NAKED AND AFRAID

A STUDY OF GENESIS III, VERSE 7 AND ITS INTERPRETATION

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by

Anne Yarwood, B.A.

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AUTHOR: Anne Yarwood (B.A., McMaster University)

SUPERVISOR: Dr. J. C. Robertson

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ABSTRACT

This is a study of Genesis III, verse 7 and its interpretation from the time of the Midrash Rabbah to the present. It consists of introduction, six chapters, conclusion and bibliography. The first chapter is a close textual analysis; the second shows the relationship between this verse and attitudes to nakedness and clothing in the rest of the Bible and outside it. The following four chapters deal with various understandings of the text under the headings of sexuality, reason, morality and anxiety. There is an attempt to show that, rather than being discrete or even contradictory interpretations, these are in fact closely related and complementary understandings of the text. It is argued that the theme of anxiety, at its fullest, comprehends the other themes, and the interpretation of the verse as a statement about man's anxious condition is presented as the most adequate understanding of it.

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INTRODUCTION

> Then the eyes of both were opened, and they
> knew that they were naked; and they sewed
> fig leaves together and made themselves aprons.
>
> (Revised Standard Version)

The early chapters of Genesis are foundational in character, not only in the sense that they serve as an introduction to the book of Genesis as a whole and to the history of the Hebrew people but also in that they have profoundly influenced the religions of Judaism and Christianity and the philosophical thought arising out of these faiths. The chapters deal with the questions about his situation which have engaged man's mind from his beginnings: Paul Tillich recognizes this when he calls Genesis I-III "the profoundest and richest expression of man's awareness of his existential estrangement".[1] The "Fall" narrative, in Genesis III, of which the first 19 verses are generally agreed by scholars to be a single unit rather than a compilation of materials, has been expecially significant for Western man's understanding of himself and his situation. (The word "Fall" is used throughout this study as a conventional term for the events described in Genesis III and is not intended as evaluative.)

F. R. Tennant sees Chapter III as an ancient and influential articulation of man's sense that

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[1]Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology Vol. II, p. 31.

> it is knowledge which begets the consciousness of evil, widening experience which discloses more and more of life's ills; above all...the ever-increasing requirements of progressive civilisation impose more and more demands upon the individual will, and a greater break with the state of nature.[2]

Tennant also says that it is wholly inaccurate to characterize this narrative as "mere" myth:

> The Fall-story is an attempt at philosophy... It still uses mythological objects, in place of inaccessible historical facts, for the concrete presentation of its teaching; but in its theological and ethical implications ...it has emancipated itself from the characteristics of primitive mythological speculation, and deserves a place amongst the earliest attempts at theological philosophy.[3]

Verse 7 of this chapter, describing the immediate effects of the first human beings' eating fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, is a pivotal point of the narrative. A study of this verse, with the help of some of the existing interpretations of it, can be expected to illumine the way in which western humanity, and philosophers and theologians in particular, have seen the human condition after the acquisition of knowledge by our earliest ancestors.

While there has been an immense amount of scholarly work on Genesis III as a whole, verse 7 has received relatively scant attention (particularly from specialists in Biblical exegesis), possibly for a somewhat paradoxical reason. The literal meaning of the text is

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[2]F. R. Tennant, The Sources of the Doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin, pp. 65-66.

[3]Ibid., p. 83.

relatively clear (the ambiguities are considered in the first chapter) while its contextual significance is disturbingly obscure. It is apparently quite incongruous with the preceding and succeeding verses though the surprise element is often overlooked because the chapter is so familiar to western readers. The incongruity of this verse, which is concerned with the mundane matter of the naked human body and man's first attempt to get dressed, in the context of weighty matters of good and evil, life and death, paradise and exile, is considered in conjunction with the history of interpretation of the text as providing a possible clue to its meaning. It seems unlikely, in view of the apparent care taken by the author or redactor of this material in his use of words and ideas, that verse 7 is a piece of carelessness or a weak point in the narrative; its pivotal location in the chapter, moreover, suggests that it is of pivotal significance.

The major question of this study is: What light does Genesis III:7 shed on the human condition? It may well be asked at the outset why such a verse should be supposed to shed <u>any</u> light on the present condition of humanity. It was, after all, written at a time and in an environment far removed from our own situation, and may be based upon material even older and more foreign to 20th century technological man than the present form. It has often been suggested that it is invalid to try to show parallels between Biblical beliefs or Biblical narratives and the beliefs or literature of peoples far removed from the Biblical environment. But it is arguable that a narrative such as the account of the Fall can and indeed must be viewed as a particular but durable articulation of an experience which is common to all times and places, an aspect of <u>every</u> human life encapsulated in story. If

this is our understanding of Biblical myth (and it is the understanding assumed in this study) then it is perfectly legitimate to enquire into both the nature of the existential situation which is being articulated in Genesis III, and the many ways in which that articulation has been expanded and modified by later exegetes and philosophers. It is partly this capacity for adaptation which testifies to the validity of the myth and ensures its enduring quality.

It is assumed, then, that the narrative of Genesis III issues from human experience rather than ex nihilo, or from "mere" mythology, or from abstract intellectualization. Neither is "revelation" or divine inspiration assumed; it is held here that the Biblical material is in need of no such support in order to be taken with the utmost seriousness. Whatever authority it has is self-evident and does not need to be presupposed: its truth shines out. In contrast to the presumption of special inspiration is the attitude that the Genesis story is an aetiological account, i.e., an outcome of man's extrapolating from his present situation the events which must have happened at the beginning of human experience. That is largely the attitude of this study, though not (of course) of a number of the interpreters whose work is considered.

To some degree, it must be recognized, theology and philosophy still use the means that the Genesis writer used to convey meaning, for however abstract a philosophical or religious work may be it necessarily employs sensory images and metaphors which are the residual forms, or perhaps the material, of mythology. It is therefore valid to compare ancient and modern articulations of a particular theme, while recognizing the changes that have taken place in forms of expression.

F. R. Tennant has noted that before such a comparative study can take place,

> It will be important to ascertain, in so far as it is possible, the meaning which this narrative had for the age in which it received its present form. This can, of course, only be done by divesting ourselves of all ideas which familiar later developments of thought cause us, perhaps habitually, to read into it; and by translating ourselves, as completely as may be, to the mental standpoint of its writer.[4]

Such a methodology will be employed here: the opening sections will attempt to ascertain the meaning of the narrative for those who first received it. In this attempt it will be assumed that the simplest meaning of the words is what was intended unless clear reasons for thinking otherwise can be shown. Such reasons (for interpreting words less simply) may be internal or external, i.e., may relate to usage elsewhere in the Bible or to wider historical considerations.

The format of the thesis may be likened to the painting of a picture rather than the step-by-step assembly of a product. The words of verse 7 are the centre or focus, the linguistic and cultural contexts are the surrounding area, and the background consists of many secondary sources, representing various shades of opinion and theological conviction. The arrangement of the material does not follow a logical sequence, but is designed to enhance the features of the central verse; there is not a linear or scientific progression but rather a multilinear or literary progression, appropriate to the style of the text itself.

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[4]Ibid., p. 2.

The study begins with an examination of the verse in its context, trying to approach an understanding of what the words meant for their writer and for their first readers. The first chapter is concerned with an analysis of the Hebrew words and phrases (making full use of secondary sources and lexicographers insofar as they contribute insights about this verse) and also with a consideration of the position and significance of the verse within the opening section of Genesis. In Genesis II and the first verses of Genesis III, Yahweh Elohim has commanded Adam to eat of all the trees in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He has warned the man that "in the day" he eats of that tree he will "surely die". The serpent has then, (in Chapter III:4-5) contradicted this warning, telling Eve that, far from dying, she and Adam will, on eating from that tree, "be like Elohim, knowing good and evil." The reader is thus led to expect that the result of the disobedient eating of the fruit will be dramatic--either death in some form or transformation into divinely knowledgeable human beings. But the actual effect on the man and woman is described as their knowing "that they were naked"--an unexpectedly mundane result of original disobedience. The reader is thus invited to question the relationships between death, divinity, disobedience, knowledge and nakedness. The first chapter examines these relationships as they can be elicited from the text itself.

The second chapter of the thesis examines the concept with which the text most obviously deals (the origins of physical modesty and clothing) from an anthropological viewpoint. It considers how this account relates to the treatment of nakedness and clothing

elsewhere in the Bible and to secular anthropological theory.

The body of the thesis, Chapters 3-6, studies interpretations of the text under four headings, with the aim of understanding the text more thoroughly in the light of these interpretations. An attempt has been made to consider as many contributions to the understanding of the text as possible; when there is widespread agreement about meaning, representative exegetes have been selected for quotation and discussion. There is a particular concern to see how each interpreter has dealt with the incongruity described above (p. 6), and how this exegetical stumbling-block has affected his interpretation. With these factors in mind, there is a consideration of the following themes which have occurred most frequently in the interpretation of the text: emergent sexuality; the beginnings of reason; emergent moral consciousness; and anxiety. The study attempts to show that rather than being discrete or even contradictory interpretations these are in fact closely related and complementary understandings of the text, and that the latter theme (anxiety) at its fullest can comprehend them all.

The arrangement of the material is thematic rather than chronological throughout this study; Moses Maimonides and Franz Delitzsch, for example, are considered in conjunction on the question of what it means for Adam's and Eve's eyes to be opened, since although they are far apart in time they have complementary insights on this point. There is no attempt to judge commentators on the relative acceptability of their interpretations; an original contribution by a little-known scholar or a non-academic writer may be included alongside material from a more traditional and respected source if

it seems likely to add a dimension to understanding the verse, without any comparison being intended between the respectability of the authors. The quotation of John Calvin and of Desmond Morris on the same page in Chapter 2 is an obvious example. The concern throughout is to try to uncover the layers of meaning which the words unfold and which have been variously accessible to a multitude of readers from the beginning.

The thesis concludes with an attempt to answer the major question: What light does this verse shed on the human condition? Given that it is worthwhile to know more about the nature of man and his world, this study is defended on the grounds that it is an attempt to discover the intent of an ancient writer and thus to understand his view of reality, his teaching, and also to see how that teaching is compatible with continuing human experience. If it is shown to be compatible to a large degree with the way we and our scholarly predecessors have seen reality, then weight is added to the belief that men are indeed caught in an anxiety-producing conflict between finitude and transcendence. The study argues that the text presents an ancient insight into an aspect of life which has only been widely explored within the last two centuries: the nature of human anxiety. Such an argument is an attempt at "consciousness-raising", undertaken in the hope that the reader will come away with a slightly-changed view of his or her own world and possibilities. This is, perhaps, an effort to beguile the reader, as Eve perceived the serpent to have beguiled her, i.e. to have raised her consciousness. Whether this is a worthy endeavour is of course as debatable as the thesis itself.

CHAPTER ONE

The Original Cover-Up: A Look at the Text

Then the eyes of both were opened,	וַתִּפָּקַחְנָה עֵינֵי שְׁנֵיהֶם
and they knew	וַיֵּדְעוּ
that they were naked;	כִּי עֵירֻמִּם הֵם
and they sewed fig leaves together	וַיִּתְפְּרוּ עֲלֵה תְאֵנָה
and made themselves aprons.	וַיַּעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם חֲגֹרֹת

This chapter will explore the literal meaning of Genesis III:7, that is to say, the meaning that the Hebrew words were intended by their author to convey, as far as this can be discovered. It is recognized at the outset that almost any word carries a complexity of connotations and that few words or phrases are easily definable. Accordingly, there is no attempt here to set boundaries around the meaning of this verse, but rather to consider the range of possible interpretations. Here and in the following chapters, the criterion for reference to lexicographers and secondary material of other kinds is simply the contribution they make to the understanding of the verse; duplication has been avoided as far as possible.

When the Lord God made man and placed him in the garden of Eden, man was apparently well able to see. He could distinguish all kinds of cattle, beasts and birds in order to name them, and could recognize the woman as bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh. There is evidence that the woman, similarly, had good eyesight (better,

perhaps, than her hearing), for after the serpent had spoken to her she "saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes" (III:6). Adam and Eve (the names had not yet been given to them, but are used throughout this study for simplicity) were not blind. Why, then, does the narrator tell us that when they had both eaten of the fruit (and not until then) "the eyes of both were opened"? (There is, it should be noted, a stress on the common experience of Adam and Eve, in that the text does not simply say "their eyes" but "the eyes of both".)

One of the circumstances in which one's eyes may be closed is sleep. We have been told in Chapter II:21 that in order to make the woman the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and we have not been told that he has awakened from this state. It may be, then, that Adam and Eve have been in some kind of sleep until this moment when their eyes are opened. Martin Buber has suggested that the fact that Eve perceives, or imagines, the tree of knowledge to be "desired to make one wise" (III:6) attests to "a strange, dreamlike kind of contemplation...she seems moved by dream-longing," and Adam "seems to be truly in dream-lassitude when he eats."[1] Soren Kierkegaard has similarly said that man's spirit was dreaming before he ate the fruit, that is, that he was not fully awake.[2] Other interpretations and versions of the Fall story have also recognized that the opening of the man's and woman's eyes implies

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[1]Martin Buber, Images of Good and Evil, p. 20

[2]Soren Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, p. 38.

that they were until then asleep. The Gnostic Apocryphon of John, for example, has a version of the Fall which speaks of Wisdom awakening the first humans from the dark depths of sleep into the light of knowledge.

There is, evidently, some degree of metaphor involved in such interpretations of the meaning of the man's and woman's eyes being opened, for it is not an ordinary sleep that is understood as their prior state. Franz Delitzsch comments that תַּרְדֵּמָה (in II:21) signifies

> to be removed from the actuality of waking life and placed in a state of mere passivity ...it is no ecstatic sleep that is intended, but natural though Divinely effected sleep.[3]

Norman Snaith, by contrast, refers to "The deep hypnotic sleep which is due to supernatural causes."[4] Having one's eyes opened from such a sleep would mean more than a normal awakening. Maimonides tells us, indeed, that וַתִּפָּקַחְנָה (were opened) indubitably has a figurative meaning:

> Besides, you must know that the Hebrew word pakah used in this passage is exclusively employed in the figurative sense of receiving new sources of knowledge, not in that of regaining the sense of sight.[5]

The standard lexicon of the Old Testament (Brown, Driver & Briggs) refers us to such passages as Genesis XXI:19, where Hagar's eyes are

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[3]Franz Delitzsch, A New Commentary on Genesis, p. 142.

