

Articles by Ian B. Johnson

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Clothing and Nakedness in The Bible

Surprise! God Isn't Offended by Your Body!

The True Purpose and Significance of Clothing in Relationship to God's Grace and The Christian Ethics of Clothing

This series of articles is neither "Christian nudist" nor opposed to nudism. Rather, these essays are a study of the Scriptures regarding our bodies, nakedness and the purpose behind clothing. They conclude that God does not command us to wear clothing under all circumstances, but allows us clothing to help us overcome our own shame in coming before Him and before each other, and that how we clothe ourselves in any given situation is to be governed by the law of love. They further conclude that the Scriptures that speak about clothing and nakedness were not written primarily to reinforce a religious taboo, but were written to teach us something very basic about ourselves and our relationship with God. Other articles in this series quote at length and comment upon the various Scriptural passages on the subject, while this article presents a summary of the subject. It should be noted particularly, from the outset, that, while my interest in this subject resulted from a local political controversy and my study has led me to the conclusion that Christianity and carefully-practiced nudism may be compatible, I am not a practicing nudist and am not publishing these articles to promote nudism.[[1](#)] Rather, I am publishing them to promote unity and to lead to a clearer understanding of our salvation in Christ, and of the basis for true Christian morality and ethics.

If We Wear Clothes Because God Is Offended by Our Sinful Bodies, We're All in Big Trouble

It is commonly taught that God told Adam to wear clothes because, when Adam sinned, God became offended by the appearance of our shameful human bodies and therefore likely to strike us dead if He sees us uncovered. However, if this is true, we're all in big trouble.

I am not a regularly practicing nudist. However, I do confess that I undress to bathe, that I remove my clothes in front of other men in the locker room at the gym several times a week, and that I have occasionally in medical settings exposed myself in the presence of women I didn't know when instructed to do so. Moreover, I suspect that nearly everyone makes similar exceptions to their learned moral rules about covering their bodies. However, if one really believes that we must all cover our bodies because God is offended by them, these exceptions create a problem. If God is offended by the appearance of our bodies, it really doesn't matter that we expose them only in private or in socially

acceptable settings. Social acceptability doesn't matter. God still sees, and He is still offended.

Indeed, if I really believed that the appearance of my body offended God, I would not even do as one particularly superstitious English monarch is said to have done -- that is, remained clothed at all times except the two times every year when she took a bath, with a contingent of her most trusted knights standing guard to prevent any unauthorized human from seeing her nakedness. No, if my body is offensive to God, I must bathe only with my clothes on. Padlocks on the bathroom door, the best knights in the realm standing watch, even the entire United States Marine Corps encamped around my house, would not convince me to do otherwise. No door, lock, castle or army can keep God out of my bathroom. He still sees, and He is still offended.

This, however, leads to yet another problem. If the Marine Corps can't keep God from seeing my nakedness, my flimsy clothing can't do it, either. He sees what's under my clothing. And on the spiritual level, He sees everything that's in my mind and heart, despite everything I do to cover it up. "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4.13, KJV). He still sees, and He is still offended.

It follows, therefore, that clothing as a means of hiding our nakedness from God was not God's idea. It was man's idea, as explained below.

Clothing Was -- And Still Is -- Our Idea, A Strictly Human Invention

God created man, male and female, naked, sinless, with no knowledge of evil and no dread of God. Adam was more than just physically naked -- he was also mentally, emotionally and spiritually naked. He could walk and talk freely with God and felt no need to try to hide anything from Him. He was likewise naked in all possible ways with his wife, with whom he was truly one.

It was only after Adam and Eve sinned, thereby acquiring that knowledge of evil which God had lovingly denied them, that they felt a need to hide from each other and from God. It was only at this point that Adam, or, possibly, Eve (the text isn't clear on this point), insisted on sewing loin coverings out of fig leaves. They then hid from God, apparently believing that if God couldn't see them, He'd go away. Adam later told God that they had hid because they were naked, and their nakedness made them afraid of God, but their peaceful communion with God in the naked state before they sinned clearly shows that their fear really resulted from their sin and not from their physical lack of clothing. (They were deceived.) It is noteworthy that the part of their bodies which the first humans felt compelled to cover after they sinned was their genitals -- the part that they would both have to use to fulfill God's command to be fruitful and multiply, the only command God had given them which they were still able to

perform. Thus, sewing together the fig leaves can properly be viewed as an act of rebellion against God.[2] In any event, it is clear that clothing was Adam's or Eve's idea -- they sewed fig leaves together on their own initiative, without even any tiny hint from God that He wanted them to do so.

