

ONE-NATURISM

INTRODUCTION

Until more recent years, probably the majority of the fundamental-evangelical believers, particularly those exposed to dispensational teaching, understood that all believers lived with two natures, the old and the new. One-nature teaching has been promoted by prominent teachers and writers who have been deeply influenced through the teaching and writings of more recent Reformed or Covenant theologians and their disciples. David Dunlap explains:

“Among Reformed Bible teachers, the view that a Christian does not possess an old nature has rapidly become the majority view. During the last fifty years, Reformed teachers have stepped forward, ardently stressing that believers do not possess an old sinful nature.... This unorthodox view has been embraced by most current Reformed teachers and theologians. However, it must be noted that this view is of recent origin, and was not the view of the majority of Reformers from the time of the 1500’s to our present century. In our present era Reformed professor Robert Dabney taught this view in the late 1800’s and Reformed theologian B. B. Warfield espoused this view in his work *Christ is Lord*. Many observers trace this view’s rise in popularity back to the 1940’s to the teaching and writings of Professor John Murray (1898-1975), who was associated for many years with Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. Yet we must reiterate that this view is a new view, a view that was not held by the majority of the early Reformers, nor is it held by leading Dispensational theologians. Anthony Hoekema, a respected Calvinist theologian, who holds the one-nature view, candidly concedes that this view is new and was not held by the Reformers.”¹

In one-nature teaching the believer is said to have only one nature (the new nature), not two natures, since at conversion the old/sinful/Adamic nature has been eradicated or “exchanged” for the new nature. In contrast, God’s Word pictures believers as having two-natures. While still having the old, Adamic nature, believers are also “partakers of the divine nature” or new nature (2 Pet. 1:4). This paper will highlight a few of the areas in which God’s Word differs with the one-nature teaching.²

EXTINCTION OF THE OLD MAN AND THE OLD ADAMIC SIN NATURE

In most one-nature teaching the *old man* (Rom. 6:6; Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9) is often identified as “that old inner self which was empowered by the old nature you inherited from Adam Your old self — the sinner — and your old nature — characterized by the sin ... are gone forever because you are no longer separated from God [Your old man] is dead, buried, gone forever ...”³ It is stated that our “old man was crucified with Christ. He is non-existent; he is no longer there. If you are a Christian, the man that you were in Adam has gone out of existence; he has no

¹ David Dunlap, “[One Naturism](http://plymouthbrethren.org)” (*Plymouth Brethren Writings*; <http://plymouthbrethren.org>).

² For the purpose of this paper only the Covenant form of one-nature teaching is considered. There is a *Wesleyan* or *Holiness* form, which teaches that sin itself is eradicated, usually through a “second blessing” sanctification experience. [Understandably not all one-nature teaching promoters agree on all points, as the various quotes will verify. All quotes used in this paper supporting one-nature teaching are the words of Covenant theologians or teachers deeply influenced by them.]

³ Neil T. Anderson, *Victory Over The Darkness*, (Ventura CA: Regal Books, 1990), 76-79.

reality at all; you are in Christ.”⁴ The old man “does not mean the carnal nature and all its propensities Neither does it mean the flesh with its affections and lusts The ‘old man’ is not ‘the flesh,’ he is not the ‘corrupt nature;’ the old man is the Adamic nature, the old humanity.”⁵

Others promoting one-nature teaching have written: “You don’t have two natures. The only nature any Christian has is the nature of the Lord Jesus Himself So what has happened to the old man? Paul says that the old has ‘passed away’ (2 Cor. 5:17). You know what it means when someone has ‘passed away.’ To put it plain, they’re dead. That’s what happened to our old sin nature Who was Paul speaking about when he said, ‘I have been crucified and I no longer live’ (Gal. 2:20)? He was referring to his sin nature.”⁶ It “is a serious misunderstanding to think of the believer as having both an old and a new nature The believer is one new man. The old man has ceased to exist. Salvation brings about a radical change in the nature of the believer.”⁷

Does Romans 6 actually teach that the old man or old nature is extinct? Does death mean that the old man ceases to exist? Paul wrote:

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. –Rom. 6:1-7

Paul’s point is that our old man was crucified with Christ in order that we should no longer be slaves of sin. In that sense, the old man or old nature died. But death in God’s Word does not mean extinction. When a person dies, they do not cease to exist.

In Genesis chapter 2, we read:

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” –Gen. 2:16-17

When Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, they did not cease to exist. However, they did die in a spiritual sense. They experienced a separation from God, and their relationship with God was broken because of their sin. Their first actions after sinning were to cover themselves up and hide from God (Gen. 3:7-8).

⁴ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans, The New Man, An Exposition of Chapter 6* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973). Cited in Steve McVey, *Grace Walk*, (Eugene OR: Harvest House, 1995), 59.

