

The Bible opens with five magnificent stories. They sound the major themes of faith and life. David Steele describes the time in which they were written:

*It was long before stories  
Had been relegated to the children  
To fill up space at bedtime.  
Stories were for adults!  
Human beings knew about stories, then.  
They understood that each one of us  
Creates a story, lives a story,  
Is a storyteller.*

David Steele is about the task of helping contemporary people rediscover the power of those ancient tales. He is storytelling pastor of Christ Presbyterian Church in Terra Linda, San Rafael, California. He retells these ancient stories with a humorous, poetic touch; and in the process, the sandaled/bathrobed characters reappear in jeans and jogging shoes. The old, old story becomes our story.

The illustrator, Marshall Porter, is a Presbyterian Elder with a keen sense of faith and humor.

David Steele's book of shorter Biblical poems, **GOD MUST HAVE A SENSE OF HUMOR: HE CREATED AARDVARKS AND ORANGUTANS . . . AND ME!** is also available from Illuminations Press .

# ~~His~~ ~~Her~~ ~~Our~~ History Herstory Ourstory

**From Adam to Abraham**

**David Steele**

## The Garden

Genesis 2:4-3:24

“And Yahweh God planted a garden in Eden; There God put the man whom God had formed.”

Oh, to be in Eden again!

No snow to shovel,

No 9 to 5, or traffic jams,

No squabbling kids, no ulcers,

No malnutrition, no taxes,

No muggings, nor migraines, nor munitions.

Whatever happened to Eden?

Is that Eden in the travel brochures?

At the mountain cabin . . . the island resort . . .

The Caribbean Cruise . . . ?

Two weeks of bliss,

Available during the off season

For only \$200 a day

(double occupancy).

Is Eden a prenatal memory?

Does it arise from the warmth of the womb

When all our needs were met,

Before we were so roughly

Expelled into “The way it is,”

To greet fear, and pain, and death?

Is Eden our yearning for

“The way it was”?

Perhaps Eden is a never, never land;

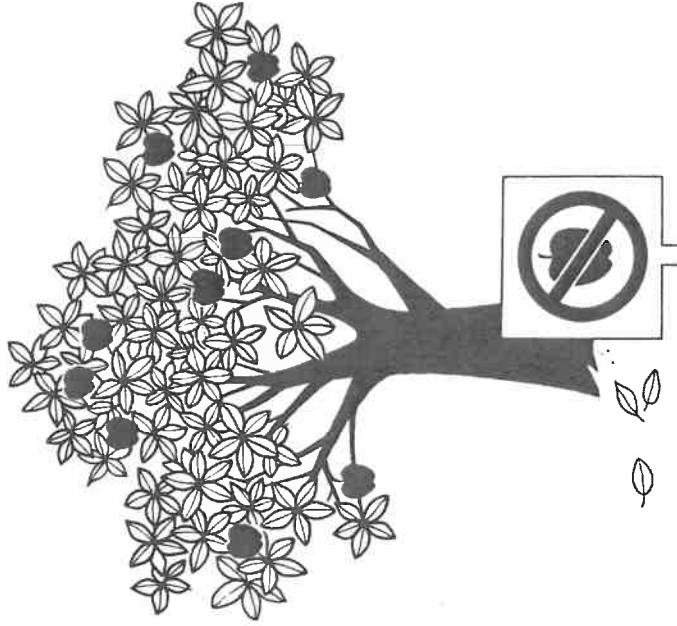
Simply our way of crying out in anguish

Against “The way it is.”

Is Eden

“The way it might have been”?

“The way it ought to be”?



