with Jesus's role as moral exemplar for the rest of us. Traditional Christology, which suggests Jesus had an importantly different kind of human nature from ours, leads to the following troubling questions: "How could one possibly follow an example set by God? Surely God is able to do what God does because he has powers that far exceed our own. How then could what God does as a precondition to becoming incarnate possibly be imitated by human beings?"⁶ The advocates of Christ's fallen human nature seek to avoid the apparent moral divisions between Jesus and us that are built into traditional Christology. According to these advocates, if we

³ The concept, here rephrased, comes from Gregory's *Letter to Cledonius* (Letter 101): "If anyone has put his trust in Him as a Man without a human mind, he is really bereft of mind, and quite unworthy of salvation. For that which He has not assumed He has not healed; but that which is united to His Godhead is also saved," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, 2nd ser., vol. 7 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 440.

⁴ Gregory, *Letter to Cledonius*, 440.

⁵ Thomas Weinandy, OFM Cap., *In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh: An Essay on the Humanity of Christ* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 18–19. Weinandy names Edward Irving, Karl Barth, and Hans Urs von Balthasar as advocates of similar views to his own (54–70). Oliver Crisp also names Irving and Barth, along with Colin Gunton, as holding similar views to Weinandy's (*Divinity and Humanity* [New York: Cambridge, 2007], 90n1). While Weinandy attempts to show that much of patristic and medieval theology are on his side, Crisp rightly notes that "this is contentious" (*Divinity and Humanity*, 107n27).

⁶ Bruce McCormack, "Kenoticism in Modern Christology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Christology*, ed. Francesca Aran Murphy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 445.

attribute Christ's perfect life to his divinely human personhood, then he would not be truly human and we would not be truly saved. These thinkers rightly recognize that Christology and soteriology stand or fall together.

Unlike the ancient Christological debates, there is essentially unanimous agreement today that Christ assumed many elements of what we call fallen human nature: Christ clearly had the ability to undergo hunger, pain, suffering, and death, though he never committed any actual sins. What is in dispute, however, is how we account for Christ's avoidance of personal, actual sins. Was the human nature of Jesus just like ours, so that Jesus had to actively work to avoid sins just like we do? Or, was the human nature of Jesus importantly different from ours, so that Jesus had the kind of human nature that was unable to sin? The issue of what accounts for Jesus's ability to avoid sins is a major source of division today in debates over the character of Christ's human nature.

Oliver Crisp has helpfully identified two rival sides in the debate over how Christ was able to avoid sins: "the sinlessness view" and "the impeccability view." The Sinless Christ is someone who "was capable of sinning, and might have sinned had he chosen to do so, although he did not choose to, and, as a matter of fact, remained sinless throughout his earthly career."⁷ The Sinless Christ shared in every aspect of our nature, but lived that nature better than we live it. The Impeccable Christ, on the other hand, is someone who "was incapable of sin" because of the confluence of human and divine natures in his one person.⁸ The Impeccable Christ lived better than us precisely because he is very different from us.⁹ As we will see, each side's account of Christ's avoidance of sins is a kind of test case for more general disagreements about the nature of salvation.

I will be arguing in favor of the Impeccable Christ position, and my argument will focus on what I understand to be the regrettable implications of the Sinless Christ view and the promising implications of the Impeccable Christ view. To lay out the Sinless Christ position as I understand it, I will first draw on the thought of Father Weinandy. However,

⁷ Oliver Crisp, *God Incarnate: Explorations in Christology* (New York: T & T Clark, 2009), 122.

⁸ Crisp, *God Incarnate*, 122.

⁹ In a later essay, Crisp frames the question a bit differently, asking whether Christ had a fallen human nature. In that essay, Crisp uses the words "sinless" and "impeccable" to describe two related viewpoints, and uses the term "sinless" to refer to the claim that Christ had an "unfallen" human nature. Crisp's change in language is likely meant to reflect the traditional idea that "sinfulness" is expressed in the very idea of possessing a fallen human nature, not just in the claim that one has done discrete bad actions (*Divinity and Humanity*, 106–11).

while I understand Weinandy's thought to be one of the most important contemporary representations of the Sinless Christ position, I will not focus solely on Weinandy or solely on the contemporary debate. Part of my argument is that the positions of today's Sinless Christ advocates are prefigured in the thought of Julian of Eclanum, in the context of his dispute with Augustine of Hippo. Julian is a strong advocate of the Sinless Christ position and shows more clearly why so many find the Sinless Christ position compelling. Furthermore, by looking at Julian and Augustine's debate, we can see more clearly the weaknesses of the Sinless Christ position, which were laid out convincingly in Augustine's responses to Julian. Engagement with Julian and Augustine, then, will illuminate the contemporary discussion.¹⁰ The core claim of this essay is that an Impeccable Christ Christology like Augustine's has better moral, soteriological, and eschatological implications than the Sinless Christ view advanced by Julian and contemporary thinkers such as Weinandy.

The essay is organized into three parts. First, I engage Weinandy's thesis regarding Christ's necessarily fallen human nature, because Weinandy offers one of the best expressions of the Sinless Christ view. In the second section I demonstrate the similarities between the contemporary Sinless Christ view and the view of Julian of Eclanum. In the final section I let Augustine offer his responses to Julian and, by extension, to the contemporary Sinless Christ view. Augustine shows us why it is good news to think that Christ has a human nature that is fundamentally better than, because importantly different from, ours.

What Is Not Assumed is Not Saved

The Sinless Christ model takes as its governing principle the patristic axiom that "what is not assumed is not saved."¹¹ The Sinless Christ model interprets this principle to mean that Christ must have shared in every aspect of our human nature except for actual sin, if Christ saves us and is our moral exemplar. Since our human nature is fallen, Christ's human nature must also have been fallen. Weinandy's thought is a prime example of the Sinless Christ account, and what follows is Weinandy's thesis: "Only

¹⁰ A peer-reviewer of this essay notes rightly that Theodore of Mopsuestia would also be a proper analogue for the contemporary Sinless Christ viewpoint. I choose to focus on Julian here, however, because of Augustine's direct engagement with Julian's views. Even so, Julian and Theodore have relevant commonalities: they were, in fact, housemates for a short time during Julian's anti-Augustine writings (James J. O'Donnell, *Augustine: A New Biography* [New York: Ecco, 2005], 282).