[4]Norman H. Snaith, Notes on the Hebrew Text of Genesis I-VIII, p. 28.

[5]Moses Maimonides, The Guide for the Perplexed, p. 16.

opened to see a lifesaving well of water, and to Isaiah XXXV:5, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened". Interestingly, Numbers XXIV:15-16 makes a parallel between a man's eye being opened and his hearing the word of God, though the Hebrew word for "opened" in that passage is not the same as in Genesis III.

The general sense of the first phrase of III:7, then, seems to be that of coming to a new awareness from a state of physical or metaphorical sleep. This interpretation is strengthened by the preceding interaction of Eve with the serpent: the noun "serpent" is the same as the verb "to divine" in the sense that (for example) Joseph divines the dream of Pharaoh, later in Genesis. Divination, and perhaps, therefore, serpents, are connected with dreams and dreaminess. To this may be added the observation that the opening of any creature's eyes for the first time occurs shortly after birth: the writer may intend to convey something of the sense that the man and woman are, by eating the fruit, new-born. Their eyes are opened to a new world. (It may be noted, also, that they are 'naked as new-born babes'.)

One commentary suggests that the fruit which Adam and Eve ate was literally as well as metaphorically poisonous. It first had a soporific effect in which "Adam and his wife were lulled into dreamy oblivion of all but the present moment", but this gradually diminished and the subsequent physical pain alerted the man and woman to their fatal mistake. They came out of the dream: their eyes were opened.[6] The likelihood of a figurative meaning, rather than

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[6]Robert Jamieson, A Commentary, Critical, Experimental and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments, Vol. I, pp. 53-54.

such a literal one as this is, however, increased by the link with the following words, "and they knew". When we look back to verse 5, we see that the serpent predicted that on eating the fruit the man's and woman's eyes would be opened and they would be like Elohim, knowing good and evil. The prediction that their eyes would be opened has been fulfilled and there is, in the repetitive style of the narrative, a strong suggestion that there is a link between the opening of the eyes and the concomitant "knowing". Moreover, the verb "to know", in the Bible, is pregnant with associations and always means more than simply 'to see with the eyes'.

Martin Buber says that "this is obviously the original meaning of the Hebrew verb 'know': be in direct contact with".[7] Franz Delitzsch likewise points out that "The verb יָדַע means not merely intellectual knowledge, but at the same time profound inward experience."[8] Delitzsch makes the following link between the opening of the eyes and the knowing: " וַתִּפָּקַחְנָה states the actus directus of knowledge, and the וַיֵּדְעוּ that follows the actus reflexus".[9] The opening of the eyes, then, may be seen as leading to the attainment of a direct and intimate awareness: "and they knew".

The intimate associations of "knowing" are enhanced by the fact that it is also used in the Bible to denote sexual intercourse, i.e., carnal knowledge. But Henrickus Renckens has noted that too

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[7]Martin Buber, op. cit., p. 20.

[8]Franz Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 155.

[9]Ibid.

easy an equation should not be made between these meanings and uses of the Hebrew word:

> The verb "to know" occurs hundreds of times in the Bible with the ordinary biblical meaning attached to it. This...adds a strongly affective and practical dimension to the meaning of the word "know" as we normally use it, in the sense of mental and theoretical knowing. [However] there are only a small number of cases in the Bible (and they are clearly recognizable) in which the word is used as a euphemism for knowing someone sexually...it could only be legitimate to interpret know in this sense once the sexual meaning of the narrative as a whole had clearly been proved.[10]

The two uses of the word "know" thus suggest that there is something in common between cognition and intercourse; when, in a Biblical narrative, a person "knows" something, an intimate and direct knowledge is suggested, but there is not necessarily a sexual connotation. We would not be justified in assuming that Adam and Eve "knew" each other sexually as an immediate result of eating the fruit (such knowing is specifically referred to in the following chapter, verse 1) though we may legitimately assume that what they knew was vivid and immediate.

We should not forget that what the serpent and Elohim have said about the forbidden fruit is that it leads to the knowledge of good and evil. We may reasonably look for some link between such knowledge and the knowing of nakedness which is recorded in verse 7. The range of interpretations of the nature of the knowledge of good

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[10]Henrickus Renckens, Israel's Concept of the Beginning, p. 273.

and evil is extremely broad: Augustine, for example, takes it to mean that Adam and Eve would be able to discern "between the good they had lost and the evil into which they had fallen".[11] Martin Buber notes that it has been taken variously as referring to the acquisition of sexual desire, the attainment of moral consciousness, and cognition in general, but he rejects these in favour of a fourth possibility, "adequate awareness of the opposites inherent in all being within the world."[12]

These possible meanings of the knowledge of good and evil should be kept in mind as we consider what it is that Adam and Eve know after eating the fruit, i.e., "that they were naked". U. Cassuto comments that

> The reference to nakedness here at the end of the paragraph [v. 7] forms a fitting parallel to the close of the preceding paragraph (ii 25), to the conclusion of the next paragraph (iii 21), and also to the beginning of the passage, which emphasizes the word עָרוּם ʿārūm ('cunning'), which is similar in sound to עָרֹם ʿārōm and עֵירֹם ʿērōm (both words mean: naked).[13]

The structure of the passage thus encourages the reader to search for the links between words and the significance of their placement.

As suggested in the quotation from Cassuto, above, the Hebrew word for naked in verse 7, עֵירֻמִּם , has complex associations.

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[11]Saint Augustine, The City of God, p. 466.

[12]Martin Buber, op. cit., p. 145.

[13]U. Cassuto, A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, Part One, p. 148.

The form is the masculine plural of the adjective, from the root עֵירֹם , or עֵרֹם , "naked, nakedness" (Brown, Driver & Briggs, p. 734). This is not exactly the same form as is used in II:25 (עֲרוּמִּים). Delitzsch claims that "The formation עֲרוּמִּים ...is plural of עָרֹם ...from ערם ...to peel, to expose, in opposition to which עֵירֻמִּם , iii.7, plural of the sing. עֵירֹם , iii.10 sq., seems to be derived from עור related to ערר , ערה ,...to strip."[14] It would thus seem that the nakedness of which the man and his wife are not ashamed (II:25) is not identical with, though it is close to, the nakedness which they come to know in III:7. The verb עָרַר is also the root of the words translated "childless" in Genesis XV:2 and Leviticus XX:21. In those verses it seems to denote "destitute" or "devoid" of the good which offspring represent, and there may be something of this sense of destitution intended in III:7.

The word עָרוּם , in Chapter III, verse 1, is (as Cassuto has noted) so closely associated with the word for naked in the text, both in form and position, as to amount to a probable word-play. This word, which is translated subtle or cunning, is (like the עֲרוּמִּים of the immediately preceding verse, II:25) formed from a stem ערם . There would thus seem to be a connection between the cleverness of the serpent (or cleverness itself) and the original nakedness of man and woman. This connection is slightly weaker in III:7, though the sound of the words is still very similar. Cassuto comments thus:

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[14]Franz Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 145.

> It is true that the man and his wife were naked (עֲרוּמִּים , ʿarūmmīm), and that they remained naked because their ignorance of good and evil prevented them from feeling ashamed of their nakedness, yet, notwithstanding their lack of knowledge, they were not wanting in cunning (עָרְמָה , ʿormā); the serpent within them was cunning. In order to make the word-play more apparent, Scripture uses in the previous verse the form עָרוֹם ʿarōm and not עֵירוֹם ʿerōm, which occurs subsequently in verses 7, 10, 11, and it prefers the full (that is, with a Waw) to the defective mode of spelling. The only difference between עֲרוּמִּים ʿarūmmīm (naked) and עֲרוּמִים ʿarūmīm (cunning) is the Daghes (represented by an additional m in the transliteration).[15]

Another possible, though rather less compelling, link or association is with the word for "cursed", first used in III:14, in relation to the serpent. The form of this word, אָרוּר , is quite distinct, but the sound, ʾarūr, is close enough to the sound of ʿarūm (cunning) and ʿarūmmīm (naked) to constitute another possible play on words. The writer may intend us to make a triple association between nakedness, cunning, and being cursed, the meanings of all these words being rather fluid and open to suggestion.

Whatever the overtones and connotations, a literal meaning is evidently the first intent here, as shown by the following phrase: "and they sewed fig leaves together". The sequel to Adam's and Eve's knowing their nakedness was to attempt a practical remedy. (There is, incidentally, no role-division suggested here; in this phrase, as throughout the verse, Adam and Eve are seen as equal and joint participants.) The verb תפר , which is here usually translated "to sew",

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[15] U. Cassuto, op. cit., p. 143.

actually means "to join together" in some way of which sewing is only one possibility.[16] (Here, indeed, sewing seems an unlikely means of joining together the foliage for the purpose described.) The words translated "fig leaves", עֲלֵה תְאֵנָה , literally mean the singular "leaf of a fig", but are probably intended to convey the collective sense of foliage.[17] (The words might denote twigs as well as leaves, and there has been persistent controversy about the species of tree which is referred to. Keil and Delitzsch comment that "The word תְּאֵנָה always denotes the fig-tree",[18] but the type of fig-tree is quite uncertain. A traditional Rabbinic interpretation holds that the tree was the same as that which brought about the Fall, i.e., that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was a fig tree.)[19]

The final phrase of the verse, "and made themselves aprons", has suggested various kinds of garment to commentators. The concensus is that it refers to some kind of loin-cloth covering the genitals. Martin Luther comments,

> The word חֲגֹרֹת , which occurs here in the plural, strictly connotes a girdle. From this you will understand that the fig leaves covered every part of the thigh, so that the part which was most honourable before sin was covered as though most disgraceful and unworthy of the eyes of men.[20]

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[16]Franz Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 155.

[17]G. J. Spurrell, Notes on the Text of the Book of Genesis, p. 39.

[18]C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol. I, p. 96.

[19]H. Freedman and Maurice Simon (trans. & eds.), Midrash Rabbah, Vol. I, p. 152.

[20]Martin Luther, Lectures on Genesis, Chapters I-V, p. 169.

Delitzsch notes that הַגּוֹרָה comes from the verb הגר , "to surround", adding

> But the leaves of the common fig have no tough tendrils and are too soft for aprons. Some kind of fig no longer ascertainable is meant by the fig-tree of Paradise...They made themselves aprons of foliage...to cover the parts where the generative organs are situated.[21]

Norman Snaith points out that while הַגּוֹרָה is used for an article of woman's dress in Isaiah III:24, it is elsewhere used in reference to a warrior's belt or piece of armour (e.g., I Kings II:5; II Kings III:21).[22] This brings notes of both defensiveness and aggression to the use of the word. The Midrash Rabbah suggests that the word should be understood inclusively, to mean (by its very plurality) various kinds of garments.[23] The significance for the Hebrew reader of the action of Adam and Eve in covering their nakedness as a preliminary attempt at hiding should also be noted here. A. M. Dubarle has pointed out that their action suggests not simply shame before each other but also the suggestion that they will be seen by God, for in the Bible the attempt to hide oneself is nearly always an accompaniment to a sense of divine presence.[24]

In summary, then, the literal meaning of verse 7 appears to be that the man and his wife gained a new awareness; they recognized

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[21]Franz Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 155.

[22]Norman H. Snaith, op. cit., p. 33.

[23]Midrash Rabbah, p. 153.

[24]A. M. Dubarle, The Biblical Doctrine of Original Sin, p. 71.

their physical nakedness and its implications, which have to do with subtlety, with the divine presence, and perhaps also with being cursed. In response to this awareness they joined foliage to form a protective covering for their genitals, and possibly to signify some hostility or alienation. The verse thus describes a turning-point in the history of man's self-knowledge and the way in which he deals with it.

CHAPTER TWO

Indecent Exposure: Attitudes to Nakedness

The account of man's first awareness of human nakedness, and his reaction to it, must be seen in the context of the Biblical attitude to the uncovered human body and in an even broader context of the general human attitude. Only as we understand what nakedness has meant throughout history can we begin to see the significance of man's eyes being opened to his naked condition.

When nakedness is spoken of in the Bible after Genesis III, the word used is most often עֶרְוָת , from the root ערה . This word always has shameful connotations and often also implies a reference to sexual relations. The first occurrence, after Chapter III, is in Genesis IX. It has been remarked that there is a parallel between this passage and the story of the Fall: in the latter, the first man becomes aware of his nakedness after eating the (forbidden) fruit; in Chapter IX, Noah's nakedness is exposed after he becomes intoxicated by the fruit of the vine. We read in verses 22-3 that

> Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it upon both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness.
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> (Revised Standard Version)

It is evident from this passage that to see one's father's nakedness was shameful, both for the one seeing and the

one seen, but it is not immediately clear why. Is it nakedness per se, the nakedness of any person, which must not be seen, or is kinship the vital factor? For light on this we must turn to uses of the word elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. It is used frequently in Leviticus, commonly in the context of prohibitions. In Leviticus XVIII:6-8, for example, we read,

> None of you shall approach any one near of kin to him to uncover nakedness...You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father, which is the nakedness of your mother; she is your mother, you shall not uncover her nakedness. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife; it is your father's nakedness.

The rest of the chapter lists other kin whose nakedness must not be uncovered; the inference is clear that what is prohibited is an incestuous sexual relationship. This is made explicit in Leviticus XX:11, which says, "The man who lies with his father's wife has uncovered his father's nakedness; both of them shall be put to death". This provides a possible key to understanding the nature of Ham's offence in Genesis IX:22. Seeing the nakedness of a relative is clearly identified with incest.

