

APPENDIX A

BIBLICAL ANALYSIS: OLD MAN/NEW MAN CONTROVERSY

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 provided in this appendix. Each line of reasoning is founded on theological determinations and each has implications for the Christian life.

The overview of each alternative is not intended to provide a complete analysis. Rather the author undertook to provide a faithful summarization of each, relying primarily on the respective authors’ own words to ensure their issues and concerns are accurately represented. The overview and associated chart for each alternative progressively moves (1) from the *position* of both the non-believer and believer relative to God, (2) to the *process*, the actual way the day-to-day life is lived, and finally (3) to the *product*, the outcome of each particular stance.

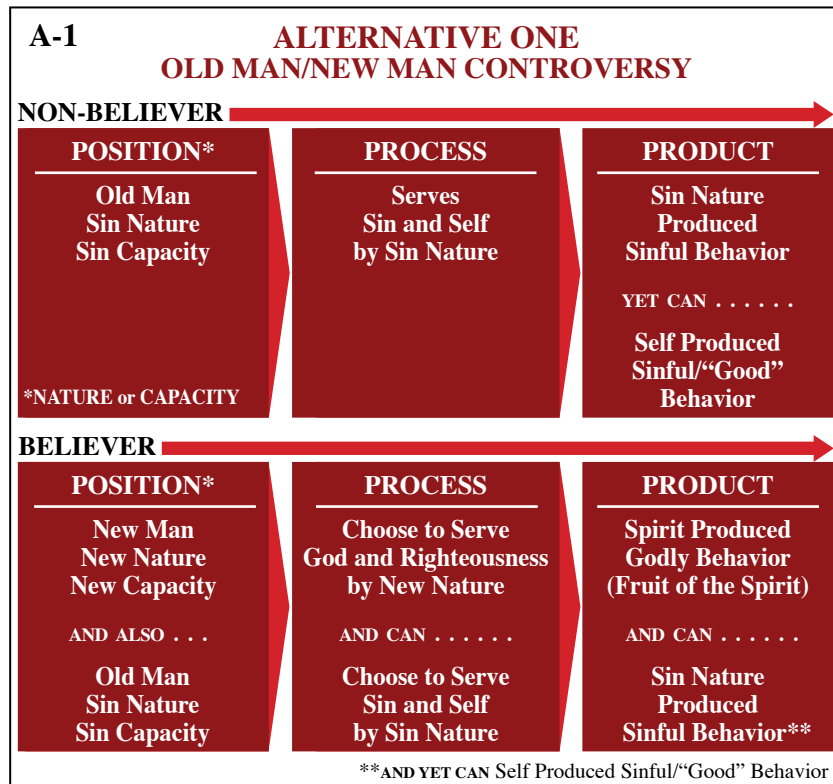
The first portion of this appendix analyzes each alternative. Then, the latter portion shows a side-by-side comparison of their theological similarities and differences. The comparison provides clear distinctions between alternatives, particularly how the believer lives out the Christian life. Those differentiations are the ingredients that give rise to the controversy between “empowered living” and “influenced living.”

ESCAPE

ALTERNATIVE ONE

Charles Caldwell Ryrie,
Balancing the Christian Life.
 Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1969

In chart A-1, this view distinguishes the non-believer and the believer in relation to their natures. The old man and new man are recognized as two distinct natures, not two people. In this view the old man is synonymous with the sin nature or the old nature. “The old nature of the flesh is that capacity which all men have to serve and please self...the capacity to leave God out of one’s life.”¹ Consequently, the non-believer has only one nature and “only one course of action—to serve sin and self.”² On the other hand, “conversion brings with it a new capacity with which we may now serve God and righteousness.”³ With both a sin and a new nature, the Christian “is in constant conflict between the two capacities.”⁴



APPENDIX A

Non-Believer

The *upper portion* of chart A-1 explains that the non-believers' behavior is sinful because their only choice is to serve themselves and comply with their inclination to sin.⁵ The result of the "power of the sin nature" is sinful behavior.⁶ Although by nature a servant of sin, the non-Christian can still choose to do "good," yet even with the right motive it does not earn merit before God. Why is that so? "The conscience of an unbeliever may lead him aright, so he may will to do a good thing."⁷ For example, a non-Christian may give a million dollars to charity. While helpful to others, before God it doesn't give him an advantage.

Believer

Believers are dual natured, with both a sin nature and a new nature and "actions...stem from the old and the new" (see *lower portion*).⁸ "Union with Christ...associates [the believer] with Him who gives the power to live according to the new capacity."⁹ Godly behavior is produced by the Spirit through the believer¹⁰ and is the result of the believer's choices that align with the new capacity.¹¹ Consequently, obedient Christian living is the joint product of "dependence on the power of the God and effort on the part of the believer;" they "are not mutually exclusive."¹² "Even though the action stems from the new nature...and although it is His power which enables the act to be performed," the believer does it and will be rewarded for the obedient behavior.¹³

Since the old nature is not eradicated when becoming a Christian,¹⁴ "the believer has an option" and "he may...choose to leave God out [of his life] and live according to the old nature."¹⁵ Wrong motives can lead to "good" behavior. As before, a million dollars given to charity for the wrong reason is displeasing to God, even though helpful to others.