¹¹ Weinandy names Gregory's axiom as the inspiration for "the principle soteriological argument that [Weinandy's] study embraces and employs" (*In the Likeness*, 28).

if Jesus assumed a humanity at one with the fallen race of Adam could his death and Resurrection heal and save that humanity.”¹²

The theological issue of how to characterize Christ’s human nature is intimately bound up with Saint Paul’s claim that human beings inhabit “sinful flesh” while Jesus was “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom 8:3; RSV). “Likeness” denotes both similarity and dissimilarity, and as Weinandy frames the issue, the alternatives are to emphasize either the similarity or dissimilarity between our human nature and Christ’s human nature. For Weinandy, the emphasis is on similarity, with “likeness” essentially denoting “correspondence or congruity” between Christ’s flesh and our sinful flesh.¹³ That is, Weinandy writes, “our sinful condition was made manifest and fully exposed in and through Jesus’s humanity.”¹⁴ According to Weinandy, the correspondence between Christ’s flesh and our sinful flesh is necessary to the mystery of salvation and moral transformation: “Our salvation is unconditionally dependent upon the Son’s assuming a humanity disfigured by sin and freely acting as a son of Adam.”¹⁵ In other words, “only by the eternal Son’s assumption of our humanity, a humanity that sin defiled and infected, is our humanity healed, renewed, and given immortality.”¹⁶

One way in which Weinandy specifies his thesis is by saying that Jesus did not adopt a “generic” form of human nature: “The Word did not just become *soma*, that is, take upon himself a generic human body and

¹² Weinandy, *In the Likeness*, 28. Weinandy’s claim that Jesus must take on fallen humanity in order to save us seems to be advanced as a claim of necessity, with the accompanying implication that Jesus could not save us without taking on fallen human nature. To the extent that it is a claim of necessity, it is incongruous with some important elements in the theological tradition. For instance, Aquinas, in answering the question of whether the Incarnation was necessary, argues that there are two ways for something to be “necessary” in *Summa theologiae* [ST] III, q. 14, a. 2, resp: “First, when the end cannot be without it; as food is necessary for the preservation of human life. Secondly, when the end is attained better and more conveniently, as a horse is necessary for a journey” (trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province). Aquinas argues here that, because God is omnipotent, it cannot be said that the Incarnation was strictly necessary to attain the end of salvation. The Incarnation was, instead, necessary as the most fitting means given the context. For Aquinas, it is not the case that our salvation could not in principle have been achieved without the Incarnation.

¹³ Weinandy, *In the Likeness*, 79.

¹⁴ Weinandy, *In the Likeness*, 80. See also Weinandy, *Jesus the Christ* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2003), 99, and Weinandy, *Jesus: Essays in Christology* (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press, 2014), 93n9.

¹⁵ Weinandy, *In the Likeness*, 18–19.

¹⁶ Weinandy, *In the Likeness*, 29.

life, but rather became *sarx*, that is took on flesh in all its human frailty and weakness, which are the consequences of sin.”¹⁷ To adopt a “generic” human nature would not be salvifically effective: “To be *homoousious* with us demands more than an ahistorical sameness of species, but a communion with us as we are in reality—brothers and sisters defiled by the sin of Adam.”¹⁸ In order to save us, Jesus must adopt the *specific* kind of human nature we inhabit: “Jesus was born of the fallen human race, and . . . such a condition was absolutely indispensable for our salvation.”¹⁹

The Temptations of Christ

By saying that “the eternal Son of God functioned from within the confines of a humanity altered by sin and the Fall,” Weinandy specifically means that Jesus “experienced, of necessity, many of the effects of sin which permeate the world and plague human beings—hunger and thirst, sickness and sorrow, temptation and harassment by Satan, being hated and despised, fear and loneliness, even death and separation from God.”²⁰ To be fair, it would be hard to find a theologian who would disagree with the claim that Jesus experienced hunger, thirst, sickness, and sorrow or was the victim of hatred and underwent death.²¹ What is theologically interesting, however, and what is theologically controversial, is Weinandy’s claim that Jesus’s avoidance of sin is only significant if Jesus experienced temptations to sin. Weinandy’s position is that Jesus must have been tempted to sin if he is truly human, since our human nature is the kind of nature that is tempted to sin: “Jesus’s temptations verify that he genuinely assumed our human condition. Otherwise, he could not sympathize with our weakness,

¹⁷ Weinandy, *In the Likeness*, 130. See also Weinandy, *Jesus: Essays in Christology*, 44n40.

¹⁸ Weinandy, *In the Likeness*, 35.

¹⁹ Weinandy, *In the Likeness*, 21.

²⁰ Weinandy, *In the Likeness*, 18. See also Weinandy, *Jesus the Christ*, 99, where Weinandy argues that Jesus is truly human not only because he “experienced hunger and thirst, sickness and sorrow”; Jesus also experienced “temptation and harassment by Satan.”

²¹ In a review of Weinandy’s book *In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh*, John Grabowski rightly raises the concern that “there is a certain tension in the book between the rhetoric it uses and the reality which it seeks to describe” (*The Thomist* 59 [1995]: 651). Grabowski’s point is that inflated rhetoric sometimes masks rather uncontroversial claims. Grabowski, however, does not acknowledge the significance and controversial character of Weinandy’s claims about the temptations of Jesus, which claims I discuss below. Kelly Kapic raises a similar concern with Weinandy’s rhetoric in “The Son’s Assumption of a Human Nature: A Call for Clarity,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 3, no. 2 (2001): 159–60.

which is due to sin.”²² Furthermore, Christ’s temptations were essential to his salvific accomplishment: “The Son lived an obedient life under the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, fending off all temptation, and thus fulfilling all righteousness.”²³ Weinandy’s assumptions seem to be that one is not human if one is not able to be tempted to sin, and one’s avoidance of personal sin is not significant if one is not tempted to sin.

Weinandy is not satisfied with the traditional claim, exemplified in the thought of Thomas Aquinas, that Jesus experienced only external temptations, but not internal temptations, with internal temptations being those caused by desires within the person. According to Aquinas, internal temptations are caused by concupiscence or the *fomes peccati*, and Christ was not subject to internal temptations because Christ assumed the kind of human nature in which concupiscence or the *fomes peccati* was completely absent.²⁴ Aquinas lays out his position in the following passage:

As the Apostle says (Hebrews 4:15), Christ wished to be “tempted in all things, without sin.” Now temptation which comes from an enemy can be without sin: because it comes about by merely outward suggestion. But temptation which comes from the flesh cannot be without sin, because such a temptation is caused by pleasure and concupiscence; and, as Augustine says (De Civ. Dei xix), “it is not without sin that the flesh desireth against the spirit.” And hence Christ wished to be tempted by an enemy, but not by the flesh.²⁵

According to Aquinas, Christ’s external temptations never actually drew Christ toward sin, but were rather “tempting” in the sense that the object

²² Weinandy, *In the Likeness*, 98.

²³ Weinandy, *In the Likeness*, 149.

²⁴ *Fomes peccati* names the “tinder of sin” or “accelerant of sin,” and as tinder or accelerant, concupiscence is always ready to spread the desire for the less than virtuous. As Aquinas puts it, the *fomes peccati* consists in the “resistance of the sensitive appetite to reason” (*ST* III, q. 15, a. 2, ad 1). In other words, the concept *fomes peccati* names the reality that our initial desires outside of reason (sensitive appetite) are often antithetical to virtue, especially when it comes to initial desires for food, drink, and sex. As the editors of the new English Dominican translation of the *Summa* put it in their glossary entry on *inflammation of sin*; *fomes peccati*: “Man’s passions after original sin are a kind of tinder-box; conditions there are highly inflammable; fire may break out at any moment” (*Summa Theologiae*, vol. 51, 3a. 27–30, ed. Thomas R. Heath, O.P. [New York: Cambridge, 2006]), 120). According to Thomas, those non-rational desires can be shaped but cannot be made fully virtuous this side of heaven.

