

The Argument

Naturism and Christian Morality: Is There A Conflict?

James Neff, 1998

This article titled "The Argument" by James Neff is one of the very best articles/interviews we have ever found on naturism. It was on the internet years ago but had since disappeared. We happened to find a copy of it and are republishing the article/interview for posterity's sake. It's not a short article, but we promise...well worth the time it takes to read it.

This argument was developed from a series of discussions with various Christians from equally varied backgrounds and denominations. It attempts to bring the general arguments for and against naturism into a cohesive format where the humanity of persons involved is reflected, while bringing to light many misconceptions about naturism and its morality.

A: "I don't think being naked in front of others is particularly healthy. That's one of the claims of nudism, and I don't see where it's healthy to inspire lust."

B: "Why do you assume being naked inspires lust?"

A: "Pornography, that's why! You don't think people are reading the articles, do you?"

B: "You don't see nudists doing the things one sees in pornography, either. Pornography is not just images of nude men and women. I contend that in order for a nude to be pornographic, it has to inspire lust through a vehicle other than or in addition to mere nudity."

A: "How so?"

B: "For example, a naked body is not in and of itself lust inspiring. If that were true, then millions who have passed through the Sistine Chapel have been overwhelmed with lust, and there is no evidence of that. All who have read the Song of Solomon in the Bible would also have been stricken with lust, by the very word of God. There has to be intent from the heart, from either the one who is being lusted after and the one who is lusting, or both. Lust is not a simple mechanism based on what is seen or even heard. People call 1-900 numbers to hear sexy voices to inspire their lust. In such a case we have two people involved in lust inspiration for the express purpose of self-gratification. No eyes are needed in that situation, so how is seeing the nudity of someone explicitly lust inspiring? If someone called you out of the blue and had the intent of inspiring lust in you, you have the moral choice whether to be filled with lust or not. It's a choice. No one is suggesting that we get rid of phones or talking

simply because there is a possibility of inspiring lust through that vehicle. In fact, I would say more lust is inspired by words than by images, daily. Likewise, when you see a nude, you again have a choice. Will you see a nude human form or will you see something related to your personal sexuality? One may have a beautiful, attractive sister or brother, but that does not mean one would lust or have sexual attraction for him or her. One is not thrust into lust or sexual thought upon seeing him or her naked, either. We have control over our natures by will, by volition."

A: "True, but people are conditioned to a lust response to the sight of a nude body."

B: "Really? I don't think so at all. I think they are conditioned to discover the truth of what is hidden and satisfy their curiosity, and in the course of this they find themselves entangled in a deception regarding human sexuality and the weaknesses of the human psyche. I see nude bodies all the time that do not inspire lust in me at all, and they range from women to whom I could very easily be sexually attracted to people of all ages and sizes and races and kinds. Any lust inspiration is entirely due to my moral conscience and will. Someone else being naked cannot make me lust."

A: "Oh, come on! If a truly gorgeous woman approaches you totally naked, you are not thinking thoughts of lust?"

B: "Not unless I choose to. Even if in such a case she were intending to inspire lust, the decision to be turned-on is entirely mine. What you are missing is this: (1) we are not animals, we are self-reflective beings with conscience and soul and spirit in addition to mind, body and some crude instincts. And (2) we have will, something animals do not have; we can will ourselves to whatever state of mind and reaction we choose based upon a complex range of emotions and knowledge -- and spiritual truth -- and overcome. Remember, God told Cain, 'Sin crouches at the door. Master yourself!' [Genesis 4.7]. Cain had already sinned in his heart by dwelling inwardly on something other than God, other than peace and love and truth. But nonetheless, God warned him not to let sin overtake him. We have been deceived by those who teach us we are not capable of self-control. It is a lie."

A: "But that's my point! Why put yourself and others in harms way? Of temptation? Seems very foolish."

B: "But you are still operating on the notion that mere nudity inspires lust, or that mere nude images inspire lust, or that being in the presence of nude people inspires lust. It does not. Lust is born in the heart, period. I can lust in a grocery store filled with fully clothed people, or at work surrounded by fully clothed people, and in neither situation have any element of nudity present in

order to fill my heart with lust. Lust is a moral choice, unrelated to nudity. It doesn't require stimulus to exist. Lust is not so much 'inspired' as it is 'determined' by the individual. I can lust for a banana split at any time of day, filled with desire for it. It doesn't take a photo of a banana split or sitting next to a person eating a banana split to be overwhelmed with desire. Granted, if I see a photo of a delicious banana split, I might be encouraged by this advertising to get one and eat it. But why would one assume that by the sight of a naked person I might be encouraged to have sex? What is it about the naked body that immediately brings the mind to sex? Is the body only for sex? Is sex all there is? Is the human being nothing but a sex machine, like a banana split is nothing but a dessert to eat? Hardly. It has everything to do with what I think when I see a naked person. To suggest that the sight of a naked body is the button which turns on sexuality is absurd. Blind people have sex, and they lust and desire just like sighted people. These ideas about the body are nonsense and truly devalue it and reduce its complexity to a grotesque cliché."

A: "But you admit, a photo of a banana split could give you the urge to have one..."

B: "True, it can send an impulse message. But you're still overstating it. It is my CHOICE to desire that banana split based on thousands of complex internal thoughts and spiritual determinations for myself. It is not voodoo or witchcraft. Lust and desire is not shot like an arrow into the heart, with the one lusting and unable to resist. It is a choice. A decision. All is lawful to me, but not all is profitable, says Paul [1 Corinthians 6.12]. We are the guardians of our souls and the gates of our perception and how we interpret and deal with input, all day and all night. What you seem to be proposing is something more like dreaming, where people are paralyzed and incapable of doing anything about it, or like a disease which overtakes the body itself. That's simply not reality. I am more than a pair of eyes grounded to a microchip with one program called 'lust' or 'sex'."

A: "But for some people, this is the case. For them, the sight of a naked body is like an instant cue card for lust. They simply react, being conditioned to react with thoughts of lust."

B: "But that is because they do not have the internal moral monitoring or a will to be without lust, or any experience with nudity outside of the pornographic. And who created that environment? Not nudists! Textile compulsives who teach shame and embarrassment about the natural created this environment, and it's reaping its reward for repressions. Once again, you're ignoring the complexities of lust and human psychology. It is not a drug-like reaction on the victim. There has to be intent, and permission... self-permission, if you will. Resist the devil and he will flee, says Paul. [Editor's note: These words were in fact written by James, not Paul. See James 4.7.] We are not to flee the devil, we are to resist

him and make HIM flee. There is no resistance in that person you are talking about. But that person has been carefully and successfully conditioned to think that immediate arousal at the sight of a naked body of the opposite sex is normal. It is totally abnormal. Pavlovian. Depraved. Man was not intended to be so knee-jerk, and God did not create the environment for this to happen. This is man's own doing."

A: "So that person should never be a nudist, wouldn't you agree?"

B: "On the contrary, that person should be guided into nudism and confront this conditioning, and overcome. Remember, Jesus exhorts: 'To him who overcomes, will I make a pillar in the house of my God' [Revelation 3.12]. Christians lust just as much as non-Christians. In this culture and society, its almost a given, sad though it may be. We can become pillars, instead of pools of weak mush. He will make them a support structure, a tower of strength and fortitude against evil, against falling. Others can lean on him. Others can find strength and confidence in him. Anyone who has or recognizes that they have a problem with lust based on seeing the nude human form should be guided into naturism and shown that they are not merely Pavlovian dogs trained to bark and hoot with sexual reactions to certain stimuli, but rather that they are complex human beings with spirit and will and a moral nature which truly can control and master the self. In fact, a lot of people enter nudism with completely unsavory intentions, to see and be among nude men or women, to satisfy their desires, often visually or in fantasy. And these people quickly realize how common and ordinary and average the nude human form is, and discover release from the conditioning they thought was either the nature of their gender or a personal problem."

A: "We're also told to lay aside every sin which entangles us [Hebrews 12.1]. Whatever happened to 'lead us not into temptation'? [Matthew 6.13, Luke 11.4]."

B: "You are once again assuming that the circumstance itself is sin, and also temptation. If the natural is temptation, we're in big trouble. Every moment that passes is then temptation. I contend that being natural, as God made us, cannot be sinful in and of itself, but rather we must MAKE it sinful by way of our deeds and intent. The deeds and intentions of naturism are not sin, not lust and not corruption, but are being natural, free, honest and true. If I can be tempted in a room full of clothed people -- and this is obviously possible and happens every day to millions -- then should I never be among people at all? There we go running away from Satan, when we are called to be strong, in self-control, fully clothed with the armor of God [Ephesians 6.11-17] -- the TRUE clothing -- and make Satan flee from us [James 4.7]."

