# MBC MEN'S STUDY

# **LEADERSHIP 8: THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST**

#### **CLASS 5: THE INCARNATION OF JESUS, PART III**

Before getting into the book, here is the layout of the framework for our five-month men's study class.

- August 13<sup>th</sup>: Introduction and why this Matters
- September 24<sup>th</sup>: Jesus, before time began.
- October 29<sup>th</sup>: The Incarnate Christ I
- November 26<sup>th</sup>: The incarnate Christ II
- December 10<sup>th</sup>: The will and temptations of Christ

#### PURPOSE OF THIS 5 MONTH CLASS

- Why do we want to talk about Christ?
- Why should we desire to know more and more about who Jesus was and who He is now?
- What we do with the doctrine of Christ has eternal ramifications.
- We can't believe in the wrong Christ and think that it is the right way to heaven.
- We can't seek to please the wrong Christ and think that we are living in the right way.
- If we want to know that our salvation is secure and that we are going in the right direction, we must know who Jesus is and what He did.
- If we get this wrong, our entire life can be going in the wrong direction and pointing others in the wrong way as well.
- When we know who Jesus is and what He has done for us, it empowers us to live in such a way that brings honor and glory to God.
- When we live like this, it is going to benefit our own walk with the Lord and all of those around us.
- The center of our faith and the source of our hope isn't a creed, an idea, an experience, a church, or a philosophy. It's a person: Jesus the Messiah.
- Knowing him isn't only the beginning of the Christian life it's the whole Christian life.
- As believers, we know Jesus personally, which means Christology is deeply practical.
- The more that you about Christ and what Christ did for you, the more you are going to desire to live for Him. We have been given more resources and promises from being *in Christ* than we can imagine.
- We need to understand these things in order to live a life which brings honor and glory to Christ.

#### HOW HAVE WE GOTTEN HERE...A QUICK REVIEW

- What does the Bible say about being "in Christ"?
- What does the Bible say about who Christ is and why is it important that we know the truth from the Bible?
- False teachings and how the church combated them throughout the centuries.
- The importance of getting our belief about Christ right.
  - o This is foundational for our basic understanding of Christianity.
- The preexistence of Christ (or Christ in eternity past)
- His eternality from the OT and NT
- His deity from the OT and NT
- His attributes are the same as the Father's in the Bible.
- His incarnation, Christ putting on human flesh.
- His virgin birth, the infinite value of His unique birth.
  - o This was prophesied in the OT and came to pass in the NT.
- The virgin birth is a tier one doctrine and necessary for salvation.
- He was both fully man and God; not a mixture of the two.
- Last time was about the Kenosis
  - o The self-emptying of Christ by putting on human flesh.
- The hypostatic union and the necessity of Christ being fully man and fully God.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

- Before going into the work of Christ, it is important to find out a few things.
- When Christ was accomplishing His works on earth, was it through His human will or the will of the Father? In other words, did Christ have two wills or just one?
- Another very important aspect of the person of Christ, is that He is able to sympathize with us.
- **Hebrews 4:15-16** "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."
- This is a very important point of discussion within broader Christianity. If Christ can truly sympathize with us in our weakness and He has been tempted in all things...could Christ have sinned?
- If He could not have sinned, then does He truly understand us in our temptation?
- If He could have sinned, does that mean that there was something in Him which was not perfect and therefore not of God?

- As we finish our look at the incarnation of Christ, we are going to tackle some of these questions and find out what the Bible has to say.
- The reason this is so important is because the author of Hebrews says that because of Christ's ability to sympathize with us, we should therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace.
- If there is no real sympathy from Christ, then the command to draw near is really an empty platitude.

#### THE INCARNATION OF THE SON OF GOD

- The incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ is the central fact of Christianity. Upon it the whole superstructure of Christian theology depends.<sup>1</sup>
- The hypostatic union of Christ has been at the center of the church and Christian debate for centuries.
  - o "Hypostatic union" sounds fancy in English, but it's actually a simple term. Hypostatic means personal. The hypostatic union is the personal union of Jesus's two natures. Jesus has two complete natures: one fully human and one fully divine. What the doctrine of the hypostatic union teaches is that these two natures are united in one person in the God-man. Jesus is not two persons. He is one person. The hypostatic union is the joining (mysterious though it be) of the divine and the human in the one person of Jesus.<sup>2</sup>
- The main question is usually centered around the *what*...what happened when Jesus put on flesh?
- We have answered many of those questions but there are some which still remain.
- What would have happened to His will if He was doing the will of the Father? What happened when He was tempted to sin...could Jesus have sinned?