God Accommodates Our Need For Privacy So That We Will Be Able To Approach Him With Less Fear

When Adam and Eve sewed fig leaves into loin cloths, the concept of privacy was born. They sought an area of privacy in which they could hide their sin from God. They also sought privacy not to be reminded of His only remaining commandment (reproduction) except when they found it comfortable to remember it. There were four problems with this, of course: namely, that God still saw them, that their sin didn't lie in the external appearance of their bodies, that God was therefore still aware of their sin, and that they remained aware of God's command.

Nevertheless, God accommodated their newly-discovered need for privacy in order to teach them about His grace. First, God confronted their sin. When Adam and Eve hid, God didn't go away as they had hoped or immediately strike them dead as they had feared. Instead, He sought a full confession of what they had done and true repentance. But He received only Adam's protestation that he was afraid of God because he was naked, Adam's plea that he ate the forbidden fruit because the woman gave it to him, and Eve's plea that she ate the fruit because the serpent deceived her. Adam and Eve still wanted to cover their sin behind clothing and excuses. Therefore, in place of the fig leaf loincloths they had made, God gave them coats of skins that He had made. As many conventional theologians have understood and taught, this killing of animals to make our first parents' clothing taught that blood would have to be shed to cover human sin and prefigured the death of Jesus. But at a much simpler level, it also taught Adam and Eve directly that they could not effectively cover their own sin but God would have to do that for them. Better yet, it showed them that God was *willing* to cover their sin, and to create for them the sphere of privacy they now needed, so that they would be able to come before Him freely and without the fear that He would instantly strike them dead.[3]

Because Clothing Is So Important To Our Approach To God, Dress Codes Become Inflexibly Frozen Into The Religious Morality Of Most Cultures

Note that Adam and Eve clothed themselves, covering those parts of their body directly related to the command of God, in an attempt to hide themselves from God's wrath. And thus was religion born.

People and cultures since Adam's time have generally gone several steps farther than Adam did down the path of religion. Individuals ask "What must *I do* to be saved?" Cultures ask "What must *we do* to be saved?" We want to *do* something to save ourselves from God's anger, and *invariably* come up with ritual observances and lists of rules which must be observed as the solution to our collective problem. (We also tend to invent gods which will, we think, be appeased by the prescribed acts of our religion, but this is a topic for a separate essay.) The point to be made here is that, having abandoned a living relationship with the true God, we invariably seek in our own collective wisdom to devise rules and observances which will gain us favor with the God we have chosen not to know. These religious rules always include some taboos regarding clothing and nakedness. Moreover, because sewing clothing was the first act of human religion, these clothing taboos tend to be central to every culture on earth and to contain some details which are very inflexible. And because our attempt to appease God or climb our way to Him has been perceived as a collective effort ever since construction of the Tower of Babel was begun, dissenting ways of thought or living which challenge these inflexible rules are generally not tolerated. It is usually felt that toleration of the dissenter in these matters might cause God to lash out in anger at the whole community.

However, the clothing rules devised by human religions, though generally rigid, are far from uniform. The one element all systems have in common is that adult women must cover their genitals, at least on particular occasions. But there are some cultures in which even adult women are permitted to go naked rather frequently, male nakedness is nothing unusual in many places, and there is wide variability in the rules regarding both how and how completely genitals must be covered. Furthermore, some, but not nearly all, cultures observe that female breasts are involved in reproduction (feeding babies), and require that they be covered as well. Still other cultures, like the thoroughly schizophrenic modern United States culture, require that female genitals and breasts or nipples and male genitals be "completely and opaquely covered" (a phrase found in many current US state obscenity laws) but richly reward women (particularly) who show off just as much of their bodies as they can without crossing the line. At the other extreme, there have been cultures like the English and North American culture of Victorian times, which required men to cover only their genitals and buttocks but required women to hide their entire torso and the full length of their "limbs" behind several layers of cloth nearly all the time. (Indeed, Victorian culture was so obsessed with "limbs" that, in a proper Victorian home, the legs of household furniture, which were considered a part of the feminine sphere of influence, were covered with petticoats lest men should be moved to lust after chairs.)