A: "No, I don't buy this."

B: "That's because it shatters a long held world-view and challenges it. Let me ask you, can you be tempted to sinful thoughts of lust by a woman in a bathing suit?"

A: "Of course..."

B: "Do you avoid beaches and swimming pools because of this?"

A: "No..."

B: "Where is the temptation coming from? The girl in the bathing suit, or your own heart?"

A: "Well... both."

B: "Wait, you cannot accuse the girl in the bathing suit of setting out to tempt you with sin. You don't know her heart or intent. All you have before you by happenstance is a female in a certain type of clothing which you determine to be 'revealing' what you think should be denied the eyes at all times. You can't have it both ways, saying she's doing wrong when she covers the parts of her body you think are sinful or cause sin, and she's also doing wrong if she is a naturist and among others like herself who do not cover these parts. That's Catch-22."

A: "But she is not dressed modestly. The bathing suit shows off the parts that inspire lust."

B: "Then by your own edicts about sin and temptation, you should never be around people at a beach or swimming pool, lest you be tempted by the immodesty of others, even when their immodesty is not intentionally aimed at causing you to lust. And you may have a thin threshold of what you consider immodest. That should limit you quite a bit. However, if the sin of lust is born in your own heart by your own moral choice, to look upon this woman and lower her from her true status -- a person made in God's image [Genesis 1.26-27] -- and to devalue her by seeing her as parts which inspire lust (which alone is wrong, to divide her into pieces and these pieces being merely sexual in your eyes)... don't you see? You are responsible for your lust. And if you think about it, that bathing suit is directing your attention to 'parts' you have already decided for yourself are 'sexual' in nature. Even if she does not intend to inspire lust, lust is born in your heart by your objectification of her and her 'parts' that you see in that one way. Let me ask you, why don't you think of nursing babies when you see her breasts?"

A: "Nursing babies? Oh, come on...."

B: "What is it that makes you think of something sexual in relation to seeing her breasts in the bathing suit, and not what her mammary glands are made for... feeding babies?"

A: "You're telling me that when you see a woman's breasts you think of babies?"

B: "I'm telling you we each have the power in our own souls to determine what we see internally, that is, contemplate. I can see breasts as sex objects, or as wonderful creations of God for feeding children or... and here's one... I can even think of the Gospel."

A: "WHAT?"

B: "Paul likened new Christians to babes feeding at the breast, the good milk, the purity of the truth of Christ [1 Corinthians 3.1-2, see also 1 Peter 2.2-3]. You see? We can either be of a defiled and darkened mind, or an enlightened and purified mind. Scripture says 'to him who is defiled all things are defiled, and nothing is pure' [Titus 1.15]. What a horrible state of mind! It is a matter of moral choice. We can look at a breast and think of the good milk of the Gospel of Christ, and how beautiful God's creation is, or we can be of a depraved mind and do what is not right. Our choice. Our moral determination."

A: "Come on... you don't EVER see a woman's breasts and think of something... sexual?"

B: "Sure I do. I think of a million things. I can look at the sprout of a flower and think of something sexual. But which do I entertain in my heart? Which is the resonance of my heart and soul? What am I focused on? In naturism, we see people as a whole, not parts. Her breasts are no different from her elbow, save that her breasts can feed a child and her elbows cannot. Men and women and boys and girls are just that... whole beings."

A: "Still, Paul directed women to be clothed modestly [1 Timothy 2.9]."

B: "Absolutely. And who was he speaking to? Babes in Christ, people who were completely without any disciplines at all. The text demonstrates this explicitly. These people had problems with gender identity as well as sexual immorality. Paul gave them good instruction. But I would say that modesty relates to dress, not undress."

A: "Surely you're joking..."

B: "No, I'm not joking. You can bet those same women to whom he spoke were baptized completely nude, in public. We have lost a lot of historic ground here,

almost 2000 years later. I believe Paul would say modesty is for dress, among the weak in faith and weak in character. Once one is past the pabulum, and eating meat, one can move into new territory. The mature can do things which the immature cannot. Paul expresses this constantly [see Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8]. Modesty is for dress, but when naked there is neither modesty or immodesty, only the purity of what God created... IF that is what one decides he or she will see, and that vision is determined by wisdom and familiarity. Nudism has the ability to formulate the foundation for this very environment where there is no concept of shame about what is natural."

A: "You are suggesting that nudism is a cure for lust, you realize that don't you?"

B: "On the contrary, I am emphatically declaring that we, as individual souls and minds, have an obligation as beings called to light and truth and a Godly mind, to keep our hearts and minds upon the good things, not the evil. In or OUT of nudism, lust exists. This is a fact. Therefore, in or OUT of nudism we are obligated to self-control and right mind. I am saying we have the power to overcome lust and impurity... and we can do that anytime, anyplace and anywhere. In a room full of clothed people, in a room full of naked people. I believe this can be done even by those who do not know God. The many nudists who are not Christians or religious in any way are living proof of this. If you believe we are conditioned to a response of lust, we can be re-conditioned to a response of respect."

A: "Well, I agree to some degree. We can overcome things. I don't know about overcoming something so deeply rooted in us, though."

B: "The power to do so is in us, and even more so with God's help. God created us naked and unashamed [Genesis 2.25]. Why? Because there is no shame in being naked. It is how He created us, in His image [Genesis 1.26-27]. He called this creation 'very good' [Genesis 1.31]. It was only when our minds and hearts were darkened through the Fall, our disobedience to God, that we felt shame and indignity for ourselves, even physically. And that was entirely our fault."

A: "And then God clothed us with animal skins, according to Genesis [Genesis 3.21]."

B: "Yes, but He rejected our clothing of ourselves. Remember? When Adam and Eve strung together fig leaves as aprons [Genesis 3.7], He rejected that act. He replaced the aprons of leaves with something that had two very powerful messages. (1) A message of sacrifice for sin, for animals had to die in order to produce those skins. And (2), one of mercy and love, since God was sending us out into the world, at the mercy of the elements. Exposure can be dangerous when too cold, or with too much sun, etc. God wisely showed us how to clothe

ourselves. That by no means sent us away with an authorization for our shame. If anything, our shame is an effect of the Fall, an insult to our Creator."

A: "Wait... the skins were a sacrifice for sins. They had sinned. They were ashamed."

B: "Yes, they had sinned. And they were ashamed. But their sin had nothing to do with their nakedness. God created them naked and unashamed [Genesis 2.25]. After the Fall, their eyes were opened and they realized they were naked [Genesis 3.7]. This is very symbolic. They lost their innocence. The sin had nothing to do with their naked bodies, but with their conscience. And remember, Paul says sin entered the world through one man, Adam; not Eve [Romans 5.12]. Even though Eve was deceived and ate the forbidden fruit, sin was not imparted through her, but through the man. Adam chose his wife over God's love and God's laws; he chose himself as his own moral authority. The recompense for this act was more than just spiritual death and separation from God, but a darkened conscience and a deluded heart. Adam and Eve's reaction to the Fall was one of complete shame and confusion. Their shame was distorted and displaced. Instead of feeling guilty for what they had done, they passed the buck in every direction possible, with Adam even blaming Eve for what he had done by choice [Genesis 3.12]. Suddenly they were ashamed of themselves as human beings... in the image of God."

A: "But they didn't go naked after that."

B: "Scripture doesn't tell us that they were thereafter ashamed of being naked. When God sees that Adam has fallen, He asks, 'Who told you that you were naked?' [Genesis 3.11]. Naked meant nothing. It was just a concept, a concept of division between man and woman. They were intended to be naked and unashamed, not naked and ashamed. In fact, it says Adam knew his wife and she conceived a child, so they were obviously naked after that [Genesis 4.1]. We don't see the further effects of the Fall until later, when Cain kills Abel out of jealousy and revenge [Genesis 4.8], and the sin increases and multiplies until the time of Noah [Genesis 6.8-13]. Look at it this way. The effects of the Fall are manifold: envy, greed, jealousy, strife, mischief, hate, distrust, disharmony with God and nature. Also out of the Fall comes aging, disease, death, even mental illness. All of these things come from being fallen beings, born in sin and iniquity, destined for death."

A: "Yes, so? What's that got to do with going naked?"

B: "So, we fight against all these effects of the Fall, don't we? Everyone struggles against the fallen nature, trying to improve it. Even those who do not know the law of God struggle to form civilization, law and order, rationale and reason."