²⁵ *ST* III, q. 41, a. 1, ad 3.

presented as a temptation could be seen as something to be desired in an unvirtuous way (i.e., “outward suggestion”). The reason Christ did not experience internal temptation has to do with Christ’s perfection of virtue. As Aquinas puts it, the more virtuous one is, the fewer bad desires one has. Because Christ was virtuous to a superlative degree, Christ could not have been drawn to sin through his own internal desires.²⁶ From the perspective of Aquinas, Christ’s truly perfect virtue was incompatible with internal desires—even initial, fleeting ones—for the less than noble.

Weinandy notes that the Tradition has long held that Christ did not experience internal temptations caused by concupiscence or the *fomes peccati*.²⁷ Yet, as Weinandy says, the traditional position seems to entail that “temptations of Jesus . . . pose, however, a unique problem.”²⁸ According to Weinandy, “temptation presupposes enticement. There must be a lure and an attraction.”²⁹ That is, in the case of sinful human beings, “our concupiscence conspires with external stimuli to give rise to temptation.”³⁰ Something must be moving us toward that by which we are tempted. If we were not moved, we would not be tempted. So a temptation that is merely “external” would not seem to be a true temptation. Thus, “Jesus appears to be in a different situation” from us regarding his temptations, since he cannot be moved by internal desire for sin caused by concupiscence.³¹

If one grant’s Weinandy’s definition of temptation, then the Thomistic claim that Jesus experienced only external temptations seems to lead to a significant theological problem. If Jesus was never moved by internal desires for sin, then, Weinandy wonders, perhaps the temptations of Jesus were just a kind of “play acting”: “Does [the lack of concupiscence] suggest that his temptations were less severe than our own, even to the point of being fictitious?”³² It seems that if Jesus lacks concupiscence then Jesus was never really tempted to sin, and thus Jesus was never really human,

²⁶ ST III, q. 15, a. 2, resp.: “But there belongs to the very nature of the *fomes* of sin an inclination of the sensual appetite to what is contrary to reason. And hence it is plain that the more perfect the virtues are in any man, the weaker the *fomes* of sin becomes in him. Hence, since in Christ the virtues were in their highest degree, the *fomes* of sin was nowise in Him.”

²⁷ Weinandy, *In the Likeness*, 18, 52n32, 98–99. See also Weinandy, *Jesus the Christ*, 99. Weinandy, however, does suggest that “the New Testament does not make any distinction between temptations that arise from “outside” and those that originate from “within” a person” (*In the Likeness*, 99).

²⁸ Weinandy, *In the Likeness*, 98.

²⁹ Weinandy, *In the Likeness*, 98.

³⁰ Weinandy, *In the Likeness*, 98.

³¹ Weinandy, *In the Likeness*, 98.

³² Weinandy, *In the Likeness*, 99.

since being human requires being tempted to sin. A Thomistic account of Christ's merely external temptations seems to unwittingly back into a kind of docetic Christology, since it explains away Christ's temptations by excising an essential element of human nature from Christ's person.

To avoid the apparently problematic conclusion of classic Thomism, Weinandy flips the argument on its head. Weinandy suggests that the absence of concupiscence in Jesus makes Jesus's temptations *even more* intense than the temptations of the rest of humanity: "Jesus . . . experienced both the entire allurement of temptation and, because he never conspired with it, endured the undivided assault of Satan's attack."³³ Jesus's temptations are more intense than ours because, according to Weinandy, our concupiscence surprisingly mitigates our temptations: "Our minds and hearts are anesthetized and dulled by our concupiscence and personal sin."³⁴ When a temptation strikes us, "we almost inevitably conspire with the temptation to some degree, teasing it on," and by going along with the temptation, "we never feel its full impact."³⁵ Jesus, however, did not "tease on" his temptations, and as a result, his temptations "confronted him with a sharpness and force we do not experience."³⁶ Although Weinandy does not explain how a person can experience "allurement" without some kind of internal desire, Weinandy is certain that Jesus's temptations were no "mere play acting"; rather, "Satan tempted and attacked him with a ferocity that we never experience."³⁷

Weinandy sees Jesus's obedience through the onslaught of internal (but concupiscence-free) temptations as providing an essential element of Jesus's salvific accomplishment: "Since Jesus was vulnerable to temptation, suffering and death, God's power is manifested more in that [Jesus] was ever faithful and thus raised to the highest glory."³⁸ Had Jesus not experienced temptations, "he could not sympathize with our weakness, which is due to sin."³⁹ Weinandy's approach takes seriously the words of Luke's Gospel that Jesus "grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him" (Luke 2:40). Weinandy's approach has the virtue of presenting Jesus as truly one of us, but someone who is greater than us because he has stared down the devil through the powers he shares

³³ Weinandy, *In the Likeness*, 99.

³⁴ Weinandy, *In the Likeness*, 99.

³⁵ Weinandy, *In the Likeness*, 99.

³⁶ Weinandy, *In the Likeness*, 99.

³⁷ Weinandy, *In the Likeness*, 99.

³⁸ Weinandy, *In the Likeness*, 49.

³⁹ Weinandy, *In the Likeness*, 98.

with us: “He conquered temptation as one of us, as a man who freely lived by the indwelling Spirit.”⁴⁰ His temptations are what rendered his sinlessness significant: “only because Jesus never personally sinned within the confines of our sinful condition did he bring us salvation.”⁴¹ Jesus’s salvific accomplishment is made real precisely because Jesus overcame the temptations that we often succumb to, showing us what the power of God is able to do in a human nature fully in tune with God’s grace.

In his 2018 book *Jesus Becoming Jesus*, Weinandy avoids explicit mention of how the temptations of Jesus relate to his fallen nature. While he does devote a short section to the temptations of Jesus, Weinandy’s theological focus there is on the Son’s filial obedience to the Father, rather than on how those temptations connect to the Son’s fallen human nature.⁴² Yet in the book Weinandy indicates that his earlier work still expresses his views: “For a fuller study of Jesus assuming a humanity from the sinful race of Adam, see my *In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh*.”⁴³ Moreover, Weinandy’s comments in *Jesus Becoming Jesus* continue his more general reliance on the thesis of the fallen human nature of Jesus.⁴⁴ We might wonder how

⁴⁰ Weinandy, *In the Likeness*, 100.

⁴¹ Weinandy, *In the Likeness*, 30.

⁴² Thomas G. Weinandy, OFM, Cap., *Jesus Becoming Jesus: A Theological Interpretation of the Synoptic Gospels* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2018), 104–9.

⁴³ Weinandy, *Jesus Becoming Jesus*, 82 n. 9.