#### DID JESUS HAVE A SINGLE WILL OR TWO?

- We need to start with the age-old question about the will of Jesus.
- There is considerable debate over whether Jesus had one or two wills. The question actually turns on whether self-consciousness and self-determination reside in the nature or in the personality.<sup>3</sup>
- Does Jesus have one will since He is one person? Or does He have two wills because He is truly God and truly man?<sup>4</sup>
- These are the areas that we must really think about so that we do not get into heresy.
- We know that Jesus is a person, meaning that He is one. But, we also know He's truly man and truly God.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> John F. Walvoord, Jesus Christ Our Lord (Galaxie Software, 2008), 96.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-is-the-hypostatic-union

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Rolland McCune, A Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity: The Doctrines of Man, Sin, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, vol. 2 (Allen Park, MI: Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009), 148.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> https://www.ligonier.org/podcasts/5-minutes-in-church-history-with-stephen-nichols/monothelitism

#### **Monothelitism**

- Monothelitism was a heresy in the early church that was dealt with at the Sixth Ecumenical Council. The word *thelos* means "will." So, a Monothelite is one who believes that Jesus had one will. Monothelitism was a challenge to the true humanity of Jesus because His human will was totally swallowed up and did not exist because of divine will.<sup>5</sup>
- The monothelite teaching emerged as essentially a compromise position. The miaphysitists could agree that Jesus possessed two natures if He only possessed one will, and some Chalcedonians could agree that Jesus had one will if He had two natures. The monothelite position was promulgated by Sergius I of Constantinople and spread under Pope Honorius I.<sup>6</sup>
  - Miaphysitism... Jesus' deity and humanity are united in one nature, the two being united without separation, confusion or alteration.
  - This is the position that states Jesus is one person of one substance with only one, fully integrated nature that is both fully human and fully divine.
    - This term is from the Greek mia for "one" and physis for "nature."

#### **Dyothelitism**

- For centuries, dyothelitism is the term the church has used to refer to the two wills of Christ the one divine will he (eternally) shares as God, with his Father (and the Spirit), and a natural human will that is his by virtue of the incarnation and his taking on our full humanity. We speak of two wills in the one unique person of the God-man.<sup>8</sup>
- The battle for his human will came last and was the most sophisticated. The conflict, prompted by political intrigue, raged in the seventh century and led to a sixth ecumenical council in 680–681, the third at Constantinople.
  - When the question was freshly pressed on the church in the seventh century, the explanation that emerged as most compelling, and enduring, was that of Maximus the Confessor (born 580) even though he did not live to see the triumph. At the time, dyothelitism was not politically expedient to the emperor Constans's ambitions to reunite Christian regions against the threat of Islam. Maximus was arrested and exiled, and he died in exile eight years later at age 81. Seven years later, Constans was assassinated. Soon the imperial attitude changed, and twenty years after Maximus's death, his theology carried the day at the ecumenical council.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> https://www.gotquestions.org/Monothelitism.html

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> https://www.gotquestions.org/miaphysitism-dyophysitism.html

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/your-will-be-done

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Ibid.

## Why does this matter?

- There are numerous texts which could be cited to definitively prove that Christ possessed both a divine and a human will.
- **John 6:38**, Jesus declares, "I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me."
- In **Matthew 26:39**, Christ says, "My father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."
- And as Jesus declares in **John 10:17-18**, "The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."
- Clearly, these texts show the divine will which Christ had, in common with the Father and, in contrast, the human will which He subjected to the will of His Father.
- To deny this is to deny what Christ was saying. Furthermore, it is to deny that Christ was fully human.
  - O Monothelitism was declared a heresy and the reason it was declared a heresy is because the church concluded a will is to an extent an essential part of a person's nature. If Jesus didn't have a human will as well as the divine will, it would be very difficult to see him as truly and fully human.<sup>10</sup>

## In summary

• While the human nature that the Son of God received in his incarnation allows him to experience humanity, he does not exist as two persons. **He is but one person with two natures**—the divine and the human. Christ's deity effects the individualization (involving character and personality) of his human nature. God the Father prepared Christ's physical human body (Heb. 10:5–7; see Ps. 40:6–8) for the incarnation so that the Son of God might do the will of the Father. **Each nature possesses its own will.** 11

