

Saint or Sinner?  
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The following is a dialogue between John and I regarding the reformer's concept that we are both righteous and sinners at the same time. I think it is seminal in its approach to the subject. Jan Antonsson

We have to keep in mind that many Christians who are, at least in comparison to the average person in the pew, theologically astute, still think, to a great degree, from within the reformation paradigm, although they may have stretched it about as far as it will stretch. In my (formally unlettered) thinking, at the heart of the problem with the inadequacies in the theology of the reformers (which had its roots in Augustinian thought mostly) is the fact that they include sin and death in the dimension of Truth (Reality).

Christian Science, Science of Mind, New Age; that whole scene, intellectually reacting to that perversion, came up with a theology which was purely reactionary and laced with eastern mysticism. Their solution to the dilemma of what you accurately called spiritual schizophrenia, was to deny the EXISTENCE of sin and death, etc. Right there is a very fine line having to do with their meaning of illusion.

With them, all that nasty stuff simply has no existential actuality. If they taught that it has no Reality, I would agree since the New Testament reserves the word for truth (essential meaning reality) for Christ and all that is in Him. When we get up high enough in our thinking and get a birds-eye view of the New Testament, we see two diametrically opposing forces. If we get high enough we see the negative force fully contained in the positive but temporarily the negative is in violent opposition, not knowing that its opposition is part of the final plan.

These two opposing forces (penultimately speaking), are The Truth and the lie. The Truth has eternal substance and is most essentially the Seed of God, His Word. This is a Real Seed, the very generating

power and life of God. It is Really reproductive, multiplying the very Life, Being and Person of God Himself. As I have almost compulsively repeated, this has to do with God, in conjugal union within Him/Herself, planting His Seed (Sperm) and conceiving and birthing His family.

The lie, in an attempt to counterfeit the generating power of Deity, reproduces itself by its seed. Jesus said that the devil is a liar and the father of lies. Logically that makes him to be a lie. If a daughter that I father is a Gavazzoni, that makes me a Gavazzoni. If the devil is the father of lies, that makes him a lie! Now, a lie is different than the truth, even though it may have existential actuality. It is existentially actual but not Real. Here is a paradox: Sin and death are constituted by the lie. It is their very substance. Yet that substance is an existential void, an emptiness, an anti-being, as it were.

Within God's own omnipresence---not in His eternality, but in the dimension of His solidarity with His creation---He has created a void, a vacuum, so that it can be said that it exists within Him, but it exists in a kind of encapsulated form, in a indissoluble encapsulation that keeps it contained so that it can never, as it were, get into, become part of, and contaminate the constitution of the Divine Nature.

As an example, you could swallow poison in a capsule so that it would be within your body, but if the capsule never dissolves, the poison never gets INTO you; into your blood stream, into your tissues; it doesn't affect the quality of your life. [In reflecting on this truth we must not forget that John wrote that God is light, and IN Him is NO darkness, (I John 1:5)].

Within that void, that vacuum mentioned above, there is darkness; utter deprivation of the Light of Life. There, within Pure Relational Being, there comes into existence an anti-being; the evil one, whose existence counterfeits being, but takes on the appearance of being since it moves within Pure Being, but never contaminating it. That explains the place of evil within the cosmos, even though the cosmos is in God.

The seed of the serpent has no power to reproduce life, not to mention divine life. The operation of the seed of the serpent is entirely

a matter of the penetration by that sperm into the natural mind to reproduce a lie. That lie, beginning as a false identity grows into behavioral patterns (sin), but it is still all a lie, so that we can look at our "lives" (which is not really our lives) and our behavior that is antithetical to the Truth and call it what it is, a lie. Oh, the worlds of meaning in the prophesy by God Himself, "And I will put enmity between you (the serpent) and the woman and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise Him on the heel" (Gen. 3:15)

This is why Paul could say that he agreed with the law with his mind, but found himself doing what he didn't want to do while not doing what he did want to do, and then upon reflection conclude that it was not him doing it but "sin that dwelleth in (him)" (Rom. 7:17,20). There we see clearly the matter of the counterfeit persona, the pretender to true identity, the lie-constituted alter ego.

Paul could say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20). Also he could say, "I sin, yet not I, but sin that dwelleth in me." In the case of Real living, Christ is the active Agent and we are granted communion and participation in His life. So also, in the matter of sinning; sin, is the active agent and we, yet NOT WE, do sin. But it is sin parading about in this body of death (also a lie, since we've been raised together with Christ) demanding to be acknowledged as, at least, having a part in our being.

