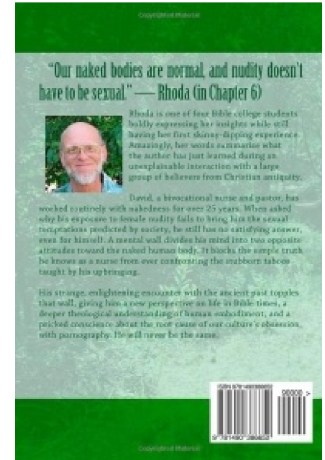


Why You May Want to Read *MEETING AT THE RIVER*

Body shame is the foundation of both prudery and pornography. Its exploitation by advertisers, fashion designers and Hollywood has created a *porno-prudish* culture that distorts both body image and human sexuality. Since childhood, most of us have been taught that *body shame* is unavoidable. But this is a lie as old as the serpent's deception in Eden. The only way to get back to a healthy and realistic view of our "*fearfully and wonderfully made*" bodies is to return to the view held by their Designer.



Use Amazon's "[Look Inside](#)" to read Preface, back cover & part of Chapter 1.
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[Preface](#) ([back to top](#))

For many readers and for many reasons, this book will be enthralling, enlightening, and exasperating. It will enthrall those who've longed for a closer connection to the skin they live in, but who always felt such a desire less than spiritually acceptable. It will enlighten most people to historical, biblical, cross-cultural, and psycho-social facts about the phenomenon of nonsexual human nakedness, which certain taboos never before allowed them to learn. But this book will exasperate those whose reaction to its arguments will be like mine was—one of resistance. Some may get angry enough to slam it shut and throw it against a wall. When I finally admitted that its arguments matched the undeniable realities of my experience, I threw both of them against an old and illogical wall in my mind, and *great was the fall of it!*

from Chapter 1 - [Surprise](#) ([back to top](#))

No, I thought, this is by no means a public gathering. It appeared to be intentionally private with a purpose that included elements of devotion. *So, why, I asked myself, does this peculiar group of religious people have no social inhibitions about mixed-gender nudity?* Evidently no one cared, and no one was staring, except me!

from Chapter 2 - [Antiquity](#) ([back to top](#))

"So it is clear," he proceeded. "I need labor no further to convince you of how your fellow ministers embrace this false view of the body. Without realizing its error, they maintain it as a holy trust. It becomes almost as sacred to them as the Gospel itself, for they guard and defend it with the same vigor. What was in our day normal and commonplace, they now deem shameful and lustful. How could they think otherwise, if that is what they learned from trusted teachers? . . ."

from Chapter 3 - [Education](#) ([back to top](#))

“Modesty?” retorted the old man, repeating my thoughts. “You call it modesty to define the body as a center for lustful attraction? With His very own hands, God fashioned it to reflect His glory. From the beginning, He meant it to be an awesome sight, not one to be shamefully hidden, especially from the eyes of the young as they grow up. Self-made coverings for hiding the body was the firstfruits of Satan’s deception and of human sin.

“Carefully search it out. You will find that the constant use of such coverings give birth to deceitful practices. Fig leaves draw both the eye and the mind to what is concealed beneath them. Garments should serve for protection and comfort. But if what they hide is rarely seen in normal life, they invite lustful thoughts, rather than preventing them. Satan knew this. Keeping the flesh covered up through false shame allows it to be wantonly uncovered for truly shameful ends.”

from Chapter 4 - **Decision** ([back to top](#))

“You have no idea how strategically the Lord has placed you, brother. You actually know the truth even better than I could ever explain it. But I will add my own honesty. I have watched more scenes like the one before us than you have watched babies being born. Yet I still enjoy the sight of those women bathing over there. Do we ever grow tired of starry nights, or blazing sunsets, or delicately fashioned flowers, or fluffy white clouds in a clear blue sky? Even if we did tire of those delights, the sight of naked humanity—the pinnacle of God’s creation, the image of His Godhead, the temple of His presence—will always attract the eyes of other humans, unless perversion has blinded them. Even then, there is still hope for the most corrupted vision to be healed.”

from Chapter 5 - **Calling** ([back to top](#))

“Surely by now you see the confusion. In one breath, the body is declared a holy temple. In the next, it is called a lustful enticement. This is why God withholds His hand of deliverance from believers who get entangled with lustful images of the naked body. He cannot liberate their minds when they believe their defilement comes from the beauty of His handiwork. It is in that very beauty that His truth flourishes. If they⁷³ knew this rightly, the truth would set them free. Instead, they shun that beauty! But tell me, brother, how well does this false teaching of shame deliver those trapped in such corruption?”

