

Dump the Garden that did not exist and start to live in the real world

When I wanted to think about what to do this morning, I was originally interested in exploring the tension in our lives between helping others and helping our friends.

However, I decided to show you some of the conversation on our Facebook page and I came across a sentence (that I wrote), which caught my eye. I thought it was rather good.



Gordon Uniting Church We can follow god and call the world good, or like in the garden of eden, spend our lives blaming others, and find ourselves trapped in a tiny world of our making.

Like · Reply · Commented on by Lloyd Robinson [?] · February 10 at 9:10pm

And, it takes little effort to encourage me to work with Genesis 1, 2, 3. They are fantastic stories. But the question, what angle, what could be new... So I looked to apply Genesis 2 and 3 to today. This is a little rough, but it is always more difficult to apply something that it is just to believe. So here goes...

Good News

Genesis 2 : 15 - 25

Reflection: The search for the Garden

Let us suggest a concept of Heaven. Surely the Garden of Eden is a picture that is close to Heaven. A Heaven that is lost. A Heaven that is possible, if only others would work towards it. The image is a picture of Pandora, the world upon that the film Avatar is set in. It is idyllic, perfect and magical. Disney is going to make a ride based on Pandora, so we can enter a magical, perfect, gentle Garden; if only for a short time.

Peter Rollins spoke at Balmain Uniting Church in 2014. This video is titled "Heaven and Hell" and is on youtube. The full video goes for 60 minutes... During this video he examines Heaven and Hell. At this point in the video he is thinking about heaven. Peter quotes Karl Marx and the famous line: "religion is the opium of the people". I have included the broader quotation from Karl Marx in your notices so that you can absorb its broader context, as he deals with it a little quickly to remember. He is an Irishman, so the accent is... well Irish. Anyway, lets drop in for a couple of minutes.

Reflection... Peter Rollins Heaven - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d268krq7tY8> from 9:00 – 11:00

He is positing that Heaven is a universal search for people. Secondly, the most authentic searching for heaven is currently being undertaken in the secular world. The search for heaven becomes religion. Religion numbs the pain of existence. It is the imaginary flowers on our chains of oppression.

Genesis 2 sets up this scene for us. It is a Garden. A place where life is perfect and nothing is bad.

Reflection: Living inside a Fantasy?

Last year, I started to separate Genesis 1 from Genesis 2 more and allow them to live as different stories. Genesis 1 emphasizes that the work of creation is Good. God is pleased.

Then you get to Genesis 2 and the story continues. The spoiling of creation happens. The way that I have always interpreted this passage is in a forward telling of the story.

i.e. There was an idyllic time when the world was perfect. That was spoiled (everybody blames everybody else, even a snake gets involved). We now live in a broken world.

The desire for the existence of a perfect world concept lives in our culture and is reflected in many forms:

- Atlantis (a perfect society that sank beneath the waves)
- Pandora (where the natives are in perfect harmony with nature)

It is fundamentally understood in our culture. You can prove this when someone makes an advertisement for beer using the story.

Beer from the Garden - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sjl5_vDfiuM

We do not need a user manual for such a story – it is built in. Hence the commercial world can use the story to sell beer without explanation. Our product is made in the Garden of Eden. It is a great product, transported from the Garden of Eden to you. By drinking this product, you can step outside (transcend) your existence into the Garden. They are selling transcendence in beer!

So, as I tried to make sense of this, I turned the story around. You see, the story is read from left to right, but history is going from right to left. We only know the outcome of the story. To get back to it, we need to start from the end. “You know how the world is, let me tell you how it got this way”.

God has placed an angel and swords at the gate of the Garden. You and I cannot enter the Garden. It is barred from us. We cannot enter it. It may as well not exist. It is not possible to be part of your or my reality.

We are confronted with a world where for most of us, we need to work, relationships are hard work, parenting is hard work (expanding the concept of pain in childbirth) and we will feel the need to protect and hide our egos (i.e. need clothing). Our first instinct might be to rush back into the Garden, but it is barred from us entering.

But we are determined to keep the chains of oppression covered in imaginary flowers. Humans are determined to avoid reality and many break through the first barrier of flaming swords and angels. When we do, we get into the Garden right? No, we walk straight into a domestic dispute.

I did not eat the apple. You ate it first. I only had a little bit, barely nibbled it. I would have never eaten it if you had not already.

Look there is a snake, it made me do it. It cannot even walk, how it is supposed to hand you the apple. It curled around it and gave it to me.

The dog ate my homework. The vacuum cleaner sucked it up. The tree can walk and distracted me. Not my fault. Not my fault. Not my fault.

It is their fault. Who? Asians, Gay people, Muslims, Women, Cockroaches, mice, bacteria, chickens (spread avian flu), the Labor party, the Liberal party, my teacher, my workplace, the food I eat is making me ill.

