



OLD MAN & NEW MAN ALTERNATIVES

(Source: Appendix A from *Escape*)

Biblical texts on the “old man” and “new man” are found in Romans 6:6, Ephesians 4:22-24, and Colossians 3:9-10. Five suggested viewpoints addressing the old man/new man are dealt with in this Article. [An overview and analyzes of each is found in Appendix A of *Escape*.] This Article gives a side-by-side comparison of the theological similarities and differences. The comparison shows the clear distinctions between each, particularly concerning living the Christian life. The sources of each alternative are:

Source of Alternatives

View #1—Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Balancing the Christian Life*
[Chicago, IL: Moody Press], 1969.

View #2—David C. Needham, *Birthright*
[Portland, OR: Multnomah Press], 1979.

View #3—Renald E. Showers, *The New Nature*
[Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers], 1986.

View #4—Steve McVey, *Grace Walk*
[Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers], 1995.

View #5—Ken Neff, *Escape*
[Jacksonville Beach, FL: LeaderQuest], 2018.

Chart 1 emphasizes the major issues for the five views.¹ The distinctions readily bring to light the theological conflict between “empowered living” and “influenced living” by the Spirit. The major differences speaking directly to this controversy are: Men versus Natures, Conflict in Christian Life, Power or Influence, Accessing Power, Fruitfulness. Clarification of each position by these central issues is addressed below.

Chart One

OLD MAN & NEW MAN ALTERNATIVES (Major Issues)

| ISSUE | ONE | TWO | THREE | FOUR | FIVE |
|--|--|---|---|--|---|
| Old Man | Sin Capacity (Sin Nature) | Unregenerate Person (Identity–Flesh Self) (Unredeemed Flesh) | Unregenerate Person (Sinful Disposition) | Natural Person (Identity in Sin) | Unregenerate Person (Old Inner Man) (Sinful Flesh) |
| New Man | New Capacity (New Nature) | Regenerate Person (Identity–True Self) w/unredeemed flesh | Regenerate Person (New Disposition) w/sinful disposition | New Person (Identity in Christ) w/flesh | Regenerate Person (New Inner Man) w/sinful flesh |
| Conflict in Christian Life | Sin Capacity (with power) vs New Capacity (no power) | Flesh-Level Life (with power) vs Spirit-Level Life (no power) | Sinful Disposition (with power) vs New Disposition (no power) | Flesh-Life (with power) vs Christ-Life (no power) | Sinful Flesh (no power) vs New Inner Man (no power) |
| Sin's Power (for living) | Power of Sin (in sin capacity) | Power of Sin (in unredeemed flesh) | Power of Sin (in sinful disposition) | Power of Sin (in flesh) | None |
| Human's Ability (for living) | Human Effort | Self Effort (rely on own abilities) | Self Effort (rely on own abilities) | Self Effort (rely on own abilities) | Human Effort |
| God's Power (for living) | Holy Spirit | Holy Spirit | Holy Spirit | Holy Spirit | None (for living) |
| Spirit's Power Through Believer | Yes (for living) | Yes (for living) | Yes (for living) | Yes (for living) | None (for living) |
| Accessing Spirit's Power (for living) | Dependency | Expectation & Dependency | Appropriate | Dependency & Appropriate | Not Apply |
| Produces the Fruit of the Spirit | Holy Spirit | Holy Spirit | Holy Spirit | Holy Spirit | Obedience |
| Flesh | Sin Nature (sin capacity) | Mortal Body (provides sin its opportunity) | Physical Body (servant of sinful disposition) | Self-Efforts to cope with life, relying on our own abilities | Physical Body (seat of sin) |
| Sinful Flesh (Rom 8; Gal 5) | NI | Desires of Unredeemed Flesh | Sinful Disposition (in physical body) | NI | Propensity to Sin (in physical body) |
| Body of Sin (Rom 6:6) | Sin Nature (sin capacity) | Body Functioning Independently from God | Sinful Disposition Reigning Over Physical Body | NI | Physical Body Influenced by Sinful Flesh |

NI = Not Indicated

Men versus Natures

Alternative 1

The first position equates both the old man and new man to the old nature and new nature, respectively. The sin nature or old man does not cease to exist. At regeneration, the old man continues to exist along with the added new nature or new man.

Alternatives 2–5

The remaining four views identify the old man as the unregenerate person. At the new birth, the old man ceases to exist and the new man corresponds to the regenerate person. [Note: Alternative four addresses the unregenerate person as the “natural person” and the regenerate person as the “new person.”]

Alternatives 2, 4, & 5

Concurring with one another, the Christian’s truest self or new inner man, the person he is in Christ, never sins because God’s “seed remains in him” (1 John 3:9). He also possesses unredeemed flesh or sinful flesh. Consequently, a believer’s unrighteous behavior is an expression of his sinful, physical flesh, while righteous conduct is the reflection of the truest self or inner man.