ALTERNATIVE TWO

David C. Needham

Birthright.

Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1979

Seen from the second viewpoint, a person's identity is the essence of both the old man and the new man, with meaning in life flowing from that identity (see chart A-2).¹ "Awareness of identity determines meaning in life."² The unregenerate man, the old man, strives to find meaning in life independent from God through the deeds of the flesh.³ The non-believer's most basic nature is sin.⁴ In fact, "*sin is...the expression of man's struggle with the meaning of his*

ESCAPE

existence while missing life from God.”⁵ Consequently, “the essence of sin, then, cannot be separated from the issue of meaning.”⁶

At regeneration, a radical and actual change occurs in the person—no longer a child of wrath (Eph 2:3) but now a child of God (2 Cor 5:17).⁷ When the believer is united with Christ, the old man ceases to exist and the believer becomes a new man—the “real self” or “true self,” which now is the believer’s new identity, finding meaning through dependence on God.⁸ This “new identity is not on the flesh level, but the spirit level—one’s deepest self” so that “a Christian’s essential nature is righteous rather than sinful.”⁹ He is a spiritual being, who is not able to sin.¹⁰ The believer’s awareness of his new identity is the basis of purpose in life,¹¹ which outflows into actually experiencing real life from God.¹²

This position emphasizes the importance of each believer understanding that he is a “saint” rather than a “sinner.”¹³ While rejecting two-natures within the believer,¹⁴ this view embraces a “principle” concept.¹⁵ The “‘principle’—not evil in itself—is *the incessant demand for meaning*,” which is at work in every person.¹⁶ With two diametrically opposed meanings in life based on either independent from or dependent on God, a conflict can ensue within the believer, resulting in behavior produced by “self/flesh effort” or by “Spirit power.”¹⁷ “The moment that demand for meaning becomes dominant in my flesh...that ‘principle’ is producing evil within me.”¹⁸ On the other hand,

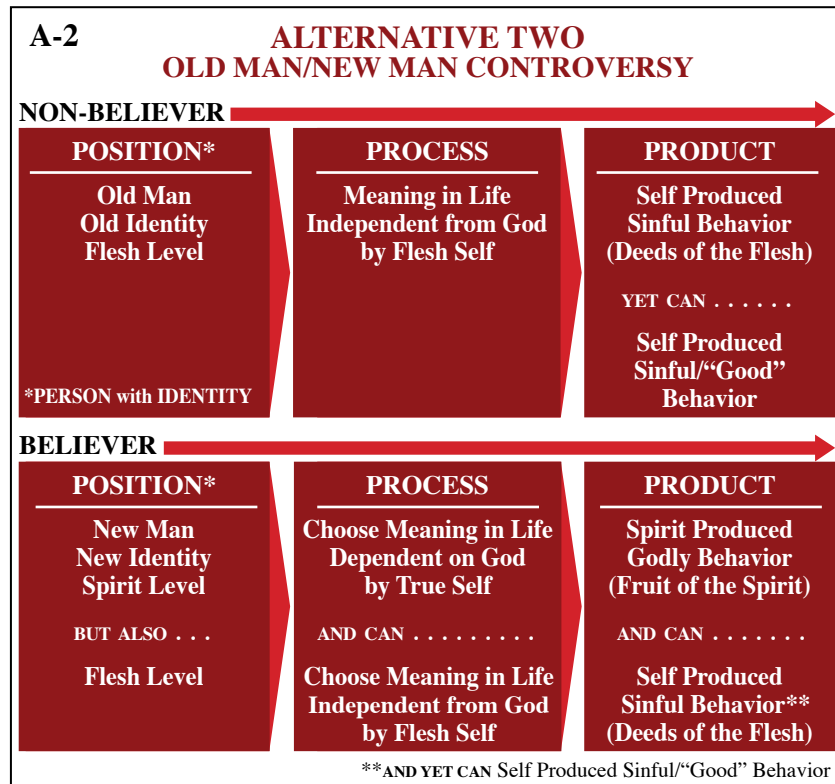
when that determinative search for meaning flows out of the deepest self, empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit, there is at that point *nothing inside of me* that is essentially evil. My flesh at that moment is a slave to righteousness. My members are yielded to God and the result is purity—holiness in both the inward and outward man.¹⁹

Non-Believer

The *upper portion* of chart A-2 shows the non-believer as the old man, whose essential nature is sinful.²⁰ “He has no alternative” but to function “independently from God.”²¹ Being fundamentally fleshly, “that is where life will be found for [the unregenerate].”²² The flesh or mortal body is “that part of man’s nature which gives sin its opportunity.”²³ While not evil in itself, the flesh “is too easily made an instrument of evil,”²⁴ and “when the flesh determines its own meaning, it always produces sin.”²⁵ Consequently, sinful behavior “is the expression of an individual’s response to the issue of meaning apart from the life of God.”²⁶

Nevertheless non-Christians can choose to do “good,” but it does not bring merit before God.²⁷ “Out of simple, determined discipline of their own persons they [can press] themselves into other patterns of thought and behavior.”²⁸ Whether being able to stop “swearing, stealing, or being immoral”

APPENDIX A



or not, it should be understood that “sin is not simply what we do or don’t do; sin relates to our independence from or dependence upon life from God!”²⁹

