

A. Introducing the story of Cain and Abel?

Why the story of Cain and Abel? The story resembles our story in Croatia. The Croats and Serbs or the Abel and Cain or the opposite. Linking our story with the biblical one should help us to better understand the dynamics of relationship. How it comes to violence, division, murder, and reconciliation. The narrative will serve as a lens through which we can easier understand and relate.

The idea that the reader almost always sees themselves as a suffering Abel distanced from Cain the villain, has the greatest bearing on our understanding of violence. In such interpretation Cain is never identified with oneself. Cain is always seen as the somewhat imaginary other at whom all point the finger (but that other is actually a prisoner of self-denial inside an Abelian justification of the use of violence provoked by the inflicted pain). In other words, the conclusion of a superficial understanding and interpretation of violence in a society where the distinction between Cain and Abel is clearly perceived and where everyone considers themselves an Abel is that there must be an Abel the victim, and Abel the inflictor of violence. Of course, there is a Cain, but he is imaginary, because the one who is spoken of as Cain is always referred to by others and never by oneself. A person who others call Cain considers themselves to be Abel and refers to those who call him/her Cain as Cain's.

It seems that Cain exists only when Abel the victim turns to violence. In other words, if there were no violence, that is, if the use of violence was not justified as a valid method for resolving conflict, there would be no Cain and no other. Violence as a tool or state that turns our story into a tragedy is that captivating state we put ourselves in when we define violence as a necessary evil.

To escape separating the tyrant and the victim on the principle of worthiness and to escape projecting evil onto the other, I suggest the concept: I am Abel, but Cain lives in me, as a line of direction that will serve to keep us from losing and dehumanising Cain, and locate rather than project Abel in ourselves. This concept would signify the tragedy of humanity trapped inside the vicious circle of violence had the emphases in the story not been put on God's reconcilable non-violent character and on God's non-violent corrective of violence.

However, as much as Cain is perceived as valiant and the one who brings violence to the front, the same can be said for Abel, the victim. The harm can be even greater than that of Cain because everybody expects this from Cain; in Abel's case, however, there is seeking for violent vengeance (defined as final judgement) and - more dangerously - the use of violence based on the possibility of becoming a potential victim and to avoid that from happening one uses violence preemptively in order to correct "bad" or "wrong" violence by Cain. Here, on the second point, we can speak of Abel as having the role of a god that we see in the story. Nevertheless, here in the story God is a peacemaker, negotiator and peaceful judge.

If we take Cain and Abel and give them an equal treatment as God did after the offerings, we are left with no side to choose, meaning Cain or Abel. Ironically we are more willing to see ourselves as Cain's, not because God has shown more attention to Cain but because even after killing his brother God protects Cain in a violent world and he goes on living, with the possibility to raise a family and even to bring forth civilization. The only difference is that God's presence in Cain's life is reduced.

Today among people we encounter a phenomenon that can be best expressed as Abel having the power of Cain but holding just the status of becoming a possible victim. It seems that God is no longer a peacemaker between two brothers. Rather he is an observer from above whom we may ask for help, or not. Now today's Western countries and emerging Eastern European

countries have taken the role of God in deciding who Cain is and who Abel is. The question 'who am I?' and 'what is my identity' is actually clearer now. Now humankind is described by definition in a certain framework - which defines us and answers who we are and what we do. So even if we feel like Abel we may indeed be perceived by others as Cain.

If we choose to identify ourselves with that Cain we have found many explanations for our violent behaviour. This, however, does not speak to those who are victims. They do not have the privilege that Cain has. So what about Abel? It is very important question indeed, because almost 100% of the population see themselves as Abel (at least from time to time).