#### COULD JESUS HAVE SINNED? WAS HE ABLE TO SIN?

- I think this is important to cover before we get into the works of Christ.
- We can all agree that Jesus was without sin.
  - Hebrews 4:15 "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses,
     but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, <u>yet without sin</u>."
- This means the real debate is not *if* Jesus sinned, but rather *could* Jesus have sinned.
- If Jesus has a human will, does it mean that He could have sinned? We know that He had His divine will and that in His divinity He could not sin.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> https://www.ligonier.org/posts/does-jesus-have-one-or-two-wills

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> MacArthur and Mayhue, eds., Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 264.

- There is a debate between theologians over whether Christ could have sinned or not. All Bible-believing thinkers agree that Christ did not sin. The question, however, is whether He could have sinned.<sup>12</sup>
- Christ's impeccability has been widely affirmed throughout the history of the church and defended by most of the leading Reformed systematicians. In the last 150 years, however, many theologians have rejected the idea that Christ was unable to sin, arguing instead that peccability is necessary for Christ's temptations to be genuine and for Christ to sympathize with his people.<sup>13</sup>
- There are two main views: *Peccable* and *impeccable*.

#### First view: Peccable

- This can be defined as meaning 'liable to sin or error'. To add a greater depth to this definition, the same resource further specifies that peccable can have the aforementioned meaning, plus 'vulnerable to temptation'.<sup>14</sup>
- These two definitions can actually mean something relatively different. Liable to sin seems as if it is something that is possible and even likely to happen. Being vulnerable to something gives nothing away in terms of the likelihood of it occurring.
- This is often referred to as Jesus was able to sin but without sin.

# **Second view: Impeccable**

- Second, impeccability. The same resource defines this as either "the quality of being without an error or fault" or "the quality of being exempt from sin or incapable of sinning." Again, the difference between not being liable to sin and being incapable of sinning is slight in wording, but great in meaning.<sup>15</sup>
- Simply put, Christ was not able to sin.

### Why does this doctrine matter?

• Here we see the nearly unbearable weight of this doctrine upon human understanding. If we were to say that the divine nature canceled out any ability to sin, that would be the heresy of Eutychianism, mixing the natures. If we said that he never did possess any real human inclinations but only a human body, we'd be guilty of Apollinarianism. If we claimed that "his human side" could sin, we would be guilty of Nestorianism—dividing the person into two. If we claimed that Jesus the Man could sin and only avoid sin because of God's presence, we'd be close to Ebionism, denying the divinity of Christ. 16

impeccability/#:~:text=The%20doctrine%20of%20impeccability%20states,Christ%20due%20to%20sinful%20desires.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Rolland McCune, A Systematic Theology of Biblical Christianity: The Doctrines of Man, Sin, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, vol. 2 (Allen Park, MI: Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009), 149.

<sup>13</sup> https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/theological-primer-

<sup>14</sup>https://www.google.com/search?q=peccability&rlz=1C1GCEU\_enUS995US995&oq=peccability&gs\_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUyBggAE\_ EUYOTIGCAEQRRg80gEIMjA4MWowajeoAgCwAgA&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8

<sup>15</sup> https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/impeccability#:~:text=Definitions%20of%20impeccability,of%20conformity%20to%20social%20expectations

<sup>16</sup> https://g3min.org/the-doctrine-of-impeccability-a-test-case-for-the-hypostatic-union/

- First, Christ's impeccability can be deduced from Scripture. If Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever (Heb. 13:8), he must be unchanging in his holiness. A mutable holiness would be inconsistent with the omnipotence of Christ and irreconcilable with the fact that Christ is the author and finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2).<sup>17</sup>
- **Second**, Christ's impeccability is tied to the constitution of his person. To be sure, Christ was empowered by the Spirit with extraordinary grace, but Christ was not only strengthened to resist temptation, but the presence of the divine Logos also made it infallibly certain that Christ would resist. We must not think that Christ's two natures operated independently of each other, as if they were rival parties or two sources of knowing and doing veiled one from the other.
- **Third**, impeccability is consistent with temptation. One of the reasons for the assumption of a human nature by the Logos is so that the Logos might be tempted as a man and be able to sympathize with men (Heb. 2:14-18). If we elevate Christ's impeccability in a way that casts aside his temptability, we are out of step with Scripture.