Believer

For the believer (see *lower portion*), his “deepest identity is spiritual, not flesh”...and is “distinctly alive!”³⁰ Accepting oneself as “fundamentally a spiritual being” is critical,³¹ since the Christian’s “essential nature (deepest self, inner man, new man) is a creation of God who does not sin.”³² Consequently, believers “*by nature* do what is right!”³³ In their deepest self they are “in perfect agreement with the will of God.”³⁴ “In other words, every single righteous ‘ought’ you will ever sense will be in precise agreement with every single ‘want’ that authentic ‘you’ will ever have.”³⁵ As such believers are “receivers and displayers of His [Christ’s] very life,”³⁶ being “*actual extensions of His*

ESCAPE

*life through a dependent relationship with Him.*³⁷ “Of course such a life will express itself in righteous acts, but the foundation for those acts is *dependence*.”³⁸ “God’s highest desire” isn’t for believers to avoid bad behavior and do what is right.³⁹ Rather than merely keeping rules, His desire is for a dependent relationship that produces righteousness.

Nevertheless the biblical commands regarding Christian behavior are “reasonable expectations, well within our reach,” since the believer has been provided with the ability to obey.⁴⁰ God has given the Spirit who energizes and produces resurrection life that “flows from God”⁴¹ through the believer.⁴² That empowerment is only experienced as a result of the believer’s “conscious openness, dependency, and expectation of receiving the necessary energy in the Person of the Holy Spirit.”⁴³ Consequently, “Christianity is not simply... discipline; it is the discipline of the Spirit,” with resurrection life “found only as God’s life is actually received and displayed through us.”⁴⁴

Adhering to a dichotomy between the spirit/inward man and the mortal flesh/outward man,⁴⁵ the Christian’s “true [spiritual] personhood does not require a body.”⁴⁶ There are, in fact, levels in personhood varying from “a deep self (inner man) and my more shallow self [flesh level].”⁴⁷ One’s truest self, that is “inseparable from dependence upon God,” displays behavior consistent with a slave of righteousness,⁴⁸ with choices “in perfect harmony with [one’s] new identity.”⁴⁹ On the other hand, since the flesh self is affected by circumstances, the believer’s behavior unfortunately may not be “reflective of [one’s] true [deep self] personhood,” becoming a slave of unrighteousness.⁵⁰ “To whatever degree [the believer] fails to fulfill his truest self as one who is ‘from God’ and totally dependent upon God for authentic life, to that degree, the ‘nature’ he manifests by his thoughts and behavior is also sinful.”⁵¹ Nevertheless when a struggle between a believer’s “wants” and “oughts” arises, “it is not a conflict within [the believer’s] truest personhood. It is rather a conflict between the true personhood [self] and [his] unredeemed mortality [the flesh level and indwelling sin].”⁵²

ALTERNATIVE THREE

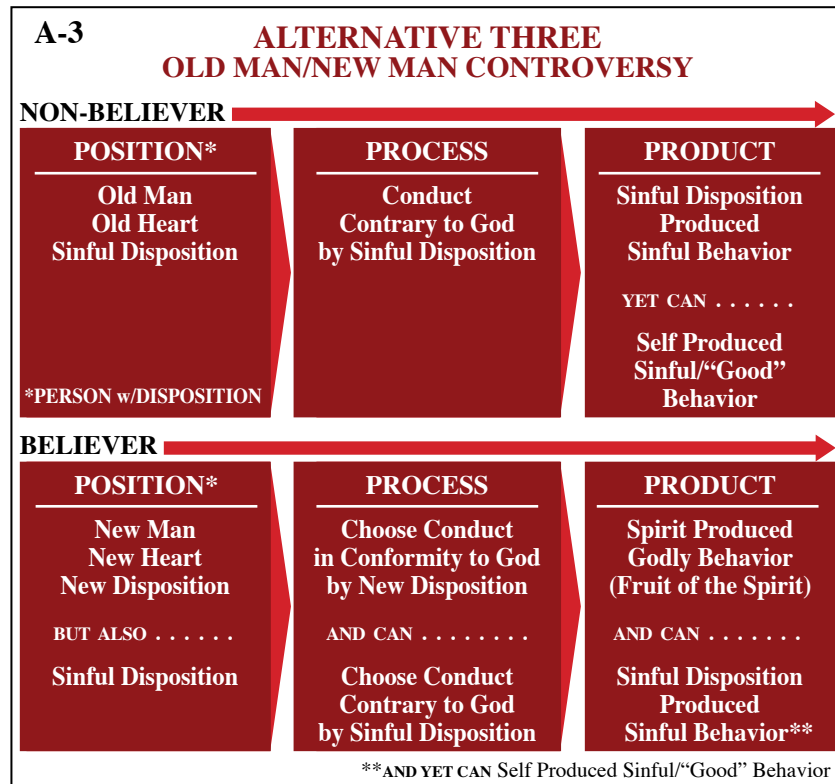
Renald E. Showers

The New Nature.

Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1986

As illustrated in chart A-3, the third view distinguishes the position of the unregenerate, the old man, from the regenerate, the new man. The unregenerate are enslaved by their “sinful dispositions of enmity against God,” with sin being “inscribed so indelibly upon their heart.”¹ The old disposition equates to the so-called old, sin nature “since enmity against God is sin.”²

APPENDIX A



At regeneration, “the unsaved person dies with Christ in the sense that he ceases to be an unregenerate man...ceases to be an ‘old man.’”³ Regeneration “does not involve a metaphysical change in man,” rather it is “concerned primarily with the disposition of man.”⁴ “[P]lacing of something which had not been there before, not changing of something already there, the regenerated person retains his old disposition after receiving the new one.”⁵ While having the old disposition, “a disposition of enmity against God,” through physical birth, the new disposition, “a favorable disposition toward God,” is received at spiritual birth.⁶ Since the old disposition equates to the old sin nature, the new one “consists of the law of God written in the human heart,” being equated to the believer’s new nature.⁷

ESCAPE

Non-Believer

The non-believer (see *upper portion* of chart A-3) has a heart that is hardened toward God as a result of his “sinful disposition which enslaves the unregenerate heart.”⁸ The sinful disposition is the old nature that “is the master of the heart,”⁹ and “produces the act of sin.”¹⁰ Since “the heart is the inner control center of the human being” and “the seat of man’s disposition,”¹¹ it is “the place where moral conduct is determined.”¹² As a result, the sinful disposition “functions through the heart” to produce behavior contrary to God’s will.¹³ From this perspective the heart and the mind are understood to be equivalent.

This view also holds that the non-believer can choose to do “good,” but it does not bring merit before God.¹⁴ “In Romans 2:14-15 Paul is teaching that unregenerate Gentiles have a moral consciousness, a sense of right and wrong, inherent within them.”¹⁵ Consequently, their actions can reflect that God given awareness.

Believer

At the new birth, the old man ceases to exist (see *lower portion*).¹⁶ Based on Ezekiel 36:26, the believer receives a “new heart (the regenerate inner control center)” that “serves as the seat and center of the [new] human spirit” (the new disposition/nature).¹⁷ No longer enslaved to the mastery of the old nature, the indwelling Holy Spirit now “functions through the heart,”¹⁸ working “together with the new human spirit [the new disposition] for the performance of God’s will” and giving the believer “the power to do God’s will.”¹⁹ “All these changes provide the believer with great potential for living a very different kind of life from that of his unregenerate days.”²⁰

That potential is not guaranteed since the believer continues to possess the old sinful disposition or nature. With “two opposing natures dwelling in him,” a spiritual struggle can be experienced.²¹ “The old nature...tries to control the believer in opposition to God’s rule” and the “new nature prompts the believer to concur with the will to obey God’s rule.”²² Since the power of the old nature cannot be overcome by the new disposition, being powerless, the power of the Holy Spirit must be appropriated for obedience.²³ Not only does the believer require a new disposition (the prompting) but also the power of the Holy Spirit (the doing) in order that God’s will might be produced through the Christian.²⁴ “Moment by moment he must trust the Holy Spirit rather than himself to empower him for victory over the power of the old nature.”²⁵

APPENDIX A

ALTERNATIVE FOUR

Steve McVey

Grace Walk,

Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1995

Central to the fourth alternative is the statement, “[I]t is important to see yourself as God sees you” (see chart A-4).¹ Christians’ relationship with Christ “gives [them] a new identity,”² an “identity by [their] spiritual birth and not by [their] behavior.”³ Nevertheless,

We’ve been programmed to think of identity as inseparable from behavior...Most Christians...perception of their identity is that they have been forgiven of their sins and saved by God’s grace, but that they are still basically just sinners who are trying with God’s help to live the kind of lifestyle He wants them to live.⁴

“But God doesn’t look at it that way. He doesn’t determine identity by behavior but by *birth*.”⁵ “A person born into the family of God receives a new identity,” becoming “a new creation.”⁶ “God didn’t simply change you when you were saved. He created a new person,”⁷ a “redeemed *saint*” rather than a *sinner*.⁸ Consequently,

When you come to believe that [you are a new person] by faith, you won’t feel the need to act. You can just be yourself, allowing the nature of Christ within your spirit to flow through your personality and out of your life, like the river of living water that Jesus talked about that flows from one’s innermost being.⁹