Alternatives 1–5

There is agreement between all five points of view regarding the experience of inner conflict in the Christian life. Each embraced the idea of two opposing factors impacting the believer’s choices and subsequent behavior. Whether distinguished as sin versus new capacity/nature, sinful versus new disposition, flesh-level versus Christ-level life,” or sinful flesh versus new inner men,” these competing factors are continually in operation and constantly at odds in the believer.

Alternatives 1–4

Sinful behavior in alternatives one through four is associated with the power of sin. On the other hand, the believer who is responsible for godly behavior possesses no corresponding power. In each case, however, it is the Holy Spirit counteracting the power of sin and causing behavior pleasing to God. The Spirit’s power must be appropriated by faith in order to allow Him to work through the believer, producing victory in the Christian life. [Note: These views hold that the Christian possesses power to sin but not power to live obediently.]

Alternative 5

Alternative five contends that neither sinful flesh (outer man) nor the new inner man has any power. Rather, Christian living is only associated with good or bad choices, not power sources. In fact, the Spirit’s ministry for living the Christian life doesn’t involve empowering, bringing about good works through the believer, but rather influencing good choices via filling, leading, and teaching.

Alternative 4

Alternative four seems to be an echo of alternative two, utilizing similar terminology (e.g., “identity,” “dependent,” “independent,” “relationship,” “expressed through,” “flow from,” etc.). However, alternative four takes the idea that the Spirit is responsible for Christian behavior to its logical conclusion. He wrote, “It’s tough to let go of self-sufficiency,”² meaning “trying to live by self-effort,” and consequently wrote, “The Christian life is easy, if you just let Him do it.”³ Whether stated or not by others with the same view of the Christian life, unfortunately a “let-go-and-let-God” understanding is the logical conclusion.

Alternatives 2–4

Alternatives two through four understand victory in the Christian life to be a *gift* from God by means of the Holy Spirit’s power actually producing victorious living. In each case, relying on one’s own abilities resulting in sin is contrasted with the empowering of the Spirit yielding godliness. [Note: (#1) The conclusion is that any and every human-action done

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apart from the Spirit's power would be considered sin. (#2) Rather than the Christian, God "ought...to reward Himself at the judgment"⁴ since He is the one who actually does the work.]

Alternatives 1 & 5

Alternatives one and five understand victory in the Christian life results in a *reward* from God. Both views believe the Christian walk involves collaboration between the Spirit's ministry and the believer's choices. As discussed throughout this book, "walking with respect to the flesh" or "walking with respect to the Spirit" involves human-effort no matter how life is lived. Choices rather than power sources result in temporal death, lost fellowship, or life, intimacy with Christ and victory. In either case, behavior is the result of the believer's own human-effort influenced by either the Spirit or sinful flesh. This is the reason every Christian will be responsible for his own works, whether good or bad, at the judgment seat of Christ (1 Cor 3:14; 2 Cor 5:10). There he will be rewarded for his good works. [Note: Even though the Spirit enables/empowers obedience in alternative one, Ryrie explains that the believer is nevertheless responsible for his own actions. He wrote, "Whatever is done, whether for good or for evil, I do...I am responsible for my actions."⁵

Power or Influence

Alternatives 1–4

As shown, both sin's power and the Spirit's power are central in alternatives one through four. Keep in mind our discussion concerns the walk of the Christian, not spiritual gifts or ministry. As previously noted, both perspectives picture a tug of war between these rival powers, each striving for control of the believer, resulting in obedience or disobedience.

Alternatives 2–4

In conformity with the empowerment view of alternatives two through four, any and every action by a Christian that is independent of the Spirit's power is self-effort and must be considered sinful.⁶ Otherwise the behavior would be "spirit-produced" and godly. The fallacy of that position was addressed in chapter 6, *Walk: Focusing on What in Escape*. Whether it is called self-effort, self-discipline or self-determination, any effort expended by a Christian is typically, yet wrongly, associated with effort that stems from the flesh. In that case, the adjective *self* is synonymous with sin. Nevertheless, obedience or disobedience always involves human-effort; that is the essence of walking. The issue is what influences the Christian's choices in his daily life: the *flesh* or the *Spirit*. The issue in both Romans 8 and Galatians 5 was not contrasting power sources but rather contrasting believers' choices. These determine whether the Christian's life experience either evidences the character of God, the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23), or behavior that does not reflect God, the deeds of the flesh (vv 19-21).

Alternative 5

The fifth view states that there are no sources of power causing either unrighteousness or righteousness through the Christian. Rather, believers are to keep on placing themselves at God's disposal (Rom 6:13), allowing the Spirit to influence their lives. While the believer can also allow sin to influence his behavior, neither sin nor the Spirit provides power for the Christian to live disobediently or obediently. As expressed often in this book, the author holds to the influencing model for Christian living, not empowerment.

Accessing Power

Alternative 5

Those who support the empowerment model state that it is the believer's choice to allow the *Spirit's empowerment to cause and produce obedience through the believer*. Nevertheless in chapter 8, we discussed in detail the error of that viewpoint. We addressed the numerous texts stating the biblical concept of Christian living. It is *the Christian living through Christ, not Christ (or the Spirit) living through the Christian*. Only as the believer is available to God and obediently chooses to follow the influence of the Spirit's teaching and guidance will he truly experience abundant living.