This extreme variability in the rules demonstrates quite clearly their human origin. They are, in fact, not God's command to us, but part of our attempt to appease Him. The clothing regulations of the reader's culture, therefore, may

not be relied upon as stating God's eternal commands on the subject. Only in the Bible may God's commands be found.

Social Order And The Regulation Of Sexuality Are Also Inadequate Justifications For The Taboos Surrounding Clothing

In modern Western culture, it has become unfashionable and even, in many circles, impolite or not "politically correct" to speak in terms of divine or religious origins for moral rules. But the real underlying rationale for rules in the area of clothing remains a collective religious fear -- a vague and diffuse fear that, if anyone in the community is permitted to expose too much of their bodies (except for medical, hygienic or purely commercial purposes) without facing judicial punishment, some power above humanity will punish the community. This can be demonstrated quite easily by observing the violent reactions engendered by the politics of nudist resorts. When nudist resorts become too politically visible, often because some political leader is creating controversy for his own political profit, a great deal of pressure usually arises to shut them down. On these occasions, opponents of nudism invariably say that the practice is a great threat to the community, and particularly to children who might be exposed to it, and should not be tolerated. However, these resorts are usually well isolated from public view and the actual risk that someone who really is not trying to look will nevertheless see an exposed body and be offended is actually fairly small. This author has never observed any nudist trying to force his or her way of life on anyone, whether in person, in the media or on the Web. So what is the explanation for the violent opposition to the practice by people who have never even been present to observe it? It must be a fear of collective punishment of the community for tolerating the practice.

The political arguments against nudism often label it dangerous for two concrete reasons: 1) the presence of a naturist establishment promotes crime in its neighborhood; and 2) since it promotes lust when men look at naked women, naturism will promote sex crime in the community if tolerated. These look, at first, like reasonable, empirical arguments for prohibition, arguments based on real evidence. The problem is that they are merely restatements of community fears. They are simply assumed to be already proven, a circular argument, and cannot be impeached with contrary evidence. Thus, while it is often said that the presence of a resort increases crime in its vicinity, none of the sources this author has seen on the subject present hard crime rate data to support this conclusion.^[4] It sounds reasonable, therefore it is simply assumed.

As for the second argument -- that toleration of bodily exposure leads to sex crimes -- the data, such as it is, does not support it. Interestingly, there is one whole state of the United States which has never bothered to outlaw exposure of the female breast. Early in the days of the Anglo colonization of Texas, so the story goes, the Native American tribes which harassed the white colonies were

in the habit of killing the men but taking the women and children alive. Therefore, the early laws among these white towns permitted women to go topless as a matter of survival (it made it clear who the women were), and they were encouraged to do so whenever natives might be around. Whether or not this is actually how the Texas indecent exposure statute came to omit reference to the breast, this author actually saw that law in action in a public park in Austin in 1978, when a well-developed young woman who was out walking her dog on a warm day stripped off her shirt, revealing no clothing underneath, and a nearby police officer did nothing. And, as of April 2000, Texas had still not "corrected" this omission in its laws. Indeed, that state has since 1978 adopted a breastfeeding rights statute which secures women with infants the right to breastfeed anywhere. So, if toleration of exposure feeds lust and lust leads to sex crimes, Texas should have a significantly higher rate of sex crimes per capita than the other 49 states which are not so officially lax about women's breasts. However, Texas ranks near the middle of the states in its per capita rate of forcible rape, and a number of other large states rank higher.[5]

Moreover, public toplessness is not uncommon in most of Europe, and complete nudity is tolerated in more settings in many European countries than it is in the United States. Yet, in most of Western Europe, the rates of sex crimes (and of all violent crimes, generally) per capita are significantly lower than in the United States. While there are other cultural and historical differences which may explain the lower overall violent crime rates in Europe, neither Europe nor Texas provide experimental verification of the proposition that toleration of exposure leads to increased sex crime rates. Rather, it is simply assumed that this must be true, even contrary to the evidence. But belief in a proposition even contrary to the evidence is an attribute of religion, not of the secular science politicians who debate in this area imply is on their side.