⁴⁴ Consider the following quotes from Weinandy, *Jesus Becoming Jesus*: “In becoming man, the Son of God assumed the flesh of his father Adam, and in that assumption he took upon himself the sin and the iniquity and the guilt of Adam’s posterity. . . . On the one hand, Jesus, the Son of God, in lovingly assuming humankind’s fallen and sin-marred nature, inherited within his own humanity and so the guilt and punishment that inhered within that humanity [*sic*]. On the other hand, by living a holy life without sin, Jesus, as the Spirit-filled Father’s Son, was concurrently empowered, within his very suffering of humankind’s sinful condemnation and deadly punishment, to transfigure or convert that punishment into an act of sacrificial love” (353); “Because Jesus places the saving of the ‘good’ thief within the context of Adam’s sin within the Garden of Eden, he is revealing that he, as the Father’s Suffering Servant/Son, is assuming the sinful history of all humankind; that is, in assuming humankind’s sinful nature, he has assumed, taken into his very humanity, the totality of humankind’s sin” (371); “This dying and rising is the passing over of Jesus’ putting to death his fallen humanity inherited from Adam and his rising into his new glorious humanity as the new Adam, becoming the father of a new humanity within a transformed new Creation” (261); “In freely offering himself in love to his Father on behalf of humankind, Jesus will put to death the sin-enslaved humanity that he inherited from Adam and in doing so free humankind of its sin-enslaved will and its sin-darkened mind” (346). Regarding Jesus’ baptism, Weinandy describes the act as “the putting to death of

Weinandy will treat the connection between the fallen nature of Jesus and the temptation to sin in the two follow-up volumes he has planned.⁴⁵

Julian on the Sinless Christ

Weinandy makes a powerful case on behalf of the Sinless Christ position. While one approach at this point would be to engage Weinandy's thought directly, I think another fruitful method for advancing the discussion is to turn to that ancient dispute between Augustine and Julian. Julian makes quite similar claims to those of the Sinless Christ camp, and his claims are based on similar presumptions about the nature of true humanity and the meaning of salvation. Julian's views bolster the case for the Sinless Christ Christology, while Augustine's responses to Julian draw out the inadequacies of the Sinless Christ view.

Julian of Eclanum was an Italian bishop in the fifth-century Roman Empire.⁴⁶ As the most eloquent defender of what has been called Pelagianism, Julian emphasizes the goodness of human nature and the possibility of the will to naturally achieve the fullness of virtue without grace assisting the will.⁴⁷ Julian is adamant that Christ assumed all elements of human nature, including, perhaps most significantly for our purposes here, the ability to be tempted to sin. What Weinandy and the Tradition call elements of *fallen* human nature—vulnerability to hunger, pain, temptation, suffering, death, and so on—Julian will simply say are elements

his sinful humanity inherited from Adam and the raising up, as the new Adam, of a new, re-created holy humanity that is free from sin and death" (83). Relatedly, a footnote on the nature of the Blessed Virgin Mary's virginity seems to assume Weinandy's earlier views: "First, if Jesus, as the New Adam, assumed a humanity of the sinful race of the first Adam and thereby experienced the effects of that fallen humanity—such as pain, suffering, and death—is it not proper that Mary . . . equally experience pain, suffering, and death? . . . The ultimate issue is this: if Jesus was not immune from the effects of Adam's sin in becoming man, then Mary, from whom he received his humanity, ought not be immune from the effects of Eve's sin" (36n3).

⁴⁵ Weinandy, *Jesus Becoming Jesus*, xxi.

⁴⁶ Julian and Augustine were theological arch-enemies for over a decade, between 418 and 430. For a review of what is at stake in their debate, see Gerald Bonner, "The Nature of the Pelagian Crisis," in *Tolle Lege: Essays on Augustine and on Medieval Philosophy in Honor of Roland J. Teske, S.J.*, ed. Richard C. Taylor, David Twetten, and Michael Wreen (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2011), 61–80; and Mathijs Lamberigts, "Julian of Eclanum: A Plea for a Good Creator," *Augustiniana* 38 (1988): 5–24.

⁴⁷ Pelagians, most notably, did not believe in fallen human nature. On this point Weinandy is very far from the Pelagians, since Weinandy's thesis is that Jesus assumed fallen human nature.

of human nature (Julian does not believe in the fall). While Weinandy and Julian may disagree about the original cause of these elements, they agree that Jesus is not a savior if he does not assume these elements as part of his human nature. Furthermore, Julian argues that Christ would not have been truly human if he was not truly tempted to sin. Like Weinandy, Julian rejects the claim that Jesus was not really tempted because his human nature was importantly different from ours.

Julian's claims about the goodness of human nature and Julian's rejection of the concept of fallen human nature are rooted in fundamental claims about God's role as creator. Julian believes God has designed creation just how it is supposed to be and that the integrity of creation is the same today as it was when Adam was first created.⁴⁸ For Julian, there is no such thing as fallen human nature, precisely because God is so good that he created human nature exactly how God wanted it to be created: "Human beings . . . were formed in every respect so that no one can imagine them made better."⁴⁹ Julian argues that the so-called "consequences of original sin" are in fact just part of God's design of creation: "Everything, then, which human beings have as part of their nature they have obtained as necessary, because they could not be other than they were made to be."⁵⁰ Thus both the good and seemingly bad elements of human nature all come from God: "From God's wisdom they received in their bodies beautiful parts and shameful parts so that they might learn in themselves both modesty and confidence."⁵¹ For Julian, the essence of human nature is found in human nature as it is expressed in history.

Julian's account of goodness and necessity impacts his moral theology,

⁴⁸ See Augustine, *Contra Iul. imp.* 5.15: "God who made everything very good established no creature such that in that kind which has been made it is shown that it could have been made either more suitably or more in accord with reason. Endowed equally with wisdom and omnipotence, he would, of course, not have created anything that a mere human being could have rightly criticized. . . . All elements in absolutely all creatures which are found to be natural were made in the very best way so that any supposed improvement in them is found to be stupid and sacrilegious" (p. 530).

⁴⁹ Augustine, *Contra Iul. imp.* 5.15: "So too, human beings which were included above in the genus of walking animals were formed in every respect so that no one can imagine them made better. From God's wisdom they received in their bodies beautiful parts and shameful parts so that they might learn in themselves both modesty and confidence lest they should be thought ugly if they were completely clothed or become lazy and negligent if they were always completely unclothed" (p. 530).

⁵⁰ Augustine, *Contra Iul. imp.* 5.49 (p. 573).

⁵¹ Augustine, *Contra Iul. imp.* 5.15 (p. 530).

especially on the issue of free will. According to Julian, the capacity for willing is a necessary part of human nature, but any act of willing is only possible, not necessary.⁵² Julian defines free will in the following way: "It consists in the fact that it is possible for human beings either to turn their will to a serious sin or to hold it back from a serious sin without any of the unavoidable compulsion found in natural things."⁵³ Since one's will is never determined, the potential to sin is an essential element of human freedom: according to Julian, "free choice could not exist unless it had the possibility of sinning."⁵⁴ The necessity of freedom entails the possibility of sin. One is not human if one is not the kind of being who can sin.⁵⁵

With this view of the necessary possibility of sin as a precondition for human freedom, it is no surprise that Julian accuses Augustine of holding a docetic view of Christ. Augustine is adamant that Christ was not able to sin, since Christ did not have concupiscence. Julian's response is to say that a Christ without concupiscence is a "cadaver," a human body without a true human soul, a puppet whose strings are pulled by God.⁵⁶ According

⁵² Augustine, *Contra Iul. imp.* 5.47 (p. 572).

⁵³ Augustine, *Contra Iul. imp.* 3.109 (p. 335). Teske suggests in his translation introduction that "Julian comes close to what contemporaries label as a libertarian view of free will" (p. 25).

⁵⁴ Augustine, *Contra Iul. imp.* 5.47 (p. 572).