“You mean *porn addiction*?” I asked, and he nodded. . . .

. . . “Double-mindedness makes the struggle against this wicked trade endless,” stated the old man. “God cannot bless the deception of body shame. Nor does He ever cease to bless our naked flesh as a sanctuary for His presence. He never calls what is good *evil*. Nor will He sanction errors about His incarnated image, even if His own children preach them. Such lies are a great stumbling block, leading multitudes to trip and fall into the very pit they warn against. And because church leaders have adopted and spread this as though it were part of⁷⁴ the Gospel itself, then it is their duty to repent and make restitution.”

from Chapter 6 - **Encounter** ([back to top](#))

Even now, while fully awake, I wanted to believe that the old preacher was real, that my experience with him and the ancient crowd of apparitions—or angels, or maybe even authentic, first-century Christians somehow transported through time—wasn’t just a fantasy. But no matter what the encounter was, these four young people standing in front of me were very real. They’d been caught not only displaying their external anatomy to each other and to a stranger, but also feeling guilty for letting their youthful curiosity get the better of their upbringing. Yet, even if the girls had been guilty of gawking at what had forever been to them a visual taboo, all four appeared innocent of following society’s sexual expectations of what being nude together was bound to lead to. . . .

. . . . “It’s interesting, isn’t it,” I interjected. “When body parts are covered up, it makes you wonder what they would look like uncovered. Your curiosity can run wild. But when the clothing is off, it brings you down to reality. It makes me remember something a teacher told us back in high school. He said a girl on the beach would attract more attention in a bikini than with nothing on. None of us believed him. He said it was because nakedness short-circuits the imagination. That’s just what I discovered in my nursing job. The real thing wipes out unreal fantasies.”

from Chapter 7 - **Mission** ([back to top](#))

I won't recount all I told them during the rest of that afternoon, nor everything they told me, but we became so enthralled with discussing this new way of seeing the human body that we lost track of time. The sun was nearing the treetops on the far side of the river, when we finally realized with regret our need to get dressed and head back up the trail to the road. Along the way, I suggested we keep in contact. So, upon reaching our cars, we exchanged email addresses. Before driving off, we all expressed a sense of leaving with a mission to accomplish. None of us knew what it would involve, but each felt led in some way to spread the message of *body acceptance*. We promised to stay in touch about our progress.

About The Author ([back to top](#))

David L. Hatton is a bivocational minister and nurse. He graduated from Maranatha Baptist Bible College in 1972 with a BA in Bible and from New College Berkeley in 1988 with an MA in Cross-Cultural Studies. Before becoming an RN in 1981, he worked a few years with Gospel Outreach in Northern California and with Jeunesse en Mission (Youth With a Mission) in Quebec. He has been an ER nurse, but for more than two decades has worked in labor and delivery. Ordained within The Wesleyan Church in 2001, David presently pastors a small congregation of seniors in a retirement village. His hobbies are art, writing, and hiking with his wife Rosemary, with whom he lives in Sacramento, California. Married in 1971, they have 12 children and a growing number of grandchildren.

from Poem #1 - **“Pornography”** ([back to top](#))

“Beneath the painted hide they hire to pose for filthy fame,
A woman's raped of self-esteem and wrapped in sinful shame.
But sons who buy their sister's theft have been the most untrue:
They fail to guard the woman's worth that manhood calls them to!” . . .

from Poem #2 - **“Divine Story of Naked Glory”** ([back to top](#))

In every part His image gleams, from naked head to toe, All
lust comes from a sinful heart, not from that glory's glow. But
Satan fuels that lust with lies through body-shame and fear To
hide what's “very good” beneath ongoing fig-leaf gear. . . .

from Poem #3 - **“Christians and Nakedness”** ([back to top](#))

We've grown quite unaccustomed to normal nudity.
We even hide ourselves at home from friends and family.
Some people hate their bodies, despising God's design,
Embarrassed if they must disrobe and let His glory shine.