⁵ Lloyd-Jones, op. cit., 62, 79. Cited in David C. Needham, *Birthright — Christian, Do You Know Who You Are?* (Portland OR: Multnomah Press, 1979), 241-242.

⁶ McVey, op. cit., 56-58.

⁷ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Freedom From Sin* (Chicago, Moody Press, 1987), 32, 33. Cited in Miles Stanford book review.

In the story of Lazarus and the Rich Man, both were dead. Yet neither one was extinct. See Luke 16:19-31.

Paul did not say, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is to be extinct!” Rather, he said “to die is gain (Phil. 1:21).”

He did not say that he would prefer, “to be absent from the body and to cease to exist.” He said that to die for the believer is “to be present with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8).”

In Ephesians chapter 2, Paul wrote:

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. —Eph. 2:1-3

Paul says that at the time we were dead, we were walking according to the course of this world. At that time, we were fulfilling the desires of the flesh. Obviously, at the time that we were dead we were still in existence. We were not extinct. We were literally a “dead man walking.”

In God’s Word, death does not mean extinction. It does not mean that the person ceases to exist.

Dr. Ryrie wrote about the remedy for the inherited sin nature that believers struggle with. He said:

The remedy is twofold. (1) Redemption includes a judgment on the sin nature so that the believer is no longer bound to serve sin (Rom. 6:18; 8:1; Gal. 5:24). All that which belongs to the old life has been crucified with Christ. Death always means separation; therefore, His death separated us from the dominion of original sin. (2) However, the old is not eradicated until the resurrection; therefore, God has given us His Holy Spirit to give us victory over sin in daily life.

We are separated from the dominion of sin by Christ’s death, and we are free from its domination by the power of the Spirit.⁸

The one-nature teaching as expressed above clearly equates the “now extinct” *old man* with the *Adamic nature*. Yet it is also stated that the old man is neither the flesh nor the corrupt nature. However, it seems better to understand that this sinful corrupt nature **is** the *Adamic nature*, which we inherited from the “*old man*,” the fallen, first Adam (Rom. 5:12-21). In our unregenerate condition we were “*fulfilling the desires of the flesh [or sinful nature, NIV] and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others*” (Eph. 2:3).⁹ Our sinful Adamic nature is still in/with all believers even though we are also “*partakers of the divine nature*” through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19) and the very life and nature of the “*new man*,” Christ, the last Adam, is in us (Col. 1:27). This accounts for the conflict within believers to which Paul refers when he wrote of his own experience as a believer (Rom. 7:15-25). He also referred to this conflict when he wrote, “*For the flesh [or sinful nature] lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit*

⁸ Ryrie, Charles Caldwell. *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999. Print.

⁹ In some contexts *sarx* (Gr.) is best understood as the “carnal nature.”

against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other” (Gal. 5:17a). People think and act according to their natures. By this theological term, nature, we do not mean person, but rather that set of attributes or characteristics manifested by a life source. While we believers ourselves each remain only as one *person*, we are capable of thinking and acting both sinfully and righteously because we now have two, co-existing *natures*, the source of which is either the first Adam (fallen) or the last Adam. The two Adams are the life source for our two natures.

If, as one-nature teaching declares, “the old man or sin nature no longer exists in the Christian”¹⁰ and we are *actually*, not positionally, “dead to sin” (Rom. 6:2), then why would God tell us believers to *reckon* ourselves “to be dead indeed unto sin” (Rom. 6:11)? Paul admonished the Ephesian believers to “put off concerning the former manner of life, the old man, which is corrupt [or is being corrupted, NASB] according to the deceitful lusts” (Eph. 4:22). If the “old man” does not exist, why would Paul tell believers “to put off your old man?” And, if he “has gone out of existence” and “has no reality at all,” why would Paul say that your old man “is [now] *being corrupted* by its deceitful lusts”? It seems to us that it is more biblically consistent to think in terms of the believer as still having the old sinful Adamic nature within him. In one-nature teaching the extinction of the old nature is closely related to *the believer’s new identity*.

