

Publishing Editor's column

A FEATURE of the record in Genesis of the entrance of sin into the world is the refusal of Adam and Eve to accept the blame for their conduct. When God confronts Adam with the question, "Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?", Adam's response is, "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat". Adam not only blames Eve for his breach of the Divine command, he blames God also, for why else should he refer to Eve as "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me"? Likewise Eve, when she is confronted with her disobedience, immediately blames the serpent for beguiling her (3:11-13).

Ever since then, men and women have sought to avoid responsibility for their actions, and we live today in a culture in which people blame others for their mistakes, refusing to admit that they are at fault. This has led to much use of the legal system to sue for compensation where people have brought trouble upon themselves by their own actions. For example, although it has been well established for many years that smoking is harmful to health, and warnings to this effect are to be found on cigarette packets and advertisements, people are now suing tobacco companies for compensation when they get lung cancer. Though big business is ruthless in its exploitation of human weaknesses for profit, individuals cannot escape responsibility for their own actions.

Although we try to keep separate from the world and its ways, we have to live in the world, and its ways can easily rub off on us. This growing tendency to blame others for things which are our own fault is one example. Some may blame their upbringing, or their ecclesial environment, when they fall into sin, but this is not the way to react. Scripture is clear: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jno. 1:8,9). Excusing ourselves by blaming others will do us no good in God's sight; if others are at fault we must leave it to God to deal with them as He sees fit.

Consider the contrasting behaviour of Saul and David. Saul, when instructed by God to completely destroy the Amalekites, was only partially obedient, saving King Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle alive. When confronted with his sin by Samuel, he blamed the people for keeping back the sheep and cattle, and received stern words of condemnation and rejection from God through His prophet. David, when confronted by the prophet Nathan with his sin over Bathsheba, made no attempt to avoid the blame, but said immediately, "I have sinned against the LORD" (2 Sam. 12:13), and was forgiven his sin. One day we shall have to stand before the judgement seat of Christ, and blaming others will not prevent us from being rejected if that is what we deserve. Let us be ready to confess our sins and seek forgiveness, not blaming others, but knowing that our God is a God Who delights in mercy, and will take account of such things as our upbringing and environment.

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