Therefore, we are back to the concept that the absolute requirement to wear clothing is an element of collective religion, not a true crime-preventive measure. If it is to be justified as part of the Christian religion, that justification must come from the Bible.

The Bible Says Surprisingly Little About Either Clothing Or Nakedness

The Bible says very little about clothing. Of course, the Old Testament, otherwise known for its strict laws, explains how Adam and Eve, though created naked, came to be clothed. It also commends Shem and Japheth, the sons of Noah, for preserving their father's privacy and makes special provision for the preservation of privacy during worship and within the family relationship. However, the only Old Testament clothing regulations which cannot be viewed as being designed to preserve privacy are those which prescribe elaborate clothing for the priests to wear while ministering (Exodus 28), one prohibiting cross-dressing (Deuteronomy 22.5), one against wearing garments made of

mixed fabrics (Leviticus 19.19; Deuteronomy 22.11) and the rather detailed regulation about "leprous" garments (Leviticus 13.47-59). Yet none of these can be extended into a uniform minimum dress code. The priest's garments were symbolic and educational, and no one but the priests was allowed to wear them, so they provide no general rules regarding clothing styles. The cross-dressing rule prohibited interchanging male and female clothing, but did not prescribe what either men or women must wear. The remaining ordinances simply declared what materials must not be used in clothing, but said nothing about what clothing made of the allowed materials must look like or must cover. This is something the Old Testament never bothers to tell us.

Moreover, the answer to this question is not to be found in the New Testament, either. In fact, the only New Testament command on the specific subject of clothing is that women should dress appropriately for the occasion ("modestly") and should not over-dress in expensive clothing and jewelry. The apostles said nothing at all about men's clothing, and did not attempt to set any minimum standard of decency for women.

It is surprising also both how little the Bible says about nakedness and that what it says is not all negative. Indeed in the Old Testament, physical nakedness is used in different places as a symbol of openness to God, of mourning and of coming judgment, and on several occasions God even commands His prophets to go naked publicly for symbolic purposes. Moreover, in explaining the purpose of the Sabbath, His chosen fast, God commends those who do not refuse self-denial to the extent of exposing their own flesh on the Sabbath in order that the hungry may be fed and the naked clothed. In the New Testament, nakedness as an incident of persecution or Christian suffering is commended -- indeed, the Apostle Paul boasted that he had endured nakedness (along with many other hardships) as a result of persecution for the Gospel's sake. Furthermore, although history tells us that public baths were common in the Hellenistic and Roman world to which the New Testament was addressed, and that these baths were built in open public squares and were usually not segregated by gender, the Apostles wrote not one word about them. On the other hand, involuntary nakedness is consistently used throughout Scripture as a picture of judgment, with the prime example being Jesus' nakedness on the Cross. However, nakedness itself is never condemned as sin and we are never told what parts of our bodies we must cover in order to please God. It's as if this question didn't matter.

Because We Can't Approach God, The Principles That Really Govern Clothing Can't Be Based Upon What We Must Do To Approach Him

In fact, the questions about what clothing styles we must wear and what parts of our bodies we must cover in order to please God don't matter. Regardless of what we wear, we are incapable of pleasing Him (Romans 4.10-28; Hebrews

11.6). God is offended by our sin, and we cannot make atonement for (cover) it (Isaiah 59.1-15; Galatians 3.10-12; Hebrews 10.1-4). Only Jesus could cover our sin, and He did even more than this -- through His death, He made it possible for our sin to be taken away (Hebrews 11.10-14). Moreover, His resurrection made it possible for us to enter into a relationship with the Father which is just like His own, a relationship in which sin has never been an issue (Romans 6.1-14; 2 Corinthians 5.16-21).