Nakedness is not referred to only in connection with sexual relations, however. In Exodus XX:26 the word refers to an individual's exposure of himself before the Lord, which (for reasons not yet clear) was regarded as grossly irreverent, while in Deuteronomy XXIII:15 עֶרְוָת is used to mean a more inclusive and general indecency or improper behaviour. Genesis XLII:9 and 12 uses עֶרְוָת in an impersonal sense to refer to the nakedness, or weakness, of the land--its undefended nature. The word עֵירֹם is used in Deuteronomy

XXVIII:48, in conjunction with hunger and thirst, to suggest a deprived state; it is part of a "want of all things". We thus see that nakedness has generally negative connotations; this is especially evident when it refers to illicit sexual behaviour, but is not limited to that usage. Exposure of the body, in the Biblical view, is not good; it is indecent. A. M. Dubarle has argued that

> ...the biblical authors much more often saw in the state of nakedness the loss of human and social dignity than the possibility of a dangerous excitement. Apart from the case of Bathsabee (2 Samuel XI:2), the question only arises with characters possessing some pre-eminence or authority which is compromised by the state of nakedness....Nakedness was often the state of prisoners-of-war...or of drunken persons...And so it was shameful. The state of a child at birth does not bring to the mind of biblical authors the idea of innocence but of destitution and weakness. It is shameful for an adult to be reduced to this state, in which all that the mind of man has been able to devise to protect himself from external dangers is lacking. Clothing is a sign of the richness and intelligence which makes man suited to command (Isaiah III:6). Again, clothing is the epitome of all the dissimulations that make social life possible, and not merely the precautions taken to avoid sexual excitement.[1]

Renckens suggests that because, in the Bible, "Nakedness is meant as a sign of shame and dishonour, of weakness and helplessness", verse 7 might be freely translated as "they became aware that they had been caught with their trousers down!"[2] Gerhad von Rad notes that "To appear naked before God was an abomination for ancient Israel",[3]

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[1]A. M. Dubarle, The Biblical Doctrine of Original Sin, pp. 74-75.

[2]Henrickus Renckens, Israel's Concept of the Beginning, p. 278.

[3]Gerhad von Rad, Genesis, p. 88.

an offence which went beyond the indecency of exposure to another human being. Lastly, to strip a person naked was an especially hostile act, as in Ezekiel XVI:39 and Hosea II:3. To cover someone's nakedness was to act decently and responsibly; in Ezekiel XVI:8 it is even equated with entering a more intimate relationship.

The overall connotation of "naked" for the Hebrew author, then, was probably close to "shameful", and the response of attempting to clothe that nakedness may have been seen as a more proper human response than the shamelessness in II:25. As B. Jacob shows,

> After their disobedience the first men became conscious that they must not appear naked before God, even that they must not appear at all before him. They try to cover themselves and to hide; they cover what according to later social convention must be covered.[4]

The Biblical sense of the indecency of exposure was not by any means unique in its time, or indeed in any time. Clothing has been the norm for man from the beginnings of history, yet its origins are obscure and its significance ambiguous. That it is generally felt to be at the same time both normal and a concession to imperfection is illustrated by the prevalence of nudity in art, and particularly in representations of divine beings. There is a sense conveyed that nakedness is not only man's earlier state but his ideal state; clothing represents a fall from that ideal, and divinity is still seen as unashamedly naked as man once was.

There is a paradox in the notion that nakedness is linked to godliness. On the one hand clothing, and shame, represent a fall

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[4]B. Jacob, The First Book of the Bible: Genesis, p. 25.

from an ideal state, while on the other hand it is clothing that (among other things) distinguishes man from animal. Clothing is expressive of man's affinity with God and with the earth; it is a reminder of his physical and spiritual nature. It is when Adam and Eve have eaten the forbidden fruit and clothed themselves in foliage that they are said by Elohim to have become "like one of us". There is a similar paradox in the title of Roger W. Wescott's book, The Divine Animal, in which he shows that, as with so many of the traits that characterize the species, clothing is not absolutely unique to man. A few animal species, apparently, "clothe" themselves as a means of protection, disguise or (occasionally) display:

> Caddisfly larvae, for example, use their jaws to construct cases of sand grains, twigs, and body secretions that shield them from aquatic predators. Hermit crabs crawl into empty mollusc shells, and decorator crabs use their pincers to cover their carpaces with algae or sea anemones that hide them or discourage hungry cephalopods and fish. And chimpanzees and gorillas, when in a state of agonistic or festive excitement, will pull leaves and branches from surrounding vegetation and drape themselves, albeit temporarily, with the greenery.[5]

The common element in protection, disguise and display would appear to be a state of disturbance. It is in conditions of fear or of sexual excitement that the beginnings of vestiture are seen. Clothing is an attempted solution to a problem--the problem of a threat from outside or an urge from within. In man, however, clothing is also linked with shame, which Wescott describes as occurring

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[5]Roger W. Wescott, The Divine Animal, p. 64.

"solely in response to a stimulus which, so far as we know, is uniquely hominian: the violation of a taboo".[6]

Wescott's discussion of taboo is highly relevant to an understanding of the significance of nakedness for ancient man, and particularly for a study of its meaning in Genesis III. He says,

> The most widespread taboos seem to cluster around two remote and perhaps antithetical poles of human activity: bodily functions (especially sexuality and excretion) on the one hand and supernatural agencies (especially deities and ghosts) on the other...[7]

Wescott suggests here that dread of the supernatural and revulsion against bodily functions are distinct and even antithetical components of taboo, but it is worth considering whether they may in fact be linked, in which case a convention such as clothing might carry both elements, dread and revulsion.

It should also be noted that, at least as it relates to revulsion against the body, clothing is a solely adult expedient: universally, infants "exhibit no modesty about public exposure or functioning of their excretory organs."[8] In considering the stage at which children do become "modest", it is extremely hard to separate learned behaviour from innate tendencies. For this reason, among others, it is unclear whether the revulsion against bodily functions is mainly concerned with sexuality or excretion. The former has

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[6] Ibid., p. 202.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., p. 211.

usually been stressed above the latter, but Keil and Delitzsch, for example, suggest that Adam and Eve "endeavoured to hide the disgrace of their spiritual nakedness by covering those parts of the body through which the impurities of nature are removed."[9] Augustine, in his aphorism that man is conceived and born "between the urine and the faeces", draws attention to the physically close association between the functions of sex and elimination which makes separation of these components of shame almost impossible.

That clothing has more than a material significance is supported by the fact that at the same periods of history and in the same environmental conditions some peoples (the vast majority) utilize clothing, while others, exceptionally, do not. Jean-Jacques Rousseau has pointed out that clothing can hardly be considered purely necessary:

> Nakedness, lack of habitation and deprivation of all those useless things we believe so necessary are not...such a great misfortune for these first men; nor, above all, are they such an obstacle to their preservation ...it is clear in any case that the first man who made himself clothing or a dwelling, in doing so gave himself things that were hardly necessary, since he had done without them until then and since it is hard to see why he could not endure, as a grown man, a kind of life he had endured from his infancy.[10]

Such reasoning is in opposition to utilitarian accounts of the origin of clothing, such as those which suppose the loin cloth to have been devised to protect the scrotum against the deleterious effects of

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[9]C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol. I, p. 97.

[10]Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The First and Second Discourses, p. 112.

heat, or as a defense against aggression aimed specifically at the genitals. In all these accounts, however, clothing marks a move away from the state of nature, a move characterized and motivated by a wish to overcome that state.

Quite a different explanation of human clothing has been offered by anthropologist Desmond Morris, in his book The Naked Ape. Far from seeing clothing as distinguishing man from animal, Morris sees that distinction in man's nakedness, i.e., his lack of body hair. Moreover, man's invention of clothing is a natural response to this maladaptive phenomenon, a compensation for what he lacks which other animals have, rather than an addition to what nature has provided for all animals. The problem with man's nakedness is not merely one of temperature, according to Morris, but concerns his sexuality:

> Because of his vertical posture it is impossible for a naked ape to approach another member of his species without performing a genital display...it follows that the covering of the genital region with some simple kind of garment must have been an early cultural development...
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> With varying cultural conditions, the spread of the anti-sexual garments has varied, sometimes extending to other secondary signals (breast-coverings, lip veils)...the less drastic course of simply hiding the genitals behind a concealing garment is now almost universal.[11]

One point should be seen in relation to all the rather speculative accounts of the origins of clothing. They fail to account for those relatively small numbers of people, now and in the past,

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[11]Desmond Morris, The Naked Ape, pp. 85-86.

who do not wear clothes. If a few definitely non-human animals show traces of behaviour akin to vestiture, it is equally true that a few definitely human beings do not exhibit such behaviour. The loincloth is almost, but not entirely, universal. Human clothing, then, is not a defining characteristic of the species, but a phenomenon associated with a certain kind of development, more probably cultural than biological.

The Victorian anthropologist Edward Westermarck has gone so far as to describe physical modesty as purely a matter of local convention, noting that some naked peoples show no sense of physical shame, some wear clothes but do not cover the sex organs, and some use clothing for sexual titillation.[12] This relegation of modesty to the status of a variable convention, however, is not quite consistent with the "almost universal" use of a loin-covering. Wescott's and Westermarck's exceptions in the human and animal domains do not negate the assertion that covering the genitals and other parts of the body is generally characteristic of humans and not of animals.

St. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and Martin Luther are examples of theologians who have believed that both the practical and psychological needs for clothing were a result of the Fall. Each of these writers ascribed all man's mental and physical deficiencies to his decline from the primitive, i.e., paradisal state. Augustine stated that, "As in Paradise there was no excessive heat or cold, so its inhabitants were exempt from the vicissitudes of fear and desire",[13]

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[12] In H. R. Hays, From Ape to Angel, p. 165.

[13] St. Augustine, The City of God, p. 474.

and Aquinas explained that

> Clothing is necessary to man in his present state of unhappiness for two reasons. First, to supply a deficiency in respect of external harm caused by, for instance, extreme heat or cold. Secondly, to hide his ignominy and to cover the shame of those members wherein the rebellion of the flesh against the spirit is most manifest. Now these two motives do not apply to the primitive state; because then man's body could not be hurt by any outward thing... nor was there in man's body anything shameful that would bring confusion on him.[14]

Luther remarked (like Morris, later) that "We are indeed born naked into this world and with a hairless skin, although the rest of the animals all bring with them their fur, hair, feathers and scales",[15] and explained that if Adam and Eve had not disobeyed this would have been no problem, for "the entire body would have been protected against the cold".[16] There is, for Luther, no conflict between the various accounts of the origins of clothing: all reasons for covering the body are a result of man's fall from a state of original bliss and sufficiency. Luther also asserts that

> ...among the writers in all languages there cannot be found a trace which would indicate that nakedness became disgraceful through sin when previously it had been honourable. So we have Moses as the one and only teacher of this knowledge.[17]

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[14] St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica II.2, p. 272.

[15] Martin Luther, Lectures on Genesis, Chapters I-V, pp. 139-140.

[16] Ibid., p. 140.

[17] Ibid., p. 168.

Luther's claim for the Genesis writer is perhaps weakened, however, by study of myths such as the Legend of Adapa, in which

> Adapa, who has been shown the 'secrets of heaven and earth',--that is, has acquired knowledge--is commanded by Ea to put on the garment that is offered him...[Moreover] The idea conveyed by the use of oil [in the story] was the same as the one indicated in clothing one's nakedness.[18]

It has also been observed that "the Tibetans [speak] of a sweet, whitish herb, or marrow, from the enjoyment of which originated the feeling of shame and the custom of wearing clothes."[19] And in the Gilgamesh epic, after Enkidu succumbs to temptation and thereby acquires knowledge, "the temptress goes on to tell him, 'you are wise, Enkidu, you are like a god'; and she marks his new status by improvising clothing for him."[20]

John Calvin adds to the material and psychological reasons for clothing its religiously significant quality, saying that God "intended clothing to be a sign of shame".[21] Clothing is to recall for man his state of corruption and depravity, the fact that his body as well as his soul bears the mark of original sin. It is curious, however (particularly in relation to Desmond Morris's claim that clothing is necessitated by man's upright posture), to see that

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[18]Herbert E. Ryle, The Book of Genesis, p. 61.

[19]John Peter Lange, Genesis, p. 245.

[20]E. A. Speiser, The Anchor Bible: Genesis, p. 26.

[21]John Calvin, Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis, Vol. I, p. 181.

Calvin views that very posture as an aspect of God's image in man:

> I admit that external form, as it distinguishes us from brutes, also exalts us more nearly to God: nor will I vehemently contend with anyone who would understand by the image of God that
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> > While the mute creation downward bend
> > Their sight, and to their earthly mother tend,
> > Man looks aloft and with expectant eyes
> > Beholds his own hereditary skies.
> > (Ovid)
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> > [22]

Somewhat similar, though more complex in its argument, is the suggestion by a later writer that the genitals are reminders of man's mortality (the mortality which alone makes procreation necessary) and that we cover them for that reason:

> As the death of man, in its historical aspect, stands in counter-relation to the human generations in their historical aspect, so it would seem that while the first presentiment of death, in the first human consciousness of guilt, must give a shock to men, there would also be, in connection with this foreboding of death, another presentiment of a call to sexual propagation; but along with this, and in order to this, there would be a feeling which would seek to veil it, with its acts and organs, as by a sacred law.[23]

A loincloth, then, may serve to hide mortality along with sex.

It becomes evident that attitudes to nakedness and clothing have been complex, involving concepts of shame and dignity, decline and progress, savagery and civilization. In the Bible, nakedness is

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[22] In Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, Vol. I, p. 159.

[23] John Peter Lange, op. cit., p. 231.

generally associated with moral and physical weakness. In the ancient world as a whole, and in speculation about man's primitive state, the covering of nakedness has been seen as an expedient, though in some ways regrettable, concomitant of man's biological and psychological evolution. It is apparent that in this connection something occurred in human development, for clothing has not always been worn; it is adopted only when man reaches a certain stage. Roger Wescott says, in speaking of such taboos as nakedness,

> It seems probable...that the event or series of events which led to the institution of taboo was a trauma; for otherwise it would be difficult, if not impossible, to explain the intense shame, fear, and loathing which invariably accompany any widespread or flagrant violation of ritual prohibitions.[24]

Genesis III is an account of what happened to make man ashamed and afraid of his nakedness; verse 7 describes the trauma of recognition, and of entering a new stage in human life.

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[24]Roger W. Wescott, op. cit., p. 206.

CHAPTER THREE

Stirrings of Lust: The Theme of Emergent Sexuality

Because Adam and Eve, their eyes being opened, made for themselves a covering for their genitals rather than for any other part of the body, it has been a common assumption that their new awareness had to do with sexuality. "They knew that they were naked" has widely been interpreted as meaning, "they knew that they were sexual." This chapter will explore the many aspects and variations of that interpretation. As always in this study, quotations are intended to be representative rather than exhaustive.