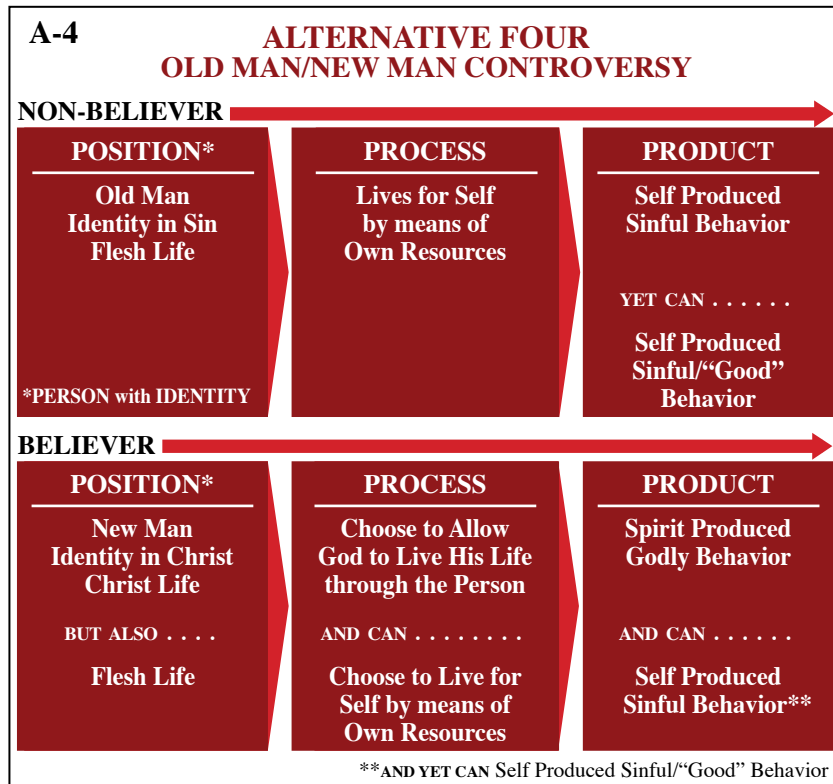
Prior to salvation, “the old you was dead in sin. It was the sin nature, sometimes called an unregenerate nature, the Adamic nature, the natural man, or your old self.”¹⁰ “Paul often used the phrase ‘the old man’ to describe the old sin nature that gave us our identity before we were saved.”¹¹ At salvation, God created the “new person” and our old sin nature “passed away and is never coming back...our sin nature is dead!”¹² “God has forgiven us of our *sin nature*.”¹³ “It isn’t your nature now to live a lifestyle of sin,”¹⁴ since the Christian has “become a partaker of the divine nature” and “become one with Christ.”¹⁵

Since “the only nature any Christian has is the nature of the Lord Jesus Himself,”¹⁶ “at the core of [his] life, at the spirit level, [he has] a disposition that hungers to glorify God.”¹⁷ While the Christian never experiences a conflict between two supposed natures,¹⁸ “the *pleasure* of sinning doesn’t disappear when a person trusts Christ,”¹⁹ due to *the flesh’s* “constant attack against the Christian [his new divine nature].”²⁰

ESCAPE

Non-Believer

The *upper portion* of chart A-4 points out that the non-believer is the old man, whose identity is found in sin.²¹ “Before you trusted in Christ you had *no* spiritual identity,”²² rather it was “the old sin nature that gave us our identity.”²³ Since the natural man is spiritually dead in his trespasses and sins,²⁴ the unbeliever “lives for self,”²⁵ relying on his own resources²⁶ and serving his own needs.²⁷ Consequently, sinful behavior is the only product of the flesh life.



Believer

For the believer (see *lower portion*), his true identity is in Christ. He is a saint as the result of his spiritual birth.²⁸ Even though the old man is

APPENDIX A

dead, a “conflict between flesh and spirit will exist as long as [we] are in this world,”²⁹ since “the ‘flesh’ is still an enemy to be reckoned with every day.”³⁰ Nevertheless, “the victorious Christian life is nothing less than the life of Christ being expressed through the child of God.”³¹ Consequently, “any behavior that is not dependent on Him living His life through us comes from the flesh.”³² “Since a good synonym for *flesh* [is] self-sufficiency,”³³ trying “to meet our needs independent of Jesus,”³⁴ “to walk after the flesh simply means to live a lifestyle that does not rely on Christ as its source,”³⁵ producing sinful behavior. While “it isn’t [believers’] nature now to live a lifestyle of sin,”³⁶ nevertheless “saints have the freedom to choose to sin or not to sin.”³⁷

The flesh-life relates to “walking after the flesh...relying on your own ability instead of on God’s resources.”³⁸ On the other hand, the Christ-life concerns your dependence “on His resource, not our own.”³⁹ “The only remedy for flesh is walking in the Spirit,”⁴⁰ and thus “allowing the Spirit of Christ to do the walking through us.”⁴¹ “By the life of Christ the new you has the desire to resist sin and the power to live victoriously.”⁴² “It simply requires appropriating by faith that Christ is your life and then allowing Him to live His life through you.”⁴³

While there are those “who are quick to point out that keeping religious rules won’t cause anybody to become a Christian believe that keeping certain rules will help them grow in the Christian life.”⁴⁴ Thinking it is “somehow possible to cause God to accept me more than He already did” at salvation, I serve Him “to gain His approval.”⁴⁵ We should remember that “the core of the Christian life doesn’t revolve around *doing*, but is grounded in *being*.”⁴⁶ Unfortunately, “many Christians today are exhausted because they understand the Christian life to be primarily a life of service *for* God. But that isn’t true. The Christian life is primarily a life of intimacy *with* God.”⁴⁷ “Christian service that doesn’t overflow from our walk with Christ is nothing but flesh,”⁴⁸ out of our own self-sufficiency and self-effort that “is the essence of legalism.”⁴⁹ In fact, it is “possible to be busy doing things *for* God while our actions still stem from the energy of the flesh.”⁵⁰