The first principle I call the *instinctive response* and the second the *preventive response*. The instinctive response refers to those who would instinctively respond to Cain's act with the same measure. The basis of this reaction would be self-explanatory for Cain asked for it by his evil act. In others who have a tendency to see themselves as helpless victims the reaction would also be instinctive but would likely be expressed in mental violence and not physical. It is in the nature of the instinctive response to accept revenge as a legitimate act of defence. In this understanding, the prevention of violence is based on the logic of violence. There's a search for the basic or most acceptable type of violence the use of which would be justified. The therapy for violence as an evil is therefore an evil medication, so that the critique of violence in the world of instinctive response is nothing more than a critique of violence by violent means.

Although it exists in the world of instinctive response, preventive response here signifies prevention of violence through non-violent ways. It is picturesquely expressed in the putting of a symbolic mark on Cain's head so that no one in the world of violence would inflict violence on Cain and suffer a sevenfold vengeance. We can tell that the fear of a sevenfold vengeance was great from the fact that Cain lived a long time and died a natural death. This in turn tells us that in the world of violence, violence functions by the logic of vengeance in which all live under the fear of it and cannot stand up to it. By not punishing Cain by taking his life and by not fulfilling the fear of retribution against the killer of Abel [the biblical narrative does not give us a plea by Abel for retribution as Abel is dead; rather, it speaks of Cain's fear of retribution.] God criticises the thought patterns of both victim and inflictor of violence while, at the same time, understanding Cain's fear of a world in which violence rules and into which Cain is exiled. He also criticises this world where the logic of violence reigns by putting a mark on Cain to protect him from possible violence.

In conclusion, the preventive response belongs as a principle only to God, but it is also a lesson in how humankind should relate to the other. It doesn't accept some form of violence so as to prevent violence. Rather, it seeks a solution outside of the sphere of violence and vengeance. As such it is a critique of violence and its manipulation of people.

Therefore the thesis 'I am Abel, but Cain lives in me' encompasses both principles. The instinctive response is that by which all people, all cultures and all structures function. It is utilised in the acceptance of structures of violence so as to stop violence and that which lies hidden in us in anticipation of a violent retribution. The preventive response can to some extent be understood as an attempt to suppress hatred and the desire for vengeance in an individual based on a belief system or through personal preference. If hatred turns into a serious conflict then the preventive response is God's act which warns and admonishes but only rarely prevents violence. Therefore, the idea 'I am Abel, but Cain lives in me' is the foundation from where we must proceed so that we can approach reconciliation which has a not human, but a divine character.

The story

Adam and Eve had to adjust to a new environment (knowing that they had been thrown out from a place of perfection into a place of pain and toil in the presence of God), so the story of Cain and Able portrays not only their sin, but that of their parents.

Eve, after the birth of Cain starts to differentiate between the values of one human being over another. In Eve's eyes Cain and Abel do not have equal value. She characterises Cain as valuable (4, 1) and Able as ordinary, of somewhat lesser value (4, 2).

Following the logic and dynamic of the story the reader identifies with Cain for everybody likes to think of themselves as more worthy than an Abel. A difference has appeared between myself and another. God hasn't yet entered the scene. Next we see Cain and Abel bringing their sacrifices before God and God favouring Abel's sacrifice.

The first question that is raised and should be debated is the difference between our/Eve's favouring and God's if there is any? If we have favoured Cain as Eve, the results of such a decision would not be worth investigating in Eve or our parents or educators, but rather we should look into what we have gained by such favouring. Maybe Cain had felt superior throughout his life because his mother favoured him and when God favoured Abel's sacrifice Cain saw it as illogical and hateful for it was in such contrast to what he had learnt, thought and believed. The inability to understand God's decision led to Cain's reaction of murder which was a demonstration or protest (in Cain's mind) of God and Abel's wrong idea of worth. So Cain was not aware that the murder he committed was wrong and against God's will. His fear of God's punishment is only awareness in Cain that it's difficult to live in a world where murder and violence reign. That fact didn't stop him from committing his crime because he felt that as a victim of injustice his murder is of a different character. Of course, most of us identified with Abel when he was shown God's favour for his sacrifice, thus all human institutions of giving value and relating to others don't give an appropriate answer when faced with God's way of relating to violence. In the moment when God showed he favoured Abel's sacrifice we may not have completely identified with Abel, but we surely did when Cain attacked his brother and killed him in cold blood.