THE BELIEVER’S “IDENTITY”

It now seems more common for one-nature teaching to generally emphasize the believer’s *identity* in Christ rather than the believer’s *position* in Christ. It is often indicated that God “doesn’t determine identity by behavior but by birth. A person born into the family of God receives a new identity The essence of your identity rests in your spirit What you are at the spirit level [a saint, righteous and holy] determines your real identity ... [It was the old man or the sin nature] “that gave us our identity before we were saved [We] have only one nature now, the nature of Christ Jesus”¹¹ It is stated: “The Bible doesn’t refer to believers as sinners, not even sinners saved by grace. Believers are called saints — holy ones — who occasionally sin [There has been a] “radical transformation of your core identity from sinner to saint.”¹² “If a true Christian accepts himself as a sinner, then his core identity is sin.”¹³ As a believer “I am not sin and I am not a sinner: I am a saint struggling with sin, which causes me to do what I don’t want to do.”¹⁴ It is also stated that regeneration “is becoming someone you had never been before. This new identity is not on the flesh level, but the spirit level — one’s deepest self. This act is more than a judicial act of God. It is an act so REAL that it is right to say that a Christian’s essential nature is righteous rather than sinful I am a person who in terms of my most essential nature (deepest

¹⁰ Charles Solomon, *Rejection Syndrome*, 187.

¹¹ McVey, op. cit., 42, 43, 45, 57.

¹² N. T. Anderson, *The Bondage Breaker*, (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1990), 44.

¹³ N. T. Anderson, *Living Free in Christ* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1993), 72. Cited in David G. Moore and Robert A. Pyne, “Neil Anderson’s Approach to the Spiritual Life,” (*Bibliotheca Sacra*, Jan-Mar, 1996), 76.

¹⁴ Anderson, *Victory Over The Darkness*, 83. [The author at times seems to merge or perhaps equate “identity” in one-nature teaching as he understands it, with the more traditional term “position” as used by those of us who embrace the believer’s dual nature. But in our thinking, they are not identical. See Anderson’s, *The Bondage Breaker*, 229ff.]

self, inner man, new man) is a creation of God who does not sin. I am righteous — by nature delighting in the law of God. This new man is not simply a capacity; it is the real me. The person I once was (the old man) I am no more I am not two people, but there are most certainly two levels of my personhood. There is a deeper self (inner man) and my more shallow self (the flesh).”¹⁵

A person who sins is a sinner in the same actual sense as one who paints is a painter. Not all sinners are saints; but since all saints actually sin experientially, all saints are sinners (1 John 1:8). Paul even identified himself as a *sinner* — in fact, *the chief of sinners* (1 Tim. 1:15). He also identified himself as a *saint*, in fact *less than the least of all saints* (Eph. 3:8). Paul identified all believers as “saints” no doubt because they were positionally holy, separated unto God. God, the judge, has judicially declared believers to be righteous even though in actuality “*there is none righteous, no, not one*” (Rom. 3:10). Jesus Himself declared, “*There is none good but one, that is God*, (Mk. 10:18).” The command, “Cleanse your hands, ye sinners” (James 4:8), is addressed to saints. Believers have a heavenly, spiritual identity as saints even though they also have an earthly, physical identity as *sinners*. We should see ourselves as *saints* who sin and as *sinners* who are forgiven. There is nothing wrong with a believer’s testimony, “I’m a sinner saved by grace.” Some have stated: “By addressing believers as ‘saints,’ Paul was making a statement not about their core identity, but about God’s declaration that they are righteous in Christ.”¹⁶

In thinking of the believer’s so-called identity, this question seems pertinent: It is claimed that “the ‘old self’ no longer exists [and the] pre-regeneration person no longer exists ...! One wonders, in this approach, who was saved? It wasn’t me, because the old me *does* not exist and the present me *did* not exist. Jesus didn’t really save the me that exists now! Is our union with Christ in His death presumed to mean that we are now different persons who did not exist before?”¹⁷ “Identity” may be a good term to use. It must be an identity based on our *position* in Christ. However, much of one-nature teaching seems to ignore or even repudiate *positional truth*.

POSITIONAL TRUTH

In much of one-nature teaching the believer’s *identity* in Christ is not equated with or based on the believer’s *position* in Christ. It has been emphasized in this way: “Mark this — *a Christian is a person who has become someone he was not before*. A Christian, in terms of his deepest identity, is a SAINT Not only positionally (true in the mind of God but not true in actuality here on earth), not only judicially (a matter of God’s moral bookkeeping), but ACTUALLY In the deepest sense of personhood, if you have received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, you are not a sinner. You are righteous. But what ‘you’ are we talking about? Not some ethereal, ‘positional’

¹⁵ Needham, op. cit., 61, 78, 92. Consistent with most all one-nature teaching, it is also stated: “You [a believer] are living in the age of the new covenant; God has written His law on your heart (Jer. 31:31-34; cf. 2 Cor. 3:3)! You and I ‘are from God.’ Our nature is His!” (p.160). This is a misapplication of God’s covenant with Israel regarding their future.

¹⁶ D. Moore and R. Pyne, “Neil Anderson’s Approach to the Spiritual Life,” 77.