Reinhold Niebuhr has pointed out that

> ...on the whole Greek side of Christianity, sex is regarded as a special symbol and consequence of sin, [partly] because sexual lust is seen as a vivid form of sensuality...[1]

Within this general view, however, there have been different understandings of what constituted Adam's and Eve's new knowledge, ranging from the belief that it was the Fall which brought about the sexual differentiation of male and female, to the belief that sexual desire was then first felt. Kierkegaard, in a typically inclusive view, says "The consequence was a double one: that sin came into the world, and that sexuality was posited--the one being inseparable from the other."[2]

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[1]Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, Vol. I, p. 171.

[2]Søren Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, pp. 43-44.

The most radical interpretation of the relationship of sex to the Fall is one which is discussed by C. H. Dodd in his book The Bible and the Greeks. Speaking of the Hermetist myth of Poimandres, which has some parallels to the account of the Fall in Genesis III, he writes:

> We have here an elaborate myth leading up to a clearly expressed moral, namely, that man is naturally immortal, but that through the attachment to matter which is involved in the exercise of the sexual instinct he has become mortal. Reproduction is the sign and result of a Fall which man must retrieve by denying the body and all its instincts.[3]

This account of the Fall has to assume that the original man was bisexual or asexual, like his Creator. To interpret Genesis in this way one must look to I:27, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." This can be read as meaning that the image of God in man was his bisexuality, and that "it was love of material nature that caused man to become mortal in becoming sexual."[4] Genesis III-IV:1 would then be seen as the account of the beginnings of man's sexual life:

> That story tells how man, transgressing a divine command, ate of the Tree of Knowledge, and so became aware of himself as sexual. This is immediately followed by the consummation of the marriage of Adam and Eve and the birth of a son. Thus there was some basis in the Hebrew story for the idea that the sexual life of man is a sign and consequence of his fall from some higher state.[5]

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[3] C. H. Dodd, The Bible and the Greeks, p. 146.

[4] Ibid., p. 152.

[5] Ibid.

The problem which must be contended with, in this interpretation, is Chapter II:21-24, which describes the making of woman from man, before the Fall, in terms which strongly suggest sexual differentiation. Moreover, as we have seen, verse 25 specifically tells us that "the man and his wife were both naked" in Eden; the nakedness which they come to know in III:7 can hardly be a completely new condition of male- and female-ness.

Despite the difficulties of the position which sees sexuality as the result of the Fall (difficulties which include the fact that the Lord God appears to have sanctioned the relationship between man and woman, in Chapter II), it has been a persistent theme in the exegesis of Chapter III. The Fall itself, i.e., the disobedience of Adam and Eve, has been understood as consisting of the act of sexual intercourse, with the trees and fruit viewed as metaphors of this act. Thus Philo Judaeus, for example, writes that

> ...love being engendered, and, as it were, uniting two separate portions of one animal into one body, adapted them to each other, implanting in each of them a desire of connection with the other with a view to the generation of a being similar to themselves. And this desire caused likewise pleasure to their bodies, which is the beginning of iniquities and transgressions, and it is owing to this that men have exchanged their previously immortal and happy existence for one which is mortal and full of misfortune.[6]

Genesis III:7 would then be seen as Adam's and Eve's recognition of their mortal (because sexual) state.

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[6]Philo Judaeus, in The Essential Philo, p. 34.

The concept which seems to underlie sexuality-as-sin is that wholeness is superior to dividedness. Man was originally whole and complete, androgynous; he is now partial, incomplete, male or female. The division into two sexes, according to this concept, is responsible for the cycle of life and death, i.e., for mortality. In The Destiny of Man, Nicolas Berdyaev paraphrases the view of Jacob Boehme on this point:

> Original sin is connected in the first instance with division into two sexes and the Fall of the androgyn, i.e., of man as a complete being...Sex which has cleft into two the androgynous image of man dooms man to death, to the bad infinity of lives and deaths...Man is a sick, wounded, disharmonious creature, primarily because he is a sexual, i.e., bisected being, and has lost his wholeness and integrity...The horror of sex is the horror of life and death in our sinful world, the horror of being unable to escape it.[7]

It is this horror which (such interpreters would say) is expressed in III:7 as "they knew that they were naked".

The reading of III:7 in terms of the sexual act has been encouraged by the occurrence in the verse of the verb "knew" which, as noted in Chapter One, p. 13, above) is sometimes associated in the Hebrew with sexual intercourse. The inference drawn from this by some commentators is that Adam and Eve "knew" one another sexually, i.e., had intercourse, immediately after eating the fruit. However, as Renckens points out, when "know" is used in this sense in the Bible it always has as direct object the person who is "known".

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[7]Nicolas Berdyaev, The Destiny of Man, pp. 64-65.

In III:7 the object is a fact, "that they were naked", and sexual intercourse thus cannot be intended by "they knew".[8]

A more common interpretation of the verse in terms of sexuality, and one easier to harmonize with the preceding chapters, is that which sees the consequence of the Fall to be neither sex itself nor the act of intercourse but rather sexual desire or lust. In his great work The City of God, St. Augustine gives an exemplary exposition of this view, and one upon which many later interpreters have built.

Augustine recognizes the problem that III:7 poses in relation to God's statement that the man and woman would die when they ate the fruit of the forbidden tree. He attempts to show that the awareness and covering of nakedness described in verse 7 can indeed be understood as a form of death; he says that "the words, 'In the day ye eat of it ye shall die the death' should be understood as meaning, 'In the day you desert me in disobedience, I will desert you in justice.'"[9] The predicted death is a spiritual death, and Augustine claims that this is experienced by Adam and Eve in their shameful awareness of their nakedness.

This interpretation does not explain why awareness of nakedness should have caused in the man and woman an emotion which necessitated covering themselves--why, in fact, it caused fear or shame. To explain this, Augustine must infer from the text an occurrence which

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[8]Henrickus Renckens, Israel's Concept of the Beginning, p. 273.

[9]St. Augustine, The City of God, p. 423.

is not explicitly stated: the first sexual arousal of Adam and Eve, with its concurrent physical manifestations; this he describes as the "first stirring of the disobedient motion which was felt in the flesh of the disobedient soul."[10] It is the "disobedience of the flesh", rather than the simple nakedness of the unaroused body, which causes shame, and this disobedience and shame are the first experience of death: "one death indeed is experienced, that, namely, which occurs when God forsakes the soul."[11]

It may not be self-evident why physical sexual arousal should be shameful, but it was apparently clear to Augustine that this arousal was evidence of man's baseness; not that anything bodily was wrong per se, for it was created by God and therefore by nature good, but that it was the epitome of the failure of man's spirit to control his carnality. Augustine explains that "when the spirit serves the flesh it is fitly called carnal",[12] whereas if man were not fallen the flesh would be "subject to the spirit with a perfect and marvellous readiness of obedience".[13] The immediate result of the Fall, then, is the breakdown of the spiritual control of the flesh, the fragmentation of man's being, the loss of the original unity in which man's body was obedient to his spirit. As Augustine sees it, the result of man's disobedience is implied in verse 7 as disobedience

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[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid., p. 430.

[13] Ibid.

itself, the disobedience of the flesh which is seen in sexual desire as well as in physical death:

> In short, to say all in a word, what but disobedience was the punishment of disobedience in that sin? For what else is man's misery but his own disobedience to himself...For in spite of himself his mind is both frequently disturbed and his flesh suffers, and grows old, and dies...our flesh, which was subjected to us, now torments us by insubordination...[14]

The physical signs of sexual arousal are sensory evidence of this result of man's sin; they are therefore shameful and should be covered. Man is rightly ashamed of his body, because the way it behaves, i.e., uncontrollably, is testimony to original sin. Concupiscence is both cause and guilty effect of the Fall; concupiscence has therefore to be covered up by clothing:

> Justly is shame very specially connected with this lust; justly, too, these members themselves, being moved and restrained not at our will, but by a certain independent autocracy, so to speak, are called "shameful". Their condition was different before sin... not that their nakedness was unknown to them, but because nakedness was not yet shameful, because not yet did lust move those members without the will's consent; not yet did the flesh by its disobedience testify against the disobedience of man.[15]

The text does not say explicitly that man's bodily condition was changed by his disobedience; indeed, it specifically tells us that man was "naked" both before and after his disobedience, though

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[14] Ibid., p. 463.

[15] Ibid., p. 465.

the slight difference in form of the Hebrew word in II:25 and III:7 may be taken to imply a change. The text does say that man's perception was changed: Adam's and Eve's eyes were opened and they knew what they did not, apparently, know before. Augustine, however, reads the opening of Adam's and Eve's eyes as their perception of a new state. After they ate the fruit, he says,

> ...there began in the movement of their bodily members a shameless novelty which made nakedness indecent; it at once made them observant and made them ashamed. "The eyes of them both were opened", not to see, for they already saw, but to discern between the good they had lost and the evil into which they had fallen..."They knew", therefore, "that they were naked"--naked of that grace which prevented them from being ashamed of bodily nakedness while the law of sin offered no resistance to their mind.[16]

The ultimate religious solution to the problem of concupiscence is, of course, salvation; nevertheless, in this life man is forever enmeshed in original sin and its carnal results. Thus, far from being a merely formal convention, clothing has (since the Fall) been a moral necessity:

> Shame modestly covered that which lust disobediently moved in opposition to the will which was then punished for its own disobedience. Consequently, all nations, propagated from that one stock, have so strong an instinct to cover the shameful parts...[17]

Augustine anticipated one of the objections which can be made

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[16] Ibid., pp. 465-66.

[17] Ibid., p. 466.

against his explanation of the origin of physical modesty. How is it, he rhetorically asks, that we do not modestly hide the acts and words of anger and other vicious emotions in the same way that we cover the acts of lust? Why are we not "shameful" about railing against a friend or raising a hand to strike a neighbour, in the same way that we are ashamed of sexual behaviour? The answer, he says, actually adds weight to his theory. We do not experience the same kind of shame about anger because angry acts and words are under the control of the will. We can decide not to act out our anger, not to give physical or verbal expression to it, but we cannot decide to be physically unmoved by lust; our bodies, in this respect, have a will of their own:

> For he who in his anger rails at or even strikes some one, could not do so were not his tongue and hand moved by the authority of the will, as also they are moved when there is no anger. But the organs of generation are so subjected to the rule of lust that they have no motion but what it communicates. It is this we are ashamed of; it is this which blushingly hides from the eyes of onlookers.[18]

The change which has taken place in Adam and Eve is thus, for Augustine, not simply an alteration of perception or understanding, but an organic change, a corruption of the body. Before the Fall they were indeed sexual beings, but their sexuality was under the control of their wills; they were fitted for procreation as commanded by God, but without lust, without the inordinate character of sexual desire.

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[18] Ibid., p. 467.

Lust is closely linked with (if not identical to) pleasure, in Augustine's view. The procreative sexual act which might have been engaged in before the "original sin" would have been a deliberate act of obedience to God's command, and would have been devoid of any element of desire for a particular person--thus, devoid of sinful delight:

> But so long as the will retains under its authority the other members...chastity is preserved, and the delight of sin foregone. The man, then, would have sown the seed, and the woman received it, as need required, the generative organs being moved by the will, not excited by lust.[19]

The generative organs have been chosen as the only bodily parts which, in a state of physical health at least, are "disobedient" in this way, because it is particularly appropriate that the organs which transmit original sin should display it. Covering these parts hides both the site and the source of man's shame.[20]

In assessing Augustine's interpretation of the text, there seems rather more justification for his metaphorical interpretation of the "death" which follows sin than for his explanation of the form that this death took. Chapter II, verse 25, specifically tells us that Adam and Eve were naked and not ashamed, although as already noted the "nakedness" of that verse may be slightly different from that of III:7. The emphasis of III:7 seems to be on the changed way in which Adam and Eve see themselves, the fact that they now know they are naked; if there is a death which results from disobedience

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[19] Ibid., pp. 471-72.

[20] Ibid., p. 468.

it appears to consist in a death of confidence rather than a physical corruption.

Nevertheless, Augustine's analysis of the nature of shame is forceful. He sees the uncontrollability of the body as that which makes man ashamed of this body. This is borne out by a consideration of other bodily functions which are generally causes of shame to the extent to which they are uncontrollable. Even blushing, the involuntary manifestation of embarrassment, when seen increases shame. This insight, that man's shame has to do with his perception of his own inability to control his body, may be Augustine's major contribution to the understanding of this verse.

Martin Luther is one of those who agree with Augustine that lust is a consequence of the Fall, and that it is lust which is shameful and necessitates clothing, but he is less explicit than Augustine about the disobedience of the flesh which characterizes lust. Rather, lust is for Luther a sign of the corruption which afflicts all nature as a result of the Fall:

> Adam and Eve not only were ashamed because of their nakedness, which previously was most honourable and the unique adornment of man, but they also made girdles for themselves for the purpose of covering, as though it were something most shameful, that part of the body which by its nature was most honourable and noble. What in all nature is nobler than the work of procreation? This work was assigned by God...to that part which sin has taught us to call the pudendum and to cover, lest it be seen. Moreover, although in the innocent nature the entire work of procreation would have been most holy and most pure, after sin the leprosy of lust has made its way into this part of the body...And so through sin the most useful members have become the most shameful.[21]

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[21]Martin Luther, Lectures on Genesis, Chapters 1-5, pp. 167-68.

Luther emphasizes that before sin occurred nakedness was not only innocent but glorious. He imagines the joyful condition of man in which "Eve, our mother, would have sat among us naked; and no one would have been offended by the nakedness of her breasts and the other parts of the body",[22] and recalls the time when

> It would have been something glorious for man that, though all the animals needed hair, feathers and scales to cover up their ugliness, he alone was created with such prestige and beauty of body that he could walk about with a hairless and naked skin.[23]

This beauty of body, which encompassed the whole of man's unfallen sexuality, was lost through sin. What was known by Adam and Eve when their eyes were opened was their corrupt sexual nature, symbolic of the general corruption of nature which had taken place. Such an interpretation, incidentally, allows for the slight change in form of the word "naked" in III:7 from II:25. Though the man's and woman's state may be the same to the outward eye as it was before they disobeyed, their inner eyes are opened and they perceive a change in their condition. Their nakedness, like all else, is not what it was formerly; their sexual organs are now shameful and need covering.