A: "True. God has written His laws upon people's hearts [Romans 2.14-15]."

B: "Right. Now, another effect of the Fall was shame of nakedness, right?"

A: "Yes."

B: "So, why is it wrong to fight against that one? We fight against disease with medicine and doctors and learning more about the body and what can attack it and make it weak, right? We fight against premature aging and poor dietary practices which contribute to illness and early demise, true? We struggle to contain those who would violate civil laws of peace and order, don't we?"

A: "Yes..."

B: "And we even fight against injustice and corruption and immortality and mental illness and... the list goes on and on. Man is constantly fighting the effects of the Fall. Surely you would not say it is wrong for man to do this?"

A: "No, no, it's not wrong. Futile maybe, in many respects."

B: "Well, within the boundaries of understanding that some things we cannot change, such as death, the most we can do is prolong life and attempt to improve its condition for ourselves. And clearly, God is not against man striving to do just that, wouldn't you agree?"

A: "Yes, I agree with that."

B: "Okay, so struggles against the effects of the Fall should likewise include all things in the Fall. A darkened mind and conscience, fear, disease, hate, jealousy and even shame of nakedness."

A: "Eh... its not that big a thing to struggle against, really. Not like death or disease or lawlessness."

B: "Oh? Satan truly has deceived the whole earth! Let's look at the effects of the effects."

A: "How do you mean?"

B: "For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction, true?"

A: "Heh, well... in Physics, yes."

B: "No, in life in general this is true. You tell a lie, that is one thing... the cause. The law of reciprocity is a reality, even in Christianity. There is after this an

effect, and then a chain reaction of effects. You reap what you sow [Galatians 6.7]."

A: "Yes, that's true."

B: "With a virus, you can catch it... and you can pass it to someone else. One has to be knowledgeable about it in order to keep others from being harmed along with yourself if you're infected, right?"

A: "Right."

B: "Okay, in shame and embarrassment about what is natural and what was created in the image and likeness of God Himself [Genesis 1.26-27], and which God called 'very good' [Genesis 1.31], there is a reaction, and an equal and opposite reaction to this effect of the Fall."

A: "And what reaction is that?"

B: "Well, the first reaction is sexualization and objectification of the body."

A: "What is that?"

B: "The body is not in and of itself sexual, and neither are its parts. You would agree that genitals, for example, are not expressly used for sex only, but have other functions?"

A: "Well, yes..."

B: "Now if the body is not inherently sexual, since sex occupies so little of its time and function and necessity and abilities, surely there is something very wrong with a thinking that says the body is naturally sexual and erotic as it is."

A: "Okay, that's true. It is not expressly sexual."

B: "And gender itself is not sexual. Just being male or female doesn't mean the body is sexual or erotic. Our genders are not only part of sexuality, but also part of everything else we do, think, feel, etc."

A: "Okay."

B: "Therefore, to sexualize the naked body is to collapse it all into one single element or attribute of its function and ability, and that's wrong. It's like saying "Being naked is being intellectual," since a person can think and learn, or "Being naked is being athletic" since a person can exercise, or "Being naked is eating" since we eat. Anyone who said this would be considered insane. Just because

we have sex doesn't mean we are sexual at all times, and just because genitals are the parts most used for sex doesn't mean they are exclusively sexual since we do other things with our genitals, such as release toxins from our bodies, etc. Our entire bodies are involved in sex, including our mind and our spirit as well."

A: "Okay, I see that."

B: "So it makes no sense to attribute to the whole body what is only one element of its function or capacity. That's really guilt by association, in a sense. It's like saying the whole person is dirty because his fingernails are filthy. And since we know sexuality is not dirty and something God created, and that it is good when it is done as He intended, it cannot defile us unless we let it defile us, by defiling sexuality itself."

A: "By perversion."

B: "Yes. Now, what you're suggesting with your original contention is that being naked is a perversion, and that cannot be."

A: "I don't think that's what I was saying."

B: "No, it's not what you intended to say, but in reality, it is the 'effect' of what you are saying, for if we determine that the naked human form is in and of itself shameful, sinful, evil or even inherently sexual, we have perverted the creation of God. Otherwise, we have to believe that God created us in a perverted state, and we know He did not. He called us naked and unashamed [Genesis 2.25] and 'very good' [Genesis 1.31]. He saw nothing wrong in it. Our nakedness was not then (and is not now) in and of itself wrong. It is what we DO with our nakedness, just as it is what we DO with our mind and hands and heart and intellect, that can be right or wrong."

A: "I admit, that is logical. Okay."

B: "And if your contention is true, man is an animal incapable of self-control on any level, and yet God told Cain to master himself when sin was being born in his heart [Genesis 4.7]. And also, if your original contention is true, man in a naked and natural state is inherently sinful in his actual flesh, apart from what he thinks or does, apart from his spirit and soul, and he merely responds to a stimulus which causes lust and thereby causes sin... "

A: "But nakedness can inspire lust, that's just a fact."

B: "And so can being clothed. That's also a fact. That's what you're missing. It is not only nakedness that inspires lust, anymore than money inspires greed. It

is the LOVE of money that is the root of all evil, not money itself [1 Timothy 6.10]. Remember Paul said, 'I know nothing created by God is evil of itself' [Romans 14.14] and another place he said, 'Nothing created by God is to be rejected if received with thanksgiving' [1 Timothy 4.4]."

A: "Paul was talking about food..."

B: "Paul was talking about EVERYTHING created by God. Food was just the immediate controversy."

A: "Okay."

B: "Lust is born in our sinful natures, in the heart. Agreed?"

A: "Agreed."

B: "My skin cells and the shape of my flesh over my bones is not capable of lust or generating lust, it's just my body."

A: "I'll agree... it's just the body."

B: "And lust is born in the heart, and we have the power to let it grow and affect us and others or to stop it. Agreed?"

A: "Yes, I would agree. Otherwise we'd have no opportunity for being civil and having self-control."

B: "Exactly. Self-control is the big issue for mankind. And you and I would agree that through Jesus Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, man has the ultimate capacity for that self-control, but even with that, we've seen people who claim to be of the faith who do terrible things."

A: "True..."

B: "And likewise, we've seen people who do not know God at all, in so far as we can tell, and yet they do good."

A: "Very true."

B: "So, the effect of the Fall is man being subjected to a nature that inspires him from within to do that which is not pleasing in the eyes of God, and man struggles against this either for his own sake -- seeking society with law and order and civility and peace -- or going farther and reaching out to God through Christ for help, and having a new heart given to him whereby he can by faith perform the things pleasing to God, and win approval by faith."

A: "Yes, I would agree."

B: "And so we struggle, whether in Christ or not in Christ, against our fallen nature to attempt to make a life for ourselves which is either sufficiently peaceful or pleasing to God. Both struggles are real and God approves of them both. As Paul says in Romans, 'All who do good are welcome by God' [Romans 2.9-11], not in terms of salvation, but in terms of moral approval and doing what is right and promotes peace."

A: "Yes."

B: "Now the effect of a fallen nature inspires man to lust, to distort God's original design for human sexuality and natural gender attraction, promoting adultery and fornication, and in more depraved activities -- of those darkened even more so -- to perversions on top of perversions, such as homosexuality and bestiality and rape and child molestation and even pornography. Would you agree?"

A: "Yes, I agree that's true."

B: "And even apart from any external influence, man by reason of his fallen nature, can sin. Agreed?"

A: "Absolutely."

B: "Therefore it is wrong to condemn the body of man for what his heart, his soul, his mind and spirit are in control of. It makes so sense to blame the flesh for what the 'driver' of the flesh does or is inclined to do. No?"

A: "Possibly... the body will go to hell as well."

B: "But that's God's territory. We're talking man's territory, and how and what we can do while here and present in this flesh, and the issue at hand is nudism, not salvation and eternal destiny."

A: "Okay."

B: "Let me put it another way. If your child is told not to steal, and she steals, what possible benefit is there in cutting off her hand? Did her hand commit the sin, or did her heart conceive the sin first and the hand merely obeyed the heart?"

A: "Oh, I see... yes, I agree. The hand is not at fault."

B: "Likewise, the body is not at fault in lusts. Breasts don't cause lust... genitals don't cause lust... a shapely figure or attractive man do not CAUSE lust. The body is not at fault for the sins of the heart. The heart is at fault. Jesus said if a man even looks upon a woman with lust, he has already committed adultery in his heart [Matthew 5.28]."

A: "But that's my point, really. That's going to happen when you're naked with people of the opposite sex."

B: "No, you're still objectifying the naked body and blaming it for the sin. Think about it. As I said before, you can lust after someone fully dressed, can't you?"