And as a nation, we are completely sucked in. We need to blame others for our failure. If we can only rid ourselves of you, then it will be all better.

In an article by Peter Harcher this week, a quote from the middle of the article goes as follows:

"In an extraordinary moment of unity this week, the Business Council and the ACTU and 16 other groups including big investors and environmental groups came together to appeal to the political parties to stop arguing and to seek a shared solution. In a joint letter, they railed against "partisan antics".

Did the political system respond to this plea? Of course not. It's too much fun to keep up the partisan antics. Turnbull won't stop because he's winning. And Labor is starting to panic."

You could argue the crisis of our political and social systems has reach a level where you can get 10-20% of the Australian vote only to blaming others, politicians and parties have no need for a purpose.

But this is just an example of how we are all behaving. Politicians reflect (perfectly) the current culture. If it is acceptable for you and I to blame others, then politicians take that license.

Peter Rollins – Batman - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d268krq7tY8> - about 27:00 to 31:00

It is a horribly sad image of Batman, who spends a large amount of his fortune to buy equipment to beat up criminals every Friday and Saturday night. Each night, he thinks the criminal could have been the person that killed his parents. Never sated, he is forced to repeat the same cycle every week. Gotham City is trapped into the hell of Batman's making.

When we believe the Garden of Eden is how life is supposed to be, we believe that our flaws are not our fault. We search for someone to blame. It could be the devil. It could be the heat. It could be my local church. It could be the minister or the person next to me. We live as though the world could be perfect and will engage in any number of domestic disputes maintain the dream. Our politicians are just like us. They will engage in any number of disputes to avoid really making change.

The way we need to live is in a post Garden of Eden time. The world is the way it is. Work to make it better from where it is. When we start from reality and upset the current system, we will enable real change.

When Jesus says, "Let the dead bury the dead", he did not mean dead people to raise up to act as zombie undertakers, he meant the living that are as "the dead". They are people who want to live in the Garden, and will do anything to avoid the reality. They will blame the Romans, the Samaritans, the Lepers, the mad for their difficulties and Jesus systemically denies this idea by meeting and talking with each group and proving they are not to be blamed.

We think, most religious people are in the church, no most religious people are outside the church. They are dedicated to maintaining the imaginary flowers to avoid seeing their chains of oppression. When we see the world as it is and can be, then we experience Grace, hear the Good News and rise from the dead.

My friend on Facebook, wants to claim the garden for himself. He realizes he is not perfect, so he sets out to scapegoat "the others" by damning them to Hell. He has as much say in who goes to Heaven and Hell as I do, but by liberally handing around damnation, he hopes to move a little closer to heaven himself by pushing others down. He will also, like Batman, create a hell of his own making in the middle of the Garden – as he ritually judges people to external damnation.



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So, by the time I get to the end of my thinking, there was no Garden. It is a plot device to set up a great story. There never was a Garden. It is broken at two levels. We are barred from entering it. there are swords and angels barring the way, so, take a hint and do not try to enter it. However, if you insist, then you just get to enjoy an endless domestic dispute (a hell in your heaven). Far better to be on this side of it.

We need to stop seeing the world as we want it to be and start seeing it as it is....

When we see the world as it is, then we can imagine how it really could be.....

And, I probably will not travel to Disneyland to experience Pandora.

Quote from Karl Marx – Religion is the Opium of the Masses.

One of the more frequently quoted statements of Karl Marx is Religion is the opium of the people this being a translation of the German statement "Die Religion ... ist das Opium des Volkes".

This statement appears in Karl Marx' - "A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right" which appeared in the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher, as published in Paris on the 7 & 10 February 1844.

Many people, however, take Karl Marx' *Religion is the opium of the people* statement to be a plain and simple condemnation of religion but what Marx actually meant by saying about Religion and about it being the Opium of the People is somewhat more subtle than this:-

... Religion is the general theory of this world, its encyclopaedic compendium, its logic in popular form, its spiritual point d'honneur, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn complement, and its universal basis of consolation and justification. It is the fantastic realization of the human essence since the human essence has not acquired any true reality. The struggle against religion is, therefore, indirectly the struggle against that world whose spiritual aroma is religion.

Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.

The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness. To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions. The criticism of religion is, therefore, in embryo, the criticism of that vale of tears of which religion is the halo.

Criticism has plucked the imaginary flowers on the chain not in order that man shall continue to bear that chain without fantasy or consolation, but so that he shall throw off the chain and pluck the living flower. The criticism of religion disillusion man, so that he will think, act, and fashion his reality like a man who has discarded his illusions and regained his senses, so that he will move around himself as his own true Sun". . .

http://www.age-of-the-sage.org/quotations/marx_opium_people.html