¹⁷ Charles R. Smith, “Book Review: *Birthright*,” *Grace Theological Journal* 3 (Fall 1982), 287. Also cited in Frederic R. Howe, “*A Review of Birthright*, by David C. Needham,” (*Bibliotheca Sacra*, Jan-Mar. 1984), 68-78.

you.”¹⁸ It is even plainly stated in these words: “Listen to me: there is no such thing as ‘positional truth.’ The Bible speaks only of truth and deception. The term ‘positional truth’ is simply Satan’s deception ... the old man literally died in Christ. It is not positional.”¹⁹

A related issue has to do with *imparted* righteousness. It has also been stated in one-nature teaching: “God only *imputed* righteousness to Old Testament saints, but He *imparted* righteousness to you when you were saved. Imputing righteousness was a legal verdict, but imparting righteousness is a literal event that happens to New Testament saints. In these days of grace, Christians are literally given the righteousness of Christ. Lot had righteousness *credited* to him, but you had righteousness *created* in you when you were saved.”²⁰ Such reasoning makes it possible for one-nature teaching promoters to boldly declare that “A saint is literally a holy person As a believer ... I am not a sinner.”²¹ “I have been made righteous” (Rom. 5:1; 2 Cor. 5:21).²² This is based on the “radical, inner transformation of justification” involving “exchanged natures.” It is thus correct to call this “one-time transformation... a new perspective on justification and sanctification.”²³ It is indeed “a new perspective.”

We rejoice in the fact that we believers are now identified as SAINTS — only because we, like Abraham and Lot, have been *justified* by faith (Rom. 3:21-4:5). God has not *made* us perfectly righteous (actually and/or experientially) through the *impartation* of the righteousness of Christ. He, as our almighty Judge, has judiciously declared us to be perfectly righteous through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. There is a huge difference. Here is the hinge on which the whole controversy [of the Reformation] turns. Catholics regard justification as an act by which a man *is made just [or righteous]*; Protestants, as one in which he is *merely declared or reputed just [or righteous]*, the merits of another — viz. Christ — being made over to his account.”²⁴ Is this latter not the meaning of forensic, judicial justification? We believers are now perfectly righteous positionally because the righteousness of Jesus Christ has been judiciously credited to each of our accounts — not through *impartation*, but through *imputation*. Our spiritual identity as saints is a *positional identity* that we believers have because we are in Christ.

God has also perfectly *sanctified* us positionally,²⁵ yes, even glorified us [past tense] positionally

¹⁸ Needham, op. cit., 47. [With author’s emphasis — For more on Needham’s view on “positional truth” see pp. 13, 46, 57, 58, 136, 154.]

¹⁹ Bill Gillham, *Lifetime Guarantee*, (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyall, Publishers, Inc., 1987), 81.

²⁰ McVey, op. cit., 51. [McVey has been deeply influenced by Gillham (65-67) who wrote his Foreword.] Others have shared our concern for this one-nature teaching “lack of emphasis on the legal or positional basis for believers being called saints or holy.” Elliot Miller, “The Bondage Maker: Examining the Message and Method of Neil T. Anderson, Part One: Sanctification and the Believer’s Identity in Christ,” (*Christian Research Journal*, Summer 1998). Or check the website at www.equip.org/free/DAO81.htm

²¹ Anderson, *Victory Over the Darkness*, 44, 83.

²² Anderson, *The Bondage Breaker*, 232-33.

²³ Anderson, *Victory Over the Darkness*, 71-73, 84. Most one-nature teaching promoters, including McVey and Anderson, teach on “progressive sanctification” and would not accept the Roman Catholic teaching on justification conditioned on a life-time process of sacramental works.

²⁴ Addis and Arnold, *A Catholic Dictionary*, 1960, 491.

²⁵ References on positional sanctification include these: Heb. 2:11; 10:14; 13:12; Jude 1; 1 Cor. 1:2, 30; 6:11.

in Christ (Rom. 8:30). We believers also experience in our present lives the blessing of *progressive* sanctification as we reckon by faith on the glorious positional truths having to do with *who we are* and *what we have* in Christ and yield ourselves to Him (Rom. 6:1-13). We were positionally chosen IN Christ — even before there was an earth to live on and before we had an actual, experiential existence (Eph. 1:3). We believers are positionally “blessed with all spiritual blessings” in heaven — most of which we will not actually experience until our rapture or death. In fact we now have in our possession the guarantee of a limitless and glorious inheritance, which one day we will surely experience in all its fullness and for all eternity. We are positionally *identified* with Christ in all that He actually experienced for us. When He died, we died with Him (Gal. 2:20). When He rose from the dead, we rose with Him (Col. 3:1-2). When He ascended, we ascended with Him to even sit with Him in heaven (Eph. 2:6). Even though all this has not been our literal, actual experience, it is just as real *positionally* as if we had. We did not even exist as earthly creatures when all this happened. These blessed, factual truths are best considered as positional truth and identification truths which are foundational for the believer’s spiritual growth toward maturity.

