

CAIN AND ABEL

It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare;
it is because we do not dare that things are difficult.
-Seneca

According to theology, the Creator has the power of omniscience-perfect knowledge and control of everything, past, present and future. Yet, the first generation of humans is said to have committed the first sin and the second generation committed the first murder. If there was a being with such awesome powers, then such events would have happened as planned. The buck stops at the Creator.

If such a way of thinking had any basis in reality, humans would be mere automatons acting out their roles like puppets. We think we have free will, when in fact we don't. Religion tries to have it both ways wherever it is expedient.

I stress that the Church's first concern is for obedience to its member clergy; the idea of a god is nothing but a metaphor for Church authority. It is more accurate to think of the Church as power seeking political organization rather than as a moral paragon. To prove my point, I will show that it is impossible to be resolutely true to raising the moral standards of human society and be religious at the same time. Let us digress to the fable of Adam and Eve and compare it to Cain and Abel.

Adam and Even were labeled the first sinners because they disobeyed God. Yet by their act of disobedience, when they learned the difference between good and evil, they promptly tried to be good by making clothes for themselves. God lost control, so he condemned the entire human race.

Cain and Abel both tried to please their god by offering regular sacrifices-Cain by the first fruits of his crops and Abel by the firstborn of his herd. When God showed his preferences for Abel's sacrifices, Cain became visibly angry. Based upon God's mushy advice to do the right thing to avoid sin, and because Cain did not know what sin was, he followed his impulses and murdered his brother. God's reaction was to chase him away with a mark on him to warn others not to harm him. As a result, Cain became wealthy and respected.

If God had truly punished Cain, we could properly admire God for acting justly. But because he rewarded him, Abel qualifies as the Bible's first sacrificial victim. In other words, though Cain did not intentionally sacrifice his brother, the purpose of blood sacrifice is to gain favor from God. This story opens the door to blood sacrifice that stretches all the way to Jesus' crucifixion.

What we can draw from this is that sin defines acts of disobedience against the Church. Whereas when murder is committed to appease the Church's fictitious God, it is looked upon as virtuous. If moral concerns were the Church's first priority, surely Cain's murder would qualify as the first sin instead of Adam's act of disobedience.

SUMMARY-GEN. 4:1-26

Common beliefs have it that the 'mark of Cain' symbolizes dishonor because God branded Cain a sinner for murdering his brother. Not exactly!

The word sin makes its first appearance in the Cain and Abel story as a way of introducing the perverted consequences of religious obedience. Eve produced two sons, Cain and Abel. According to Eve, God was the father of the firstborn Cain and Adam fathered Abel.

When they grew up, Cain became a farmer and Able a shepherd. Each tried to please the Creator in his own way. Cain offered his first fruits from the ground and Abel offered the firstborn of his sheep. After a while, because God was showing favor towards Abel and disregarding Cain, Cain's frustration grew into visible anger.

When God noticed Cain's anger, he advised, "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it." The statement was ambiguous. What must Cain do well to be accepted? Sin lurks for not doing well at what? What desire must he master? What is sin? God, the omnipotent one, had to know what was

on Cain's mind but he did not discourage him with an imperative statement like: Do not harm your brother! Instead, he left it up to the simple minded Cain to interpret what he said.

Judging by Cain's actions, here is how he interpreted his Creator: If you do right I will accept you. And if you do wrong you will sin. Desire is for you to master. And that is exactly what Cain did. He mastered his desire and avoided sin by taking Abel out to the field and killing him. If we take the view that Abel was the firstborn son of the first human father-Cain being a son of God-we could argue that it was the first human sacrifice.