The problem with this understanding of the Fall is that in a corrupted world sexuality is necessarily corrupt and shameful, whereas many religious thinkers, particularly in recent times, have

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[22] Ibid., p. 140.

[23] Ibid.

wanted to allow for the view that a proper sexual relationship can be without shame. Keil and Delitzsch, for example, in their Biblical Commentary, state that "the relation of the sexes for a pure and holy man is a pure and holy relation."[24] They base this assertion, however, on Genesis II:25, which tells us that the man and his wife were naked and not ashamed, whereas we have seen that it is possible to infer an irrevocable change in their condition from III:7. If all of nature has been corrupted by human disobedience, then it may indeed no longer be possible for a sexual relationship to be pure and holy, and the recognition by Adam and Eve of their sexuality may be a fitting sign of their recognition of evil.

That there is some sexual significance to the man's and woman's recognition of their nakedness is strongly supported by the fact that it was the genitals which were covered rather than any other part of the body. Although the shamefulness of the excretory organs may also be involved in covering these parts, interpreters have seen particular reasons why the sexual and reproductive organs should become the focus of shame. In addition to Augustine's explanation that lust, the disobedience of the flesh, appears in the genitals, the transmission of sin through these organs via the reproductive process was seen as a source of their shamefulness, once the doctrine of original sin was developed. A common view was that "the private parts are the instruments of generation, whereby the sin committed by Adam is transmitted to his

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[24]C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol. I, p. 91.

descendants."[25] This is quite a different explanation of sexual shame from that of Augustine. It focuses on the evil inherent in reproduction, rather than on the disobedience of the flesh.

The problem here is similar to that which sees sexual differentiation itself as the consequence of the Fall. Not only does it appear from the biblical text that before III:7 God has endorsed the male-female relationship (II:21-22), it also seems that human reproduction was blessed preceding the Fall (I:28). A possible means of resolving this problem is to interpret I:28 as referring to a non-sexual form of reproduction; this is perhaps supported by the omission from II:18ff. of any reference to fruitfulness following from the relationship between husband and wife. In such a view, the means by which man is fruitful, through sexual organs, would be a consequence of his disobedience and the organs would thus be shameful. In this connection, it is noteworthy that the first recorded happening after the expulsion from Eden is Adam's "knowing" of his wife and her bearing a child (IV:1).

Later theologians who interpret III:7 in terms of sexuality tend to de-emphasize the element of shame involved in Adam's and Eve's new awareness of themselves. (They are supported by the fact that neither the verse itself nor the succeeding passage speaks directly of shame, though shortly afterwards, in verse 10, Adam says that he was afraid because of his nakedness.) Paul Tillich, for example, sees the man's and woman's attainment of sexual consciousness as symbolic of their growing up, their attainment of adulthood.

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[25]Arnold Williams, The Common Expositor, p. 126.

Referring to the condition in which man was "naked and not ashamed", he says:

> It designates the state before actuality, existence and history...One is reminded of the early stages of a child's development. The most striking example is the growth of his sexual consciousness...an awakening takes place. Experience, responsibility, and guilt are acquired, and the state of dreaming innocence is lost. This example is evident in the biblical story, where sexual consciousness is the first consequence of the loss of innocence.[26]

What is lacking in this interpretation is an explanation of why adult man elects, or feels a need, to cover his sexual organs--i.e., why sexual maturity leads to fear and shame. Tillich seems readily to accept that shamefulness naturally follows sexual consciousness, which (though true to common experience) is by no means self-explanatory.

Usually, the interpretation of Genesis III:7 in terms of emergent sexuality, in whatever sense, entails one major inadequacy: it pays little attention to the prediction by the serpent, and its subsequent confirmation by the Lord God, that the consequence of eating the fruit would be man's becoming "like Elohim". It is rare for exegetes to attempt to reconcile any sense of becoming sexual with becoming divine, except by making sexuality purely symbolic of acquiring knowledge or maturity of a more general kind, as Tillich, for example, does. The text has led us to wonder what it is that the man and woman now know which makes them, as Yahweh Elohim says, "like one of us". If we answer, "They know that they are sexual

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[26]Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 33.

beings" this implies that sexuality is characteristic of Elohim, which is certainly problematic thoelogically. It may not be wholly dismissable, however. Genesis VI:1-4 leads us to think about intercourse between "the sons of God" and "the daughters of men". Moreover, sexuality as the differentiation of man from woman and the sign of their relatedness and interdependence, has been interpreted (by Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, among others) as symbolizing the divine capacity for personal relationship which man alone in creation possesses. "God is in relationship", say Barth, "and so too is the man created by Him."[27] Why this should give rise to fear and shame is perhaps explained by the dual potential of sexuality, for attraction and estrangement, unity or disunity, completion and contradiction.[28] A recognition of the multifaceted nature of sex is inherent in the very fabric of our language, in the use of sexual slang words to denote hostility, frustration and failure as well as the sexual act or organs, e.g., "Fuck it!" and "I'm all screwed up."

If, to the question of what man and woman knew after eating the fruit, we answer, "They knew that they were reproductive beings", and consider that this constitutes their likeness to Elohim, we see again the paradox in the text. Man's conscious creative powers, this interpretation would suggest, are at once the divine likeness in him and the cause of his fear. The need to reproduce is so linked to mortality that it is a constant reminder of dying. Like sexuality,

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[27]Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, III.2, p. 324.

[28]Dwight Hervey Small, Christian: Celebrate Your Sexuality, p. 132.

reproduction has two opposing aspects, positive and negative, pointing to life and to death. When man knows his nakedness, then, if this is related to knowing his sexual and/or reproductive nature, he knows something which is both awesome in its implications of divine potential and humbling in its reminder of his bondage to the physical world, to sensuality and its limitations.

CHAPTER FOUR

Knowing One's Place: The Themes of Reason and Self-Consciousness

Endless attempts have been made to answer the question of what man is, of what (if anything) distinguishes him from the rest of nature. Most of the answers that have been suggested (including, perhaps, that of Genesis) have to do, directly or indirectly, with the human capacity for reasoning. Sometimes language is seen as the vital manifestation of this capacity. Certainly, as far as we can tell, man alone asks this question about himself and of himself--a question which implies curiosity, concern, and a capacity for learning and thinking of which we have no evidence outside the human realm. The very question, What is man?, implies a sense of distinction, a self-consciousness, which may entail alienation from the non-human as well as a bond with fellow men. This chapter will attempt to show how Genesis III:7 has been interpreted in such terms, as an account of the birth of self-conscious reason in man.

Long before Darwin there was speculation about the origins of man as a reasoning being. While the concept of a Golden Age of innocence and happiness from which we have fallen pervades literature and mythology, the countervailing concept of man's gradual and painful ascent from a state of primitivism (as suggested in various ways by Hobbes and Kant, for example) has been equally weighty in affecting our ideas about ourselves. Immanuel Kant is one of the few commentators who have recognized the central place of Genesis III:7 in the account

of man's attainment of reason. In his essay Conjectural Beginnings of Human History Kant explores in speculative fashion the probable sequence of events which took place as rational human life began. The Genesis III story appears to him a profoundly wise depiction of that sequence, from its introduction of the theme of disobedience, through its climax in verse 7, to its finale in man's expulsion from his instinctual world. Instinct is the form in which animals hear the voice of God; the tragedy according to Genesis III is that man can no longer hear Him in that way:

> In the beginning, the novice must have been guided by instinct alone, that voice of God which is obeyed by all animals...So long as inexperienced man obeyed this call of nature all was well with him. But soon reason began to stir [and] sought to enlarge its knowledge...beyond the bounds of instinctual knowledge.[1]

In Kant's view, it was instinct which guided Adam and Eve at first in the garden; it was reason which arose "to do violence to the voice of nature"[2] as Eve weighed the merits of the forbidden fruit. When she decided to eat, and did so, she was for the first time exercising choice, and her action opened her eyes to her capacity for choice--she then knew that she could reason and choose:

> ...however insignificant the damage done, it sufficed to open man's eyes...He discovered in himself a power of choosing for himself a way of life, of not being bound without alternatives to a single

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[1] Immanuel Kant, "Conjectural Beginnings of Human History", in On History, p. 55.

[2] Ibid., p. 56.

way like the animals...[3]

For Kant, man's decision to clothe himself was not simply a response to the guilt occasioned by his disobedience; it was the critical choice, far surpassing in importance the relatively insignificant decision to eat the forbidden fruit. "Eating the fruit" is purely a symbol of the first human choice, with no intrinsic significance, whereas Adam's and Eve's sewing together the fig-leaves to make loin-cloths for themselves is both symbolically and actually crucial. Symbolically, it is the first fully conscious choice made by persons who know that they are choosing; but Kant sees it also as the realisation that the unbridled indulgence in sexual activity (which, while to some degree characteristic of all animals, constitutes more of a problem for man--see Desmond Morris's view in Chapter Two, above) is inferior to the social control of human sexuality. In covering their genitals, Adam and Eve are deciding against immediate and unlimited sexual gratification in favour of postponement and rational restraint of pleasure. Such control, or sublimation, Kant says (anticipating Freud) gives rise to the whole realm of imagination:

> The fig leaf...then, was a far greater manifestation of reason than that shown in the earlier stage of development. For the one shows merely a power to choose the extent to which to serve impulse, but the other--rendering an inclination more inward...and constant by removing its object from the senses--already reflects consciousness of a certain degree of reason over

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[3] Ibid.

> impulse. Refusal was the feat which brought about the passage from merely sensual (empfundenden) to spiritual (idealischen) attractions, from mere animal desire gradually to love, and along with this from the feeling of the merely agreeable to a taste for beauty.[4]

With respect to imagination and aesthetics, it must be pointed out that Eve has already, even before her first choice, seen that the fruit is a "delight to the eyes" (verse 6), and decides to eat it partly on that basis. She apparently has, literally, "a taste for beauty" at this stage. Nevertheless, the fruit is beautiful quite apart from human making, and Kant may validly argue that with the introduction of the fig-leaf girdle man has entered the realm of artistry: Adam and Eve 'dress up' their bodies as they conceal their natural state. Man has also entered a stage of dissatisfaction with nature, a wish to improve on his natural condition (perhaps for more than aesthetic motives) in accordance with reason.

The rupture with nature marked by the donning of clothes is permanent and irrevocable; hence its immense significance in human history, as Kant sees it. Reason, once exercised, can never be abdicated, though man may yearn for the age of innocence in which he was naked and not ashamed. Just as an adult can never return to infancy, so the species 'man', having attained the age of reason, must learn to live in a world of reason:

> For nature had now driven him from the safe and harmless state of childhood--a garden, as it were, which looked after his needs without any trouble on his part...into the

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[4] Ibid., p. 57.

> wide world, where so many cares, troubles, and unforeseen ills awaited him. In the future, the wretchedness of his condition would often arouse in him the wish for a paradise...where he could dream or while away his existence in quiet inactivity and permanent peace. But between him and that imagined place of bliss, restless reason would interpose itself, irresistibly impelling him to develop the faculties implanted within him. It would not permit him to return to that crude and simple state from which it had driven him to begin with...[5]

Knowing and covering one's nakedness is thus, for Kant, knowing that one lives in a world which demands the use of reason to master impulse.

The interpretation of this verse in these terms of the emergence of reason, or a particular level of consciousness, is of course supported by the description of the forbidden fruit as coming from the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (II:9 and 17), although there is some confusion of this with the tree of life, and it is not absolutely clear which fruit Adam and Eve actually ate. Eve may have been confused about the trees. However, she clearly thought she was eating a forbidden fruit and that "the tree was to be desired to make one wise" (III:6); moreover, in III:22 the Lord God confirms that man now knows good and evil. This knowledge of good and evil has been interpreted by some scholars as (in the words of Martin Buber, who rejects this interpretation):

> ...cognition in general, cognizance of the world, knowledge of all the good and bad things there are, for this would be in

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[5] Ibid., p. 59.

> line with Biblical usage, in which the antithesis good and evil is often used to denote 'anything', 'all kinds of things'.[6]

However, as Buber points out, a more particular kind of knowledge than this must be intended, since man already has been endowed by his Creator with enough knoweldge to allow him to name the animals and to describe his relationship to the woman. Buber suggests that the knowledge of good and evil is the knowledge of opposites, i.e., of the tension inherent in the world, and that this knowledge constitutes an understanding of the world which is quite beyond the capacity of the animal mind and is treated by the Genesis writer as a divine attribute.[7]

Buber retains the 'intimate' Biblical sense of the word knowledge in his interpretation by suggesting that the knowledge of good and evil is a recognition by man of his own situation--a step into self-consciousness. He says that man

> ...knows oppositeness only by his situation within it...he knows it directly from within that 'evil' at times when he happens to be situated there; more exactly: he knows it when he recognizes a condition in which he finds himself whenever he has transgressed the command of God, as the 'evil' and the one he has thereby lost and which for the time being is inaccessible to him, as the good.[8]

In knowing good and evil, then, man is discovering "what's what",

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[6]Martin Buber, Images of Good and Evil, p. 17.

[7]Ibid., pp. 19-20.

[8]Ibid., p. 21.

what is good and what is not-good or the opposite of good; he is seeing things not merely as discrete entities, but in relation to one another, and himself in relation to other things. He is coming to know his place, his situation, and his own ability to cope with it:

> In just this manner the first humans, as soon as they have eaten of the fruit, 'know' that they are naked...they see themselves as they are, but now, since they see themselves so, not merely without clothing but 'naked' ...now they are ashamed, not merely before one another, but with one another before God (III:10), because, overcome by the knowledge of oppositeness, they feel the natural state of unclothedness in which they find themselves, to be an ill or an evil, or rather both at once and more besides... but as a countermeasure they conceive, will and establish the 'good' of clothing.[9]

Knowledge of nakedness, in this view, is a vivid illustration of the more general knowledge of good and evil and the tension-filled relationship of things to one another which constitutes self-consciousness and the human understanding of the world. This understanding alienates man from the world in which there is no 'good' or 'evil', the natural world in which all things are equal and undifferentiated as to value. At the same time, it elevates his status; as Kierkegaard has said, "innocence is ignorance...invariably innocence is lost only by the qualitative leap of the individual."[10]

Ninian Smart emphasizes the place of language in this qualitative leap. Exploring, like Kierkegaard, the paradoxical

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[9] Ibid., p. 22.