Alternatives 1–4

In each of these four perspectives, it is understood that the Christian cannot walk obediently without the Spirit causing obedience *through* him.⁷ Accessing the power of the Spirit is by “daily dependence,”⁸ “expectation,”⁹ or “appropriation.”¹⁰ Unfortunately their how to experience His power is associated with the biblical concept of “yieldedness,” “dedication,” or “presentation” found in Romans 6:13.¹¹ Here is the rub. As we just noted, Christians are to keep making themselves available to God (Rom 6:13), *allowing* the Spirit to influence them. That text does not address *any expected* power; rather it concerns the choices the believer makes, either aligning with God’s will or not.

Fruitfulness

Alternatives 1–4

Each of the first four alternatives holds that the Holy Spirit produces the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23a). Their approach to fruitfulness is the logical conclusion from their position that (1) Spirit’s power is required for Christian living, (2) Spirit’s power works through the believer, and (3) Spirit’s power must be appropriated. Consequently, they understand that the fruit of the Spirit is the Spirit’s fruit produced through believers.

Alternative 5

Notice that the fifth alternative takes a different stance. The issue here is not the believer choosing to allow the Spirit to produce His fruit through the believer. Rather it is the Christian choosing behavior, which reflects God’s will, as influenced by the Spirit.

Yours to Decide

Each view is determined by interpretative and theological considerations. The Author believes View Five provides the best alternative in light of the biblical evidence. Notice that it is the only view that aligns with “influenced living” by the Spirit, which the contents of *Escape* support. All the other views require “empowered living.”



Endnotes

1. Page references by Alternative 1–4 for each issue on chart 1 is provided in chart 2.

| 2 | | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|--|---|--|
| COMPARISONS OF ALTERNATIVES | | | | |
| ISSUE | ONE | TWO | THREE | FOUR |
| Old Man | 34, 36 | 61, 82, 96, 114, 165, 244 | 9, 10, 67-68, 123 | 44, 58-60 |
| New Man | 35-36 | 52, 82, 155, 236, 244, 253 | 10, 68, 123 | 27-28, 42, 44-45, 49, 58-59, 71, 90, 98 |
| Conflict in Christian Life | 35, 45-46, 48, 55 | 25, 66, 82, 86, 113-14, 135-36, 138, 141, 158, 251 | 10, 93, 115-16 | 30-31, 33, 37, 56-57, 65, 90, 93, 131, 174 |
| Sin's Power (for living) | 46, 54-56 | 30, 129, 154 | 10-11, 62, 97, 101- 02, 104, 110, 115-16 | 93, 99-100, 102-03 |
| Human's Ability (for living) | 33, 35, 37-38, 41, 64-65, 187-89 | 34, 129, 175 | 10-11, 93, 97, 103-05, 111-12 | 21, 30, 36-37, 77, 81, 87-88, 90, 93, 131, 174 |
| God's Power (for living) | 45, 55, 189 | 143-52, 156, 158-59, 236, 266 | 11, 74, 96-97, 105, 108, 110, 115-18 | 65, 96-98 |
| Spirit's Power Through Believer | 33 | 104, 111, 158-60, 251 | 157 | 70-71, 88, 96- 97, 99, 106, 175 |
| Accessing Spirit's Power (for living) | 189 | 35, 96, 110, 114, 151 | 115-17, 119 | 78, 174-75 |
| Produces the Fruit of the Spirit | 189 | 158, 194 | 148-149 | Assumed ("through believer") |
| Flesh | 34-35 | 36, 79, 149, 258 | 71-72, 113 | 30-31, 33, 36, 92 |
| Sinful Flesh (Rom 8; Gal 5) | NI | 82, 253, 257-58 | 62, 71-77, 113 | NI |
| Body of Sin (Rom 6:6) | 54-55 | 113, 129, 135, 241, 248-49 | 71-72 | NI |
| NI = Not Indicated | | | | |

2. Steve McVey, *Grace Walk* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1995, 77, italics added.
3. Ibid., 71, italics added.
4. Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Balancing the Christian Life* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1969), 33.
5. Ibid.
6. David C. Needham, *Birthright* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1979), 34, 129, 175; Renald Showers, *The New Nature* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1986), 93, 97, 112; McVey, 30, 77, 93. Self-produced behavior is often couched in the following terminology: self-effort, trying in one's own power, or relying upon one's own power.
7. Ryrie, 33; Needham, 104, 111; Showers, 157; McVey, 71, 96, 175.
8. Ryrie, 115, 189.
9. Needham, 151, 158.
Needham expands the means of accessing to include "conscious openness, dependency, and expectation of receiving energy in the Person of the Holy Spirit" (151).
10. Showers, 115-117, 119; McVey, 78, 174-75.
11. Ryrie, 77-78, 114-115.