A: "Sure."

B: "And you don't blame the clothes for that, do you?"

A: "Ha, ha! No."

B: "And you can lust after money, but you don't stop earning money or using money in the right way to avoid lust of money... right?"

A: "Right."

B: "So, there's no reason to blame nakedness for sin or lust. It is not at fault."

A: "I see the logic in your argument, but I just don't feel like it's right, nonetheless."

B: "Of course not, and that's because you've spent your life objectifying the naked human body with sin of lust, or with an exclusively sexual priority which isn't there. And you've been thoroughly conditioned to do so."

A: "How so?"

B: "Did Adam and Eve have lust for one another while naked and unashamed in the Garden of Eden?"

A: "Well, they were married."

B: "They were? I don't recall any mention of that. But let's assume that by God they were married. Even so, do you think they had lust?"

A: "It says 'the man and his wife' [Genesis 2.25], so I assume they were married by God. And, no... they had normal sexual attraction, I'm sure. But not lust. They had love."

B: "Ah, so there IS a difference between sexual attraction and lust?"

A: "Of course. Lust is wrong. Lust is desiring what does not belong to you and sex outside of marriage."

B: "And you would agree lust is also objectifying a person to their raw sexual proportions... sex objects."

A: "Absolutely."

B: "So it's okay to lust and imagine being married to someone who is presently unmarried?"

A: "Huh?"

B: "My point is, sexual attraction is perfectly normal, good and given by God. Would you agree?"

A: "Oh, sure..."

B: "And lust is something else. It is going outside the bounds of what is right and good about sexual desires, correct?"

A: "Right."

B: "So, it cannot be a sin to look upon a woman who is unmarried if you are also unmarried, and think a sexual thought, since neither of you is married, and if you imagine yourself married and making love, that would be perfectly natural. No?"

A: "Well, I don't really know if that would be right or not..."

B: "Ah, a gray area of morality?"

A: "Perhaps."

B: "We can't have it both ways. Either sexual desire and attraction to the opposite sex (unrelated to adultery or fornication) is good and normal and something God created in us, or it is bad, evil and wrong at all times. Otherwise, we condemn God in our foolish speculations and our hearts are darkened. The glory of God is His truth, and His truth is that He created us to have sexual attraction and desires for the opposite sex, which is good. He created the system."

A: "Okay, I see what you mean."

B: "The point is, we are sexual beings... and we have sexual desires and attractions, and these are good within the right parameters."

A: "Yes."

B: "And this was created by God, and everything created by God is good."

A: "Absolutely."

B: "And likewise, God created us naked and unashamed [Genesis 2.25], nakedness having nothing to do with our normal and wholesome sexual desires and attractions for the opposite sex, and this was 'very good' [Genesis 1.31]."

A: "Yes."

B: "Now here's something else to consider: were Adam and Eve capable of sin before the Fall?"

A: "Sure... they did sin, so clearly they were capable of sin at any time."

B: "And their nakedness had nothing to do with their sin."

A: "I don't see that it did, no. They just disobeyed God and afterward saw that they were naked, something they did not understand before."

B: "So sin comes from within, not without. As Jesus says, 'It is not what goes into a man which defiles him, but that which proceeds from him' [Mark 7.18-23]."

A: "Okay."

B: "So before the Fall they were capable of sin, and after the Fall they were capable of sin. Right?"

A: "Right."

B: "So the only real difference between man before and after the Fall is the 'effect' of the Fall itself."

A: "Yes, I would agree with that."

B: "So did man have a darkened conscience and sinful nature to begin with? Was he created sinful?"

A: "No, he was created with the capacity to sin or not sin."

B: "Exactly. And we are the same now, the only difference being that we have inherited, through Adam, a sin nature born in us apart from our own doing, and for which we reap the penalty of death... just by being human. Correct?"

A: "That's what Scripture says, yes. The wages of sin is death [Romans 6.23]. Adam brought death to the whole world [Romans 5.12]."

B: "So we are no more or no less sinful than Adam and Eve."

A: "Right. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God [Romans 3.23]."

B: "So why believe that people are incapable of being with one another, naked and unashamed, aware of God's good creation, sufficiently empowered and determined to overcome this effect of the Fall and have fellowship with one another without lust, and without sin?"

A: "Like I said, because we are conditioned to respond to nudity with lust."

B: "And like I said, that can be overcome. Reconditioning is easy, especially with something that has a totally natural base. Naturism proves it, day in and day out. Millions of people -- families, singles and couples -- associate with one another completely naked, perfectly comfortable, at ease with themselves and with others, not judging one another and no running around in a frenzy of lust, but simply being what they are... human beings, falling short of God's glory but struggling against the effects of the Fall, seeking a better life, seeking harmony with nature and their fellow man, and being naked and unashamed in the process... being as they were born and as they are naturally, as God intended."

A: "I just don't know...."

B: "You don't know because you have not experienced it. You're looking in from the outside and using the ways people on the outside think about it to judge it. That doesn't work. You don't know any more about nudism than I can know about what it's like to be French, having never been to France, never learned the language and not being born a Frenchman."

A: "Well, this is a bit more complicated than being French!"

B: "No it's not, actually. It has to do with how one views reality. It's just a culture."

A: "What do you mean?"

B: "Look, if I was born in a tribe in South America where being properly clothed meant wearing a streak of red paint across my forehead, then being without that streak of red across my forehead would be nakedness. True?"

A: "True, for that Indian, that would be nakedness."

B: "And here nakedness comes in many degrees... for some people even being without a shirt is being naked."

A: "True, there are different perceptions of what nakedness is."

B: "But if I came to America, with my red stripe of paint on my forehead, I would be arrested for being naked on the spot!"

A: "Heh. True... you would be naked by our standards."

B: "But fully clothed by MY people's standards."

A: "Yes."

B: "So which standard is correct?"

A: "Well, the one you're in, I guess."

B: "So, it has to do with culture, not morality. It has to do with perceptions, not absolutes. Personally, God set this absolute by creating us naked and unashamed [Genesis 2.25] and calling it very good [Genesis 1.31], and we were quite capable of sin even then in that state. We ruined it, we took on displaced shame and guilt rather than facing what we had done honestly and squarely."

A: "Okay, but in the Bible there are occasions when being nude was wrong. Noah got drunk and was naked in his tent [Genesis 9.20-25]."

B: "Right. And what element do you have there accompanying his nudity? Two things: (1) he got drunk and passed out, and (2) Ham his son did something sexual, either to Noah or his own mother. It is expressed in the law that to uncover the nakedness of your father meant to have sex with your own mother [Leviticus 18.7-8]. So we have to remember that these phrases are not explicit, such as 'Adam knew his wife' [Genesis 4.1]. Adam had sex with his wife. He already knew her, obviously. Noah's sin was not being naked, and his sons walked in backward, covering him with a cloth because he was naked and drunk, and it is likely they did not desire to see him awake and scandalized by what had happened. So it was not nakedness that was at issue, but something sinful Ham did, which brought a curse, even on Canaan. If Noah's nakedness was in and of itself sinful or wrong, then God commanded Isaiah to do

something sinful and wrong when He commanded him to prophesy for three years in the city totally naked [Isaiah 20.2-4]. And that is not likely. But back to our Biblical origins. We were created naked and unashamed [Genesis 2.25], and this was 'very good' [Genesis 1.31]. We have to create something wrong about it. God didn't see anything wrong at all."

A: "But it can be a sin."

B: "We have to ask, did God create man for sin, or for righteousness. And even if God DID create us with the intent for us to sin, it is clear our being naked and unashamed played no part in that Fall or sin. At no time is their nakedness mentioned as a part of their act to disobey God. Rather, after having their eyes opened they reacted to a nakedness [Genesis 3.7], a state of being they were unaware of until that point."

A: "True."

B: "Far more dangerous to us than in the Garden was the temptation to seek for ourselves our own moral authority. Our nudity was the least of our problems, if a problem at all."

A: "Yes, it seems so. But there's one problem here."

B: "What's that?"

A: "Adam and Eve were man and wife. That nakedness was an intimacy between them and only them. There wasn't anyone else there. You're talking about social nudism, which is entirely different."

B: "They were not alone? Really? God was there..."

A: "Yes."

B: "No shame before God, right?"

A: "No, He created them."

B: "And the serpent, who was the 'craftiest beast of field' was there [Genesis 3.1], and was a tempting being, a being who apparently had the power of reason and speech. And some would say it was Satan himself, in one way or another."

A: "Yes, but no other humans."