Before the actual act of murder God appears as a mediator. This time God mediates between violence and non-violence. That is Cain and non-violence, Abel is now just an object (a thing). God mediates:

"Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it (4:6-8)"

Here are some observations. First, God questions the reason of the anger. He questions the institutions and value systems that concluded that injustice has been done and that violence as a defence mechanism is justified. Secondly, through the questioning the possibility of a healing of relationships is revealed, and thirdly a refusal to change one's beliefs leads to a clear destiny. Even though he doesn't want to live in a world where violence rules Cain is unaware that by killing his brother he himself contributes to the further spreading of the world of violence.

Murder has been committed, God the mediator appears with a dramatic question: Where is your brother Abel? (Gen. 4:9). The human logic of justifying violence and twisting responsibility comes into action. Cain responds: "I don't know, he replied. Am I my brother's keeper?" (v. 9b). A dichotomy of humankind is here revealed. A brother can in a moment

become someone else. A brother becomes an object, and as such deserving of violence, hatred and death. Through engaging in violence differences are created, differences between human and lesser human categories, which leads to overemphasising and overrating ethnic, sexual and religious differences. A “few years” were enough for Cain for his brother to become someone else, someone different enough to murder.

There have been several theological attempts to portray God as the source of violence, for he made a difference between Cain and Abel’s sacrifices. Such a conclusion may have been warranted had God not done two unexpected things. First, God protects Cain by giving him a mark to protect him from a violent world with the logic that whoever kills Cain will receive a seven-fold retribution (vv. 15-16). Secondly, God answers Abel’s plea for vengeance in two ways: as a result of Cain’s violence, Abel is avenged in a causative way: Cain is thrown out of God’s presence into a world of violence, not to commit violence, but to be a testimony to others, and in some sense Cain’s presence in a world of violence is a witness to others that violence is not an integral part of God’s creation. Also, and maybe most important to understanding ourselves Abel’s request for vengeance although humanly speaking justified will not be fulfilled with the logic a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye, but with a justice that stands against violence.

The logic of violence takes on another characteristic in Cain’s descendant Lamech. Lamech by killing two young men shows that he believes that violence may be used to prevent an imminent legitimate threat and is therefore in his opinion not under the judgement of God (Gen. 4:23-24). Even though the tragedy of living in a world of violence didn't end with Cain and Abel nor Cain's descendent Lamech, this story serves as a warning not to forget that humankind's greatest problem from the beginning is seen in the acceptance of violence as a legitimate way to solve problems and secondly, it serves to emphasise that from the beginning of civilisation God's initiative in preventing violence can be seen in his critique of violence rather than its implementation.

Regardless of the doctrinal background on the essence of evil, violence and the human Fall, some key things about the source and logic of violence can be found in the story. René Girard, known as a “theorist of violence” coined the term “mimetic desire” as the basic principle of why people become violent. Mimetic theory in a way supports and substantiates my emphasis that human beings are characterised as “I am Abel, but Cain lives in me”. Mimetism comes into being when I desire something that has been given value by someone else. The logic of desiring something that someone else has leads to a mutual interest between the desirer (me) and the person who has what I want (the other). The more I identify with the other the greater my desire to take what they possess. The other puts up a resistance or defence and thus becomes an obstacle to my desire. Such a sequence of events René Girard calls “mimetic desire” which eventually leads to violence.