Yet most of our ancestors all bathed in open air.
They lived and dressed in one-room homes and saw each other bare.
We trim for sports and work-outs. Greek athletes did so stripped!
And Christians went to Roman baths with just their towels equipped!

The ancients often labored like Peter, in the nude.
When prophets preached without a stitch, nobody called it “Rude!”
The early church's converts were naked when baptized.
Though Bible scholars know these facts, they're never advertized! . . .

from Poem #4 - **“I Sing the Body Immoral”** ([back to top](#))

Ignoring hope falsely borrowed
from the fate of angels, holy or fallen
(who never knew pilgrimage with matter,
were never clothed in Adam’s flesh,
will never indwell these ashes from stars),
I sing a physical resurrection
and not some disembodied destiny. . . .

from Poem #5 - **“Nurses and Nudity”** ([back to top](#))

When porno pimps market the skin of our dust,
society labels it “Wrong!”
yet raises our young with temptations to lust
by singing pornography’s song.

The nurse sees this mockery stripped of its might,
and patients are witnesses, too.
Our simple humanity comes to the light
when body parts come into view. . . .

from Poem #6 - **“The Origin of Body Shame”** ([back to top](#))

The diet of conscience controls how it guides,
Which sins it allows, or what goodness it hides.
So, God found and asked them, with leaves round their waist,
“Who said you were naked? What fruit did you taste?”

Some call it God’s will to keep chewing that fruit,
Embracing its scruples in zealous pursuit,
Maligning His gift of our wonderful skin
By calling the sight of its nudity sin.

But others discover a godlier view,
Rejecting this prudery’s body taboo,
Resisting the porn that is wedded to shame
Passed on from the devil’s original claim. . . .

from Poem #7 - **“Woman”** ([back to top](#))

She is woman . . . and much abused:
Her lovely womb and breasts and buttocks were infused
With sordid meaning, twisted thought,
By vain imagination packaged, sold, and bought.
A wayward culture holds her chain,
And even sermons preach the sex-obsessed refrain
That turns her body parts and skin
Into ignition points for carnal lust and sin. . . .

from Essay #1 - “**What About the Hospital Nudity Problem?**” ([back to top](#))

. . . . It didn’t take me long in the nursing field to learn that our cultural ideas about nudity aren’t based on reality, but on a ridiculously false and sordid imagination. Naked anatomy becomes a problem only where unreal or irrational expectations make it one. By itself, the nude body doesn’t create the lustful thinking that preoccupies American culture. Jesus said that lust comes from an impure heart (Matthew 15:19), which is exactly what our society mentally nourishes by proclaiming that the naked body is an indecency.

from Essay #2 - “**My View on Nakedness**” ([back to top](#))

The *body taboo* also stimulates and sustains an unhealthy imagination about what actually lies hidden beneath clothing. The truth is that what garments zealously conceal is always substantially less than what can be invented within anyone’s imagination. Even worse, the *body taboo*’s emphasis on the sexual nature of the body creates some very unrealistic ideas about what the naked body has to offer sexually. What seems tacitly promised by the secrecy of apparel can never actually be realized on clothing’s removal, because more is hoped for in nakedness than realistically exists. When nudity fails to meet what people are led to anticipate, they may become addicted to progressively more depraved abuses of the human body in trying to fulfill those unrealistic expectations.