[10] Søren Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, p. 34.

coincidence of man's climb upwards with a deeply-felt sense of Paradise lost, Smart writes:

> It may have been that men, in becoming aware of themselves through the power of speech and in discovering their capacity to change the world, however slightly, also felt a sense of rupture from the natural world about them--an alienation from the cosmos of which they formed a part...men conceived themselves as having a close affinity to the animal world; but also men must have become aware, perhaps painfully, that mankind is different, that we men are not merely immersed in nature, like the bison blindly lumbering across the plain, but are also reflective and mysteriously set apart.[11]

Genesis III can be read as an account of the beginning of this sense of rupture with the innocence of un-reason, the beginning of man's existence as above all a thinking creature. Theodor Gaster aptly calls it a myth of "man's constant sacrifice of innocence to intellect."[12] Such an interpretation is encouraged by the play with words which links the serpent's 'cunning' or 'cleverness' with the 'nakedness' which Adam and Eve come to know and fearfully cover in III:7. It is also noteworthy that when Eve explains to the Lord God what has happened to her, she says that she has been "beguiled", which in the Hebrew differs very little (נִשָּׁא instead of נָשָׂא) from the word for lifting or raising. The woman is perhaps aware that something in her, which we might call her intelligence or reasoning capacity, has been raised by her 'Fall'.

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[11]Ninian Smart, The Religious Experience of Mankind, p. 54.

[12]Theodor H. Gaster, Myth, Legend and Custom in the Old Testament, Volume One, p. xxv.

This sense that gain and loss follow together from man's acquisition of knowledge or reasoning power is succinctly expressed by Adam's and Eve's recognition of their nakedness, which as well as being associated with the cleverness or subtlety of that unique animal, the serpent, is also laden with negative connotations, particularly in regard to man's physical weakness and humiliation. To recognize that they were naked was for the man and woman to recognize that they had become something of a misfit in nature at the same time that they had opened doors to the more-than-natural. Man is equally bound to his body and his mind, expelled for ever from the paradise (at least in retrospect) of life in a simple 'state of nature'.

The sense of being alienated from nature by knowledge marks, in itself, another stage of man's consciousness. Jose Ortega Y Gasset has written of "three different moments which are repeated cyclically throughout the course of human history, in forms each time more complex and rich",[13] and Genesis III:7 illustrates the first two of these moments. First, according to Ortega, man becomes conscious of being lost, "shipwrecked" or "homeless" in the world of the non-human. Next, he attempts to overcome this lostness by withdrawal into himself and the contemplation of ways to deal with his situation. Then, he re-enters the world in order to act out his plan. In III:7, Adam and Eve come to know their nakedness, or homelessness, within the world; they withdraw into themselves (and attempt to withdraw from God) by covering themselves. That is, they take thought about

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[13]Jose Ortega Y Gasset, in Phenomenology and Existentialism (ed. Richard M. Zaner and Don Ihde), p. 221.

their situation, and act in accordance with their thoughts. The new level of consciousness which is a recognition of nakedness gives rise to yet another level, which is thought about that recognition. In the first part of the verse man comes to know; in the second part, he knows that he knows.

In most of these interpretations of the verse in terms of emergent reason (Kant's is a notable exception) the sexual element is secondary and unimportant. Insofar as knowing nakedness implies knowing sexuality, for these writers, it involves a sense of discrimination, a discernment of opposites, a recognition by Adam and Eve that they are different from one another. That difference is not, however, shameful in itself; rather, the recognition of it is a mark of man's emergent capacity for reason:

> The sexual itself is not the sinful. Real ignorance of the sexual, when nonetheless it is present, is reserved for the beast, which therefore is enthralled in the blindness of instinct and acts blindly.[14]

What such non-sexual interpretations fail to explain satisfactorily, however, is why the recognition of opposites, of gender differentiation, of good or evil, should lead to the fear or shame represented by Adam's and Eve's clothing themselves. To the extent that the sexual element is discounted, the shame of nakedness is obscured.

In discussing the interpretation of III:7 in terms of sexuality (Chapter Three, above), reference was made to the apparent parallel between the Genesis account of the Fall and the sexual growth and

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[14]Søren Kierkegaard, op. cit., p. 61.

development in sexual awareness of a human child. If Genesis III is seen as an account of man's acquisition of reason, a similar parallel can be seen. The common phrase "the age of reason" reflects an awareness that the capacity for rational thought is not present at birth, except potentially, but develops at a later stage of growth. The development of reason is a gradual process within which the most significant point is probably the emergence of self-consciousness. Rollo May describes this development as follows:

> ...around the age of two, more or less, there appears in the human being the most radical and important emergence so far in evolution, namely his consciousness of himself. He begins to be aware of himself as an I. As the foetus in the womb, the infant has been part of the "original we" with its mother, and it continues as part of the psychological "we" in early infancy. But now the little child...experiences himself as an identity who is separated from his parents and can stand against them if need be. This remarkable emergence is the birth of the human animal into a person.
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> ...This consciousness of self, this capacity to see one's self as though from the outside, is the distinctive characteristic of man.[15]

If we consider Genesis III in light of the above passage, we see that until the man and woman eat the fruit, the woman speaks of herself and the man (and the serpent speaks to her) in the plural, making no distinction between the two of them. It is worth remembering that in the previous chapter Adam has greeted the newly-made woman by defining her as "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" and

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[15]Rollo May, Man's Search for Himself, pp. 73-74.

stressing her oneness with him. After eating the fruit, however, when "the eyes of both were opened", the man first speaks of himself as "I" and distinguishes his own actions from those of the woman (verses 10-12). The recognition of nakedness, then, may be in part the recognition of separateness; man's clothing himself in fig-leaves may mark his growing out of the stage in which he is part of the "original we" and into the stage of self-consciousness. This self-consciousness, as Rollo May remarks, is of the highest significance for human life:

> It underlies his ability to distinguish between "I" and the world. It gives him the capacity to ...stand outside the present and to imagine oneself back in yesterday or ahead in the day after tomorrow...This capacity for consciousness of ourselves gives us the ability to see ourselves as others see us...[16]

Adam, when his eyes are opened and he knows that he is naked, can describe the past, what has happened ("The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate", v. 12), and can relate past and present to the future in fearful anticipation ("I heard the sound of thee in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself", v. 10). He knows, now, how the Lord God will see him; he knows that he is naked. This makes him a person in a new sense, for

> ...the more self-awareness a person has, the more alive he is...Becoming a person means this heightened awareness, this heightened experience of "I-ness", this experience that it is I, the acting one,

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[16] Ibid., p. 75.

who is the subject of what is occurring.[17]

In this interpretation of III:7 as describing the development of man from childlike oneness with the world into human self-consciousness, there is also a possible explanation of why the new knowledge was accompanied by fear or shame. As May points out, "the child's 'opening his eyes', and gaining self-awareness, always involves potential conflict with those in power, be they gods or parents."[18] The newly self-conscious condition of man contrasts dramatically with

> ...the state symbolized by paradise where there is no care or want or anxiety or conflict or need for personal responsibility...Thus a premium is implicitly placed on not developing consciousness of one's self. It is as though the more unquestioning obedience the better, and as though the less personal responsibility the better.[19]

Man's immediate reaction to the recognition of his individuality may be seen as an attempt fearfully to deny it, to cover that which differentiates him from his fellow-human, and to do so, moreover, in a way which links him with the natural unselfconscious world again--by clothing himself in leaves. The attempt is, of course, unsuccessful, for despite his improvised clothing he remains afraid; indeed, the first thing of which he speaks following the Fall is of his fear about his nakedness. Self-consciousness cannot be covered

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[17] Ibid., p. 100.

[18] Ibid., p. 159.

[19] Ibid., p. 161.

or abdicated, any more than man can return to the womb, but it carries with it a heavy penalty. As Erich Fromm says,

> Adam and Eve at the beginning of their evolution are bound to blood and soil; they are still "blind". But "their eyes are opened" after they acquire the knowledge of good and evil. With this knowledge the original harmony with nature is broken. Man begins the process of individuation and cuts his ties with nature. In fact, he and nature become enemies, not to be reconciled until man has become fully human. With this first step of severing the ties between man and nature, history--and alienation--begins.[20]

If we interpret III:7 in this way, as describing the birth of self-consciousness and reason, we can hardly avoid asking why the Lord God forbade the man and woman to partake of the fruit. It is perhaps easier to see how they have become "like Elohim" if reason is the result of their eating than was the case when sexuality was seen as the result, but it is less clear why this knowledge should have been forbidden. A possible explanation is proposed by Nicolas Berdyaev (for example), who sees the divine prohibition in terms of a warning rather than a command: the Lord God is, in II:7, simply telling the man what will happen if he eats. Thus,

> Not everything was revealed to man in Paradise, and ignorance was the condition of life in it. It was the realm of the unconscious...The prohibition was a warning that the fruits of the tree of knowledge were bitter and deadly. Knowledge was born out of freedom, out of the dark recesses of the irrational. Man preferred death and the bitterness of discrimination to

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[20]Erich Fromm, You Shall Be As Gods, p. 57.

the blissful and innocent life of ignorance.[21]

God has told Adam and Eve that, though they may freely eat of every tree of the garden, eating of the tree of knowledge will cause them to die. Exactly so, says Berdyaev: the fruit of that tree is deadly, as man discovers--the birth of "discrimination" or reason is the death of the natural man.

Against this interpretation of God's words as warning, we must weigh the words of III:11 in which the Lord God speaks of "the tree of which I commanded you not to eat", and must also look more closely at the new state of reason and self-consciousness in relation to the changes which God and the serpent have predicted. Three things may be expected to happen, according to the text, when the man and woman eat the fruit. First (and there is no confusion about this in the text) those who eat will acquire the knowledge of good and evil. This is affirmed by the text's definition of the tree as "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (II:17), by the serpent's words in III:5, and by the words of the Lord God in III:22. The interpretation of this knowledge as reason or self-consciousness is notably consistent with verse 7: for the man and woman to know that they are naked is to perceive <u>how things are;</u> it is to see that for a human to be unclothed is not the same as for an animal; it is to view one's self 'from outside'. To cover their nakedness is to make use of their reason for practical and/or aesthetic purposes.

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[21]Nicolas Berdyaev, <u>The Destiny of Man</u>, p. 36.

The second expected consequence of eating the fruit, according to the words of the Lord God, is that the man and woman will die that very day. Does this in fact happen? Not, certainly, in the physical sense of dying; Adam and Eve do not expire, their bodies continue to live. But there are many ways of interpreting dying in a metaphorical or indirect sense, and death has not yet been defined by the text. Berdyaev's interpretation is one of the more common. This, like Augustine's and Luther's (see Chapter Three, above), sees the acquisition of knowledge as a psychic death or as another term for suffering, rather as we might say colloquially, "I absolutely died when that happened!" The recognition of nakedness, signifying the acquisition of self-conscious reason, is seen as the advent of human suffering, of which death is the epitome. Somewhat similar is the interpretation of the verse as an account of Adam's and Eve's death to their natural selves. They were at one with the natural world; now they have died to that and are born (naked as babes) into the alien world of reason. Another possible interpretation involves understanding God's words to mean that Adam will become aware of his mortality when he eats the fruit, so that the nakedness which the man and woman recognize in verse 7 is seen as their physical corruptibility and finitude. As they acquire reason, they know that they are naked/mortal; knowledge entails the 'deadly' awareness of dying.

The third predicted (and confirmed) consequence of the Fall contradicts the very idea of a Fall. The serpent promises that if Adam and Eve eat the fruit they will be "like Elohim", and later

in Chapter III the Lord God says, "Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil" (v. 22). The rational faculty has commonly been viewed as the attribute which man shares with God, that in which he is most like God. But the suggestion that Adam and Eve, having eaten the fruit, have attained a state of God-like reason or divine knowledge, is startlingly countered by verse 7. When the man's and woman's eyes are opened, they do not see themselves as God-like; on the contrary, they know "that they are naked". To make sense of this in conjunction with God's and the serpent's words, two considerations must be borne in mind. One is the closeness of the Hebrew word for "naked" to the word for "cunning" (see Chapter One, above); the verse may plausibly be understood as "they knew that they were cunning" or rational, as well as in the more literal or direct sense. The second consideration is that the very nature of reason is to know its limitations. This, again, is subtly suggested by the use of the multi-layered word "naked". At the very moment when Adam and Eve attain and recognize their God-like state of reason, that divine faculty makes them aware of their bodies, their weak human-ness, their difference from God. They see that they have become "like Elohim" but are not Elohim. They know that they are cunning/naked, and that they must find a way to live reasonably. They must live as neither gods nor animals, but as "a little lower than Elohim" (Psalm VIII).

CHAPTER FIVE

Not Fit To Be Seen: The Theme of Morality

Mark Twain has characterized man as "the Animal that Blushes".[1] In a cynical essay decrying human morals he says that man is the only creature who needs to clothe himself because he is the only one who possesses a sense of shame or morality. Morality and shame, Twain thinks, go hand in hand, so that the sense of shame, of wishing to hide oneself, is the first indication of an emerging concept of moral behaviour. This chapter will explore the view that Genesis III:7, inasmuch as it describes man's first shameful feeling and act, describes his birth as a moral being.

In Chapter Three, above, we saw that Augustine viewed Adam and Eve as suffering guilt over their changed sexual state, a result of their fall. Others have seen the covering of nakedness as more generally representational of a sense of guilt or shame (though without something akin to Augustine's direct sexual explanation it is hard to account for the focusing of guilt on the body and specifically the genitals). Luther, who believed that everything was to some degree corrupted by the Fall, wrote that Adam's and Eve's covering of their bodies was a recognition that those bodies, like all else, were now imperfect because of their sinful act. To know their nakedness

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[1] Samuel Langhorne Clemens, "The Damned Human Race", in The American Tradition in Literature, Vol. 2, p. 493.

was thus, indirectly and representationally, to know their guilt. Man covers his body because his corrupt body is token of his sin and his loss of innocent relationship with God:

> No-one blushes because of healthy and sound eyes. Distorted or weak eyes are regarded as less becoming and bring on shame. So in the state of innocence it was most honourable to go about naked. Now, after sin, when Adam and Eve see that they are naked, they are made ashamed, and they look for girdles with which to cover their disgrace...Their shame is a witness that they had lost the trust in God which they who were naked had before sin. Therefore even if Adam had been blind, he still would have been afraid to show himself naked to the eyes of God and of men, because through his disobedience his confidence in God was lost.[2]

The form of moral consciousness being spoken of here is guilt about an act perceived as sinful, in this case the eating of the forbidden fruit. A difficulty lies in the fact that it is only through the act that man gains the knowledge of good and evil, i.e., is able to recognize the sinful character of what he has done. Luther is aware of this complexity, as is apparent from his discussion of the parallel between the Genesis account and continuing human experience:

> And so it still is. Only after the Law has come does it become clear what we have done. But when sin has been brought to light it appears to carry with it such great disgrace that the mind cannot bear having it looked at. Therefore it tries to cover it...Men sew together very wide leaves of the fig tree; that is, they try every device they can find to gloss over and mitigate their error.[3]

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[2]Martin Luther, Lectures on Genesis Chapters 1-5, pp. 165-7.