We dream of Eden.  
We tell stories about it.  
And sometimes these stories are called,  
THE NOBLE SAVAGE;  
And sometimes they are called,  
THE GARDEN.  
In the Garden  
Yahweh God places the man,  
Formed of the elements of earth,  
Quickened by the very breath of God.  
The man, child of earth and heaven.  
And Yahweh provides the man  
With all God feels this one might need.  
A Garden, rich with beauty and shade,  
Filled with fruit and vegetables,  
Well watered, lush.  
There is a place for the man  
In that Garden.  
There is purpose,  
For he is appointed its caretaker.  
A bit of weed pulling, some irrigation,  
Pruning now and then . . .  
Not an arduous task.  
An opportunity for days spent  
Puttering in the soil,  
For the healthy exercise  
That leads to restful sleep.  
The good life is there  
In the Garden.

And Yahweh God adds a bit of mental challenge  
To the life of the man  
In the Garden.  
There are the animals yet unnamed.  
Will the man provide them proper monikers?  
An interesting task . . . beginning with the "A's"  
Aardvark . . . Armadillo  
Working one's way through to Yak and Zebra,  
Deciding just which name is best.

"Why 'elephant'?"

"Well, it looks more like an elephant  
Than a Kangaroo."

Yahweh God hopes the man  
Will take a shine to one of those animals.  
Yahweh God sees that it is lonely  
For the man in that Garden.  
He needs a helper, a companion.  
But none of the animals  
Quite fills the bill  
(Not even the duck).  
Oh, the man gets a lot of chuckles from the monkeys;  
The sight of the Elk  
At dawn brings a thrill;  
But the comfort the man gets  
From petting the dog at night  
Just isn't enough.  
Yahweh God sees that  
The man needs something, or someone,  
Who . . . well . . . who will pet back.  
So Yahweh God puts the man into deep sleep.

With deft surgical precision  
God forms from his flesh  
A companion . . . a helper . . .  
Woman!  
And when the man wakes up  
And has had time to get acquainted,  
And the two have known  
The mystery of one flesh,  
The man is fulfilled and content.  
It sure beats hoeing tomatoes!

The man and the woman  
Live together in the Garden.  
They are naked, with beautiful tans,  
Not because they espouse nudism  
Or skinny dipping,  
But simply because they have nothing to hide  
From the world,  
From one another,  
From Yahweh God.

Now in this Garden  
Are a couple of trees  
That you won't find in your local arboretum.  
One is tucked away  
Off the beaten path.  
It is called  
THE TREE OF LIFE.  
The other is pretty obvious  
For it has a big "No Trespassing" sign,  
And underneath in smaller print  
"Warning: This tree may  
Be hazardous to your health;"  
And this tree is called  
THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL.

Now it is crystal clear to the man and the woman  
That Yahweh God does not want them  
Messing around that tree.  
But why? is Yahweh God anti-intellectual?  
Does God fear the kids  
Will leave the farm for good  
If they go off to college?  
It's a bit of a puzzlement, this tree.  
It doesn't seem that knowledge  
Is the problem,  
But the Knowledge of Good and Evil.  
It appears that when a person  
Eats the fruit from this tree  
He's gonna be cock-sure of  
What is right and what is wrong.  
He's gonna know,  
Without a smidgeon of a doubt,  
That his family or clan or nation  
Is the only one that matters,  
And that his religion is the true one,  
And that his way of life is holy.  
Yes, a person is gonna know she's right  
When she eats that fruit.  
And once she knows she's right,  
Then she's gonna know  
The other person is wrong.  
And, well, God can't allow that to happen.

So anyway,  
THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL  
Stands there in the middle of the garden  
With its no trespassing sign.  
And everyday the man and the woman  
Pass by a hundred times or more.  
The sign sort of bugs them.  
It's like saying  
Don't put beans up your nose.  
You get to wondering  
What it would feel like.  
But they follow orders,  
Life goes on contentedly.  
Enter Sir Pent . . .  
He just shows up one day  
In his three-piece suit,  
Gucci loafers, leather attache case.  
He is urbane and witty,  
Speaks in a clipped British accent.  
Why you just know Sir Pent has been around.  
The man feels uneasy in his presence.  
Sir Pent has no dirt under his fingernails;  
There's not much the farmer  
Feels in common with him.  
But the woman is fascinated  
By the way he dresses.  
And she could listen to him talk for hours!

