

Nakedness Not Nudity

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February 11, 2013

Have you ever wondered why we never see illustrations of the pre-Fall Adam and Eve garbed in the spotless robes of their original innocence? In nearly every artistic interpretation—and there are some stunningly beautiful ones of the sinless pair in the Garden of Eden—the illustrator very conveniently places flora or fauna to distract the careless eye from focusing on delicate body parts of the obviously undressed adult human forms. We sense that something important always seems to get lost in the very idea of some kind of two-member nudist colony.

By following this “cover-up” tradition, however, the real meaning of the picture fails to engage the viewer’s mind. The apparently deliberate custom of overlooking such an obvious detail has bothered me ever since I realized the facts—in other words, since I became aware that Inspiration, as seen in the Spirit of Prophecy writings, provides excellent insight into the very subject.

Let’s start with this comment: “The sinless pair wore no artificial garments; they were clothed with a covering of light and glory, such as the angels wear. So long as they lived in obedience to God, this robe of light continued to enshroud them.”¹ It is distinctly clear from this explanation that (a) the sinless couple didn’t wear garments as we normally understand the term, but also that (b) they were clothed in something that would never require laundering nor be removed from them at all, *unless* they should choose the path of disobedience to their Creator. The painful and sad conclusion of the story is, of course, familiar to us from the account given by Moses in the third chapter of Genesis.

But Ellen White adds other fascinating details that further help “flesh out” the story of the Fall, if the reader will pardon our pun. “The white robe of innocence was worn by our first parents when they were placed by God in holy Eden. . . . A beautiful soft light, the light of God, enshrouded the holy pair. This robe of light was a symbol of their spiritual garments of heavenly innocence. Had they remained true to God, it would ever have continued to enshroud them. But *when sin entered*, they severed their connection with God, and *the light that had encircled them departed*. Naked and ashamed, they tried to supply the place of the heavenly garments by sewing together fig leaves for a covering.”²

Intrigued by these explanations, I determined to contact our church’s major publishing houses and evangelists—in short, those most likely to commission or to utilize artwork descriptive of the pre-Fall existence of our first parents. To my amazement, not only did all parties respond, but they also informed me that they had absolutely no illustrations or slides depicting Adam and Eve in their original robes of light.

One ministry, happily, accomplished the concept of filming a documentary in 2009, using live human actors to portray the luminous robes of glory and light worn by the innocent pair in Eden. *Amazing Facts* produced a thrilling DVD in high-definition, cleverly accomplishing through the use of cameras and special lighting the desired “halo” effect.³

Nakedness Versus Nudity in the Garden

We may be certain of this: Adam and Eve in their original robes of light had nothing of which to be ashamed. Genesis 2:25 could scarcely be clearer on this point, for the text reads: “They were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.” After the pair succumbs to temptation and pitifully tries to cover their shame, “the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons” (Genesis 3:7).

Then, to avoid God’s sorrowful yet soul-searching presence, we find Adam offering an excuse expressive of a newfound, alien fear: “I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself” (Genesis 3:10).

Now comes God’s penetrating response. “He said, Who told thee that wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?” (v. 11). Let us stop right there and ask ourselves a question. Do we suppose for one moment that Adam was so ignorant that he didn’t even notice he had been going around in the nude, that is, until he sinned? Well, no! “Adam and Eve came forth from the hand of their Creator in the perfection of every physical, mental, and spiritual endowment.”⁴

Away with the notion that somehow Adam was mentally deficient or even temporarily insane. In terms of physical, mental, and spiritual powers Adam was vastly superior to anyone now living; every good Adventist knows that. Well, then, could it be that there is an essential difference between Adam’s sudden self-awareness of *nakedness*, and the way that term is generally understood? Webster’s dictionary is replete with nuances that include the idea of being unarmed, defenseless, and devoid of concealment. Adam’s was not mere physical *nudity*; it was full-blown moral *nakedness*.

And the inspired writer is again of much help here: “The eyes of Adam and Eve were indeed opened [as Satan had intimated in Genesis 3:5], but to what? To see their own shame and ruin, to realize that the garments of heavenly light which had been their protection were no longer around them as their safeguard. Their eyes were opened to see that nakedness was the fruit of transgression.”⁵

There we have it all in a nutshell. The fruit of sin is nakedness of soul. But, praise God, Jesus provides the cure: His spotless robe of righteousness placed around our self-reproachful, slumping shoulders. Until that glad day when we walk in white with the second Adam in Paradise regained, let us be faithful. Fully clothed in garments of light, the borrowed light of Christ’s presence, we may join Adam and Eve, none of us ever knowing shame again.

¹ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 45.

² White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 310, 311; emphasis supplied.

³ See *Cosmic Conflict: The Origin of Evil*, available from www.cosmicconflict.org.

⁴ White, *Review and Herald*, February 24, 1874, in *Confrontation*, p. 10.

⁵ White, Letter 91, June 24, 1900, in *Conflict and Courage*, p. 20.