Many Christians by self-effort “try to obey” the commands of the New Testament because they believe “that is what God expects.”⁵¹ On the contrary, “God’s concern with you isn’t about rules but relationship” [intimacy with Him].⁵² That is because an abiding, intimacy with Christ provides a proper perspective that “lets us see the commands not as obligations, but as opportunities for the life of Christ to be revealed through us.”⁵³ Appropriated by faith, we choose to allow “the full power of Jesus Christ to flow through us”⁵⁴ and to thus “fulfill the commands of the New Testament,”⁵⁵ expressing His life through us. Consequently, rules-keeping should be “an overflow of our relationship with [Christ].”⁵⁶

ESCAPE

“A person does not experience victory in the Christian life by trying hard to live for God”⁵⁷ by his own self-effort. “It’s tough *to let go* of self-sufficiency.”⁵⁸ “The truth is that victory is not a *reward* but a *gift*.”⁵⁹ “We can take no credit when we triumph over the flesh, since the victory has been given to us by God”⁶⁰ to those who continue to have an intimate relationship with Christ. Each Christian must “choose to live each moment allowing Christ to live His life through [you].”⁶¹ If so, “the Christian life is easy” because “you just *let Him do it*.”⁶² Remember “[Christ] isn’t interested in what we can do for Him. Christ is interested in living His life through us.”⁶³

ALTERNATIVE FIVE

The Author

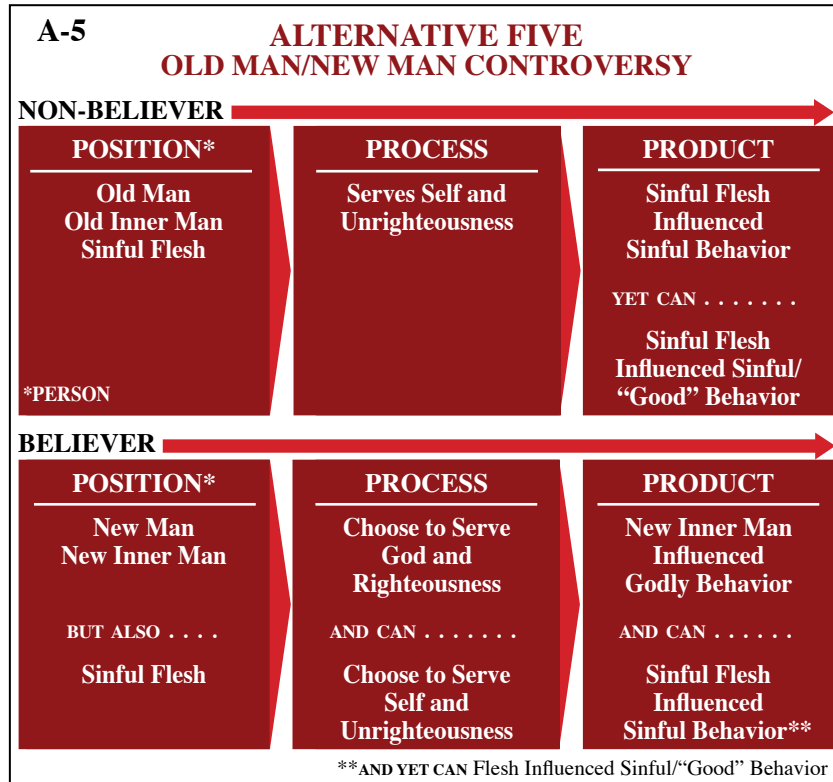
Alternative five (see chart A-5) recognizes the old man as the unregenerate inner man or inner self.¹ The unbelievers’ inner man is dominated by his sinful flesh.² For that reason, they “suppress the truth” (Rom 1:18), resulting in “their reasoning process being darkened” (Eph 4:18).³ Enslaved to sin, the non-believer’s choices give way to unrighteous behavior.

The new man is identified as the regenerate inner man or inner self. At new birth, the unregenerate inner self ceases to exist and the new inner man, the new man in Christ, is no longer bound by sin (Rom 6:6). In fact, the new inner man never sins because God’s “seed remains in him” (1 John 3:9). Nevertheless, the believer continues to have a physical body, the outer man, in which the proclivity to sin remains. While sin does *not* possess power to produce unrighteous behavior, the believer can allow sin to influence his thoughts and conduct. Even though the inclination to sin remains, sin now is not the singular option as with the unbeliever. The Christian’s inner man enjoys the constant desire to conform to God’s Word. Consequently the believer can decide to align either with his new inner self and experience fellowship with Christ or with sinful flesh and self-destructive living.

Non-Believer

The *upper portion* of chart A-5 identifies the old man as the unregenerate inner man. Being spiritually dead, the non-believer is under the dominion of sin and a proper response to God is impossible (Eph 2:1). Spiritually separated from God with a mind that is darkened toward God, the non-believer’s behavior is the product of decisions solely influenced by his sinful flesh. Nevertheless, all five alternatives agree, the non-believer can choose to do “good,” but not with behavior that bring merit before God.⁴

APPENDIX A



Believer

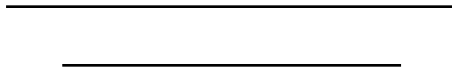
The new man is the regenerated inner man in perfect agreement with God’s will (see *lower portion*). While the new inner man is then unable to sin, the believer still has his sinful flesh. “As a total person, we do sin and can never claim to be free of it, but our ‘inward self’ that is regenerated does not sin.”⁵ Consequently, the Christian faces a conflict (Rom 6:16-23). He can choose to serve God and righteousness leading to abundant living or to serve self and unrighteousness, resulting in loss of intimacy with Christ.