⁵⁵ Julian of course recognizes that infants, for instance, are not able to will good or evil. In fact, is it because of this that he thinks infants are not guilty of sin (and therefore he rejects Augustine's notion of original sin); see Augustine, *Contra Iul. imp.* 2.24 and 5.63. Julian is certainly able to account for the humanity of infants even if they cannot use their free will.

⁵⁶ Augustine, *Contra Iul. imp.* 4.47 (p. 426). Part of the disagreement between Augustine and Julian may be that Julian has an idiosyncratic account of concupiscence. Julian defines concupiscence in the following way: the genus of concupiscence is the "fire of life" (*ignis vitalis*), and the species of concupiscence is "the movement of the genitals." He goes on to define the mode and excess of concupiscence ("its genus lies in the fire of life, its species in the movement of the genitals, its moderation in the marital act, and its excess in the intemperance of fornication [*huius genus esse in igne vitali, speciem in motu genitali, modum in opere coniugali, excessum in intemperantia fornicandi*]" (*Contra Iul.* 3.13.26 [p. 353]; Latin found in *PL* 44). Julian will go on to say that "the origin of concupiscence is correctly determined to lie in the fire of life, and with that understood, one must attribute the concupiscence of the flesh to that fire through which the life of the flesh is maintained" (*Contra Iul.* 3.13.27). It is this concupiscence "which stimulates the expectation of taste and of the eyes" (*Contra Iul. imp.* 4.26). In response to Augustine's conviction that Christ could not have had concupiscence, Julian concludes that Augustine "want[s] Christ's body to be without senses of both the eyes and of inner organs" (*Contra Iul. imp.* 4.46). To Augustine, this conclusion is a complete *non sequitur*, since he totally rejects Julian's classification of concupis-

to Julian, to say that Christ lacked concupiscence is by implication to say that Christ lacked the fullness of human nature. This claim is essentially connected to Julian's account of free will: without concupiscence, Augustine's Christ "could not experience the desire for sins."⁵⁷ If Augustine's docetic Christ could not experience true temptation, then that Christ is not a true savior. Julian hammers home his point:

Why would it have been worthy of praise to scorn the enticements of the senses if by a gift of nature he was incapable of them? What is admirable in controlling his eyes, if by the help of his flesh they do not wander? What is great about withdrawing the nose from tempting odors, when it is not able to perceive them? What is admirable about the daily maintenance of a strict frugality at meals, if he could not feel their enticements? What difficulty, finally, would there have been in the fast extended to the fortieth day, if hunger could not bother him? What respect would the discipline of the ears deserve for only listening to decent words, if he suffered a natural deafness for indecent ones? But what is the glory of chastity if he lacked virility rather than will power, and if what he was thought to accomplish by the strength of his mind came from the weakness of his members?

. . . As someone more fortunate by birth, not by virtue, he

cence. But for Julian, concupiscence is at the root of all the body's sensations, and somehow this relates to his classification of the genus of concupiscence as the "fire of life." Julian was influenced by Aristotle, and so what might be in the background of Julian's thought is Aristotle's theory of the relation of "vital heat" to the relation between the soul and body. One book on Aristotle seems to suggest there may be a connection. Gad Freudenthal writes about Aristotle's concept of vital heat, "these functions—namely informing matter, i.e. producing and endowing with persistence the homoeomerous parts in the living body and effectuating sexual generation—Aristotle considers in his physiological theory to be brought about by vital heat. . . . Aristotle . . . construes vital heat as formative: where vital heat acts on suitable matter, it endows it with forms; it warms and at the same time also informs. Specifically, in Aristotle's theory, vital heat is the physiological agent bringing about plant and animal reproduction. . . . Aristotle had a theory according to which the cohesion of inanimate substances depends upon heat which inheres in them. . . . [Furthermore,] vital heat is involved in determining the perceptive and intellectual capacities of living beings (the uniquely human *nous* alone excepted)" (*Aristotle's Theory of Material Substance: Heat and Pneuma, Form and Soul* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1995], 3–4). Whether this line of thinking helpfully illuminates Julian's account of concupiscence, it is likely that Julian thinks concupiscence has a more general role in the human body than merely causing desire.

⁵⁷ Augustine, *Contra Iul. imp.* 4.48 (p. 426).

would have lost not only trophies won by his actions, but would have also been pressed with charges of fraud if he said to mortals: Strive for the patience of him who feels nothing, and come through true crosses to the virtues of a false body that suffers nothing. . . . Certainly nothing more irreligious, nothing more wicked can be thought up than these lies.⁵⁸

Because temptation is necessary for true human freedom, a Jesus who could not be tempted would be merely a simulacrum of a human being.

To avoid Augustine's allegedly docetic Christology, Julian suggests that "we are emphatically taught by clear testimony that the righteousness of the man he assumed came, not from the difference of his nature, but from his voluntary action."⁵⁹ From Julian's perspective, Christ's true humanity entails both Christ's true temptations and Christ's true virtue: "I proclaim that all holiness remained in him because of the goodness of his mind, not because of a defect of his flesh" (i.e., lacking concupiscence).⁶⁰ Were Christ unable to be tempted, he would not be truly human and would not be our moral exemplar: "Whom would he have presented to human beings for their imitation, if the nature of a strange flesh set him apart and if the difference of his substance undermined the severity of his teaching?"⁶¹ Without the concupiscence necessary for moral virtue to be meaningful, Christ is just an alien actor in a human play.⁶²

⁵⁸ Augustine, *Contra Iul. imp.* 4.49–50 (p. 427–29).

⁵⁹ Augustine, *Contra Iul. imp.* 4.84 (p. 449).

⁶⁰ Augustine, *Contra Iul. imp.* 4.54 (p. 432).

⁶¹ Augustine, *Contra Iul. imp.* 4.86 (p. 451).

⁶² Julian's argument has found more than a few followers, and James Wetzel articulates the case in Julian's favor: "It makes a certain amount of home-spun sense to imagine Christ as a moral exemplar, someone who, in his humanity, has the same basic nature as other human beings, but who has worked that basic nature heroically. Augustine, by contrast, seems to insist perversely on an unintelligible difference in humanities: Christ has a human nature, but not a human nature that any other human being can hope to share fully" ("Response III—The Humanity of God," *Augustinian Studies* 36, no.1 [2005]: 219–26, at 221). It is not clear whether Wetzel would endorse Julian's views. Teske is sympathetic to Julian's Christology: "Julian certainly seems to have a strong argument when he claims that the Augustinian Christ cannot be a credible teacher or model of chastity if he had none of the urges and inclinations of other males. Hence, Julian presents us with a Christ who is, in some ways, a much more attractive teacher and example of the virtues, and especially of chastity, than the Christ of Augustine" (Roland Teske, S.J., "St. Augustine on the Humanity of Christ and Temptation," in *Augustine of Hippo: Philosopher, Exegete, and Theologian: A Second Collection of Essays* [Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2009], 233).