ONE-NATURE TEACHING VIEWS ON THE SOURCE OF BELIEVERS’ SIN

In one-nature teaching it is readily acknowledged that believers do actually sin. So what, then, is the source for the believer’s sin? It sounds like it is not internally in the believer’s person. As to his “essential nature” or “core identity” he is actually a *saint*, not a *sinner*. That’s his real *identity*, who he really is. In one-nature teaching sin is obviously related to “the flesh.” However, because “the flesh” has been defined in so many different ways it is often quite difficult for us to determine what in one-nature teaching is actually *the real source* of sin in the believer. This may be partly due to the fact that many of the leading promoters are either trained extensively in the field of psychology or deeply influenced by those who are. The following quotes from one-nature teaching illustrate how the flesh is variously thought to be either the source and/or the expression of sin in the believer.

The flesh in relation to a “non-evil” part of man’s human nature in one-nature teaching — One has indicated that in most Pauline passages “*the flesh* comprises everything (impulses, thoughts, desires, and the like) belonging to [‘the outward man’] It is human nature in its frailty and weakness and in need of help. It is man apart from God But though not evil in itself, the flesh is that part of man’s nature which gives sin its opportunity.”²⁶

The flesh in relation to learned specific techniques in one-nature teaching — A popular promoter of one-nature teaching wrote a book’s first chapter to show how you [the believer] have programmed your brain with earthly techniques for satisfying your needs for love and self-esteem — the greatest needs in life — rather than seeking these through Christ. These techniques are called ‘flesh’ by God (see Phil. 3:3-6).²⁷ *The flesh* is said to be “the techniques we use to try to meet our needs, independent of Jesus Christ All of us have developed flesh patterns. We have learned specific techniques that minimize the risk of painful circumstances in our lives and

²⁶ James S. Stewart, *A Man in Christ*, (New York: Harper and Brothers), 103-104. Cited in Needham, op. cit., 36.

²⁷ Gillham, op. cit., 4. Gillham does recognize that the “term ‘flesh’ has many meanings in the Bible.” p.9.

maximize the opportunity for self-gratification.”²⁸ Although the believer “has become a new man spiritually, he still lives in the old man’s body, indwelt by sin. He still has the old man’s thinking pattern, the old memories, the old habits.”²⁹

The flesh in relation to habits of the brain/mind/thoughts in one-nature teaching — It is also stated that the Evil One works “through the flesh” defined as “old patterns in the brain.”³⁰ The claim is made that when you were under the authority of your “Old Man” or “Old Skipper” or “your old sinful self with its sinful nature ... your old self trained and conditioned your actions, reactions, emotional responses, thought patterns, memories and habits in a part of your brain called ‘the flesh.’ ... During the years you spent separated from God, your worldly experiences thoroughly programmed your brain with thought patterns, memory traces, responses and habits which are alien to God. So even though your old skipper is gone, your flesh remains in opposition to God as a preprogrammed propensity to sin, which is living independent of God ...”³¹ In the believer it is a “learned independence” which “continues to promote rebellion against God” in the area of the mind.³²

The flesh in relation to habits of the body/bodily members in one-nature teaching — “It is not our old sin nature we struggle with. It’s the power of sin working through the old, worldly ways.”³³ “As long as the believer lives, he will continue to struggle with sinful habits and propensities All the sensory factors in the body that are exposed to the world’s system can easily become channels for temptation and sin A believer must keep his sinful body under control After salvation, sin no longer resides in man’s innermost self, which is recreated in Christ. Yet it finds its residual dwelling in the flesh.”³⁴ “Paul sees his body as the cause of all his problems with spiritual growth.” Although the body as such is not the source of sin, “Paul would have affirmed that sin seeps into the body from the heart (Matt. 15:11) The body has been programmed by one’s sinful nature to sin. At conversion that programming does not automatically disappear Quite the contrary — it comes over into the new life, making the body with its desires an enemy within.”³⁵ In one-nature teaching the thinking is that “... sin which formerly governed the whole of my personality is now only governing — or trying to govern — the bodily part of me. I in spirit, I as a soul, I as a personality am delivered; I am dead to sin ... sin still remains and is left in our bodies; not in us, but in our bodies. As persons, as souls we have already finished with it, but not the body. This body of sin — this body which sin inhabits and tries to use still remains Sin is no longer in

²⁸ McVey, *op. cit.*, 92.

²⁹ Bob George, *Growing in Grace*, (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1991), 111.

³⁰ Gillham, *op. cit.*, 17.

³¹ Anderson, *Victory Over The Darkness*, 79, 80.