[3]Ibid., p. 169.

Perhaps it is questionable whether Adam and Eve have in fact a clear perception of what they have done, or that they are trying to cover up their act. Their attempt to cover themselves may represent a somewhat hazy and confused sense of guilt, the very beginning of moral sense. Gerhard Von Rad points out the primitive nature of this moral awakening:

> Innocence is lost, men are afraid of their nakedness and weave aprons for themselves. They react to their deed, however, not primarily with a spiritual feeling of guilt, but with bodily shame. Shame, for our narrator, is the most elementary emotion of a guilty feeling at the deepest root of human existence, the sign of a breach that reaches to the lowest level of our physical being.[4]

At its simplest, shame is the sense that something is wrong with oneself, rather than a clear perception that a sinful act has been committed. In the words of Calvin, the man and woman "begin to be sensible of their wretchedness, although they are not yet affected with a deep knowledge of their fault."[5] New-born morality, like a new-born infant, is a matter of feeling more than reason. Yet the feeling is reliable and proper; it rouses Adam and Eve to action which, if not adequate, is at least appropriate. They try to deal with their shame, and "whereas recently they would, like giants, assault heaven by storm; now, confounded with a sense of their own

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[4]Gerhard Von Rad, Genesis, p. 88.

[5]John Calvin, Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis, Vol. I, p. 157.

ignominy, they flee to hiding-places".[6] Man's sense of guilt may be non-rational, but it is not at odds with reality.

Calvin also draws attention to the fact that the sense of shame arises wholly from within the guilty pair. No-one tells them that they are naked or that they should hide their condition; it is something that they see for themselves, and this is characteristic of guilt: it reflects an internalized moral sense rather than a mere espousal of an ethical system. Whatever the complex causes of guilt, it is never simply imposed from without but always involves the individual's own moral consciousness:

> And truly this opening of the eyes in our first parents to discover their baseness, clearly proves them to have been condemned by their own judgment. They are not yet summoned to the tribunal of God; there is none who accuses them; is not then the sense of shame, which rises spontaneously, a sure token of guilt?[7]

Guilt, then, is evidenced by the sense of guilt, and at the very least morality has a profoundly subjective element. As the Genesis narrative stresses, it is not a matter of man being told what is wrong, but of his discovery, his intimate and personal knowledge, that certain things are shameful. Moreover, morality builds on the very experience of sin--it depends, in a sense, on guilt. The recognition of nakedness and the need to cover it is "indeed the consequence of sin, but also a reaction against it."[8] Only through

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[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Franz Delitzsch, A New Commentary on Genesis, p. 155.

shame can morality develop.

Part of the forcefulness of the Genesis story may lie in its teaching on this very point--that an ascent of moral consciousness is inextricable from a descent of action. Shame and morality are expressions of man's dual consciousness of what he is and what he ought to be. So far as we can tell, man is the only creature who has either the former (self-consciousness) or the latter (aspiration). The Genesis account, which describes man's attainment of this more-than-animal state, is perhaps somewhat misleadingly called the "Fall" narrative.

Consciousness of right and wrong was apparently acquired when the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was eaten; Genesis III:7 describes the subsequent sense of shame and sinfulness. But there is a gap here: what is it that Adam and Eve feel ashamed of? We might suggest that shame occurs when human actions fall below a certain standard after the doer knows right from wrong. In the Genesis story, however, no action has taken place after the consumption of the fruit. It seems that moral consciousness and shame are simultaneous in Genesis, and the source of shame is still mysterious.

If the sense of shame does not have to do with specific actions, we may conjecture that it has to do with man's being, with the way he is rather than with what he does. In verse 7, what makes Adam and Eve fearful is not, strictly according to the text, a recognition of what they have done, but a recognition of what they are: "they knew that they were naked". Immanuel Kant, who (as we

saw in the previous chapter) interpreted Genesis largely in terms of the development of reason, saw also the moral implications of the recognition of nakedness:

> In addition, there came a first hint at the development of man as a moral creature. This came from the sense of decency (Sittsamkeit), which is an inclination to inspire others to respect by proper manners, i.e., by concealing all that which might arouse low esteem. Here, incidentally, lies the real basis of all true sociability (Geselligkeit).[9]

For Kant, morality begins with respect, being worthy of the esteem of others, decency. The recognition of nakedness was a recognition by Adam and Eve that they were not worthy of each other's esteem, that they were indecent. Their move to clothe themselves was the beginning of the attempt to become respectable, or at least to appear so, and so to gain esteem. Unfortunately, Kant does not proceed to tell us what it is about the naked state which was perceived by Adam and Eve as morally reprehensible. Shame is only the "first hint" of a moral development which will actually occur after the expulsion from Paradise:

> Inevitably evils sprang up, and (which is worse) along with the cultivation of reason also vices, such as had been wholly alien to the state of ignorance and innocence. Morally, the first step from this latter state was therefore a fall...[10]

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[9]Immanuel Kant, "Conjectural Beginnings of Human History" in On History, p. 57.

[10]Ibid., p. 60.

This is a reversal of the position in which shame is the result of a preceding action. In Kant's interpretation the sense of decency precedes "vices" or immoral action.

One of those who has grappled most vigorously with this problem of the relationship between moral sense and moral action, and the paradoxes of the Genesis account, is F. R. Tennant. Trying to discern why Adam and Eve, who have not performed any immoral action since acquiring the knowledge of good and evil, should nevertheless feel a sense of shame and guilt, he says:

> To moralize the non-moral in us must inevitably produce the same sense of discord and strife within ourselves as to be the victim of a mutilated or deranged moral constitution. A "chaos not yet reduced to order" will present exactly the same appearance to observation as a "wreck and ruin of a once fair and perfect harmony".[11]

Adam and Eve, when they know their nakedness and fearfully attempt to cover it, are not recognizing what they have done but rather what they have failed to do and to be. The negative connotations of the word "naked", the fact that it suggests a state of deprivation, of unclothedness, make it a most appropriate image of the human sense of not being that which one should be. The knowledge of good and evil which the man and woman acquire on eating the fruit is the knowledge of a state in which they should be, and the immediate recognition that they are not in that state. Indeed, it is arguable that the recognition that they "should be" is absolutely inseparable

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[11] F. R. Tennant, The Origin and Propagation of Sin, p. 9.

from the recognition that they "are not"; the knowledge of good and evil and the knowledge of nakedness are simultaneous, the one entailing the latter.

Such a view of Genesis III of course precludes the concept that man's innocence before the Fall was a state of moral goodness. As epitomised by the teachings of Augustine, Luther and Calvin (see pages 68-71, above), a traditional theological view has been, in Tennant's words,

> ...that man's first estate was one of moral excellence or innocence, of natural or miraculous harmony of quiescent flesh and calmly ruling spirit. The evil of his heart could only then be supposed to come through the corruption of his once pure and passionless being.[12]

Rather, Tennant (with Hegel, as we shall see) suggests that man's pre-Fall state was an amoral one; his ignorance of good and evil at that stage is expressed in the image of nakedness without shame (II:25), and

> On such a view, man's moral evil would be the consequence of no defection from his endowment, natural or miraculous, at the start; it would bespeak rather the present non-attainment of his final goal.[13]

Still missing from this interpretation is an account of man's vision of "his final goal". As Hegel has said,

> Sorrow is present only when there is opposition to what ought to be, to an affirmative...if the infinite demand made by good

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[12] Ibid., p. 10.

[13] Ibid., p. 11.

> was not present in the inmost being of the subject, then there would be no sorrow there, evil itself would be an empty nothing; it is present only in this antithesis or opposition.[14]

For Adam and Eve to recognize their nakedness as a state of failure or underachievement, they must have had to glimpse the positive possibility; they must have seen what could be, in order to know what should be. In searching for the nature of this vision, it is helpful to consider again the serpent-promised likeness to Elohim, which the Lord God confirms (v. 22), and its identification with the knowledge of good and evil.

It is both noteworthy and puzzling that Genesis I:26-28 speaks of man as having been made by God in his own image and likeness, while in Chapter III likeness to God is seen as having been acquired later. One possible explanation of this is in terms of man's aspiration or pride: though he was made like God, he was not intended to "snatch at" that likeness or try to increase it. This explanation has the drawback that there is little indication (except the references to knowing good and evil and the use of a preposition rather than an adjective) that the likeness to God in Chapter III is either quantitively or qualitively different from that of Chapter I. If anything, the use of the word "image" as well as "likeness" in the first chapter makes for a stronger sense of similarity between man and Elohim.

An alternative interpretation, and possible resolution of

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[14]Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, Vol. III, p. 60.

this difficulty, is to see Chapter III as describing man's first awareness of his creation in the image and likeness of God. Although he was made in that likeness, God does not (in the text) tell him so. The first indication to man that such a likeness exists or is possible is the serpent's words to the woman that when she eats the fruit she will "become like Elohim, knowing good and evil" (III:5). Although the phrase "knowing good and evil" has sometimes been taken to refer to a particular aspect of Godlikeness, it may be that the conjunction of "becoming" with "knowing" is intended to suggest an awareness on the part of the man and woman that they are indeed like Elohim, in the sense that they were created in his image. Verse 7, then, may be succinctly descriptive of the moment in which Adam and Eve become simultaneously aware of their potential Godliness (their cunning ability to discriminate between good and evil) and their naked failure to be like Elohim. Their shame and fear concerns their non-achievement of their newly-recognized potential, or (in Tennant's words) man's "present non-attainment of his final goal". Morality is born when the man and woman see what could be and accept that it should be, but that it is not.

As already noted in Chapter Four, above, verse 7 appears to fall into two parts, representing two stages of development, such as man's attainment of reason and his recognition of that attainment. This double development can similarly be seen when the verse is interpreted in terms of emergent morality. When Adam's and Eve's eyes are opened and they know that they are naked, they are recognizing their moral inadequacy; when they attempt to clothe themselves respectably, they are recognizing their responsibility as moral beings.

(It is, of course, highly significant, though peripheral to the present discussion to note the ludicrously inadequate character of man's attempt, and the Lord God's intervention to make clothing for him, in III:21.) Tennant describes in theological terms this long process which the Genesis myth compresses into thirteen words:

> The sense of sin is aroused in us when the God-consciousness meets with opposition, or is inadequate to overrule the promptings of the lower nature. This hindrance offered by our sense-nature or flesh to the functions of our reason or "spirit", we interpret as sin. But we are not responsible for this hindrance of sense, or for the inadequacy of the God-consciousness. The sense-nature claims us first, and this is the "seed of sin". Moreover, the spirit, when it awakes, develops more slowly and fitfully, and is essentially unequal to the encounter with the manifold activities of the flesh, which it finds already in full sway.[15]

Adam and Eve, in verse 7, awake to the opposition between their God-consciousness and their sense-nature. That their spirit is unequal to the encounter is illustrated by their use of fig-leaves for clothing--they resort to natural things which are wholly inappropriate for the task! Morality involves heroic rather than natural effort.

Again, in this interpretation of Genesis as well as in those which see it in terms of sex and of reason, man is seen to be "growing up" from the stage of infancy to moral adulthood, for "the human infant is simply a non-moral animal".[16] To do justice to the inter-

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[15] F. R. Tennant, op. cit., p. 69.

[16] Ibid., p. 95.

pretation in terms of moral development, we need to look more closely at the growth of moral sense in the individual human being, for as we have seen the Biblical account of human history is a parallel to personal history, the one shedding light on the other.

As far as the growth of morality is concerned, it has long been recognized that concepts of good and evil depend at first, in children, on the perceived will of the parents. "Good is, at first, what is permitted, and evil what is forbidden."[17] At the beginning of their life in Eden, Adam's and Eve's only notion of good and evil (if they had any) was their awareness that the fruit of one tree was forbidden whereas the rest were permitted. In III:6 we see Eve recognizing a kind of goodness which appears to be independent of the Lord God's permission, and somewhat contrary to it: she sees that the fruit of the forbidden tree is, at least in some of its aspects, good. Here may be the first sign of moral independence. But the fruit is as it has been made by God; it has already been described as good in various ways (II:9) and Eve does not reverse a previous judgment. In verse 7, however, a reversal is made: the nakedness of which the man and his wife were previously not ashamed is now perceived as something to be covered. The state in which God has made them and which, as part of creation, he has pronounced "very good" is perceived by man as inadequate and shameful. This is the birth of a whole new order, and "The new-born moral agent...has much to unlearn and much to subdue, as he enters on the task of

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[17] Ibid., p. 106.

moralising his organic nature."[18]

A point particularly to be noticed here is that the moral independence marked by verse 7 is, in its parallel in individual life, wholly laudable. A human being who does not separate himself from the will of his parents and begin to make his own moral judgements and decisions is a stunted child. The separation can only be seen, is only evidenced, in connection with a reversal of parental judgement or permission. The separation involves a rift with the parent and a new basis for the parent-child relationship. Nevertheless, the separation is what ought to be, it is a growth, though a painful one. Just so, Tennant says, "man was born to the arduous task of subjugating and annexing his organic to his rational and moral 'nature'."[19] And the new relationship is similarly proper. Man in his pitiful fig-leaves can approach God in a new way. A. M. Dubarle puts it thus:

> A state of nature, morally and religiously neutral, must be left behind, if the faithful are to be worthy of approaching God. The crude realities of the organism or of the instincts cannot be accepted as such. A man must paint himself, or cut his hair, or forbid himself the immediate satisfaction of certain desires, and so on.[20]

What must be seen here is the central importance of verse 7 in the account of man's moral development. It is not the eating of the

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid., p. 116.