According to the story of Adam and Eve, God did not want mankind to know good from evil. By that standard, Cain was a perfect being. He didn't know the difference, so he mastered his inhibition against killing Abel. After the deed, the omnipresent god asked, **Where is your brother Abel?** Without remorse, Cain answered, **I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?**

Popular belief has it that God cursed Cain, but he did nothing of the sort. He cursed the ground so Cain could never farm again. Also, he **shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth**. When Cain complained that God would not be able to protect him from so far away, God put a mark on his head so **Whoever kills Cain will suffer a sevenfold vengeance**. In actuality, these so-called punishments improved his life. Cain didn't wander at all. Instead he settled in the east in the land of Nod, married, prospered, had one son and founded a city.

One of Cain's descendants was Lamech, who proudly confessed to his wives of killing a young man. If Cain is avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech 77-fold, he said. Lamech correctly saw the mark of Cain as a blessing. With god protecting him, crime pays. As a final thought, we might wonder if the Mark of Cain is synonymous with the Mark of the Devil.

DECONSTRUCTION

With help from God, Eve conceived and bore Cain. Abel was the second born. Cain became a farmer and Abel a shepherd.

Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD."

And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a tiller of the ground. (Gen. 4:1-2)

1. Who is Cain's father? If Adam knew Eve then he would be Cain's father. But if Eve bore Cain "with the help of the Lord," then God could be the father. It's like a married woman cheating on her husband and crediting him with being the legitimate father. Eve's statement could be interpreted as a divine virginal conception.

2. According to Paul, the second man is from heaven. That would be Cain.

The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. (1 Cor. 15:47)

As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. (1 Cor. 15:48)

Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. (1 Cor. 15:49)

3. According to Isaiah and Psalms, God forms babies in their mother's womb; life cannot regenerate itself without his help. Thus he remains the sole creator of all life.

Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: "I am the LORD, who made all things, who stretched out the heavens alone, who spread out the earth. (Isa. 44:24)

For thou didst form my inward parts, thou didst knit me together in my mother's womb. (Psalms 139:13)

Upon thee I have leaned from my birth; thou art he who took me from my mother's womb. (Psalms 71:6)

4. Thinking back to the two creation stories in Genesis 1 and 2. In Gen. 1:9, life began after God divided the watery chaos; and in Gen. 2:6, life began after it was watered-those two symbolize the

water in women's wombs. In Gen. 1:26, God made man in his own image, and in Gen. 2:7, God breathed life into him-those acts gave men souls. So a man provides the seed, women provide the water and God gives human life by providing the soul. Women don't have souls, according to Genesis 1 and 2. Thus women are seen as being subhuman.

5. Let's replay that against the New Testament and Jesus' so-called virgin birth which is told in two contradictory ways in Matthew and Luke. This is not the time to go into the details. So suffice to say that it is not much of a stretch to present Mary as being impregnated by God. It was common belief that God gives life in the womb. The Gospel writers were no more forthright then the Creation writers.

When they grew up, Cain offered fruits from his crops and Abel offered the firstborn from his flock.

In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. (Gen. 4:3-4a)

But God showed favor for Abel's offerings and disregarded Cain's. So Cain grew frustrated and angry.

And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. (Gen. 4:4b-5)

God shows his preference for animal sacrifice. Who said God doesn't play favorites.

Noticing Cain's anger, God advised he would find acceptance by doing well. If he does not do well, he will be judged a sinner. Its desire was up to him to master.

The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen?"

If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is couching at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it." (Gen. 4:6-7)

1. Whatever God said to Cain, it is hard to make anything sensible out of it. It appears that God suggested to Cain to master his sin if he so desires. There were no do-not commands and there was no definition of sin. The choice was up to Cain to master his desire. See commentary.

2. There were no doors at the time Cain was supposed to be living. This story was written long after it supposedly happened.

So Cain mastered his desire by killing his brother.

Cain said to Abel his brother, "Let us go out to the field." And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel, and killed him. (Gen. 4:8)

Since God did not forbid him to kill his brother, he did not sin.

When God noticed Abel missing, he asked of his whereabouts. Cain replied defiantly that he is not his brother's keeper.

Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen. 4:9)

1. Early in the Bible, God was anthropomorphic, which means human like. This is why he did not know where Abel was. Could this be Jesus?

