

## THE TRIUNE GOD AND SOCIAL NUDITY

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"I remember the days of long ago,  
I meditate on all your works  
and consider what your hands have done."

-- Psalm 143:5

Scripture tells us that the very first creation in the physical universe that God personally "formed" Himself, instead of just speaking it into existence, was naked humanity. This is significant territory for meditation. It means that God is the very first Sculptor. And because He hand-sculpted us "in His own image," reflecting "His likeness," the naked human form is the first, and perhaps, the only Self-portrait of Deity. Unlike His way with other creatures, which He brought to life by a spoken fiat, God made this clay figure into a living soul by intimately breathing His own breath into its nostrils. Even after humanity's fall into sin, the Bible continues to praise this divinely handmade structure as "fearfully and wonderfully made."

In the late 1800s Adolf Just wrote a book called *Return to Nature*. In 1939 another author, Jethro Kloss, wrote a classic volume on natural healing called *Back to Eden*, which is still in print and widely read. They, and many others, believed that God had put into the natural creation all that we needed for healing. My own journey of research into the historical phenomenon of human nakedness coincided with my study of such works as these, which promoted health and vitality through a more natural diet and by bathing our bodies in sunlight, fresh air, mud, and cold water. People entranced by prudery and pornography in today's society are often unaware of how strongly these bathing practices for physical health influenced some people to readopt and return to the healthier and more natural "body acceptance" that was common in ancient times.

But mentally going "back to Eden" to meditate on God's works can yield more than insights into physical health. When God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness" (NKJV), the result of that plan was a shamelessly naked human couple. If that first unclad male and female of our race had obeyed God's instructions, they would have populated this entire planet with naked offspring. I have read of naturists who theorized about the healthy benefits that such a nude society could bring to our world. Some of these speculations might be concrete, drawn from their own experiences, while others are just wishful thinking. But my own attention lingers on another theological possibility with even greater implications. If a socially naked world of humanity was implicit in God's propagational command to our first parents, was it His intention thereby to reflect His own social "image"? In other words, was God creating a world of social nudity as a representational "likeness" of the communal "openness" within Trinitarian Deity?

There is a logical reason that anything other than a Trinitarian concept of God is heretical to Christian faith. This is because the God of biblical revelation not only "loves" but "is love" and must be so eternally. There was never a time in eternity when God was not *love*, and therefore, in the Godhead, there must always have been a minimum of two Beings, or *love* could not have existed eternally. But when God tells us to "love our neighbors," He is asking us to manifest *social love*. Our human love cannot be greater than the *love* within Deity. God's *love* has to set

the standard and be the resource for all possible loves that creatures are capable of practicing. So, the Godhead must also eternally encompass *social love*. If that is true, then God cannot be merely a Couple of Beings. God must be a Society, and that is exactly how the Bible reveals God: a Society of Three.

The above reasoning derives from one of the two *is*-definitions of God in Scripture, "God is love" (1 John 4:8). The other is "God is light" (1 John 1:5). This latter *is*-definition relates directly to the possibility that God meant for a socially nude humanity to represent the social "likeness" of the Trinitarian fellowship.

The nature of light is to reveal, not to cover up. Light doesn't hide the truth, it exposes it. If God's nature is that of "light," then nothing is hidden within the Trinity. All the Members of that Divine Society are entirely open and know each other more perfectly and more intimately than humanly imaginable. Not even a shadow obscures the view of One Member of the Trinity from Another, let alone the creaturely robes created for them to wear by human minds. In other words, within and among Themselves, this Society of Three cannot be anything but as "naked and open" to each Other's eyes as everything else is (Hebrews 4:13). The God of light, the God of truth, who decided, "Let Us make man in Our image," really did it! The naked male and female who stood before Him after the fulfillment of that Triune decision were themselves a likeness of the openness within the Godhead. Adam and Eve's intended progeny would have broadcast that naked image throughout the whole earth, perhaps eventually throughout the universe.