Paul was thoroughly consistent in his theology. He could claim that He lived and yet say it wasn't him, likewise he could admit to sin and yet say it REALLY wasn't him doing it. In the world of psychoanalysis, I'm sure that would be called denial. In the Truth which is Christ, and the Christ in whom we live, it is simply True.

So you see, the reformers were still intimidated by the accuser of the brethren (Rev. 12:10), so that they felt that they had to acknowledge the "reality" of both sin and righteousness as being "true" of them. John, of course, wonderfully witnesses to the Real Truth in his gospel and first epistle, recording Jesus claim to be the Truth and we, being born of the seed of God, not being able to keep on sinning. If we synthesize Paul and John, we have John harmonizing with Paul,

reminding believers not to deny that they have sinned, but then telling them that what did the sinning was not of the Seed of God.

Obviously, some of the earliest New Agers, the Gnostics, were trying to solve the problem of sin by denying its existence, and particularly its existence in them, but John, not really making a theological statement as such, but dealing with them where they were, in effect, says, "You can't solve the sin problem by claiming that there's no sin in you."

That's calling God a liar. You are sinning, but it's not that "you" which is born of God that sins and thus IT IS NOT THE REAL YOU. The Real Person is Christ in you. He doesn't sin. Deal with the fact that sin is in you, but don't fall for the lie that says that it indicates anything of your true identity or that it has anything to do with Truth. Having said that, let me quote a wonderful verse, the next to the last in John's first epistle. "And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life" ( I John 5:20). If we, from the Greek, validly include the idea of "real" with "true" in this verse, we get the full force of it.

Lastly, John closes that epistle with the exhortation, "Little children, keep yourself from idols" (I John 5:21). What idols is he talking about?

I think they are the many forms that the lie takes which we worship when we claim them (it) as our Reality or any part of our Reality instead of Christ.

All forms of eastern mysticism try to solve this problem by raising their/our consciousness. God solved it by taking on sinful flesh and by so doing, condemned sin in the flesh. He didn't "give a teaching" about the truth and the lie. He joined us in our victimization and drank the cup of lies to the last dregs and cast Himself into His Father's arms in death.

But death, gaining entrance into the Holy One of Israel, discovered that it had been swallowed up in victory. God didn't send us a correct theology. God acted, demonstrating the lie to be a lie through the death and resurrection of Christ, and He will convince every man in

due time of the Truth, and birth in each one the Son of God and the faith of the Son of God.

We can rejoice that the Light of Truth has and will overcome the darkness of the lie. Scripture speaks of "the light of the glory of God...." (II Cor. 4:4,6), and that "the knowledge of the glory of God shall cover the earth...." (Hab. 2:14). We see in this, the total dispelling of darkness; the complete banishment of the lie of the evil one; the swallowing up of darkness by the Light, by the out-shining of the riches of Divine Being in Christ.

I think of Harry Robert Fox's encouragement to "soak in the love of God." Likewise I encourage my fellow believers to "soak" in the truth of our true identity in Christ, and be patient toward being convinced that their "life is hidden with Christ in God," so that, "When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then shall you also be revealed with Him in glory" (Col. 3: 3,4, NAS).

What I'm saying is, that as we hear Paul say to us, "knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him..." (Rom. 6: 6), that we must not think that a mere intellectual assent to that sublime idea is what Paul meant by "knowing." It must be revealed to us by the miracle of Divine Light, that indeed our old man or self lives no more and any pretense that there is any continuity of the same is a lie, whether it is presented to us in words or in the form of actions.

We must "soak" in the truth until we truly know. To "know as we are known" (I Cor. 13:12), is not an eschatological event on a prophetic calendar. Such knowing is in the Spirit in us, and we must not impetuously run about trying to prove that our old man is dead without really knowing so. We can only believe that which we know. Did you get that? Faith is not a leap in the dark. It is one's confident stand upon the foundation of light.

Only after one is enabled to take such a stand can one "walk in the Light." (I John 1:7). No one can believe, in the biblical sense, without knowing. That is why Paul first says, "Knowing this" and then, and only then, follows up with the exhortation to "reckon yourselves to be dead to sin" (Rom. 6:11). "Reckon" is one of the many metaphors for faith ("count" or "consider" are helpful translations also). When we

really know what God knows of us, that Christ is our life, then we can stare the lie in the face and say, Back off impostor, you have no place in me."