2. Cain's lack of remorse gives a sense that he felt encouraged to do what he did.

For killing his brother, God cursed the ground he stood on. His crops would diminish in yield and he would become and fugitive and wanderer.

And the LORD said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground.

And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.

When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength; you shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth." (Gen. 4:10-12)

1. In Gen 3:17 when God cursed the ground Adam stood on, it was meant that Adam had to work the land to get his food. This time when God curses the ground, the land is not supposed to produce crops.
2. There is a faint reference to the Israelites' wandering in the desert for forty years without anything to eat except manna-whatever that is.

Cain feared he would starve or be killed if he left Eden.

Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me this day away from the ground; and from thy face I shall be hidden; and I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will slay me." (Gen. 4:13-14)

Cain's statement gives away the fact that there were many more inhabitants on earth besides him and his parents. Who did Cain fear?

So God put a mark on him for protection.

Then the LORD said to him, "Not so! If any one slays Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who came upon him should kill him. (Gen. 4:15)

Surely, the mark of Cain qualifies as a blessing. Nobody would dare kill him no matter what he did. He could steal, cheat and kill with impunity.

Cain moved to the land of Nod, east of Eden, where he found a wife, fathered a son named Enoch, and built a city.

Then Cain went away from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, east of Eden. Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch; and he built a city, and called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch. (Gen. 4:16-17)

1. Wait a minute! According to Gen. 3:23-24, God drove Adam and Eve out of Eden. Eden is supposed to be uninhabited. This is because two different people wrote them. One refers to 'LORD' and the other, 'LORD God.'

therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken.

He drove out the man; (Gen 3:23-24a)

2. Creation was supposed to have begun in Eden and already we have a place called Nod where there were enough people to populate a city. Cities are a big step up from towns and villages. Its population would have to be in the thousands. Apologists have offered all kinds of rationalizations, but the Bible authorizes none of them.

3. God still dwells in Eden and has no presence in Nod which implies he had no authority there. In fitting with pagan mythology, gods lived within the boundaries of the people who invented them. We don't know what the mark looked like and why it was readily recognized. Perhaps it was believed that the gods had a pact among themselves to honor it.

Lamech counts as the seventh generation from Creation. Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel were the first two.

To Enoch [3] was born Irad; and Irad [4] was the father of Mehujael, and Mehujael [5] the father of Methushael, and Methushael [6] the father of Lamech [7]. (Gen. 4:18)

The number seven seems a play on the number of times God would avenge anybody who killed Lamech. See below on Lamech's crimes.

Lamech had a large family of descendants.

And Lamech took two wives; the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. Adah bore Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have cattle. His brother's name was Jubal; he

was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe. Zillah bore Tubalcain; he was the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron. The sister of Tubalcain was Naamah. (Gen. 4:19-22)

The mention of iron places the time of writing somewhere after 950 BCE. This generation was supposed to have existed approximately 3500 BCE. If it looks like folklore and it sounds like folklore, it is folklore.

Lamech figures that if Cain could get away with murder, so could he. The number seven comes into play again.

Lamech said to his wives: AdahZillah, hear my voice; you wives of Lamech, hearken to what I say: I have slain a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me.
If Cain is avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy-sevenfold." (Gen. 4:23-24)

Lamech must have inherited Cain's mark.

Adam fathered another son, Seth, to replace Abel.

And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, "God has appointed for me another child instead of Abel, for Cain slew him."
To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time men began to call upon the name of the LORD. (Gen. 4:25-26)

According to Genesis 5:3, Adam and Eve produced Seth when they were 130 years old. A little ridiculous, but this is the Bible. It is said that Adam fathered a son again to replace Abel. That still leaves Cain as a Son of God.

COMMENTARY

This story takes an additional twist when we consider the effect Adam's disobedience could have had on Cain. When God warned Adam he would die on the day he ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:15), he was too innocent to know what evil was. As it turned out, instead of dying on the day he ate the forbidden fruit, he lived for 930 years (Gen. 5:5).