B: "True, but at this point we have to leave the Garden and look to the rest of Scripture, if using only Scripture to find our base for proper or acceptable nudity in relation to people in a society, since there is no dynamic of people other than Adam and Eve for us in Eden to deal with. Would you agree?"

A: "Yes, Eden is too isolated to gather enough information."

B: "Okay, consider then that the prophets were often publicly naked, and this was a sign that they were a prophet, such as Isaiah, who prophesied three years completely naked in public [Isaiah 20.2-4]. And Jeremiah, who also had his butt exposed as a symbol to the people." [Editor's note: I believe the author may have meant Micah rather than Jeremiah here. See Micah 1.8.]

A: "I've been told Isaiah was not totally nude."

B: "The passage clearly says for Isaiah to remove everything, to ungirt his loins... that means undergarments... and even down to his sandals."

A: "Strange."

B: "Only strange to a world that has drifted far from God's original design, naked and unashamed [Genesis 2.25]."

A: "Still, it was a shame."

B: "No, it was a symbol of sin. That is the shame being used in his nakedness, and that only because man was dull of heart and dull of hearing. God used this method and symbolism so man would understand through the prophet, to get him to realize something. The shame was only symbolic. Likewise, the nudity was only symbolic. Once again, we don't blame the body for what the heart does."

A: "Okay, I can see that. But, still, people didn't walk around naked."

B: "Actually they did. It depended on the circumstance and reason. For example, long before John the Baptist, there were baptisms and religious washings. These happened constantly. We know from historians that these were conducted publicly and in the nude. And after John, the baptisms of the church up through the 3rd century were conducted publicly in the nude. Their concept of shame was entirely different. It wasn't merely being naked that was shameful for them. We have good historical records of this culture and the early church. We also know that in the Holy Lands, most field workers would work partially or completely nude, because owning two sets of clothes, one for work and one for wearing apart from work, was rarely possible. Too expensive. You were very well off if you had two sets of clothes, or another cloak, or whatever. Field

workers were very poor people. And much later, the church continued nude baptisms and it was common for men, women and children to visit Roman baths where public nudity was accepted as the norm."

A: "Yes, I've read about that. I'm not sure I approve. Just because it happened doesn't make it right."

B: "True, but it does give us an idea of the values and the culture that the ancients and David and Christ and the Apostles experienced, and they do not rail against nudity."

A: "Okay."

B: "Of course, people didn't walk around nude in the city, but that's simply a cultural thing. There was appropriate and inappropriate nudity. Nudists and naturists DO walk around nude at most times, and that is THEIR culture when among people of like mind. Not down main street."

A: "Right, where no one is offended."

B: "Right, because everyone in nudism already agrees that clothing is not necessary for human dignity, and everyone agrees that being natural is acceptable."

A: "Okay, but I still can't grasp men and women sitting around naked and nothing sexual happening."

B: "Simply because they are naked? Once again, naked does not have anything explicitly to do with sexuality. Nothing sexual happens, because we are more than sexual beings. People are violent, but that doesn't mean that every time you put them together a fight will break out. We are more than that, and always have been more than that. We're not animals driven by carnal urges alone. Everyone in nudism is gathered in like mind and with respect for one another. Sexual attraction is going to occur between men and women in nudism just as it will among non-nudists. It has to do with something far more complex than mere externals, but rather the whole person... the personality, the soul... feelings... emotions."

A: "Okay, but what about sexual reactions and arousal? That's bound to happen."

B: "Such as?"

A: "Well... men, for example... when they are sexually aroused, they can become erect."

B: "Okay, question: Do you have erections when you're not aroused?"

A: "Well, yes... sometimes."

B: "So erections are not exclusively related to sexual arousal. They can happen apart from arousal."

A: "That's true."

B: "And it is perfectly normal and natural. A man can have a partial erection five or six times a day. Some studies show that a man has a partial erection every 90 minutes, but he's simply unaware of it and it is short lived. An erection is nothing more than blood flow being increased to the penis. This is totally unrelated to anything he is thinking or doing or seeing. It's just a metabolic reaction... change in blood pressure... etc. Women, likewise, have erect nipples both at arousal and simply by way of changes in metabolism, cold air, etc. It's not a sexual thing, per se. It's just natural human physiology."

A: "But if a man is attracted to a woman, and they are both naked, and he gets an erection... that's a very embarrassing thing."

B: "Is it? Why should it be? Why should any physiological response be embarrassing? Should we be embarrassed when we sneeze or hiccup or burp? In our society, some of these things ARE embarrassing to people, which is ridiculous! I've seen grown people in our culture overcome with embarrassment from the onset of hiccups in public. Why embarrassment? Because suddenly we can no longer deny that we are human and natural? That's precisely what's at the root of this problem: human vanity. These are normal, everyday reactions to natural stimulus. Someone's stomach growls at a formal dinner part, and everyone is embarrassed for that person. It's insane. Embarrassment is ludicrous. Because of human inventions about culture, dignity and propriety which have their foundation in a denial of nature, people are pressed into a mold that does not work."

A: "But an erection... that's very different. It's private... it's part of sexual intimacy."

B: "No. We've already determined that erections are not always due to sexual arousal. Society and culture have deemed it part of privacy and intimacy, as it has nudity itself. But we've already clarified that there is a mass of illogic related to nudity and society. Likewise, there is a great deal of illogic related to normal, healthy human physiology, as well."

A: "So you're telling me that if a nudist man gets a hard-on in front of someone, that's okay?"

B: "I'm saying if it happens.... and I've personally never even seen or heard of it happening (and there is something else we need to discuss about this, too) ... but IF it happens, it is not a reason for shame or embarrassment, any more than a woman's nipples becoming erect should be an embarrassment, or the body being naked should be an embarrassment, or sneezing, coughing, hiccuping or burping, etc. It's a miracle we haven't invented some absurd traditional thing to do when we yawn or stretch! Now, what we haven't discussed in the 'effect' of nudism on the psychology of men and women in relation to these physiological events, which are exaggerated in those who are accustomed to being clothed most of the time."

A: "Effect?"

B: "Yes. What you find is that men who would normally experience a partial erection, either for reasons of arousal or normal physiology, no longer experience this once naked and among the naked. The reactions and tempers of the body are reconditioned to a new environment... a new set of stimulus and circumstances. The body becomes accustomed to being naked and relaxed. The genitals are no longer bound down against the body in hot, often tight clothing. A partial erection by natural physiological circumstances is all but unnoticeable. Once the body is exposed to this relaxed state of being naked and unashamed, not only are many psychological set-ups and patterns dissolved, but the reactions associated with them are also dissolved."

A: "It's still very hard to imagine."

B: "It's like resetting a clock or resetting your body to a new sleep pattern. And yes, it is hard to imagine. And that's why people who judge nudism from the outside looking in are talking from ignorance. They don't know. They haven't experienced it, so they cannot know. And most refuse to find out the truth. They are more content with images of mass orgies and wild sexual abandon, rather than the truth."

A: "Okay, but lets say it happened anyway. A man is sitting there naked and gets an erection because he's attracted to a woman he sees, or is turned on by the many naked women parading around him! Surely THAT is embarrassing."

B: "Once again, you're not familiar with the reality of nudism, so you're putting yourself -- a clothed person -- in the position of being naked in an unfamiliar environment, with all your present set-ups and patterns of reaction intact. The nudist is accustomed to this. He doesn't see a bunch of naked women 'parading around,' as you say. He sees people... men, women, boys, girls... just people. All are naked. All are in the skin they were born in, the clothing God gave them. Naked isn't anything unusual in this realm. Naked is the norm. He's not being

bombarded with sexual imagery, but PEOPLE imagery. He's not overwhelmed by lust inspiring nudity, but the norm of nature. You see?"

A: "Sorry. It's just hard to imagine not being turned-on by all that nudity. Maybe I'm the weird one. It would be truly frightening to me."

B: "No, you're normal by this society's standards, which are clueless and debased at best. I think that very attitude may be what keeps many people away from nudism as a personal experience. Fear. And what they fear won't happen. And even if it did, it would not be looked upon as a shocking thing, but a normal human thing. If you've never played tennis and you miss the ball, no one is going to react to it like you're out of your mind or punish you for violating the basic tenets of the game. You're a newcomer. Nudists are well aware of the kind of conditioning people come in with, and it disappears very quickly. Likewise, there are degrees of nudism... from dipping a toe into the water to see how it feels, getting used to it, and then relaxing in it in confidence. Most people who step into their first experience with a crowd of nudists find that everything they thought about being naked around others who are naked was completely wrong, and they realize this almost immediately. They expect their reaction will be one way, when in reality it is nothing like they imagined, and they are at ease and comfortable very quickly. It's like being in a room where everyone is wearing a hat that says 'I'm just me,' and everyone accepts everyone else. Or in a room where everyone is wearing a uniform. Only in this case, God is the seamstress and the tailor."