Clearly someone like Weinandy would reject Julian's claims about the natural integrity of human nature: Weinandy believes in fallen human nature. But what Julian and those who today advocate a Sinless Christ Christology share is the commitment to the claim that a Christ who was not truly tempted is not truly human and not a moral exemplar for us. Christ must share in all aspects of our nature if he is to be our savior, and our human nature sets the definition of what it means to be truly human. A Jesus who is differently human is a Jesus who is not human. Furthermore, Christ's possession of our nature and its temptations made it possible for Jesus to be the perfect example of virtue precisely because his virtue was tested and he passed the test. This is a very strong case for the salvific importance of Christ's tempted human nature, and in the rest of the essay, I let Augustine show us why this case does not succeed.

What is Not Saved is Not Assumed

As Christopher Beeley has recently shown us, patristic theologians tend to emphasize the close connections between salvation, Incarnation, and human transformation, and those connections are traditionally organized under the heading of divinization: "The divinizing purpose of the Incarnation is a constant refrain in patristic Christology. . . . Christ's saving work restores the created process of divinization which will be fulfilled in the age to come, and salvation is the restoration of our creationary-eschatological trajectory of divinization. Christ's identity as God-made-man thus repairs the breach between humanity and God."⁶³ If we take the concept of divinization in its general sense, as another name for the process of our "creationary-eschatological" transformation, then it is fair to say that an emphasis on divinization is especially apparent in Augustine's later works.⁶⁴

⁶³ Christopher A. Beeley, "Christ and Human Flourishing in Patristic Theology," *Pro Ecclesia* 25, no. 2 (2016): 137–38. See also Khaled Anatolios, "The Soteriological Grammar of Conciliar Christology," *The Thomist* 78 (2014): 165–88. Anatolios argues that the four traditional Christological councils advance a kind of normative soteriological "grammatical system" in which the core claim is that salvation is "nothing less than the deification of our humanity" (187). Those who would say there is an inherent tension in the Chalcedonian understanding of the two natures of Christ, such that our salvation is imperiled the more Christ's human nature is impacted by the divine nature, mistakenly overemphasize the purity of the two natures to the neglect of "the supreme mystery that human nature was united with the divine nature in a single *hypostasis* without impairment to the integrity of either nature. It is the integrity of the two natures *within their union in Christ*, not the integrity of the natures as such, that has any value with reference to the good news of Jesus Christ" (179).

⁶⁴ The most significant recent contribution to the literature on Augustine's employ-

For Augustine, salvation in Christ is essentially a process of transformation, wherein the regrettable elements of human nature—especially our propensity to temptation—are purified as our nature becomes more truly human by being more closely united to God through the Spirit, and we are prepared to be the kind of creatures who can enjoy life together with God eternally.

If the governing principle for the Sinless Christ view is “what is not assumed is not saved,” I think it is fair to say a related but distinct principle is at the foundation of Augustine’s thought: “What is not saved is not assumed.” While the Sinless Christ view emphasizes that Christ is truly “Adam,” Augustine emphasizes that, in the words of *Gaudium et Spes* §22, Christ is the *novissimus* Adam, the ever-new Adam, someone who is more truly human than the rest of us: “God, therefore, assumed our nature, that is, the rational soul and the flesh of Christ the man, and he assumed it in a singularly marvelous and marvelously singular manner.”⁶⁵ Augustine wants us to recognize the singularly marvelous singularity that is Emmanuel, God with us. To be divinized is to be Jesus Christ.

Augustine’s divinely human Christ fits neatly within the broader Augustinian understanding of the teleological orientation of human nature. For Augustine, human beings are good but corruptible because they lack the perfection God has planned for them. God’s nature is “unchangeable and immutable.”⁶⁶ Creation, on the other hand, “is mutable because it is not the nature of God.”⁶⁷ This “mutability” did not originally devolve into corruption because of the integrating grace of the

ment of the concept of divinization is David Meconi’s book *The One Christ*. Meconi aims to show that divinization is at the heart of Augustine’s theology, and especially Augustine’s soteriology, with the salvific goal being human incorporation into the life of Christ through corporate union with Christ (*totus Christus*); see David Vincent Meconi, SJ, *The One Christ: St. Augustine’s Theology of Deification* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2013). In a review of Meconi’s book, Jonathan Teubner rightly points out that Meconi does not adequately connect the investigation of Augustine’s views of deification to Augustine’s eschatology (Review of *The One Christ: Saint Augustine’s Theology of Deification*, by David Meconi, *Reviews in Religion and Theology* 21, no. 2 [2014]: 245–46).

⁶⁵ *De correptione et gratia* 30, in *Answer to the Pelagians IV: To the Monks of Hadrumetum and Provence*, trans. Roland J. Teske, S.J., ed. John E. Rotelle, O.S.A., WSA I/26 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1998), 129.

⁶⁶ Augustine, *Contra Iul. imp.* 5.42 (p. 567). See also 5.44 (p. 569), 5.25 (p. 549), and 5.60 (p. 585).

⁶⁷ Augustine, *Contra Iul. imp.* 5.25 (p. 549).

Garden of Eden, sacramentally provided through the Tree of Life.⁶⁸ While there were no tensions between Adam's body and soul, even the integrating grace provided in the garden did not make Adam perfect, for Adam himself would have been elevated into a life in which his body would be informed not just by his soul, but by the Spirit.⁶⁹ That is, Adam would have experienced what we call resurrection, though he would not have needed to die first. While Adam was originally able to not die if he did not sin, Adam, if he had remained obedient, would have moved to a state in which he would "not be able to die" and would "no longer be able to sin."⁷⁰ That is, even the original Adam did not experience human nature in its fullest sense. Without the perfect integration of a Spirit-informed personhood (body and soul) that cannot sin and cannot die, Adam lacks what he needs to be human in the truest sense. From Augustine's perspective, the process of teleological transformation of human nature is built into God's original plan for creation.

Augustine's claims about the fall are a consequence of this broader vision for human nature. The Augustinian concept of original sin is not primarily a genealogical theory, but a teleological theory. Whatever the "cause" of our lack of perfection that plays out in disordered desires, sin, and death, the significance of the "consequences of original sin" is found in the contrast between us now and the future selves we hope to become. Adam lost the integrating grace that made him provisionally rightly ordered, and as a result of the loss of that grace, human nature has descended into disorder.⁷¹ The purpose of salvation is to bring us closer to the original perfection of human nature that God has always planned: "For the first grace brought it about that the man had righteousness if he had willed to; the second, therefore, is more powerful, for it makes one even to will so strongly and to love with such ardor that by the will of the spirit one conquers the pleasure of the flesh which has contrary desires."⁷²

⁶⁸ See Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 13.20: "This condition was granted them by the wondrous grace of God, by means of the tree of life which stood in the midst of Paradise along with the forbidden tree" (*The City of God Against the Pagans*, ed. and trans. R. W. Dyson [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998], 567). On the centrality of the Tree of Life, which Augustine thinks was a real tree, see: *De genesi ad litteram* 8.4.8, 8.5.11, 9.3.6, and 11.32.42; *De civ.* 13.23 (p. 570); *Contra Iul. imp.* 6.30 (p. 690); *Contra Iul.* 4.14.69 (p. 419).

⁶⁹ Augustine, *De gen. litt.* 9.3.6 and 9.10.18; *Contra Iul. imp.* 6.30 (p. 691) and 6.39 (p. 710–11); *De civ.* 13.20 (p. 566).