Since our relationship with God depends on what He already did for us rather than what we must do to please Him, the principles that govern clothing can't be based, as is usually taught, on inflexible rules concerning what clothing pleases or displeases Him. And, as has previously been shown, God explicitly states no inflexible dress code in His written Word.

Clothing And The Law Of Love

Whether our actions toward God or toward other people are in view, the law which underlies all of God's law is love, as Jesus Himself said:

"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets (Matthew 22.36-40, NASB).

The central importance of love for those around us is underscored by the Apostle Paul:

Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. For this, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law (Romans 13.8-10, NASB).

Indeed, as the Apostle John explains, even our love for God is measured by whether we act upon our love for others:

We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth (1 John 3.16-18, NASB).

This is not to say that where God has given an explicit command -- for instance, against murder, adultery, theft, lying or gossip -- we are free to ignore that command if we, in our own wisdom, believe that would be the loving thing to

do. No, where God gives an explicit command applicable today, its violation is never consistent with love, regardless of what our self-justifying wisdom tells us. Love is the summary of God's law, not its replacement. However, where there is no explicit command, as in the case of clothing and nakedness, we are to be governed by the broader principle of love, which asks the question, "Will my neighbor benefit from my action or be harmed by it?" If my neighbor will benefit from an action which is in my power, I may even have a duty to act, unless taking the action in question would prevent me from doing something even more beneficial. If my neighbor will be harmed, I should not act. If there is neither harm nor benefit for another in an act, I am free to act. But, in any event, I should ask God for His wisdom, which He promises to give freely when asked in faith, with a willingness to actually do what He says (James 1.5-7).

Though he was directly speaking only to the issue of what women should wear to church meetings, the Apostle Paul demonstrated the correct application of the law of love to the clothing issue generally in 1 Timothy 2.9-10. There had, apparently, been a problem in the church caused by wealthy women showing off their wealth by wearing to church expensive clothes, gold jewelry and gold braided in their hair. This, of course, created hard feelings and division with the poorer members. Paul instructs Timothy that these women should not be showing off their wealth at church, but instead should be wearing their good deeds and dressing "modestly, with decency and propriety." These three words are very general words which could also properly be translated "appropriately for the occasion, respectfully and with self-control." Thus, in clothing as in anything else which is not the subject of an explicit commandment, the rule is love. Our clothing should be appropriate for the occasion, and should not occasion either envy or offense in others present to see it.

Now for the difficult question: Does the Bible prohibit Christians from participating in social nudism? From the outset, I will declare that at the present stage of my life, I personally would not participate because, although my wife would not disapprove, virtually all of the other members of my church would be offended to learn that I had done so. Thus, if I were to participate in social nudism, my participation would create division, in violation of the law of love. However, this reasoning does not answer the question for other Christians (I presume that some like this exist) whose spouses approve or participate with them and whose church fellowships are more liberal on this issue. My answer for myself based on divisiveness gives me no basis on which to judge someone else.

For other Christians who can honestly say that attendance at nudist functions does not, in their circumstances, cause offense or division among their brethren, the question that must be asked is more basic: Can attendance, without clothes, at a nudist event, constitute dressing "appropriately" for the occasion, "respectfully and with self-control?" As to the first part of the question

-- appropriateness -- the answer depends on whether the act is viewed from the perspective of those actually present at the event or of an external critic applying a majoritarian "community standard." Clearly from the perspective of the other nudists present at the event, nakedness is "appropriate" to the occasion and they are not offended by it. Moreover, while the Scriptures command Christians to obey the laws made by their government because governors act under God's authority (Romans 13.1-2), no Scripture appears to require Christians to comply at all times with the non-legal moral "standards" of the community around them, even in their truly private behavior. Indeed, unless the entire concept of privacy is to be destroyed by an assertion that the entire community or "society" is omnipresent and stands in God's place, "community standards" cannot be said to govern private behavior. Where these non-legal "community standards" must be considered is in public behavior: a Christian should behave (this includes dress) appropriately, not causing any unnecessary offense. Thus, in those jurisdictions in which social nudism is lawful, in settings isolated from those in the community at large who would be offended by it, it appears that it is possible for nakedness to be "appropriate" dress.