We also find some important implications of Girard’s theory in the story. Firstly: mimetism is occurring between Cain and Abel, although Abel, according to human norms, possesses nothing that could attract Cain (as far as we know from the story). Mimetism comes into play when God differentiates between Cain and Abel's sacrifice. That the murder was not just motivated by jealousy and hatred but by coveting, to be seen as equal or greater in the eyes of God is clearly shown by the text. God warns Cain that his anger needs to be dealt with through getting his priorities straight (giving his best to God) and not through mimetism, i.e. removing the other (Gen 4:6-7). Secondly, Girard sees the object of desire in the other as not what Abel possesses or what his sacrifice means to God, but as either an object that is found in God, i.e. God’s standard of righteousness (which is different from

Eve's, who differentiates between them from birth, which later manifests itself in the distribution of work) or as, I dare to say, Cain's consciousness that he can be his own God. On the other hand, Abel, it would seem, has all the predispositions for Cain's job and reputation to become an object of his mimetic desire, but according to Girard's logic the unexpected happens. The one who had it all murders the one who was exalted by God. The antidote to Girard's "mimetic desire" can be found in God's dealings with the perpetrator and victim: God does not punish Cain with the same measure, but by putting a sign of protection on him disables the logic of mimetism; Abel's blood seeks vengeance, but the vengeance is not to be Cain's death.

Girard's theory of mimetism helps us to understand the complexity of living with others or the relationship between two ethnic groups, but it doesn't reveal to us why the desire for something leads to violence. In other words, why does Abel who doesn't have an object or desire, seek violent vengeance? The critique or negation of violence as a solution for God shows us that the logic of violence has nothing to do with the logic of mimetic desire or mimetic violence, i.e. through mimetism we only show the way violence is displayed and not its origin.

I would suggest that violence and our dealing with it and our understanding of God's dealings with it is the theological idea behind the story. Cain and Abel, although possibly unconscious of their tendency to violence, have the problem of not being able to understand violence as something unlawful. God, through advising Cain to resist violence, emphasises the following. Firstly, God doesn't deny the human tendency to violence, but sees it coming; secondly, he gives a direct instruction on how to fight hatred (tendency to violence) and the sins that lead to violence; and thirdly God does not punish through violence even when the perpetrator fears it.

Many theologians think that the themes of peacemaking, reconciliation and forgiveness can only be fully substantiated with the birth of Jesus and God's proclamation of peace to earth (Lk. 2:4), when comparing Jesus' life and teaching with the Old Testament wars and other violent ways of dealing with the other.

It has always been difficult to represent the value of attaining peace through non-violent means, and even more so to seek reconciliation and forgiveness in a world where violence, hatred and weapons are the main spokesmen. The Old Testament paints a picture of this kind of world where violence is considered necessary, unlike the New Testament, where Jesus in those same violent circumstances installs new non-violent values.

Because of the difficulties in making sense of the violent stories of the Old Testament, most theologians see a connection only in the prophet Isaiah and Jesus' non-violent heritage. The rest of the theologians that are more inclined to military interventions base their views and teachings on the Old Testament, so that in both cases we are talking about a discontinuity between the message that says yes to violence and the message that says yes to non-violence.

The story of Cain and Abel (as the first story after the Fall) is important because at the same time it deals with both the human tendency to violence and God's intervention in preventing violence through non-violent means. By facing the complexity of violence we avoid the danger of giving up on non-violent means in every situation. When everything is written in blood (as it is in the Old Testament) it's difficult to see any presence of initiative to non-violence. Jesus, of course, from the very beginning, stands against any idea of violence so that his life had to end in a violent death. The story of Abel and Cain is a story about violence

in the family that grows out into social, ethnic and national violence. So that this short story is a starting point and foundation to all other variants of violence.

We can detect two basic theological perspectives of violence and humankind in the story: firstly, God's authoritative dismissal and prevention of the spread of violence; secondly, humankind's misunderstanding that any kind of violence is contrary to God.

God's authoritative dismissal and prevention of the spread of violence in the context of the story and its further consequences show us that: God's peacemaking initiative and humans' free will; and the misuse of this free will and God's faithfulness to his people.