⁷⁰ Augustine, *Contra Iul. imp.* 6.30 (p. 691).

⁷¹ Augustine, *De civ.* 13.13 (p. 555).

⁷² Augustine, *De corrept.* 31 (p. 130).

This transformation will find its perfection in the resurrection: "Those men who belong to the grace of God . . . will be so endued with spiritual bodies that they will never again sin or die."⁷³

From the Augustinian perspective, the advocates of a Sinless Christ judge Christ's humanity according to a standard set by a fundamentally shortsighted account of human nature. Julian expresses the basic principle of the Sinless Christ advocates: "A different nature could not furnish an example. . . . Remove the basis of the example, and the basis of the price which he became for us will also be removed."⁷⁴ Augustine, rather than taking our nature as the standard for true humanity, invites us to marvel at the way Christ's human nature shows us the inadequacies of our own: "The nature of Christ as man was not different from our nature, though it was different from our defect. He was born as human without defect unlike all other human beings."⁷⁵ To lack our defects is not to have a truncated or "generic" human nature, but to have a better human nature. To be divinely human is not to be less than human, but to be more than merely human: "With regard to that life by which we ought to imitate Christ, the fact that each of us is a human being, while he is God, contributes very much to the difference [between Christ and us]. After all, a human being cannot be as righteous as the man who is also God."⁷⁶ Christ comes not to share in our disharmony and disintegration, but rather to model for us how we might someday experience the full harmony and integration that Christ experiences: "With this example of perfection set before us, each imitator ought to aim at this: to strive and to long not to have at all the desires of the flesh which the apostle forbids us to carry out. For in that way we can by daily progress lessen those desires which we will not have at all when salvation is complete."⁷⁷ To think that Christ has to share in our struggles in order to save us is like thinking a doctor has to be infected with an illness in order to cure it in someone else.⁷⁸

Because Christ is the model of perfect humanity, he need not—indeed cannot—be internally tempted to sin. Augustine is certain that Christ did not have bad desires or internal temptations in any sense: "The flesh of Christ . . . had nothing that was unsubdued, nor did it in any way resist

⁷³ Augustine, *De civ.* 12.24 (p. 580).

⁷⁴ Quoted by Augustine in *Contra Iul.* 5.15.57–58 (p. 468).

⁷⁵ Augustine, *Contra Iul.* 5.15.57 (p. 468).

⁷⁶ Augustine, *Contra Iul.* 5.15.47 (p. 468).

⁷⁷ Augustine, *Contra Iul. imp.* 4.57 (p. 435).

⁷⁸ Crisp uses a similar image in *Divinity and Humanity*, 107.

the spirit so that the spirit had to subdue it.”⁷⁹ While Christ chose to assume mortality, he did not assume the disharmony between flesh and spirit.⁸⁰ While Weinandy and Julian seem to think that Christ cannot be our savior unless he undergoes the same temptations we face, Augustine adopts precisely the opposite assumption: “If Christ had in his nature this concupiscence which is not something good, he would not have healed it in ours.”⁸¹ Disordered desires and temptations do not express human nature, but reveal a lack of human nature in its truest sense.⁸² It is because of Christ’s harmony that he is able to be a model of perfection for us: “In order to offer us an example by his suffering, he endured no evils of his own, but bore those of others; on our behalf he endured suffering, but not evil desires.”⁸³

Now that the broader perspective of Augustine’s argument is in place, we can better understand his objections to Julian’s account of the Sinless Christ. Those objections touch on the soteriological, moral, and eschatological implications of Julian’s argument. The first problem is that the Sinless Christ account renders Christ a heroic but inessential figure in our salvation. A Christology like Julian’s that rejects any significant difference in Christ’s human nature seems to be a kind of adoptionism: if Christ is able to save us because of the powers he shares with us, we might as well have saved ourselves. Julian’s Christology suggests, as Augustine points out, that there could be many Christs, and Jesus of Nazareth “turns out to be the only one because of the laziness of the human will, though there could have been more, if human beings had willed it.”⁸⁴ If Christ’s salvific powers are based in qualities we also possess, then Christ won trophies for his actions only because we did not try hard enough. Julian’s Christ is no longer named Emmanuel, but rather Eudaimon, the Virtuous Man.

The second problem Augustine highlights is that Julian’s Christology

⁷⁹ Augustine, *Contra Iul. imp.* 4.57 (p. 435).

⁸⁰ Augustine, *Contra Iul.* 5.15.54 (p. 467).

⁸¹ Augustine, *Contra Iul.* 5.15.58 (p. 468).

⁸² One challenge to my reading of Augustine comes from Dominic Keech in his book *The Anti-Pelagian Christology of Augustine of Hippo*, 396–430 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). Keech argues that Augustine falls prey to similar problems that plague Apollinarianism. The core premise of Keech’s criticism tracks the same premise adopted by the advocates of Sinless-Christ Christology: “Augustine’s word appears . . . to undermine and deconstruct the humanity assumed, where humanity is defined as essentially sinful in bondage to the flesh” (183). Keech’s presumption is that to be human is to be fallen, so Christ must adopt fallen human nature in every respect if he is to be truly human.

⁸³ Augustine, *Contra Iul.* 5.15.55 (p. 467).

⁸⁴ Augustine, *Contra Iul. imp.* 4.84 (p. 450).

is rooted in a false understanding of virtue. Julian claims that virtue is not virtue unless it is able to overcome obstacles and temptations: "This good which is called virtue could not have had its special character, unless it were voluntary. But it would not have been voluntary if it had had the necessity for the good. . . . In order, then, that responsibility for the good might be established, the possibility of evil was admitted."⁸⁵ This principle suggests that Christ must have been tempted, since he is the pinnacle of virtue: "What is admirable in controlling his eyes, if by the help of his flesh they do not wander?"⁸⁶ The presumption that one cannot be virtuous without undergoing temptation suggests that at least the possibility of temptation, and perhaps even actual temptation, is essential to virtue. One could reasonably conclude, as Augustine points out, that the most virtuous must be those who have overcome the most significant temptations. The logic of Julian's account seems to entail, as Augustine says, that "Christ ought to have been most filled with desires in his flesh, just as he was the greatest of all human beings in his virtue."⁸⁷ Virtue in Julian's system is fundamentally will power, and Augustine seems to be right that, according to Julian's logic, one demonstrates more will power the more one is tempted.

The presumption that Christ's temptations are essential to his true virtue fundamentally conflicts with Augustine's claim that virtue integrates one's experience of the world. If sin is evil, then the desire for sin is also evil, and even the initial impulse or temptation toward those desires and their corresponding actions is also fundamentally problematic.⁸⁸ While Julian assumes that sin is merely a bad act of the will from which one could have refrained, Augustine has a more expansive notion of sin and virtue. To be without "sin," to be truly virtuous on Augustine's account, is to be without any temptations or desires for the irrational or the less than noble: "In that final peace . . . our nature will be healed by immortality and incorruption. Then, it will have no vices, and nothing at all, in ourselves or in any other, will be in conflict with any one of us. Thus, there will be no

⁸⁵ Augustine, *Contra Iul. imp.* 4.61 (p. 587).

⁸⁶ Augustine, *Contra Iul. imp.* 4.49 (p. 427).