The next prong of this question is whether nudity can be "respectful" dress. Once again, this is a question of perspective: respectful to whom? Obviously, persons who are at any given time practicing social nudism are not at that time showing respect toward the sensibilities of the majority in the community. However, those in the community who might be offended generally are not present at a nudist activity -- they express their sensibilities by electing to be absent -- so the disrespect shown is only a theoretical disrespect toward persons who are absent. Some would also say that nudists disrespect their own bodies, citing Romans 1.24. But the immediate context of that verse is talking about idolatry -- worship of images made to look like men and animals -- which leads to being given over to lust, sexual immorality, homosexuality and a list of other sins. It is talking about immoral use of the body, not exposure of it. And the various defenses of nudism I've read on the Web suggest that many nudists think they are showing greater respect for their bodies by not being ashamed of them.

Finally, there is the question of the effect of nakedness upon "self-control." Sex is used to sell almost everything in our culture -- I've even seen it used to market religion.^[6] Images of women scantily dressed, or nude, in suggestive settings and postures, are used to create lust in order to sell everything from the sexual images themselves (pornography) to toothpaste, mutual funds, cars and political candidates. So it would be natural for someone living in our sex-crazed culture to believe that nudity, particularly female nudity, must always either 1) be intended to inspire lust or 2) have the effect of inspiring lust. Of course, if this belief is objectively true, a woman should never be naked in the presence of any man other than her husband, because such nudity either

manifests a lack of self-control on the woman's part or is certain to arouse in the other men present passions which must be frustrated, thus violating the law of love.

But is it true that all nakedness is sexual? The Bible never states this.[7] Indeed, when Adam and Eve hid their genitals, it was not to prevent lust; it was to keep God from seeing them. Moreover, nudists tend to declare that there is nothing sexual about their practice, and that, in a setting in which nakedness is common and all present understand that it is not intended as a sexual invitation, it does not function as a sexual invitation. They also make the point that lust is common among fully-clothed people, and has more to do with the social environment and individuals' mindset than with clothing. If this is true -- and I have no basis to dispute it -- a Christian may participate in nudist activities without sinning. The questions he or she must ask are the same that must be asked regarding any activity about which the Scriptures do not directly speak -- that is, what are my motives and how do my actions affect those around me? These are questions concerning which we may not form a "one size fits all" judgment for other people under all circumstances. Therefore, I have no basis for negatively judging other Christians who participate in social nudism.

LINKS

Sites discussing Christian morality or ethics generally:

- [Principles of Purity](#)

Sites promoting tolerance or unity, generally from a Christian perspective:

- [Religious Tolerance.org \(Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance\)](#)
- [Christian Unity](#)
- [Christian-oneness.org](#)
- [Common Divisive Fallacies](#)

Christian nudist sites (with no pictures anyone would find objectionable):

- [The Bible, Society and Nudity](#)

"The Bible, Society and Nudity" is an online book that is a very complete and lengthy treatment of the subject. The book was taken offline for awhile because of objections from the author's church, thus it is not an exposé or a text opposing nudism. The book was re-posted after the author's problems with his church hierarchy were resolved. It comes fairly close to being neutral.

- [Boyd Allen's Christian Nudism](#)
- [Common Ground](#) (archived screenshot)

Christian sites specifically opposing nudism:

- [Christian modesty](#) (a whole page of links on the subject)
- [Modesty](#)

Sites opposing nudism on secular grounds:

- [The Nudist Naturist Hall of Shame](#)

The secular sites opposing nudism that I've seen have tended to be just as short-lived as the Christian ones. I invite my readers to suggest other sites for inclusion here.