This should be understood as a backward process, taking into account that the basis for non-violence was clearly determined at the beginning. Many believers and supporters of non-violence today choose to serve their mandatory military service in the civil sector. However, God's part in the Israelite wars is more envisioned (considering the context of our story) as a priest who has renounced violence and arms but who walks among warriors and the wounded in war helping them to find peace of heart in the terrors of war without pointing a finger at their error. The most difficult problem theologians come across is how to understand the participation of Yahweh in the Old Testament wars and reconcile it with Jesus' teaching. In other words, can the God of the Old Testament who inspired Moses to kill 3000 dissenters with the sword be the same God revealed in Jesus? Even though Jesus was a peacemaker and because of this a victim, his attitude is not different from the God of the Old Testament. On the one hand, Jesus as fully human practiced God's peace-loving non-violent initiative, which was expressed through words (instructions to Cain to lose his hatred) and supernatural deeds (putting a sign on Cain), but on the other hand the violence of the people of God and his connection with them in the Old Testament is expressed through Jesus' fellowship with his closest friends who were former members of rebel groups (Zealots) and who still resisted the idea that the use of violence is never permitted (Peter's sword and its later use). In other words, the connection between the God of the Old Testament and Jesus is found in a total negation of violence, which can only fully function when non-violence starts to be practised and not just believed.

Traditions, especially religious ones, which claim that one can lead a "just war" have done much to spread confusion in understanding the peace loving of God. If Christianity, Judaism and Islam (seen as religious institutions) would renounce its violent proclamations of peace there would be much less room for violence per se. Those institutions that advocate a peace that accepts the right to use force in the preservation of peace will not be able to experience total reconciliation, forgiveness and peace between one another, because a incomplete negation of violence always leaves a door open for war.

The second critique or reality of violence/non-violence, which I again connect to my subtitle "I am Abel, but Cain lives in me", has to do with perseverance and a right understanding of oneself in relationship to our tendency to violence and non-violence. From a theological perspective the followers of Jesus Christ are those who have submitted their lives under the cross and taken their own crosses as a sign of non-violent following in a violent world. The greatest danger of this reality for Christians is not that they are powerless in their non-violence, but that they are powerful in their violence. In other words, non-violence that doesn't demand the weight of the cross is possible but it is conditional, whilst non-violence that demands the weight of the cross is limited by its perishableness.

For violence to be committed two are needed (Cain and Abel), but if they are both aware of themselves as possible tyrants the question is only: who will be first to react and kill? The cry

of Abel's blood for vengeance meant Cain's imminent death or his ultimate death (the last judgement). Abel's cry is denied in the form that he was seeking. Abel's vengeance can only be seen as a victory (or revenge for the victim) if Cain has understood the vicious circle of violence and renounced it.

From a theological perspective, Cain and Abel represent the inner battle of a human being and his imprisonment between being violent or a violent wish of the victim for revenge.

All are in a vicious circle of violence where the logic of escape can only be too be ready to die on a cross for the sake of non-violently promoting peace and justice, in the hope that vengeance will ultimately mean victory over violence and not over the tyrant.

Croatian, Serbian and Bosnian hatred, murders, rapes, tortures, massacres, national and ethnic prejudices during war and the post-war stress, depression, poverty, suffering, economic difficulties, have created a atmosphere where war is not to be waged under such slogans as "all for freedom and independence" or "everything to keep our borders"; rather, it is now claimed that war always leaves bloody ground that awaits its moment of revenge. Our self-confidence in the Native war as blameless is shaken by post-war revelation about the atrocities done by Croatian soldiers. And now we can see a certain negation of the Native war or an over-mentioning of it. For the Serbs the "shock" took place when they became a target of NATO aircraft; although they only then noticed the injustice and terror they still hadn't noticed the terror committed in Croatia (My goal is not to give a correct political picture, but to show the dynamics of manipulation, the obscuring and revealing that goes on when violence is instituted).