Similarly, Cain had no idea what sin was, but he had reason to believe he might be rewarded as his father was. The mushy phrase "Sin couches at the door" does not compare to an imperative like, "Don't do it." Plus, there was no defined penalty. Cain's instincts proved correct. When he complained about being banished, God rewarded him with a mark to protect him.

Lamech got the point when he admitted to his wives that he killed a man. The pattern repeats itself with Moses. After he fled to Midian for murdering an Egyptian, Yahweh rewarded him by inducting him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt.

1. Where did Cain get his wife and where did Cain find the people to build a city? The apologist answer is that according to Genesis 5:4, Adam and Eve had other unnamed sons and daughters. There a number of conflicts.

When Adam had lived a hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.

The days of Adam after he became the father of Seth were eight hundred years; and he had other sons and daughters. (Gen. 5:3-4)

1a. Even rabbits can't multiply that fast. According to the Guinness Book of Records, the most prolific mother had 69 children. Among them were 16 twins, 7 triplets and 4 quadruplets. The oldest mother was 63 years old; but she was artificially inseminated with donor eggs. The greatest number of living descendants stands at 824. With polygamy, it goes up to 1700. The oldest person lived to 122.5 years.

1b. If there were unnamed brothers and sisters, they weren't exiled. Cain went alone and there is no suggestion that anybody else ever went into Nod.

1c. The Bible has a habit of mentioning only male descendants. Thus at the time of exile, it is certain that Cain had no other brothers.

1d. What was the mark supposed to protect him from? It could only be from adults not family related.

1e. Seth came when Adam and Eve were 130 years old, but we don't know how long after Cain's exile. It is reasonable to surmise that it was long after Cain married his wife and founded a city. After Seth, the remaining sons and daughters were spread out over 800 years.

2. Puns. 'Nod' comes from Nahd, meaning wandering. 'Seth' means substituted. 'Abel' means something transitory. 'Cain' comes from qayin, meaning spear.

3. Themes. Cain plays the role of the Canaanites whose sacrifices in the Elijah story of 1 Kings 18:20-40, go unaccepted. Abel plays the role of Israel as a nation God once chose. This leads us to believe that the Cain and Abel story was produced after the Babylonian exile in 586 BCE.

4. Sacrifice plays a crucial role in the sin motif. It can be practiced either to please God or to expiate sin. This is where the Bible introduces meat eating, animal sacrifice and human sacrifice.

5. Symbolism. The Hebrews were poor wandering herdsmen and their culture was steeped in animal sacrifice. Canaanites were farmers. Adam and Eve had a third son, Seth, who became an ancestor of Noah and later of Jesus according to Luke 3:38

6. Pagan parallels. In Egyptian mythology, Seth created havoc on earth by murdering his brother Osiris, out of jealousy for his high reputation. The Sumerian tale of Dumuzi and Enkimdu depicts the rivalry between herdsmen and farmers. In this case they argued over who would marry the fertility goddess, Inanna. Nobody died.

7. What is the mark of Cain? Could it be the mark of the beast, the number 666, described in the Book of Revelation? It is the only place in the Bible where a mark is defined.

so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. This calls for wisdom: let him who has understanding reckon the number of the beast, for it is a human number, its number is six hundred and sixty-six. (Rev. 13:17)

The explanation I find most convincing is that the mark has astronomical significance. Representing Cain and Abel are Ophiuchus the Serpent Bearer and Hercules respectively. The serpent symbolizes Cain's evilness and Hercules upside down position represents the fallen Abel.

Coincidentally Ophiuchus' head is represented by one star. It's a reasonable guess that that the mark is the head star Ras Alhague which ranks as the 56th brightest star of all the stars and the brightest in the constellation. Graphic illustrations show the star on Ophiuchus' forehead. For more detail see [Eden to Babel](#).