Endnotes

[1] It was the very noisy political efforts since 1997 of state and local officials to close down one nudist resort, Lake Edun, near my hometown (Topeka, Kansas), which alerted me to the fact that this subject of clothing and nakedness was a near-perfect example of how human religion works. Before the political battle started, I had paid no attention to nudism and nudists, and was only vaguely aware that nudist "colonies" existed in a few isolated places (but certainly nowhere close to me). I had also paid no attention at all to the basis on which clothing regulations and taboos are built. I had simply accepted at face value the unstated implications of the teaching on "modesty" that I had heard in church on infrequent occasions for many years, namely, that when God gave Adam and Eve coats of skins, that constituted a command to wear them at all times or face God's wrath, and that when Paul in 1 Timothy 2.9 commanded us to dress "modestly," he thereby adopted the current traditional clothing standard of *my* church into the Scriptures by reference just as if he had spelled them out explicitly in the text. The questions raised by the political debate over social nudism -- that is, whether I should give my support to the Christian leaders who were insisting that nudism should be banned as sinful and dangerous, and whether I could accept as my brothers and sisters in Christ people in my own community who claimed to be Christian yet practiced nudism -- forced me to pay attention.

[2] That Adam's and Eve's assertion of privacy was an act of rebellion against God's command to reproduce, which He has since been willing to accommodate for a higher purpose, is underscored by the treatment of reproduction itself in the Law. God had commanded the first couple to reproduce and continues to approve of reproduction within marriage, according to His design. While He said after Eve sinned that she would, as a result, have "pain" in childbirth, He did not revoke His command to multiply or declare either sex or childbirth a sin. Indeed, the Old Testament uniformly speaks of children as a blessing given by God. So giving birth to a child cannot, in itself, be a sin. Nevertheless, God

accommodated the Hebrews' perception that birth rendered a woman unclean -- a perception which could only have arisen from an underlying notion that reproduction is sinful or evil -- by providing for a time of ritual uncleanness after childbirth and an offering for a woman's cleansing at its end (Leviticus 12).

[3] That this fear was irrational is demonstrated by the fact that, when Adam and Eve came before His presence wearing their inadequate fig leaves, God spoke to them kindly and did not instantly strike them dead -- either for eating the forbidden fruit (the real sinful act in this narrative) or for coming before Him "shamefully" and "indecently" exposed.

[4] I am open to hard data on this subject. I simply have never seen any produced by partisans on either side. But be aware that I'm not looking for propaganda statistics -- disconnected numbers without a frame of reference used to elicit an unthinking emotional response. Instead, I'm looking for data which shows where and how it was obtained and gives enough information that valid comparisons can be drawn. The crime statistics commonly kept, moreover, do not appear to be very well adapted to use in studying the effect of either the proximity of nudist resorts or the strictness of indecent exposure statutes on crime or victimization rates.

[5] The 1998 edition of the [*Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Data*](#) shows that in 1997 Texas ranked 18th of 51 US jurisdictions in the per capita rates both of forcible rape and violent crimes generally. This appears to support the point feminists have been making for years -- that rape and sexual assault are usually really crimes of violent domination rather than sexual passion -- and tends to disconfirm the hypothesis that there is a causal relationship between laxity in legal prohibitions on breast exposure and overall sex crime rates. Indeed, in surveying the table of states from which this statistic came, it is noteworthy that the forcible rape rate ranking of a majority of the states is within two or three spots of their ranking in the all violent crimes column. Though this is not, by itself, very strong evidence, it at least suggests that the prevalence of sex crimes in a locality is much more affected by factors which contribute to violence in general than it is by toleration of bodily exposure.

[6] I say "almost" everything because I've never seen sex appeal used in advertising for mortuaries, cemeteries or funeral plans.

[7] Some would point to Matthew 5.27-28. But this passage does not state that whenever a man looks on a woman he lusts for her and, therefore, sins. Instead, it says that whenever a man looks on a woman *in order to* lust for her, already mentally picturing her in bed with him, the act of adultery has already been committed in his heart. Given a little reflection, this makes a lot of sense. But it does not in any way assert that female nakedness (which is never

mentioned in the passage) invariably leads to lust, regardless of the circumstances.

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