A: "Lots of long, lingering, uncomfortable eye-contact, I would think."

B: "Actually, yes. Not because anyone is afraid of looking at someone else's body, but merely because when you get them all together naked like this, everyone seems very much the same. Class distinctions tend to fade or vanish. People are just people. There is more respect. In the clothed world you have men who will talk to a woman by looking at her chest. Every time she looks away, he's glancing down to take in a view of her body and then when she looks back at him, his eyes are quickly back on hers and then darting down to her chest again. What absurd frustration! That's what this culture feeds... frustration. In nudism, that frustration is not only gone, but the natural need to see is satisfied and moreover, the reaction to what one sees is altered entirely."

A: "Sounds a little paradisaical, if you ask me. Too good to be true."

B: "It's not paradise, but it sure had it's start there. And because it did, because it is perfectly natural and because we can and do live this way by the millions world-wide -- everyday proving that nudism is safe, healthy, natural and positive, even beneficial -- we have both logic and rationale on our side. And because we are not imposing it on others, we have sanctity, too. It is not for

everyone, but it can be. As one nudist leader [Jim C. Cunningham] said, 'Nudism is not a spectator sport. We all have the equipment and everyone can play.' Like everything, you get out of it what you put into it."

A: "But what if there is someone who is secretly roaming around, thinking lustful thoughts, just enjoying him or herself at your expense? Don't you feel used?"

B: "Well, to be honest, that's not very likely. If a man is sitting around with a sexualized mentality about what he is seeing and the people he is with, it's going to show... and it will be clearly recognized physically. Someone new to nudism might -- MIGHT -- have that reaction on conditioned impulse, and it would be overlooked, but it would not happen again. This gets down to circumstances, of course. If a man has been sleeping on a cot and gets an erection while he's asleep while sunbathing, that's perfectly natural. No one reacts to that and such an erection passes quickly. But, if you have someone who is repeatedly lurking, watching women, getting erections... yes, you'd have someone abusing the nudist environment for their own gratification. And you know what? That doesn't happen, because men like that know they would be spotted and thrown out. It would not be tolerated. In the cases I've heard where it did happen, that person seriously regretted having entered that nudist environment. If a woman is doing it, you might not be able to detect it, but as in the clothed world, you can usually tell when a person's heart and mind is not right."

A: "Well, that's good to know. But I still think you're just asking for trouble. People are geared to get aroused by the sight of nude bodies and I just don't think it can be resolved by simply being nude."

B: "Well, that's something you won't believe until you experience it yourself, or talk to enough nudists that you become convinced. The fact is, the cure for all that is chaste social and familial nudity... not more clothing, not more hiding, not more shame, and not the irrationality of saying that man is inherently undignified in his skin and is only granted dignity by way of textiles. That's simply absurd and goes against even the creation of God. And another thing to remember is, if what you believe is true, nudism would not have survived the test of time, and it has. Families would not be involved at all. If what you believe is true, nudism would be not only a spectator sport, and a resource of pornography and gratification for the perverse, but also merely a hedonistic recreation for the sexually flamboyant. You'd only see singles and swinging couples in nudism. But as it is, there are millions of nudist families, and Christian nudist singles, couples and families, devoted to a lifestyle of liberty and natural freedoms without anything sexual being involved at all. Nudity does not equal sexuality. And sexuality does not equal nudity. The two are related only when the intent is sexual, and then it is intimate by reason of the fact that

sex involves two people, not three, four, five, etc. Anything like that is clearly a perversion. Such perversions thrive and flourish apart from nudism, you must admit, so nudism is not a cause."

A: "Okay, what about this: 'Avoid even the very appearance of evil,' says the Bible [1 Thessalonians 5.22]. People see this as evil."

B: "People see a lot of things as evil. Do we stop doing everything because others think it's evil? Most people in the world who are unbelievers see the church and belief in a 2000-year-old document as the Word of God (a guide for modern living and inerrant in text) to be quite evil! Stalin attempted to destroy the churches of Russia with the iron boot of oppression. Doing 'what is right in the sight of all men' [Romans 12.17] in Russia in that day and age was to oppose religion and crush it, an 'opiate of the masses.' Clearly, we are to temper these teachings with common sense, spiritual reasoning, a dedication to truth over lies, and justifications from God and not men when the ways of men oppose the order of God. That saying holds a lot of truth related to explicit sins, but not to what is natural, much less being naked. And by faith, a lot of things are possible which seem impossible, you must admit."

A: "You know what I mean, though. This has nothing to do with faith."

B: "Ah, but for me it does. For millions of Christian naturists it does. It has everything to do with faith, with morality and with truth. My spirituality is intertwined with my nature, and my nature is as God made me: naked and unashamed. I did not come to shame about my naked body naturally, and neither did you. My step-daughter is twelve and still has not arrived at that shame because it has never been imposed upon her. Shame was given to us as a backhanded curse from our parents, who received it from their parents, who received it from theirs, and so on... a tradition of ignorance. I break the chain. I reject the slavery to such undeserved shame, a shame which tells me I should consider the temple of God [1 Corinthians 3.16-17, 1 Corinthians 6.19-20] to be so unseemly and wrong that I should cover it and hide it from view. In some things we must valiantly ignore that edict and realize there is a greater truth to accomplish in the doing. And in my life, that's what naturism is. It is overcoming 'one' of the effects -- and after effects -- of the Fall, and I do it in faith, in Jesus' Holy Name, with every confidence that my Creator knows better than mankind as to how we are to be. He created me naked and unashamed, I was born naked and unashamed, and I will fight to remain in that state, for God called it 'very good' [Genesis 1.31]. I have yet to be given a good reason to alter God's design in favor of man's design. Scripture says 'that which is highly esteemed in the eyes of men is an abomination before God' [Luke 16.15]. God's ways are higher, His thoughts are higher."

A: "But nudism scandalizes many people of faith."

B: "A lot of things I may do may scandalize people, even things I do which are completely approved of God. I can only control their reactions to some degree. Jesus plucking and eating grain on the Sabbath scandalized the religious zealots [Matthew 12.1, Luke 6.1], but it did not keep Him from doing what He knew was lawful and right. Just because the zealots had twisted the law doesn't mean Jesus should have to conform to their distortions. Nudism scandalizes people because they are ignorant of the truth, not because it is wrong. How can I simultaneously do what is right and true by God and not offend a soul? It is not possible if the majority of people are so damaged in their thinking that they believe that to be natural as God made us is in and of itself sinful! If my nakedness is offensive to them when they are not even exposed to it, then they intrude upon my liberty and my world, not me into theirs. And that is the attitude most anti-nudists give off. They disapprove of nakedness entirely, and in doing so they are saying that God created worthless junk, that God made a mistake in making us naked. That's a very darkened perception and shows a lack of knowledge about God.

The mind of man is at enmity with the things of God, is it not? [Romans 8.7]. And because it is, we are prone to sin, and by our sin nature we have a sinful heart. And that can express itself in religion, in adopting teachings and traditions which are not of God but are esteemed as though they were, just as much as in sinfulness and evil, which is outright and openly wrong. But we are challenged to overcome and we cannot overcome if we constantly appeal to the lowest common denominator in all things. If we have Christ, our fight is effective and our victory is complete. I once asked a good Christian friend, 'What would you do if God told you to take off all your clothes and go through the city preaching His Gospel?' My friend replied, 'God would NEVER do that! Never! That would not be the voice of God I heard, it would be the voice of Satan!' I then said, 'Ah, well, that's what God commanded of Isaiah [Isaiah 20.2-4], and Isaiah obeyed. You don't know the voice of your own God.'"

A: "Still, you have an obligation as a Christian not to make your brother stumble [see Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8]."

B: "True, but I have a dual obligation: to neither make him stumble or to leave him ignorant. Leaving him ignorant and weak in faith is just as bad as making use of my liberty in his presence when he is weak in faith and not ready to eat the meat, but is still sucking on the milk. And remember, I'm not naked in front of my objecting brother, only among those of like mind. We cannot take the singular expression of Paul about not making our brother stumble without also looking at the multiplicity of times Paul encourages us to teach, exhort and educate those without knowledge, and those not yet fully enlightened to deeper truths as they grow and mature in Christ, and become capable of chewing on strong meat. For example, it would be wrong for me to drink in front of one who does not have the strength of faith to believe that having a drink is lawful, even

though they have the good word of God and are capable of reading it and seeing clearly that they are weak in faith, and I am strong in faith. Paul is clear on this. Some things cannot be accepted by the immature in Christ, and it is best not to exercise my liberty in their presence. Likewise, I don't bolt into someone's house nude and challenge them on the issue of my liberty to be natural as God made me!"

