

SF. Mary's Pathway
deal
24 July 1983.
God's Two Pertinent Questions

Genesis 3:8-14; Genesis 4 vs 1-9

In the narrative of the history of ~~events~~ ^{events} in the Garden of Eden we ~~are told~~ ^{notice} that God asked 2 pertinent questions - the first to Adam ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ the Garden of Eden in the words: "Where are you?" and the second to Cain outside the Garden of Eden in the words: "Where is your brother Abel?" "Where are you?" "Where is your brother?"

For both Adam & Cain these are painful and threatening questions. God does not intend them to be seen in that way because His motive in asking them is one of deep & loving concern. Both questions illustrate so clearly the issue of disturbed relationships - the first between man & God

1. because of Adam's disobedience to God - When are you?
2. and the second between man and man because of Cain's murdering of his brother:
- Where is your brother? They also illustrate the painful but salutary truth that any

disturbance or destruction of the harmonious and trusted relationship between God and man inevitably leads to the serious disruption or even destruction of the true relationship between man & man, ^{between} one human being and another. And furthermore God, through asking Cain: "Where is your brother?" is illustrating the important truth that there is only one way of restoring the broken relationship between man and God - and that is by ^{also} restoring the relationship with your fellow-human being, your neighbour. He or she who refuses to ~~confront~~ face honestly and answer the question: "Where is your brother?" will find it impossible to face honestly and answer the ^{primary} question: "Where are you?" The way back to God is only possible if you are also willing to find the way back to the heart of your brother. Equally the person who refuses to ^{or dodges} answer the "Where are you?" will also dodge and avoid answering the "Where is your brother?" And it is this refusal or avoidance which leads to alienation & separation.

13

To assist us in our search for truth about ourselves others, It will help us to discover what happened between God on the one hand and Cain & Abel on the other hand. Both bring their firstfruits of their labors as a thanksgiving to God. God accepts that of Abel and rejects that of Cain - why? The narrative in Genesis gives us no answer or explanation but the writer of the letter to the Hebrews states in Heb. 11 vs 4: "By faith Abel offered a sacrifice greater than Cain's, and through faith his goodness was attested, for his offerings had God's approval." The secret therefore lay in the difference in motive in the hearts of these 2 men - unknown to each other but known to God. And Cain's reaction of anger and sullenness is ample proof thereof. And if one asks what the root cause of Cain's ^{of slaying his brother} action was his display of jealousy provides the answer, leading to the murdering of his brother. It could equally have been fear or pride or selfishness and history has always proven that when one or more of these motives dominate the lives of individuals or people, it inevitably leads to alienation, estrangement, division, death.

14

Effects: Cain's reaction provides us with a clear example of the effects that are being created by such an attitude and outlook. I would wish to mention the three most common and generally experienced consequences of the Cain spirit:

1. It leads to separation: Cain's killing of his brother ~~was~~ ^{was clearly} premeditated: "let us go into the open country". Clearly he had been contemplating this foul act for some time because in his heart he had already been distancing himself from his brother. A psychological and spiritual process was taking place in his mind being whereby he wanted to separate himself from his brother ^{in order} to absolve himself from any responsibility (as far as possible). So that when God asked: "Where is your brother Abel?" Cain was ready with his response: "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"
2. It leads to selfjustification: This is what Cain is doing - seeking and finding reasons why he found it necessary to remove his brother from his sight. That is ~~the~~ one of

the motives lying behind his question: "Am I my brother's keeper?" Surely, he is old and competent enough to look after himself!

Apprentice
Bible
Facts

N.B.

3. Surely, it should be clear why I had to do what I did in order to ensure my safety, my security, my self-preservation, ^{you depend yourself} ~~my~~ ^{with the another question: "But who is my brother?"} self-enhancement: The lust for power lies dominant in all of us and if not discerned, ~~and~~ recognized and framed could ~~bring~~ ^{create} havoc in and around us. Self-assertion, self-glorification, self-seeking of power and privilege ^{then} all follow in course of time - sometimes in subtle ways unknown to us but ~~soon~~ ^{eventually} becoming a blatant display of the sheer lust for power, domination, control over other people's lives and destinies.

(1-3)
All the above effects may take place in our personal lives: separation - self-justification - self-enhancement. But when it becomes a principle of life or a policy of state for millions of people as has happened → Racial separation the principle of national salvation

in our country over so many decades it does not only spell danger but it leads to disaster! A process is thereby set in motion which not only destroys all human relationships but threatens the very existence of society as a whole. Then fratricide (the killing of one brother) inevitably leads to national suicide (the killing of all).

Perhaps the most tragic part of this narrative ^{of Cain's Abel} is found in Gen. 4 vs 16 where we read that at the close of ~~the~~ God's confrontation with Cain: "Then Cain went out from the Lord's presence - - -" Once you start breaking ties with your brother, whoever he may be, you inevitably lead up by walking away from the presence of God

But the glory of the Gospel is that God always comes after us, that He sends His Son after us to bring us the wonderful news that in Christ He has forgiven us. He wishes to reconcile us and restore us - if we are but willing to heed and respond and repent. Divine reconciliation always follows genuine repentance.