I believe the fallen angel Satan was more politically motivated in sidetracking Adam and Eve from their calling than he was interested in spoiling God's personally prized art exhibition. Of course, in hating God, the devil certainly was not anxious to see the symbolic likeness of the Trinity's holy light and openness shining all over the place. Also, he was purposeful in the way he tricked our first parents into becoming falsely alienated from the divine goodness in their naked bodies. Satan probably knew that this was a sure investment in a human future where he could arrange an unholy marriage between God's image and sexual depravity, which he later did accomplish by getting strong support from religious leadership. All of these, however, were only fringe benefits. They were subordinate to his central scheme of usurping the creational jurisdiction divinely entrusted to humanity.

On the other hand, the fear Adam and Eve had about their nudity after listening to Satan, and their wish to *cover it up*, did concern their Maker. God could have skipped His question to Adam ("Who told you that you were naked?"), if that aspect of the situation was really unimportant to Him. But, it was immensely important. Who were Adam and Eve now trusting for their information about reality? And where did this new idea "naked" come from? Nothing in any part of creation, or in God Himself, had ever even hinted at anything but *full openness* and *frank exposure*. Their fig-leaf girdles were the very first instance of such a concept as *nakedness* even existing, and the concept could only be understood in reverse, not as self-explanatory. Until they hid themselves beneath those leaves, nothing could be said to be "naked," because nothing had ever yet been hidden to become "naked" by having its covering removed. Someone, a liar, had to have given them this complex definition, because it was so foreign to what they knew of God's design and so impossible to learn from anything in creation itself.

God's question might have been a rhetorical reprimand to point out the diabolical source of this new blindness to divine reality, which Satan had advertized to them as an "opening of the eyes." Or, sadly, it may not have been a real question at all, but more like an exclamation of frustration or grief: "Oh no, don't tell Me you've been listening to that lying deceiver!" It might

have been God's brief lament at Satan's sabotaging His perfect plan to decorate the world with naked self-portraits of His beneficent Trinitarian openness and unity. That liar and destroyer had slipped into the studio and painted textile outfits on His beautiful masterpieces! Yes, I think I hear more emotion than question in "Who told you that you were naked?"

There is unfathomable mystery in the Trinitarian nature of God, and Scripture offers us only hints and clues for grasping at what this Society of Three is truly like. But, "God is love," and divine *love* communicates. Where human language fails, the Triune Artist of the universe can make a picture worth a thousand sermons. God does this with many hardened souls from whom an evangelist may turn away in frustration, but from whom a panorama of forested mountains and flower-strewn meadows draw out a humble, "O God, how can I not believe You made all this beauty!" Some of those unreachd, unchurched souls have made this kind of God-praising comment specifically about the beauty they have seen in the unclad human body.

Unfortunately, Christians have often been legitimately accused of a pride of knowledge that overshadows their professed humility before God. But in this case concerning nudity, it has not been a question of "knowledge" but of sin. Christians have generally been unanimous in "missing the mark" (*i.e.*, "sinning") in their condemnation of the socially visible nude body. If God originally carved out a beautiful living statue of His own Triune nakedness in the phenomenon of human social nudity, it was certainly not the church that dug it out theologically. More often than not, those who had no ties with evangelical doctrine were simply confronted with "what His hands have made" in naked humanity, and in "meditating on those works," failed to discover there the sexual depravity prophesied by the same lips that preached the Gospel to them. Their distrust of us has reasons. Some have even heard the claim by *Christian naturists* (those who embrace traditional nudism as a godly moral philosophy) that Christ's blood has redeemed the "goodness" of nakedness from the shame it incurred in the Fall. These nonchristian *nudists* know better, for they have already experienced that "goodness" in wholesome *social nudity* without Christ's blood. The picture of God's artwork which they have been appreciating all this time pre-dates the Cross. It was hand-painted on the sixth day of creation. If only they knew that this beauty they've been enjoying for so long is actually the Self-portrait of their Creator, a Triune God Whose love and openness invites them into divine fellowship through Christ, perhaps they might get saved. Maybe we should tell them.