A: "That would be extreme, yes. What about those who would agree with you philosophically, but disagree practically."

B: "Well, if they aren't against me, they're for me, I would contend. But I would encourage anyone who recognizes the inherent absurdity in the anti-nudist argument to -- at the very least -- explore right-nudity with their family or husband or wife, and encourage them to explore the possibilities of this original state of being which God established for us. Living naked and conducting oneself in ordinary activities while naked really can change the way one feels, thinks and approaches things, etc. I think they'd be very surprised at the many benefits of naturist living."

A: "Benefits? Such as...?"

B: "Well, just on the practical level, less clothing to keep up with, to wash, to deal with. You don't dirty clothing when you work or do something messy, you get yourself dirty instead and since you throw yourself in the wash all the time anyway, off it comes. Obviously, clothing is a utility. There are times when you wear clothing, like when it's cold, or if you're going to do something that could injure the flesh, etc. It's no different than someone putting on gloves on the naked hand to handle barbed wire or whatever. But generally, most things can be done while nude, and comfortably. One of the biggest benefits of naturistic living, apart from the greater comfort of being naked, is related to child rearing. When you bring up a child without imposing shame on them, without slapping them with a forced, false modesty about their natural bodies, you don't create this deep well of misgivings and discomfort about their bodies and themselves which most people carry around with them their entire lives. Let's face it, there's no rationale or excuse in turning the tables on children. One day they are cute naked and the next they are indecent and wrong. That's ridiculous. And no explanation makes sense to them either, and that's because all the explanations you could give them are faulty, bogus and totally illogical. What people really need to say to their children is, 'We're too afraid to be natural, so be unnatural instead.' That's the bottom line, the horrible truth of the matter. We love the unnatural over the natural. We love darkness more than light."

A: "Yes, but don't you wind up with kids who want to run around naked all the time? Isn't that a problem?"

B: "No, you wind up with kids who see clothing as a utility and who use it as such. When you teach a kid how to eat with a fork or spoon, he doesn't want to do everything with the fork or spoon, does he? Come on. Children aren't that stupid. Teaching them about clothing as a utility and not a cover of shame works. Nudist families do this far and wide, and they don't have wild children shucking their clothes in public. When its appropriate, put clothes on. When its appropriate, take clothes off. It's no longer dressing or undressing based on artificial notions of some bogus 'natural shame' about the body or embarrassment or self-loathing, but rather by reason and rationale. There is no truth to the belief that we should naturally be ashamed of being naked. We start off naked and are happily naked and innocent until one day someone outside of ourselves suddenly changes the rules on us with no reason we can logically detect. Suddenly we are told we are no longer beautiful and okay in our natural state, but are somehow wrong, even shameful, by being what we are, naturally. What a sick thing that is! It's robbery of innocence. I don't think people realize the deep psychological impact this has on us. When words like 'indecent' are applied to being naked, something is really wrong in the philosophy. It has become tradition for people to knock on a door and ask, 'Are you decent?' Somehow we are indecent by reason of being naked, in being natural! Hardly! That's not only sick, that's deranged thinking. What insanity brought this into being?"

A: "But we do call our genitals 'private parts' for a reason."

B: "Wait a minute. The word does not define the object. The object must define the word based in rationale and truth. Just because we call something 'private' doesn't make it so. 'Private parts' doesn't even effectively define the parts! We don't 'private' with them. We urinate with them. We have sex with them. There is no one function, and there is no cause to label them 'private parts' at all. It's not an accurate descriptive. What's private about the genitals? Only that society has determined that genitals are ugly or nasty or sinful or shameful and should be hidden away! Genitals are used for urination and sex, therefore they are unclean and should be hidden is the thinking. What is unclean about sex and natural bodily functions? Nothing. Society just chooses to make it dirty and unclean. There is no spiritual edict to validate that view at all. In fact, look at God: He chose circumcision of the penis as his OUTWARD sign of covenant with the Hebrew people [Genesis 17.11]. Not much of a sign if a penis was not often seen! The words 'testimony' and 'testament' come from the root word for testes, dating back to the Hebrews who would hold in their right hand the testicles of a man making an oath. You won't find that happening in our culture today, but it shows you how relaxed and open people were then about the body, even parts we today would call 'private parts.' One was swearing by their loins, the source of their future generations.

And look at Paul, who compares the church to the body of Christ. He teaches that the parts should not say to one another, 'I have no need of you' [1 Corinthians 12.20], expressing the body as a whole, and then goes on to even mention the genitals, saying 'And those members of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked' [1 Corinthians 12.23-24]. So, in the mind of Paul, the genitals of the body of Christ are not something to regard as private and unmentionable, but Paul uses them as his chief example of the deeper and more honorable parts of the body of Christ himself in this symbol. That's pretty bold. What preacher would stand in the pulpit today and speak in modern terms about the genitals of the body of Christ? Not many, I assure you! How far we have come from the first teachings! And that is because we have fallen far, far from a healthy, wise, informed and even holy view of this body, this temple of the Holy Spirit [1 Corinthians 3.16-17, 1 Corinthians 6.19-20]! In the same way, when Paul was teaching about the Olympic runners, comparing the Christian to the runner who runs for the winning of a crown [1 Corinthians 9.24-25], he does not rebuke their nudity at all, and we know that they trained and exhibited this sport and all athletic endeavors in the nude. The words 'gymnast' and 'gymnasium' mean 'nude trainer' and 'place of nude training.' This was no scandal to Paul, who knew the body was good and created by God. It can be used for evil or good. There is right nudity and wrong nudity. And surely Paul would have mentioned not running naked for the crown of everlasting life! What a metaphor that would have been! Rather, he sees us like the Olympic runner: naked, having nothing of ourselves in this race, and seeking the prize."

A: "But even Paul calls the genitals uncomely [1 Corinthians 12.23]. That means ugly."

B: "He says they are perceived as such. He says 'which we THINK are less honorable' and says the uncomely are bestowed with ABUNDANT comeliness. Look closely. Paul recognizes that people generally think of genitals as being uncomely, unseemly and even dishonorable, but what does he reveal? He reveals that these parts have greater honor! And if you really dig into the depths of truth, you will see that symbolically, there is nothing more wonderful, more beautiful and more powerful than the elements of our reproductive natures and sexuality in relation to God in symbolism. He really created a marvel! What marvel is hidden? 'Who lights a lamp and places it under a bushel?' Jesus said [Matthew 5.15, Mark 4.21, Luke 11.33]. Who would build a regal and beautiful temple and then hide it? Or hide only a part of it? Paul is saying these parts are the best parts! Even when Jesus died, the veil of the temple was ripped from top to bottom [Matthew 27.51, Mark 15.38, Luke 23.45], revealing that which had been hidden from the sight of the people forever, the Holy of Holies. Many times in Scripture the shame of nakedness is

used symbolically as so many people have experienced this from the time of the Fall, but it does not authorize feeling shame for being natural. Nakedness in this sense in Scripture has to do with sin, with being unfaithful, with disgrace, but not the natural grace which is part of us as being human, made in God's image. 'I am skillfully and wonderfully made' exclaims the Psalmist [Psalm 139.14]. Every human being can say that. And look at the Song of Solomon. He takes his wife-to-be into the clefts of the rocks [Song of Solomon 2.14] and she exposes her naked body to him, and he writes poetically, even prophetically, about what he sees. This is a beautiful thing, not something unseemly or worthy of being hidden."

A: "But you admit, there is a right nudity and a wrong nudity."

B: "Absolutely. Wrong nudity is apparent when it is exploitative or degrading or humiliating or forced or..."

A: "Exhibitionistic?"

B: "Exhibitionism is when one is naked in front of those who have not consented to that nakedness. It is then offensive. It is not respecting the other person's rights. But, I must say, that is entirely cultural in scope. We have to remember that Isaiah prophesied for three years totally nude in front of everyone [Isaiah 20.2-4]. Our culture has changed, but God has not changed [Malachi 3.6, James 1.17]. When nudists gather together they are of like mind in a community. No one is offended. Everyone is together for the same purpose, and the same truth is understood. There is no exhibitionism in that environment. And nudists do not impose themselves or their nudity upon others. Nudism recognizes the sensitivity and lack of education in most people on these issues, and ultimately, it respects their right not to see others naked if that is what they so choose."