At the new birth, the believer is given a new way of thinking, enabling him to discern spiritual things that the unbeliever cannot (1 Cor 2:14-16). This new worldview is *not* fully developed at regeneration but has the potential to grow in a deeper understanding of the God’s will.⁶ It does not refer to the

ESCAPE

giving of a “new heart/mind” that is a future event following Christ’s return (Ezek 36:24-28).⁷ Rather the believer’s illumined mind is contrasted with the darkened one of the non-believer.⁸ As the Christian continues to increasingly embrace God’s Word (Jam 1:21), the “mind of Christ” (1 Cor 2:16) becomes a reality that is lived out in his daily walk (Jam 2:22, 25). This growing process is the result of the new *inner man being renewed* (Col 3:10; 2 Cor 4:16) through the *renewing of his mind* (Rom 12:2; Eph 4:23). Growth becomes evident as the believer’s mind and conduct conforms to God’s will (Rom 12:2).

Differing from the position of the other alternatives, a Christian’s decisions are influenced by either the Spirit or sinful-flesh. In either case all behavior is the result of the choices and effort each believer makes, not by an alleged power of sin or power of the Spirit. This is the reason each Christian will be responsible for his own works at the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor 5:10). There, he will be rewarded for his good works (1 Cor 3:14; 2 Cor 5:10).



APPENDIX A

COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVES

There are various ways to address the implications of the old man/new man. Chart A-6 below highlights the major issues for the five views, comparing their similarities and differences.¹ The distinctions readily bring to light the theological conflict between “empowered living” and “influenced living” by the Spirit. Both cannot be biblical correct.

Men versus Natures

Alternative 1

The first position equates both the old man and new man to the old nature and new nature, respectively (see *Supplement A*). 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.

Supplement A Use of “Nature” in Biblical Texts

Only two texts are the basis for understanding natures or dispositions in the Christian life. While the term *nature* is used fourteen times in the New Testament, Ephesians 2:3 is the only verse that provides a foundation for an alleged *sin nature*, while 2 Peter 1:4 is the only verse that gives support for an alleged *new nature*. It is important to perceive the intended meaning of the term in each context.²

Ephesians 2:3

Paul wrote, “Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of

ESCAPE

A-6 COMPARISONS OF ALTERNATIVES Part A

ISSUE	ONE	TWO
Old Man	Sin Capacity (Sin Nature)	Unregenerate Person (Identity–Flesh Self) (Unredeemed Flesh)
New Man	New Capacity (New Nature)	Regenerate Person (Identity–True Self) w/unredeemed 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)
Sin’s Power (for living)	Power of Sin (in sin capacity)	Power of Sin (in unredeemed flesh)
Human’s Ability (for living)	Human Effort	Self Effort (rely on own abilities)
God’s Power (for living)	Holy Spirit	Holy Spirit
Spirit’s Power Through Believer	Yes (for living)	Yes (for living)
Accessing Spirit’s Power (for living)	Dependency	Expectation & Dependency
Produces the Fruit of the Spirit	Holy Spirit	Holy Spirit
Flesh	Sin Nature (sin capacity)	Mortal Body (provides sin its opportunity)
Sinful Flesh (Rom 8; Gal 5)	NI	Desires of Unredeemed Flesh
Body of Sin (Rom 6:6)	Sin Nature (sin capacity)	Body Functioning Independently from God

NI = Not Indicated

APPENDIX A

COMPARISONS OF ALTERNATIVES Part B

THREE	FOUR	FIVE
Unregenerate Person (Sinful Disposition)	Natural Person (Identity in Sin)	Unregenerate Person (Old Inner Man) (Sinful Flesh)
Regenerate Person (New Disposition) w/sinful disposition	New Person (Identity in Christ) w/flesh	Regenerate Person (New Inner Man) w/sinful flesh
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)
Power of Sin (in sinful disposition)	Power of Sin (in flesh)	None
Self Effort (rely on own abilities)	Self Effort (rely on own abilities)	Human Effort
Holy Spirit	Holy Spirit	None (for living)
Yes (for living)	Yes (for living)	None (for living)
Appropriate	Dependency & Appropriate	Not Apply
Holy Spirit	Holy Spirit	Obedience
Physical Body (servant of sinful disposition)	Self-Efforts to cope with life, relying on our own abilities	Physical Body (seat of sin)
Sinful Disposition (in physical body)	NI	Propensity to Sin (in physical body)
Sinful Disposition Reigning Over Physical Body	NI	Physical Body Influenced by Sinful Flesh

NI = Not Indicated

ESCAPE

our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.” It is usually assumed that “nature” in the clause “we...were by nature children of wrath” refers to the sin nature, which accounts for the non-believer’s sinful behavior. On the other hand, the preferred view is to understand “nature” in the sense of origin or descent, with the clause translated, “We were, because of our ancestors, children of wrath.”³ “It is the natural endowment or condition inherited from our ancestors, particularly from Adam (Rom 5:12-21), that brings wrath.”⁴ Consequently, “the unregenerate are children destined to God’s wrath.”⁵

Nevertheless, the typical translation, “we...were by nature children of wrath,” springs from interpreting “nature” as “a natural quality, so that when ‘left to ourselves,’ we are destined to suffer wrath, the consequence of sin.”⁶ This particular interpretation would justify a “sin nature” or “old nature” idea, meaning that unbelievers deserve God’s wrath since their sin nature causes them to sin.