³² *Ibid.*, 83-84. Under a discussion of “Healing Emotional Wounds From Your Past” the author also writes, “Old things, including the traumas of your past, are passed away. The old you is gone; the new you is here. The flesh, which represents how you processed those events according to the world and without Christ, remains. But you are able to render it inoperative.” p. 199.

³³ *Ibid.*, 165.

³⁴ MacArthur Jr., *Freedom From Sin*, 38, 58, 85, 161. Cited in M. Stanford, Book Review.

³⁵ Jay E. Adams, *The War Within — A Biblical Strategy for Spiritual Warfare* (Eugene OR: Harvest House Publishers 1989), 62-63.

me, it is in my members.”³⁶

The flesh in relation to some non-evil “principle” in one-nature teaching — One has stated: “Sin ... is the expression of an individual’s response to the issue of meaning apart from the life of God. Awareness of identity determines meaning in life. Fulfillment of meaning in terms of true identity for a believer is righteousness. The ‘sin-nature’ concept of necessity assumes that there is always somewhere inside of me something that is essentially evil Indeed, it is true that there is an operating “principle at work in every believer. That ‘principle’ — not evil in itself — is the incessant demand for meaning The moment that demand for meaning becomes dominant in my flesh rather than my deepest personhood — at that moment that ‘principle’ is producing evil in me. When flesh determines its own meaning, it always produces sin.”³⁷

The flesh in relation to Satan and spiritual warfare in one-nature teaching — It is claimed that “Satan accomplishes his goal through your thought life. [And just how does he do this? He does so by] masquerading as the now defunct ‘old man.’ It will seem as if the old man were alive and well. But if he is, God’s Word is not true. The Evil One’s strategy is to disguise himself in your thought life as your old man.”³⁸ Most promoters of one-nature teaching who are also deeply involved in the Spiritual Warfare Movement would probably agree that: “A demon cannot live in the Christian’s spirit — that is, the person’s central core, the part that died when Adam sinned, because Jesus now lives there. Demons can however, live in other parts just as sin can. Deliverance ministries regularly kick them out of those parts of Christians [They can] live in a Christian’s mind, emotions, body and will.”³⁹ In fact, it is not uncommon for various sins and/or “emotions” to be listed as “names of demons.” An example of one such listing includes these: lust, pride, anger, hate, revenge, murder, deceit, worry, anxiety, guilt, confusion, insecurity, ineffectuality, cursing, rebellion, violence, adultery, unbelief and doubt.⁴⁰

Another has written, “I believe that the word *sin* in Romans 6:12 is personified, referring to the person of Satan: ‘Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts.’ Satan is sin: the epitome of evil, the prince of darkness, the father of lies. I would have a hard time understanding how only a principle (as opposed to an evil personal influence) would reign in my mortal body in such a way that I would have no control over it. Even more difficult to understand is how I could get a principle out of my body. Paul says, ‘I find then the principle that *evil* is present in me, *the one* who wishes to do good’ (Romans 7:12). What is present in me is evil — the person, not the principle — and it is present in me because at some time I used my body as an instrument of unrighteousness Using our bodies as instruments of unrighteousness permits Satan to reign in our mortal bodies.”⁴¹

³⁶ Lloyd-Jones, op. cit., 74, 153, 83. Cited in Needham, op. cit., 251, 248, 85.

³⁷ Needham, op. cit., 81.

³⁸ Gillham, op., cit., 91.

³⁹ Charles H. Kraft, *Defeating Dark Angels, Breaking Demonic Oppression in the Believer’s Life*, (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications, 1992), 34, 67. Kraft is/was Professor of Anthropology and Intercultural Communication at the School of World Mission of Fuller Theological Seminary.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 123-135. See the resource paper on the Spiritual Warfare Movement.

⁴¹ Anderson, *Released From Bondage*, (San Bernardino, CA: Here’s Life Publishers, Inc., 1991), 123-125.

THE TWO-NATURE VIEW ON THE SOURCE OF BELIEVERS' SIN

Without commenting on all the preceding quotes, it should be simply emphasized that sin must have a source. The believer's sin is intrinsic, coming from within the believer himself. It is the believer, even as a new creation saint, who sins. And that's why all believers are sinners. That source of sin is within man's inner being called in Scripture *the heart* that "*is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it*" (Jer. 17:9)? That's why even believers can have an "*evil [or sinful] heart of unbelief,*" a heart that can be "*hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*" (Heb. 3:12-13). In talking about the sin that defiles a man, Jesus said, "*For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.*" (Mk. 7:21-23). Paul gave a comparable statement when he listed some of the "*works [acts] of the flesh.*" (Gal. 5:19-21a). Unfortunately believers often do such things. And sadly sin's expression, whether in an unbeliever or a believer, has the same source.