So the woman and Sir Pent  
Get to passing the time of day  
On a pretty regular basis.  
He's a great conversationalist!  
Most of the time they talk about her;  
How she likes the garden,  
How she feels,  
If she's happy.  
She's flattered by the attention.  
She tells him about how Yahweh God  
Created the garden and put them there  
And how they are taking care of it,  
And all.  
Then Sir Pent breaks in:  
"And did I hear you say  
That you are not to eat  
Any of this lovely fruit?"  
"Oh, no" the woman says,  
"Why, we can eat anything here,  
Except from this tree, of course."  
"And what, dear lady, is  
So unique about this delectable fruit?"  
"We don't know.  
Yahweh God says if we eat it we die.  
Whatever that means."

“Oh, my dear, you must have misunderstood.  
Why, in my travels  
I have often enjoyed the nectar  
Of this marvelous fruit.  
You will not die.  
Au contraire, my love,  
At the moment this delicacy  
Passes your luscious lips,  
Your eyes will be opened  
And you, dear child, you  
Shall be as Yahweh God.  
Try it . . . you'll love it!”  
Well, of course, she tries the fruit,  
Wouldn't you?  
And she takes some to the man.  
We don't get the feeling  
He puts up much of a fuss  
About downing those forbidden calories.  
So the deed is done.  
And their eyes are opened all right.  
And the first thing they see  
Is that they had better start hiding.  
They no longer feel comfortable  
Exposed to one another.

So quick as a wink  
It is out with the needle and thread,  
And before long they are wearing  
Cute little fig leaf aprons.  
And that's where the fig leaf business starts, folks.  
You and I know all about fig leaves.  
We started out as little tykes,  
Quite open to life, and vulnerable.  
But while we were still in diapers  
We figured out a person can get hurt that way.  
Our eyes were opened!  
We saw we needed a few fig leaves.  
We learned to cover up:  
The value of the white lie.  
We learned to look interested  
When we were not;  
To show we didn't care  
When we did.  
We learned to pose and posture.  
We added fig leaf to fig leaf  
Until now we are completely hidden  
From one another . . .  
From ourselves.  
Those fig leaves surround us  
Like some crazy fat clown costume.  
We waddle around inside, somewhere.  
We try to get in touch with one another,  
But those fig leaf costumes bump together  
While we are miles apart.  
We reach out; but we cannot touch,  
We cannot hold hands,  
For the fig leaves.  
Oh yes, we know all about hiding behind fig leaves!

But back to the Garden.  
The man and the woman are hiding now  
Not only from each other;  
But now they have to hide from Yahweh God.  
It's ridiculous the way  
They crouch behind that skimpy bush,  
Hoping that they'll not be found.  
You do not hide long from Yahweh God!  
In a twinkling they stand before God,  
Ashamed! Knowing Guilt!

"You ate of the Tree Of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.  
Why?"

The response is natural:  
The man points to the woman,  
And the woman points to Sir Pent,  
And they say with one voice,  
"He made me do it!"  
She  
And Sir Pent lights up his cigar  
And smiles . . .

Well, acts have consequences.  
Yahweh God wastes no time spelling them out.  
To Sir Pent: "Off with the Brooks Brothers Suit, fella,  
And start slithering!"

To the man and the woman:  
"The picnic is over, kiddies.  
Start packing your bags.  
It is out into the cruel world for you.  
You shall find pain and frustration out there.  
Blood, sweat, and tears . . .  
And . . . the grave!  
'Cause life from now on is tough!"

The man and woman leave the Garden.  
We call this THE FALL.  
Some say it is a fall upward,  
That in their leaving, they face the challenge  
That reveals humanity's true glory.  
Others say the fall is downward  
And something precious is lost.  
All agree that now a fiery sword guards Eden.  
We cannot go home again.  
The fruit of the Tree of Life remains uneaten.  
*And so we live midst cares and sighs  
And dream our dreams of paradise.*