The author prefers the “natural descent” rendering to the “natural quality” position. Consequently, the notion of a “sin nature” is not supported in Scripture. That does not mean that Christians do not possess a propensity or an inclination to sin. While the inner man cannot sin, the believer’s sinful flesh continues to influence his behavior.

2 Peter 1:4

Peter wrote, “For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.” The understanding of the clause “so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature” is critical. In the context, the believer’s walk is under discussion. Based on the God’s provisions (3; 4a), the Christian now can live, or at least has the potential to live, obediently.⁷ The phrase *you may become* is actually a verb, with the form indicating the possibility of becoming a “partaker” or “sharer” in the divine nature. The essence of the verse can be captured in this manner—

God has given us what we need for godly life and thus we can experientially share in God’s nature—that is, in His holiness—and we can actually escape the bondage to lust that corrupts human life in this world.⁸

APPENDIX A

This verse does not speak to a new nature. Rather the context indicates that the Christian can experience intimate fellowship or holiness with Christ. The import is the potential and actual experience of walking obediently in shared holiness with the living God. Paul continues in verses 5-7 to explain that the Christian's choices determine if this becomes a reality.⁹ "It does not come automatically."¹⁰ Decisions have consequences.

Summary

From Ephesians 2:3 a "sin nature" cannot be supported, but non-believer and believer alike obviously possess a capacity to sin. Additionally, 2 Peter 1:4 does not provide support for a "new nature," yet the truest self, the inner man of the Christian, cannot sin. That is why Needham emphasized the essential righteousness of the believer, who can live according to God's Word rather than in defiance of it.

Conflict in Christian Life

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

ESCAPE

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,"¹¹ meaning "trying to live by self-effort," and consequently wrote, "The Christian life is easy, if you just *let Him do it*."¹² 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 apart from the Spirit's power would be considered sin. (#2) Rather than the Christian, God "ought...to reward Himself at the judgment"¹³ 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."¹⁴

APPENDIX A

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, these 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.¹⁵ Otherwise the behavior would be "spirit-produced" and godly. The fallacy of that position was addressed in chapter 6, *Walk: Focusing on What?*

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

ESCAPE

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.¹⁶ Accessing the power of the Spirit is by "daily dependence,"¹⁷ "expectation,"¹⁸ or "appropriation."¹⁹ Unfortunately their how to experience His power is associated with the biblical concept of "yieldedness," "dedication," or "presentation" found in Romans 6:13.²⁰ 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. *Supplement B* provides insight.

Supplement B Insight to "Fruit Production"

Since the fruit of the Spirit is addressed only once in the New Testament, it's context is crucial.

The context of Galatians 5:16-26 concerns two opposing... influences that vie to affect the believer and, therefore, the

APPENDIX A

believer's behavior. Walking and living *according to the flesh* or *according to the Spirit* is likewise addressed in Romans 8:4-5 and 8:12-13. To walk by the flesh concerns the believer choosing to allow his sin capacity to influence his behavior. Paul's concern is that believers choose not to be so influenced by the flesh when he pens, "Do not turn our freedom into an opportunity for the flesh" (Gal. 5:13). Conversely, to walk by the Spirit concerns the believer choosing to allow the Spirit to influence his behavior. The believers have been given freedom in Christ (Rom. 6:1-10), but now believers are free to choose to be slaves to righteousness or to sin (Rom. 6:11-23). Freedom came with a cost on Christ's part: once free we must choose to be influenced by the flesh or by the Spirit. This then is the conflict each believer faces—the Choice! Paul explains the dilemma, "For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another" (Gal. 5:17). Rather than addressing a "spontaneous quality of life" produced by the Spirit...these texts concern the active involvement of the believer in choosing and living obediently or disobediently.²¹

The representative lists of the deeds of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit are important for special consideration.

In particular, four of the nine virtues in the fruit-of-the-Spirit list (love, patience, kindness and gentleness) are identical to four of the eight virtues believers are commanded to "put on" in Colossians 3:12-14. As [addressed in this old man/new man text], believers are commanded to "put on" a way of life and live in a Godly manner and "put off" another lifestyle, living according to the flesh. The point of Colossians 3 is behavior because the believer now has a new position in Christ. The believer's new position should lead to Godly living. When Colossians 3 and Galatians 5 are placed side by side, it is evident that the believer's fruit of choices (Col 3) is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5). Of course, if you hold the view that the Spirit empowers the believer to live, producing Godly behavior in the believer, then the fruit of the Spirit would of necessity be understood as the Spirit's spontaneous work through the believer. The Spirit's conduct demonstrated and the Spirit's fruit revealed. This concept, however, lacks biblical support

ESCAPE

and imposes an interpretative agenda. Rather, the Galatians and Romans passages address believers actively choosing to obey or disobey God's Word. The result of the disobedience shows up as deeds of the flesh, while obedience manifests the fruit of the Spirit.²²