This inner source of sin is our inherited Adamic nature. In this last text and many others the term "flesh" refers to, or at least includes, the Adamic life/nature within us. Paul even went on to say that those "*who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the affections [passions] and lusts [desires]*" (Gal. 5:24). Just as the old man with the Adamic sinful nature has been put to death, so the flesh has been put to death by the believer's co-crucifixion with Christ. When Christ was crucified, so also was the believer (Gal. 2:20), the "old man" with the Adamic nature, (Rom. 6:6) and "the flesh" (Gal. 5:24). Yet in one-nature teaching the crucified old man with the sinful Adamic nature is said to be actually non-existent while the crucified flesh is still alive in the believer. How can one be actually crucified-dead and not the other? The Word states that the believer is even "*crucified ... unto the world*" and vice versa (Gal. 6:14). Yet this evil world is still with us as a very real enemy of the believer. Our co-crucifixion and identification with Christ have put to death our old man with the sinful Adamic nature and/or our flesh, and the world — *positionally*, not experientially. We are now positionally "*dead to sin*" (Rom. 6:11), having been made/set free from it (Rom. 6:18). We have been delivered from sin's bondage and power, but not it's presence. By our reckoning (Rom. 6:12) these things to be true of us, we can and do experience victory in our lives through our Lord Jesus Christ. As we have received Christ Jesus the Lord [*by faith,*] so [*by faith*] we are to walk in Him (Col. 2:6).

If sin is only on the "flesh level" (including our brain and other fleshly members) and not on the "spirit level" as often conveyed in One-nature teaching, then why did Paul exhort believers by these words: "*Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God*" (2 Cor. 7:1)? We are exhorted to "*glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's,*" (1 Cor. 6:20). Does this not imply that it is possible for the believer not to glorify God in his spirit or "at the spirit level?"

Thousands of believers have enjoyed the privilege of birth in a godly home and were saved at a very early age before their brains and other bodily members could be "programmed" much in ungodly sinful habits. Yet many of these, whether in a backslidden condition or not, and even without much if any exposure to "worldly ways," still manifest the same sins as other believers — including pride, independence, selfishness, covetousness, envy, evil thoughts, lust, sexual sins, etc. What is the source of their sin? Their sin comes from a heart with a sinful nature inherited from Adam, and not from their past worldly environment, recessed memories, programmed sinful habits or patterns grooved into their brains, or whatever.

SOME OTHER TEACHINGS RELATED TO ONE-NATURE TEACHING

1. ***Lordship salvation and lack of assurance*** — Much of one-nature teaching also promotes Lordship salvation. If the believer's death to sin (Rom. 6:11) is not understood positionally (as in one-nature teaching), when the believer shows by his sinful life that he really is not actually dead to sin, the conclusion is often made that he must not be a true believer. The following one-nature teaching quote may illustrate this: When "a person receives Christ as Savior and Lord, he dies to sin, so it is therefore impossible for a Christian to remain in a constant state of sinfulness. So a Christian can't be living in sin when he has died to it. All who come to Christ make a break with sin, a definite act that took place in the past at the moment of salvation. If someone abides in a state of sin, he is not a believer The moment a person believes, he is crucified and buried with Christ by a divine miracle and then raised with Him to a new life. Believer's lives are literally transformed."⁴² Exposure to such teaching often leads to believers' lack of assurance in their eternal salvation — the very thing that they need for their spiritual growth. Before Paul confronted the Christian liars and thieves at Ephesus with their lying and stealing (Eph. 4:25, 28), he reminded them of their tremendous position in Christ (Eph. 1-3). It is possible for a believer to live in sin even though he is in fact positionally dead to sin. One who continues to live a sinful lifestyle may or may not be a true believer. Only God knows for certain. Any assessment must come mostly from the professing believer's own testimony as to where his "hope" really lies.
2. ***Waging aggressive "spiritual warfare"*** — Many promoters of one-nature teaching have concluded that one logical and main source for most all the sinful thoughts/behavior believers face, besides "the flesh," must be the devil and/or demons, not the believer himself. This has led many to accept "a devil/demon-made-me-do-it" mentality. Thus they have become deeply involved in the spiritual warfare movement, which promotes so-called "truth encounters" and/or full-blown "power encounters."⁴³ When the old sinful Adamic life is not thought to be the source of sin in the believer, it has been easy for many to accept the thinking that sin in the believer is actually a demon by the name of a particular sin or group of sins. When "hamartia" can be personified as *Satan* instead of being understood as *sin* in Romans 6:12, it is no wonder that Satan, not sin, in the believer is considered to be the real cause for the believer's problems. One one-nature teaching claim is made "that no more than 15 percent of the evangelical Christian community is completely free of Satan's bondage."⁴⁴ This thinking is no doubt the reason why many one-nature teaching promoters have also developed and promoted various

⁴² MacArthur Jr., *Freedom From Sin*, 16, 30. Cited in M. Stanford Review. [See paper on Lordship Salvation vs Free Grace].

