

## Spiritual Nakedness ©Richard L. Smith, PhD

Before Adam and Eve sinned, they “were both naked and were not ashamed” (2:25). Afterwards, Adam declared, “I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself” (3:10). Because they listened to the serpent (3:17), they felt exposed and shameful. They were afraid of *Yahweh Elōhîm*. What does nakedness – before and after their rebellion -- signify?

At its simplest nakedness refers to nudity. Adam and Eve were not clothed, until after they sinned.

A second meaning entails their vulnerability, but in a positive sense. In themselves they were dependent and powerless in the Garden. They were totally helpless, but safe with God. They were poor, but bountifully cared for. They had “nothing, yet possessing everything” (2 Cor 6:10). Their bounty derived from covenantal calling and divine blessing, truly by grace alone. Their posture before *Yahweh Elōhîm* evidenced humility and hopeful expectancy, as the psalmist wrote, “Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maidservant to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the LORD our God, till he has mercy upon us.” (123:2).

But, when they listened to the snake, they became idolaters. They conspired with the diabolical anti-god. Adam and Eve committed covenantal disobedience resulting in a third type of nakedness that testifies to an unwanted change of status due to divine judgment (See Deuteronomy 28). Nakedness in this sense produces alienation from God, one another, and creation. After they rebelled, for instance, controversy marred Adam and Eve’s marriage bond. God’s “helper fit for” Adam became a competitor or pawn and Adam a tyrant. Their fruitful relationship with creation was forever altered. They became truly defenseless and really vulnerable, powerless (naked) before fallen creation, sinful humanity, and the evil lord.



Nakedness in each dimension is reflected in the Old Testament, particularly in the third sense, spiritual apostasy. Nakedness of this kind refers to powerlessness “under the sun” (Eccl 1:9) or in this “present evil age” (Gal 1:4). It signifies the antithesis of Eden in every sense: economic and social impoverishment, and spiritual exile, as well as dysfunctional identity. It entails “lacking everything” (Deut 28:48), being “naked and barefoot” (Isa 20:4), “stripped and naked” (Mic 1:8), and viewed “in nakedness and shame” (1:11), including “disgrace” (Isa 47:3) and “lewdness” (Ezek 23:29). Nakedness is expressed as spiritual “adultery” (Hos 2:3) or “prostitution” (Mic 1:7). For instance, Israel “played the whore with the nations and defiled [itself] with their idols” (Ezek 23:30). Ironically, in response God often gave them over to even further sin, nakedness, and shame for all to see (16:37).

Mostly likely, each of us has experienced the positive and negative forms of spiritual nakedness. Spiritual poverty (trust and contentment), the positive form, is a fruit of the Spirit we should cultivate. Spiritual adultery (idolatry) is a kind of nakedness we should avoid with all our strength

and the grace of the Lord.

“Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!” (Psalm 139:23-24)