A: "Good, because my next comment was going to be that most of us don't want to see others naked. Most of us are not very attractive naked and don't think others are either!"

B: "That's where nudism has one of its benefits. It can alter your view of your fellow man and fellow woman. You come to see everyone as acceptable, just as they are: tall, short, fat, thin, old, young, handicapped. It doesn't matter. One becomes acclimated to the nude bodies of many kinds of people, the incredible diversity of it, and in their own way they're all beautiful. I see the image of God, His greatest creation, a creation so wonderful that God himself took it upon Himself as His own body in the person of Christ, and in Jesus Christ exalted it to immortality. As long as we are locked up in a sense of vanity or vulgarity with respect to ourselves, with nothing in between, only extremes will exist. The average person is what naturism is all about, just your regular joe or jane as they are. They're accepted, not judged based on externals, and given the right

and liberty to be precisely who and what they are, naturally. No embellishments needed, nothing artificial required. Simple. Honest. True. You have to remember, you live in a culture which literally declares war on anything that doesn't fit a seriously narrow image of human perfection. It attempts to divorce those who do not fit this image from society. It's a ruthless and evil mechanism of destruction disguised as nothing more than 'fashion' or 'style,' and in its most insidious form, false modesty and so-called propriety."

A: "Oh, that's being a little harsh, don't you think?"

B: "Not at all. I'm being kind! What produces the mental illness of anorexia nervosa in thousands of young women, striving to appease a society brainwashed into thinking 'thin' is perfect? What is pushing young males by the thousands to take steroids to beef up their musculature, often with consequences like brain tumors and even death? What generates this pressure on young people to 'fit in' with so much of it being centered on outward appearances? What drives this unyielding horde of suicides among the lonely and outcast, the overweight. Anyone who doesn't fit the mold is driven to destruction, usually self-destruction. And if they don't destroy themselves, they are pushed to one side, regarded as less equal, disqualified. They are often abused, harassed, terrorized and treated like dirt. No, this society is as sick as it gets when it comes to the vanity of the self. It clearly dictates individualism as a cliché and yet promotes a cookie-cutter conformity which is, at its root, utterly superficial. Add on top of this a society so darkened in its perceptions of God that it speaks of the natural human form only in terms of either the pornographic or shameful, and you have a depraved and twisted culture. Naturism, on the other hand, points us to a respect for all people, no matter who they are or what they look like -- as they are, naturally. I believe that to support this present world system, this age, with all its madness and vanity, is sheer evil. By apologizing for it and giving it any credence at all is to worship at an altar which says that God created junk too ugly to look at, that His image does not meet our high and lofty human standards, and that His decisions are absurd compared to our societal and cultural wisdom. And that alone is a great blasphemy."

A: "Well, you still have to convince this 'evil society' that it's wrong, you know. And I don't think they are listening."

B: "Yes they are. When faced with the truth, they have one of two options while remaining evil and unenlightened: flee in denial, which is most common and looks very stupid, or attack and show that they are without cause or rationale. There is only one other possibility, and that is acceptance. Acceptance requires reformation from top to bottom, a complete re-writing of the rules, attitudes, mores, etc. related to the natural human being. And every person not raised in

nudism goes through this very transformation, so it can be done. One person at a time."

A: "You don't really expect the world, much less the church, to become nudist do you?"

B: "The world and the church is already nudist. They just have it hidden under clothing and mindless concepts of shame and human indignity predicated on a disrespect for God's creation. It's all a farce. Just more fig leaves. Remember, clothing is the artificial creation of man [Genesis 3.7]. The naked body is natural. Every day thousands upon thousands of babies are born and not one of them comes into this world wearing a stitch. That's a message from God, at best.

At one time a Christian world was not even conceivable, and Christianity as a culture, if nothing else, has flourished the world over. Anything can change. Anything can happen. The world God made is one where things happen, and usually surprising things. It doesn't matter to me if the whole world becomes nudist. What is more important is that people are confronted with their illogical and irrational behaviors and attitudes about the human body in its natural state. That is enough to bring a quantum change in people, a dissolution of vanities. And once that respect for inherent human dignity is rediscovered, the door to liberties such as nudism is wide open. But beyond nudism is a thriving respect for God's creation. Nudism is nothing more than a momentary exaggeration for what was once the natural and accepted state of mankind, and what will again be the natural and accepted state. When there is no such concept as shame for the natural body, we have in a sense regained paradise, and that will happen when Christ comes in His Kingdom. So, I have hope that I will see a world where God's creation and its beauty is respected, enjoyed and cherished, not shunned, vilified, demonized and despised. And especially by those who call themselves by the name of God's holy Son, through whom all things came into being. He made it. It's not junk, and it does not deserve the reproach cast upon it by those who claim to know Him. Unless we become as little children, we cannot see the Kingdom of God."

A: "Now, really. With respect to what we're discussing, how can any of us become as innocent as children again?"

B: "Remember Nicodemus asking Jesus, 'How can a man enter his mother's womb again?' when Jesus spoke about being 'born again'? [John 3.3-4]. We started off naked and unashamed [Genesis 2.25]. We can arrive there again. Little has changed. Nudism is, in its own way, a rebirth. It is very much a spiritual thing when one throws off the chains of what a powerful society says one is and should be, and steps into liberty and discovers in an instant how great the lie really was. Liberation is a powerful force."

A: "Sounds like you're equating the Gospel with nudism."

B: "They are similar in dynamics but NO, I'm not equating them. I'm only paralleling certain aspects of a message that revolutionizes the life of the hearer. This has its roots in our divine origins, so it definitely relates. That cannot be denied, unless one is simply seared in his own conscience. Obviously, better a man be born-again of the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ and remain a non-nudist his entire life, than to be a nudist and not come to know the Blessed Son of God for his salvation. That goes without saying. But all the better for one to have both Christ and the realization that what God created was very good, and to know that the Fall did not change that fact with respect to his material being -- man made in the image of God, especially for those who believe and know the truth.

Everything God created is good. If one were speaking about nudism in, say, the time of King David, the reaction would be, 'What's the big deal?' People then did not have the strong sense of repression we do now. They routinely saw people bathing [Exodus 2.5, 2 Kings 5.10-14, 2 Samuel 11.2], people in ritual washings and baths, people working nude in fields [Matthew 24.18] and in gardens, people fishing naked from boats like Peter [John 21.7] and some of the other disciples. It was much more common then. We have traveled too far from nature. We can return to nature. It's just a decision.

Our whole world seems to pivot, at least in the material realm, on the decision which the more powerful western cultures will make in the next hundred years. Either we will return to nature and reject the vain humanisms which have driven us to so disrespect the earth that it is on the verge of killing us (and rightly so), or we will move headlong into psychological, societal, spiritual and global suicide and collapse from the weight of our own outrageous, God-defying ego. And we will be taking down with us millions of people who have not rejected the natural nearly as much as we have. They will suffer for our crimes of self-aggrandizement over the natural kingdom God made, which we have been left to manage as wise and faithful tenants, as stewards of God's creation. To whom much is given, much is required [Luke 12.48], and that includes ourselves, not merely our trees, air and water. We are nature, too.

Consider the flowers of the field. Do they make clothing? No. They are clothed by nature, by God Himself. King Solomon in his finest clothes was not dressed as beautifully as a single, simple flower [Matthew 6.28-29]. This is the very teaching of Jesus Christ about the human condition, that God has provided and will provide for our needs if we love Him and honor Him and worship Him in spirit and in truth [John 4.23]. If we dishonor Him, reject His natural truth and create for ourselves an artificial world that appeases our sinful nature, we are surely doomed. We are to honor our father and our mother [Exodus 12.20]. Our Father is God, and our Mother is the earth and nature. We were created from

her soil, for God created man out of the dust of the ground [Genesis 2.7]. Paul likens the whole creation to a woman in labor, groaning in childbirth, awaiting the revelation of the Sons of God [Romans 8.22-23]. We have an awesome responsibility NOW, not simply in the Kingdom to come. I don't think that's too esoteric for most believers to grasp. We can look in a mirror and see the image of God if we are enlightened, and our character should likewise reflect that godly image. Right now, our character is not showing any signs of being godlike, but rather claiming to be its own god to the exclusion of The One True God. Once we get off the throne of our own lives, God will lead us into a deeper truth we are not yet ready to receive. Whether that will ever happen by spiritual maturity, or whether it will require the Second Coming and judgment, I don't know. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord [Joshua 24.15]. Naked and unashamed [Genesis 2.25]."