⁴³ Within the Spiritual Warfare Movement, there are two branches with differing views on how to deal with demons. One is the "power encounter" branch who believe that we must forcibly confront, bind, and expel demons from the lives of some people if they are to find spiritual freedom. The other branch encourages "truth encounters." This second branch is represented by Neil Anderson who believes that power encounters are not necessary, in fact may be dangerous. Anderson teaches, a more clinical approach for the demonized. He claims that Christians can be demonized, or demon possessed. According to Anderson, "anything bad which you cannot stop doing, or anything good which you cannot make yourself do, could be an area of demonic control." Anderson claims that 85% of evangelical Christians are controlled to some degree by Satan. See the articles by Gary Gilley—Spiritual Warfare [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#).

⁴⁴ Anderson, *The Bondage Breaker*, 107.

techniques, including “canned prayers” using certain efficacious clichés or verbal formulae and step-by-step procedures for waging aggressive spiritual warfare against the devil/demons who are thought to be the cause of the believer’s sin.⁴⁵

If all this present-day activity involved in waging “spiritual warfare” were essential for spiritual victory over sin, it seems that the Apostles in their epistles would have left us with clear direction as to just how this is to be done. But they have not done so, either in their teaching or by their example. Our enemies are the world, the flesh and the devil. But most of the believer’s problems with sin have to do with “the flesh.” And “the flesh” includes the old Adamic nature that is still with us as believers.

3. ***The externalization of believers’ sin and sanctification*** — When sin is thought to be removed from the believer’s old core identity, deepest self/personhood, spirit level, essential nature, inner being, or old self/me, it is in a sense “externalized” from the believer himself. Sin’s source is defined in terms like “the flesh” (as variously understood in one-nature teaching), memories, habits, bodily members, worldly ways, the old coat of humanness, principles, and Satanic or demonic bondage. This directs believers to the wrong source of their spiritual problems. By way of example, one promoter of one-nature teaching has written that “about 65 percent of all Christians” are bothered by sinful thoughts such as “lust, envy, greed, hatred, apathy, etc. Instead of recognizing that their minds are being peppered by the fiery darts of the enemy, they think the problem is their own fault. ‘If those foul thoughts are mine, what kind of a person am I?’ they wonder. So they end up condemning themselves while the enemy continues his attack unchecked.”⁴⁶

Christians should not be “taken off the hook” in such a way. Believers need to face the fact that we ourselves have sinful thoughts of “lust, envy, greed, hatred, apathy” selfishness, unbelief and pride. Scripture is clear that a saint is literally “tempted by his own lusts (pl.)” (James 1:14). We are not only saints positionally, but we are also sinners experientially. We need to acknowledge this fact. That’s the starting place. Then, for victory over sin, we need to *know* certain facts about our identification with Christ and our position in Him (Rom. 6:6). We have been delivered from sin’s bondage. We do not have to continue in sin. We are to *reckon* on these facts, believing them to be true (Rom. 6:11). Christ is our life and our righteousness. By abiding in Him, the True Vine, His life flows through us to bear righteous fruit for *His* glory, not our own (John 15:1-17). Such fruit is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). As we grow in grace our Christian lives become more the expression of His life in us. Even though we experience spiritual growth, we still need to acknowledge that we ourselves are not internally without sin (1 John 1:8).⁴⁷ We do this by confessing or acknowledging our sins to Him as the Holy Spirit brings conviction to our hearts (1 John 1:9).

⁴⁵ Anderson, *Released From Bondage*, 123-125. [See also N. Anderson, *The Bondage Breaker*, 185-204 and the paper on The Spiritual Warfare Movement].

⁴⁶ Anderson, *The Bondage Breaker*, 107.

⁴⁷ There is a case for understanding “sin” in 1 John 1:8 as having to do with the believer’s sinful *nature*, in contrast to “sins” in 1 John 1:9 having to do with the believer’s sinful *thoughts, attitudes and actions*.

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to identify only those areas of one-nature teaching that differs with the two-nature teaching found in God's Word. A Scriptural basis for the two-nature view has also been provided. Some have thought that one-nature teaching and the two-nature teaching are for practical purposes about the same. Some say, "It's just a matter of semantics." However, that is not the case. The issues considered here are sufficiently significant to warrant serious reflection. We trust that this paper will serve to clarify rather than confuse the issues.

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

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⁴⁸ It may be helpful to read Miles Stanford's Nov. 1987 critical review, "The New Nature, by Dr. Renald E. Showers."

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