⁸⁷ Augustine, *Contra Iul. imp.* 4.49 (p. 428). As we have seen, Weinandy draws exactly the conclusion that Augustine argues against: "Temptation confronted [Jesus] with a sharpness and force that we do not experience" (Weinandy, *In the Likeness*, 99). Although Weinandy attempts to hold on to the traditional claim that Jesus did not experience the *fomes peccati*, it is difficult to see much room between his and Julian's claims about the necessity and extremity of temptation for the true humanity of Jesus.

⁸⁸ Augustine, *Contra Iul. imp.* 4.41 (p. 420).

need for reason to govern the vices, because there will be no vices.”⁸⁹ For Augustine, if it is good to conquer one’s bad desires, it is even better to not have bad desires and to not even have the impulse toward those desires.⁹⁰ This is what Augustine means by the distinction between being able to not sin (*posse non peccare*) and being unable to sin (*non posse peccare*): “It is, after all, a lesser good to be able not to sin, but a greater one not to be able to sin.”⁹¹ We are rightly jealous of Christ’s human nature, because he lives out what we hope for: “Here we receive through the pledge of the Spirit the strength to both fight and to win, but there we shall enjoy ineffable and everlasting peace without any external or internal enemy.”⁹²

For Augustine, human flourishing is not overcoming struggle to win trophies. Human flourishing is immortality, and “immortality is integration: our whole being . . . integrated according to the love by which Christ became incarnate.”⁹³ For Augustine, the salvation begun in baptism will not be complete until we experience this integration fully.⁹⁴ The soul “grows in holiness, after all, when it lessens more and more those carnal desires to which it does not consent.”⁹⁵ The life of grace now is the beginning of this process of salvific integration: “Now [grace] completely renews human beings in setting them free from absolutely all their sins, but not in setting them free from all their evils and from the corruption of mortality with which the body now weighs down the mind.”⁹⁶ But, in the future, “grace makes human beings completely new when it brings them to the immortality of the body and to full happiness.”⁹⁷

Perhaps the most troubling implication of the Sinless Christ model of Christology is that it obscures the meaning of the Resurrection. If salvation requires God to become incarnate in the same “enfeebled” nature we inhabit, then it is not clear how the Resurrection is in continuity with human nature. If an Impeccable Jesus does not seem to be truly human,

⁸⁹ *De civ.* 13.27 (p. 963).

⁹⁰ Augustine, *Contra Iul. imp.* 4.49 (p. 428).

⁹¹ Augustine, *Contra Iul. imp.* 5.58 (p. 581).

⁹² Augustine, *Contra Iul. imp.* 2.40 (p. 223).

⁹³ John Cavadini, “Ideology and Solidarity in Augustine’s City of God,” in *Augustine’s City of God: A Critical Guide*, ed. James Wetzel (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 99.

⁹⁴ See Augustine *Contra Iul.* 6.13.40: “But there remains that which grace must make perfect in this whole structure, as long as the flesh has desires opposed to the spirit so that it arouses sinful impulses which must be reined in” (p. 502; italics removed).

⁹⁵ Augustine, *Contra Iul.* 6.14.41 (p. 502).

⁹⁶ Augustine, *Contra Iul.* 6.13.40 (p. 501).

⁹⁷ Augustine, *Contra Iul.* 6.13.40 (p. 501).

how is the resurrected Jesus truly human? On the logic of the Sinless Christ model, resurrected human nature involves merely an “ahistorical sameness of species,” since who we are now will no longer be who we are then, because our essentially enfeebled nature will have been completely done away with. On this view, if the ability to be tempted to sin is essential to our nature, then to eradicate our temptations to sin—and our more fundamental tendency to corruption ending in death—is to do away with our essential nature. The logic of the Sinless Christ model implicitly projects our tempted and disordered nature forward into eternal life, much in the same way Julian unwittingly projected death and disorder back into the Garden of Eden, suggesting that God designed those evils into our nature.⁹⁸

The claim that an impeccable Jesus is a theological problem is falsely premised on the implicit assumption that salvation has very little to do with the integration of the Resurrection. For Augustine, the divinely human virtue of Jesus is not something to balk at or question. The perfect virtue of Jesus is something that should cause our own hearts to burn within us (Luke 24:32). The perfect virtue of Jesus offers a preview of what we hope to become in the end: “God will rule man, and the soul will rule the body; and the delight and effortlessness with which we obey in that final peace will be as great as our happiness in living and reigning. There, for each and every man, this condition will be eternal, and its eternity will be assured; and so the peace of this blessedness, or the blessedness of this peace, will be the Supreme Good.”⁹⁹

Conclusion

The argument of this essay has been that the Sinless Christ Christology advanced by thinkers such as Weinandy is prefigured by Julian of Eclanum and shown to be inadequate by Augustine. As we have seen, the general problem with a Sinless Christ Christology, with its assumption that temptation is essential to true human nature, is that it fundamentally neglects the process of divinization at the heart of Christian soteriology. More specifically, a Sinless Christ Christology makes Christ a heroic but inessential figure in our salvation, turns virtue and freedom into mere willpower contingent on the ability to sin, and renders the Resurrection an act of violence to human nature.

⁹⁸ One of Augustine’s constant objections to Julian’s theology is that Julian roots all the regrettable elements of human nature in the Garden of Eden. See, for example, Augustine, *Contra Iul. imp.* 3.154 (p. 353–54).

⁹⁹ *De civ.* 19.27 (p. 964).

Understanding Christ as impeccable, on the other hand, is a way of recognizing the teleological trajectory of human nature that is at the core of Christianity. Certainly there are many interesting issues to think through regarding how Christ lived out his human nature, especially how he experienced the passions in a way that was both truly human and yet truly reflective of his distinctive nature.¹⁰⁰ But what we should not forget is that Christ is a person constituted by the confluence of full humanity and full divinity, and this confluence provides him a humanity that anticipates the salvific transformation we all hope for.¹⁰¹ N.V

¹⁰⁰ A peer-reviewer notes that some readers may be concerned that Augustine's Christology seems to sacrifice Christ's true humanity, whereas, for example, the Alexandrian school seems to preserve both Christ's divinity and true experience of the fullness of humanity. Augustine is certainly not opposed to the claim that Christ underwent much of the effects of "fallen human nature." Yet Augustine's emphasis is that we must see human nature in its fullest perspective, taking into account the eschatological perfection of our nature and the existential meaning of sin, rather than seeing our merely fallen nature as the only way to be truly human and sin merely as bad acts from which we could have refrained. This focus on bigger-picture issues leads him to emphasize the ways in which Christ's human nature gives us a glimpse of how our nature will be transformed. On the distinctive views of the Alexandrian school, the reviewer points to the following text from Cyril of Alexandria, which is worthy of consideration: Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John*, vol. 2, trans. David R. Maxwell, Ancient Christian Texts (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), 105–6.

¹⁰¹ For further thoughts on the relation between moral theology, contemporary Christology, and Augustine's dispute with Julian—along with recent papal reflections on the intersection between Christology and moral theology—see my recent article, Joshua M. Evans, "Morality, Human Nature, and the Sacred Heart of Jesus," *The Journal of Moral Theology* 6, no. 2 (2017): 70–86.