Each of the above destructive avenues of thought are artificially created by the overshadowing idea that nakedness and sexual lust are intrinsically related. While this implication is not really true, the *body taboo*’s strict enforcement of it has a powerful influence on the imagination, leading it down a path that is both emotionally frustrating and morally disastrous. In a major way, the taboo ends up directly promoting the lust problem that it promised to prevent. . . .

from Essay #3 - “**Teaching God's Design for BREASTS**” ([back to top](#))

Neither religious tradition nor the status quo determines holiness, but both can undermine it. Christian leaders must soberly scrutinize their teaching habits. Have they contributed to an unholy, pornographic view of breasts? I felt horrible discovering my own guilt in this regard. The path back to social sanity—and back to properly honoring the Designer of breasts—is to return to the healthy perspective of Scripture. Such a ministerial reform would morally empower Christian mothers to glorify God by breastfeeding their infants openly. Exposing their breasts in this way would renew a public demonstration of God’s design for them. It would treat them realistically, as normal parts of the female body, not as sexual commodities chained to the warped values of a misled culture.

from Essay #4 - “**The Pornographic View of the Body**” ([back to top](#))

The pornographic view of the body has a twin called “a prudish view.” They come from the same womb. They are two sides of the same coin, and when that coin is spent, whether it’s heads or tails, the purchase is a distorted portrait of our bodies. This is because both views promote an unholy, God-dishonoring treatment of the human body based on exactly the same vain imagination. Prudery hides the body, calling the Creator’s design a lustful indecency. Pornography flaunts it, using prudery’s definition to turn the beauty of God’s handiwork into a stimulus for impure sexual thoughts.

Both these ways of treating the body are an unnatural, unrealistic abuse. Though they seem to be opposite, they are conceptually identical. Both are ungodly, and both are based on a dysfunctional view of humanity’s physical embodiment. Wherever a wholesome, godly view of the naked human body is rejected and a shameful, obscene view is embraced, the resultant religious zeal of prudery inevitably plunges a society into the hellish depravity of pornography.

from Essay #5 - “**Rebuilding a Godly View of the Unclad Human Body**” ([back to top](#))

Typically, the unanimous social power of the *body taboo* resists any open-minded investigation of its own validity. It even stirs up hostility to the word “nudity” itself. That closed-minded attitude insulates most people from any kind of honest or intelligent search for the truth. For years it blocked my own mind from discussing *nudity* calmly, thoughtfully, and realistically.

But anyone with enough courage to stand still for a moment against that taboo's stream of opinion can feel how fiercely it flows. Such a momentary mental pause allows a person, perhaps for the first time, to perceive exactly where this current is taking us. The *body taboo*'s porno-prudery sweeps us far away from a godly, creational perception of our natural embodiment as humans. It keeps our minds "in the gutter," until it finally dumps them into a sewer system of "filthy" attitudes about the body and its anatomy.

Allowing or promoting this defiling process is an offensive *slap in the face* to our Creator. These physical bodies of ours are not only "*fearfully and wonderfully made*" by Him (Psalm 139:14), but He calls them His "*image*" (Genesis 1:27) and "*temple*" (1 Corinthians 6:19). The fact that they maintain their divinely ordained status despite the absence of clothing is actually a firm theological *slap in the face* to the *body taboo* itself!

from Essay #6 - "**Will You Undress Before God?**" ([back to top](#))

His [God's] second question is even more instructive. It shows how we are misled by listening to and following religious voices that are not human-friendly: "*Who told you that you were naked?*" God wants us to realize that human beings have a dangerous enemy, Satan, who is a liar. Before he deceived Adam and Eve, *nakedness* had no meaning to them. The uncovered openness of everything in nature was the only reality, both for themselves and all the rest of the creation. The human concept of being "naked" came into existence only after the very first perception of a need for "hiding" or "covering up" was established in the human heart. God, by His second question, was pointing to the liar who had introduced Adam and Eve into that perception.

Hiding and *covering up* were identifying traits in Satan's character. He both practiced and promoted them. We may hate to admit this, but lies and clothing have a similar action. Both of them hide or cover up the truth, and having done so, they provide a fertile environment for "vain imagination" and its destructive social fruit. Before being deceived, Adam and Eve saw God's world of reality as it really was. When they accepted Satan's deceitful offer to help them get their "eyes open," he literally *pulled the wool over their eyes*. They entered the realm of moral independence from God, a world of pretending, a world of feigned appearances, a make-believe world. This is where Satan himself lived and reigned.

This book is available [in paperback or a Kindle edition on Amazon](#):

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