To be sure, just like Cain and Abel, so we too have been violent or have been victims of violence, and in either case unwilling to listen to the "Do not kill" out of hatred or revenge. In a moment of hate and injustice it is difficult to hear God's voice. Remembering the war and the emotions and tensions it was illogical in the fight for independence to hear the voice saying, "love your enemies". It was much easier and more correct, or did we even hear the voice saying, "I am with you", and "God and the Croats"? In our story "Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast" (4:5). Then God asks Cain: "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast?" (v. 6). To listen in the moment of hatred is difficult, almost impossible. It wouldn't be completely correct to say that Cain didn't want to listen to God. It would be more correct to understand Cain's unwillingness to listen as a sign of total separation from God in spirit in the moment of anger and of a hesitation to take concrete steps toward the lessening or removal of hate and seeking a peaceful solution.

A relationship with another, as difficult as it may be, must be characterised by a desire to seek a non-violent solution to problems. When our relationship to others is non-violent, God, as is seen in the story of Cain and Abel, rewards us with his "acceptance" (Gen. 4:7). Isn't this a major criticism of those institutions that invoked God's blessing on war or in God's name exalted those who relate violently to others?

Today, in contrast to our war time slogans, wars are led under the slogan "battle of good against evil" which in a Christian wrapping serves political interests.

The story, although created for this purpose, tells us little about forgiveness and reconciliation. To be sure, if Cain had been ready not to kill and to listen to God's voice the outcome would most likely have been some sort of reconciliation. If it had come to the point that Cain did not kill his brother, of whom would he, and for what, would he need to first seek forgiveness and then reconciliation? What seems slightly ironical, but not counterproductive, is that Cain after the murder acknowledged no guilty conscience.

Furthermore, all Cain seems to be aware of is that God's punishment left him vulnerable in a world where murders such as his are prevalent. In this story God is not dealing with the problem of violence as a separate category. God is countering the belief that violence is an integral part of human life. On the other hand, Cain symbolises something big in a world where violence reigns. He symbolises God's desire for a peace that doesn't accept murder as a way of achieving it.

Although the story doesn't offer us a complete and fully thought out principle by which forgiveness and reconciliation are achieved, we can draw out several essential lines of direction. In some way God was the mediator of reconciliation, whose reconciling initiative was contrary to both the perpetrator's and the victim's. God shows us that reconciliation can be possible only when both sides agree to seek a non-violent solution. Justice can be achieved by the method of condemning an act of violence through the proclamation of non-violence. The perpetrator's punishment and curse is seen in the fear of living in a violent world that he has himself created. The victory of the victim is seen as a victory over a fear of violence and the desire to seek a violent retribution for the injustice.

B. Perspectives on the story of Cain and Abel

As an observer or interpreter of the story of Cain and Abel, we are in advance naturally led to conclude that the story presents Cain as a fratricide and Abel as the victim of his tyrant brother. The complexity, depth and most often, the ambiguity of a conflict, that is cohabitation with the other when it isn't genuine, is just a discussion that usually leaves us with no practical application. In our story just as in the biblical one, both brothers faced with violence and cohabitation in a violent environment believe that they're either just in their violence or justified in seeking vengeance due to unjust violence.

In order to explore and justify my proposed perspective I will now introduce several well-known perspectives on this issue by engaging in discussion with esteemed domestic and foreign theologians.

i. Miroslav Volf's use of Cain and Abel

Perspective: the potential to be like Cain

I would like to mention the theological attempt of Miroslav Volf (a Croatian theologian and professor at Yale university) in his book *Exclusion and Embrace* to make us as aware of ourselves as potential Cains, in which he draws from (a small segment of) the work of Claus Westermann (*Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, 1984) who emphasises that since the story of Cain and Abel is prehistoric it rejects every adaptation of seeing oneself as Abel, but rather "It's a story of them as murderers and us as murderers".