# Can Christ truly sympathize with our weaknesses and temptations?

- We can say that He did not sin and that He was also tempted are facts we agreed on.
- The question is then, *How could the temptations have been real if He could not have sinned?*
- The doctrine of impeccability has been questioned especially on the point of whether an impeccable person can be tempted in any proper sense. If Christ had a human nature which was subject to temptation, was this not in itself evidence that He could have sinned?<sup>18</sup>
- What was the point of tempting an impeccable Person? First, we are not sure of what Satan knew of the incarnate Christ's peccability. If it is a mystery to us, it could certainly have been a mystery to spiritual forces of darkness. Second, the fact that Jesus could not sin is not the reason he did not sin. It is true that Jesus could not sin. But the writer of Hebrews never posits Christ's divine nature as the reason for his perfection. Instead, we read that "he learned obedience by the things He suffered" (Heb. 5:8). In other words, Jesus did not sin because of his faith and obedience—the same tools available to us. 19
- Before looking at the specific temptations, I think that it is helpful to realize why Jesus went through the temptations that He did.
- The particular tests within those areas were entirely different for Him from the ones for us. The phrase "according to likeness" apparently means that He could be tested because He took the likeness of sinful flesh. "Apart from sin" means that, having no sin nature, He could not have been tested from that avenue, as

19 https://g3min.org/the-doctrine-of-impeccability-a-test-case-for-the-hypostatic-union/

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/theological-primerimpeccability/#:~:text=The%20doctrine%20of%20impeccability%20states,Christ%20due%20to%20sinful%20desires.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> John F. Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord* (Galaxie Software, 2008), 145–146.

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we can and usually are. His temptations were really not to see if He could sin, but to prove that He could not.<sup>20</sup>

- This means that Jesus was tempted so that we would know that He was not like the first Adam.
- Adam did not pass the test when he was tempted.
- Romans 5:14-15 "Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many."
- Now we know that as our representative, Adam failed. He sinned and because of that sin, death reigned over all the world.
- But we also know that Jesus, like Adam, represents those who believe in Him.
- So, Jesus' temptations were to show us, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that He was the son of God and able to represent perfectly all who believe in Him.
- We must also understand the nature of temptations.
- James 1:13-15 "Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death."
- Look at how James places the order of temptation and sin.
  - When one is tempted:
    - He is carried away and enticed by his own lusts.
      - Interestingly, the word for *carried away* is ἐξέλκω, it is a passive participle.
      - Listen to this meaning, taken in tow by his own desire(s).
      - This is when someone is being led or overpowered by their sinful lusts.
      - The word for *enticed* is δελεάζω, once again a passive participle.
      - This means, to arouse someone's interest in something. by adroit [skilled] measures, to lure, or to entice
      - This word is also used in ancient Greek as a fishing metaphor and for describing false teachers who entice unstable Christians to veer from the true path.
  - All of this is done in our hearts *before* we ever actually do any action. James is saying that our hearts have been given away by us to something else and then we [passively] follow the thing that is in charge.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Charles Caldwell Ryrie, A Survey of Bible Doctrine (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972).

- What happens next? Look at **James 1:15** "... when lust is conceived, it gives birth to sin..."
  - The outworking of lust is to conceive something, something is going to come out.
    - The word for when lust is conceived is συλλαμβάνω. It is an active verb.
    - This means something is taking place on our part. All that working of lust in our hearts is now coming to fruition.
  - What happens? Τίκτω...it gives birth to sin. Another active verb by James.
- I think that it is very important to understand the process of temptation and sin.
- Jesus did not have the capacity to sin because He did not have the sinful nature.
  - He did not have a sinful nature because He was not conceived in the "normal" way with an earthly mom and dad.
  - This means that the *inward* temptation was not there for Jesus. He was not being drawn away by His own lusts and desires.
- This is why people want Jesus to have a possibility to be able to sin so that He can be more like us.
  - o They believe that if He is more like us, then He really does "get us."
- The nature of Christ's temptations was therefore **external**.
- John 14:30 "I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me..."
  - O Here Jesus pointedly sums up the situation by stating that the prince of the world literally "in me he has nothing." Morris reflects concerning the meaning of this text that "in detail it is not easy to understand" but that the overall "sense is clear enough." He then argues that although sin gives Satan his controlling power, he cannot control Jesus because "there is no sin in Jesus."