Volf emphasises that Cain will also be embraced by the Crucified one, but that that won't save him "if he doesn't follow in the footsteps of Christ". Furthermore, Volf explains and emphasises God's action first through words to prevent evil and then through judgement to penalise evil through the dynamic of sin that led Cain to commit murder and exclude Abel. God's judgement includes mercy. Cain was convicted, but he was also marked so that in a world ruled by violence he would be a symbol that demonstrates and warns against violence.

According to Volf, Cain is sentenced either to live in a world of violence he himself created or, if he is embraced by the Crucified one but does not return love to him, he is destined to perish in the circle of violence.

For Volf, the potential of Abel to become Cain is also present in Jesus' followers but it must be "deadened". That is, Volf has managed to awaken the awareness that enables us to see ourselves as potential Cains, but a very small number of people can see themselves as one who actually took part in killing Jesus. Should the critique of violence be something more than just averseness to the possibility of becoming Cain?

I am arguing that the story shows humankind as much more than a potential Cain because they are capable of disobeying the direct word of God which seeks to prevent violence and have a tendency to misunderstand God's will expressed in the conflict through Abel's demand for retribution. To be aware of one's potential means also to be aware of one's limitations. To emphasise the concept of potential as a state of awareness one denies the seriousness of reality and the imminent danger of becoming a potential Cain in all situations.

Jesus' followers may persist in faithfulness for Jesus' sacrifice on the cross which signifies the victory over the domination of sin and the powers of exclusion, but at the same time the Cross represents a crime of all humanity and not just forgiveness and reconciliation between God and humankind. *It was not just They that crucified him but it was Us and our every further act in rebellion to God crucifies Jesus all over again.* The Cross as a martyr's act symbolises the human tendency to identify oneself with the victim, but also projects us as inflictors of violence (Cains) whose lives are marked by the dynamic "I am Abel, but Cain lives in me". By accepting the dynamic of the Cain complex in Abel we realise the effect which totally agrees with the reality of humankind but doesn't justify it and therefore doesn't belittle the theology of the cross.

ii. Ivan Starčević understanding of Cain and Abel

Perspective: we are beyond Cain and Abel

Another theological attempt at evaluating Cain is the work of Ivan Starčević (Ni Kajin, ni Abel. Pomirenje: s onu strane žrtve i počinitelja, CROPAX: Hrvatski Caritas i Franjevački institut za kulturu mira, Zagreb-Split, 2002, pp. 72-90) which as the title suggests emphasises (especially from a Christian point of view) that the focus of reconciliation is not found in "seeking culprits nor in the proclamation of the victim... [for] since the existence of humanity we are all victims... Some victims of evil outside of us which we had lightly and irresponsibly observed as it was caving in on us... [and others] victims of evil which we were not aware enough of..." Furthermore, "for the Christian Jesus Christ's sacrifice is the only sacrifice that redeems not only Abel's sacrifice but which with unsurpassed love sacrifices itself for Cain and opens up for him the possibility of conversion and a changed life. God redeems from every evil and reconciles all people." Even though Starčević and Volf have a different understanding of the Christian character (Volf: potential Cain; Starčević: Neither Cain nor Abel) their conclusion is the same. For Volf, Cain is embraced but he is expected to accept Jesus' way of the cross so that he can become a reconciler. For Starčević, the Christian in the best sense is above both Cain and Abel, he/she is an already formed follower who should in practice be a reconciler, not taking the side of Cain or Abel. Although Starčević is aware of the lack of a *neither-Cain-nor-Abel* character among Christians, he maintains that true imitation of Christ does not recognise a potential Cain nor an Abel. Volf's human beings are potential Cains and therefore have a tendency, regardless of the fact that they are a potential Cain, to see themselves just as victims. Starčević's Cain and Abel in the full sense don't exist in the believer, so the potential though it may be present doesn't really exist. Even though the critique of this story is very broad I suggest two basic principles that would in a way embrace both Volf's and Starčević's thesis as well as those whose thesis doesn't have points of contact with the mentioned views.