# • So how was Jesus tempted?<sup>22</sup>

- We often think of the 3 temptations, but the Bible says in **Luke 4:2** "...for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, He became hungry."
- Jesus' temptations follow three patterns that are common to all men.
  - The first temptation concerns the lust of the flesh (Matthew 4:3–4). Our Lord is hungry, and the
    devil tempts Him to convert stones into bread, but He replies with Scripture, quoting
    Deuteronomy 8:3.
  - The second temptation concerns the pride of life (Matthew 4:5–7), and here the devil uses a verse of Scripture (Psalm 91:11–12), but the Lord replies again with Scripture to the contrary (Deuteronomy 6:16), stating that it is wrong for Him to abuse His own powers.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Gerald L. Borchert, John 12–21, vol. 25B, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 135.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> https://www.gotquestions.org/Jesus-temptations.html

- The third temptation concerns the lust of the eyes (Matthew 4:8–10), and if any quick route to the Messiahship could be attained, bypassing the passion and crucifixion for which He had originally come, this was the way. The devil already had control over the kingdoms of the world (Ephesians 2:2) but was now ready to give everything to Christ in return for His allegiance.
- But the mere thought almost causes the Lord's divine nature to shudder at such a concept and He replies sharply, "You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only" (Deuteronomy 6:13).
- While Jesus never faced *all* the *exact* same temptations that we do, He went through far more than we ever will. Also, His temptations were in the same *categories* that our are in...yet He never gave into them and fell into sin.

# Objections to the validity of Jesus's temptations

- Opponents might rejoin, Does not the absence of any possible inclination to sin eliminate the authenticity of the temptations? No. Jesus endured the full force of temptation not by any potential flaw of his will, but, as Owen writes, "by voluntary condescension for our sakes." This act of condescension, while admittedly enshrouded in mystery, allowed Satan to strike at the same point he does with sinners **the human will but with an intensity never felt by acquiescing [yielding] sinners**. Christ submitted himself as a complete man to the unmitigated power of temptations that were riled, not abated, by his stubborn refusal to yield any holy ground.<sup>23</sup>
- It is objected to the doctrine of Christ's impeccability that it is inconsistent with his temptability. A person who cannot sin, it is said, cannot be tempted to sin. This is not correct; any more than it would be correct to say that because an army cannot be conquered, it cannot be attacked. Temptability depends upon the constitutional susceptibility, while impeccability depends upon the will. So far as his natural susceptibility, both physical and mental, was concerned, Jesus Christ was open to all forms of human temptation excepting those that spring out of lust, or corruption of nature. But his peccability, or the possibility of being overcome by those temptations, would depend upon the amount of voluntary resistance which he was able to bring to bear against them. Those temptations were very strong, but if the self-determination of his holy will was stronger than they, then they could not induce him to sin, and he would be impeccable. And yet plainly he would be temptable.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/could-jesus-have-sinned

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*,

#### THE GOOD NEWS

- Jesus can sympathize with all our weaknesses because He lived as a human being and experienced the things that we experience. According to John Owen, Christ's sympathy with us means three things. First of all, it means that He is concerned for us. Christ is concerned for us when we are hungry. He is concerned for us when we are in trouble. He is concerned for us when we are tempted. Secondly, Christ's sympathy with us means that He can relieve our suffering. He can provide for our daily needs. He can save us when we are in trouble. He can help us avoid engaging in sin. And thirdly, Christ's sympathy with us means that He can experience what we feel emotionally, insofar as our emotions are not sinful. He rejoices with us when we rejoice for good and godly things. He mourns with us when we mourn over the loss of good and godly things.<sup>25</sup>
- We truly can go to Christ because He has gone through what we have gone through, yet without giving into the weakness of sin.
- We have a great promise from God in **1 Corinthians 10:13** "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it."
- Prior to the Incarnation, God was concerned for His people. He felt sorrow for His people (Isa. 63:9), and He helped His people in times of trouble. In the Incarnation, Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, humbled Himself and came in the likeness of men (Phil. 2:5–11). Consequently, Christ, who is fully God, became fully man and sympathizes with our weaknesses. Such divine sympathy is expressed when we, the people of God, are tempted. Hebrews 4:15 makes the astonishing claim that Christ was tempted and yet was without sin. He lived a life like ours, yet none of His experience was tainted with sin! Jesus is a greater High Priest because He never yielded to temptation.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/sympathetic-weakness

<sup>26</sup> Ibid