[20] A. M. Dubarle, The Biblical Doctrine of Original Sin, p. 43.

fruit which marks the new stage--that act, precisely, represents the earlier condition in which man grasps at the immediate satisfaction of his desires. But in III:7 a sense of the insufficiency of organic nature and the need for moral restraint is first felt. A new and more complex life is now ahead of humanity, a life in which "clothing is the epitome of all the dissimulations that make social life possible".[21]

It has already been pointed out that the development of morality is dependent on God-consciousness, on a sense of man's likeness to God and of what could and should be. The converse must also be stressed: morality is not possible except where the opposition to Godlikeness is discovered. The two senses of 'naked' in verse 7 are equally necessary and apt as a description of man's moral condition: to be moral at all he must recognize that God has made him 'cunning', but he must also recognize and know that he is 'wretched' or 'deprived'. God-consciousness is countered by animal-consciousness in the moral creature; when man comes to know good and evil, he knows himself as both good and evil. As Tennant says,

> Our lowest appetites are the necessary basis of our finest moral sentiments: means of self-realisation in the highest sense, at the same time that they are the fateful rocks on which so many human lives make shipwreck. It is simply because the mastery of appetite and emotion by the moralised man has always proved so difficult that human thought has generally considered the animal side of our nature to be positively evil.[22]

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[21] Ibid., p. 75.

[22] F. R. Tennant, op. cit., p. 100.

The man and woman, then, could not grow up morally until they came to know their physical as well as their divine nature, their wretchedness and failure, which are evil, as well as their cunning and achievement, which are good.

The consummate exponent of this point of view (that it is only by passing through and beyond the state of innocence that man can become a moral or spiritual being) and the one to whom Tennant is most indebted, is G. W. F. Hegel. In his Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion he discusses in depth the various ways in which man's nature may be said to be good and/or evil, and asserts (as does Tennant later) that human evil lies in the unrealized potential for good. The realization of this potential involves man's passing out of his natural state (a state which, for animals, is good) into a state of opposition and separation, for

> ...it is just the very nature of Spirit not to be something natural and immediate; rather it is involved in the very idea of Man as Spirit that he should pass out of this natural state into a state in which there is a separation between his notion or conception and his immediate existence.
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> What is meant by Man is, a being who sets himself in opposition to his immediate nature, to his state of being in himself, and reaches a state of separation...It is this passing beyond his natural state, his potential Being, which first of all forms the basis of the division or disunion, and in connection with which the disunion directly arises.[23]

Hegel interprets Genesis III as referring to man's passing

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[23]G. W. F. Hegel, op. cit., p. 47.

from the stage of "immediate nature" into the state of separation. The Eden state is indeed prior to the knowledge of good and evil because in it man does not exercise his spiritual will, and it is this will alone which makes good and evil possible for man:

> The good man is good along with and by means of his will, and to that extent because of his guilt. Innocence implies the absence of will, the absence of evil, and consequently the absence of goodness...in so far as [man] is good, it must be by the action and consent of his will.[24]

Until Adam and Eve consciously exercise their wills, then, they exist 'before' good and evil. The true will, for Hegel, is that which transforms the natural or instinctive; it is universal and rational action as opposed to selfishness. The choice to eat the fruit is perhaps an act of will, but of what Hegel would call the "natural" or "animal" will, as it is not guided by universality or reason. This choice, however, is the necessary prelude to man's spiritual awakening, his entering the life of a moral being, for it leads to that moment recorded in verse 7 in which man for the first time sees and knows his natural, unspiritual state for what it is:

> If...Man in his immediate state is not what he is intended to be, then we have to remember that Man also has to reflect upon himself as he thus is; the fact of his being evil is thus brought into relation with reflection...only in accordance with this knowledge he comes to be regarded as evil, so that this reflection is a sort of external demand or condition implying that if he were not to reflect upon himself in this way the other characteristic, namely, that he is evil,

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[24] Ibid., p. 48.

> would drop away. In its more definite form this idea of evil implies that Man becomes evil through knowledge, or, as the Bible represents it, that he ate of the tree of knowledge.[25]

What happens when Adam and Eve eat of the knowledge-fruit is that their eyes are opened and they know their natural condition, their nakedness which henceforth, by their very act of recognizing it, is evil. This is subtly different from Buber's view (p. 63 above) that man establishes evil, a view which implies that whatever man named evil would be so. Hegel is proposing that man's recognition of an actual evil (of deprivation) makes it evil in a more profound sense for him. Man sees, when his eyes are opened, that his nature

> ...is not as it ought to be; it is knowledge which reveals this to him and brings to light that condition of Being in which he ought not to be...[26]

Verse 7 does not, at least at first sight, seem very specific about how knowledge reveals to man his evil state. Yet again, we must note the amazing aptness of the Biblical imagery: when Adam and Eve come to know that they are naked they know what many exegetes have needed some length to describe. Hegel, for example, says that

> ...the fact that he is not what he should be originates first of all in the sense of separation or alienation, and from a comparison between what he is and what he is in his essential nature, in-and-for-himself...it is the consciousness of independent Being, or Being-for-self relatively

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[25] Ibid., pp. 51-52.

[26] Ibid., p. 52.

> to an Other, but also relatively to an Object which is inherently universal in the sense that it is...rational will. It is only by means of this separation that I exist independently for myself, and it is in this that evil lies. To be evil means in an abstract sense to isolate myself... But it is along with this separation that Being-for-self originates, and it is only when it appears that we have the Spiritual as something universal, as Law, what ought to be.[27]

The brilliant use of the word 'naked' is able to encapsulate all of the sense of separation, alienation, difference, insufficiency and isolation which, as Hegel says, is prerequisite for moral, spiritual life. Nakedness is at once the symbol of the evils of man's condition and of the rebirth which can come if he will be 'as a little child'. The recognition that man is naked "is the source of the evil, but here also the point which is the ultimate source of reconciliation. It is at once what produces the disease and the source of health."[28] This is, perhaps, why it has always been so problematic whether to characterize what happens in Genesis III as a fall or a rise. It has both elements; as Oliver Lodge succinctly puts it in assessing the place of this event in man's history, "It was an upward step, and he fell over it."[29] Stumblingly, man became a moral creature.

Hegel insists on the necessity for man to experience the loss of innocence in order to become spiritual. It is not sufficient

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[27] Ibid., pp. 52-53.

[28] Ibid., p. 53.

[29] Sir Oliver Lodge, Evolution and Creation, p. 137.

for him to know about good and evil; he must know them in the Biblical sense, as applicable to his own condition:

> The next thing is...that Man should come to see the infinite nature of the opposition ...between good and evil, that he should know himself to be evil in so far as he is something natural, and thus become conscious of the antithesis, not merely in general, but as actually existing in himself, and see that it is he who is evil...It is required that Man should have this abstract opposition within himself and overcome it...[30]

The attempt to overcome this known opposition, expressed by Hegel perhaps more fully and lucidly than by any other writer, is expressed scripturally in man's clothing himself in fig-leaves, an attempt to provide for himself what he lacks, to supply his deficiency. It is man's actual recognition of his moral status, and its poverty of effect does not diminish its significance. Genesis III:7 marks the point in human history (personal and collective) at which human beings know that they are not what they should be, and at which they first use that knowledge--in an action characterized both by shame for what is and by hope for what may be.

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[30] G. W. F. Hegel, op. cit., pp. 58-59.

CHAPTER SIX

Fearful Freedom: The Theme of Anxiety

In the preceding chapters it has already been noted that although Genesis III:7 implies that Adam and Eve were ashamed of their nakedness, the text does not actually mention shame. The following verse does say that they were afraid because they were naked; it behoves the careful reader, then, to try to understand this fear. The present chapter will study the interpretation of verse 7 in terms of emergent anxiety, since anxiety (or dread) is the name given by many interpreters to the kind of fear apparently experienced by the first man and woman when they recognized their condition.

There is a suggestion in the text, as shown in Chapter One, above, that Adam and Eve in their Fall undergo something comparable to a birth experience. According to some psychologists, birth itself is the source of anxiety:

> "To be born", says Otto Rank, "is to be cast out of the Garden of Eden." According to Rank, before he is born, man lives in a state of bliss. But, with the exception of his death, man's birth is the most painfully anxious experience which he undergoes ...This painful experience sets up or carries with it the first and most fundamental feeling of anxiety which the individual ever experiences...For Rank, this "primal anxiety" is the source of all the anxieties of death, doubt and guilt which perplex man throughout his painful existence.[1]

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[1]Davis D. McElroy, Existentialism and Modern Literature, p. 2.

The very newness of Adam's and Eve's experience, the birthlike quality of the opening of their eyes and their experience of 'stark' nakedness, would be sufficient explanation of their fear, and their covering themselves may be seen as their attempt to return to their previous womb-like security.

The traumatic nature of the birth experience is widely accepted; another psychologist, Nandor Fodor, has said that "The change-over from pre-natal to post-natal life involves an ordeal as severe as dying. Hence the fear of death begins at birth."[2] If Genesis III is seen as an account of a spiritual experience akin to physical birth, then the concomitant fear, the experience of "surely dying", becomes understandable. Fodor postulates a characteristically human desire to return to the womb, saying that "we still suffer from fetal nostalgia, and deep down we are as surly about our expulsion from Paradise as Adam and Eve were in Biblical days."[3] The donning of clothes represents an attempt to recapture the warmth of the womb, to escape the death-fear which accompanies birth. In the exercise of reason and the activities of civilisation, similarly, man tries to evade the issue of death, though his death-fear is subdued only by other fears. Death is drained of its threatening immediacy only as man becomes anxiety-ridden; Adam and Eve, as soon as they can see and fear, cover up what they have seen yet do not thereby become fearless. They burden themselves with the

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[2]Nandor Fodor, The Search for the Beloved, p. 383.

[3]Ibid., p. 291.

complex anxieties of civilised life, symbolised by clothing.

A more traditional theological emphasis in interpreting the results of the Fall has been on the disruption of the established harmony between the natural and spiritual aspects of man's existence. While Kant, Hegel and many since have questioned whether 'spirit' could be said to exist originally, there has been considerable agreement that since the historic moment depicted in III:7 the natural and the spiritual have been at odds, and that the conflict has led to fear. The disruption of the original harmony of human nature is seen in the change of attitude to the body which is described in verse 7. Adam and Eve were originally unashamed, devoid of any embarrassment about their bodies, but then become self-conscious and uncomfortable with each other's nakedness. They became anxious about themselves and dealt with this anxiety by donning makeshift garments--by developing the first social convention. But why self-consciousness should be uncomfortable or anxiety-provoking, and why clothing should be thought to alleviate such feelings, remains obscure. For clarification we must look at the nature of the disharmony with which man's self-centredness confronts him.

Human life is unharmonious or discordant, says Reinhold Niebuhr, in that it is fundamentally a matter of contradiction and paradox. The contradictions centre around the facts of human finitude and freedom--facts of man's very nature, of which he must be aware when he sees himself as he really is. Human freedom is more than the ability to choose between material or moral alternatives, more than the capacity for reason or morality, immense though these capacities are. Freedom is transcendence, yet when

man becomes aware of himself as a free, transcendent being he is also aware of his contradictory finiteness. Niebuhr writes:

> Man is self-determining not only in the sense that he transcends natural process in such a way as to be able to choose between various alternatives presented to him by the processes of nature, but also in the sense that he transcends himself in such a way that he must choose his total end ...Yet this same man is a creature whose life is definitely limited by nature and he is unable to choose anything beyond the bounds set by the creation in which he stands.[4]

It is this conflict between freedom and finitude, between transcendence and bondage, which calls forth anxiety. Man's self is constantly caught in the conflict, "It is always a self anxious for its life, and its universal perspectives qualified by its 'here and now' relation to a particular body."[5]

One of the reasons for believing that it was this conflict that Adam and Eve first experienced when their eyes were opened is the fact that their fear apparently involved their exposed sexuality. Sexuality, Niebuhr suggests, is a perfect example of the human predicament:

> ...generation is so obviously a necessity of finite existence;...the incompleteness of man and woman, one without the other, is the most striking example of the insufficiency and dependence of one life upon the other and the most vivid illustration of a qualification and modification of an

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[4]Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, Vol. I, p. 162.

[5]Ibid., p. 170.

> abstractly human nature by natural circumstance and necessity.[6]

The study of human psychology suggests that inner conflict inevitably gives rise to anxiety. If Adam and Eve have, in verse 7, become aware of this conflict in themselves, the reaction of fear is entirely consistent. Moreover, their attempt to cover their genitals can be seen as an attempt to calm the anxiety by covering or repressing the focus of conflict.

Fear, in the Bible, is a complex emotion and by no means purely negative. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" says the writer of Proverbs (I:7), and religious thought is pervaded with the concept of godly fear, meaning "not only the respect a weak creature has for his infinitely perfect Creator, but also the vague consciousness of sin bringing down God's anger."[7] Though these words of Dubarle might suggest that respect for perfection and consciousness of sin are separate aspects of fear, we have seen (Chapter Five, above) that man's awareness of God as perfect and himself as sinful is a single event. Fear has to do with the gap between what is and what should be, and fear is paradoxically a sign both of unworthiness and of favour:

> When God appears, the story often insists on the reaction of fear experienced by those who receive this favour.
>
> The fact is that it is a mortal danger for man to see God...And the only possible

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[6] Ibid., p. 171.

[7] A. M. Dubarle, The Biblical Doctrine of Original Sin, p. 25.

> escape is to fall on one's face as Moses did...or to cover one's face as Elias did ...[8]

What happens in III:7, then is what happens in human religious experience. Man is afraid when

> ...he discovers himself to be intelligent, eager for knowledge and at the same time radically separated from God, because he is voluntarily and freely a sinner; each individual, by virtue of a personal decision which is free and at the same time inevitable, is the object of divine anger.[9]

Several phrases here are close to the heart of existentialist thought on the subject matter of Genesis III. Man is seen as "radically separated from God", "voluntarily and freely a sinner", and capable of "personal decision which is free and at the same time inevitable". Each of these conditions is sufficient to call forth the fear implicit in verse 7. The radical separation from God, of which man becomes conscious with the birth of his moral sense, has been explored in Chapter Five. The awareness that a sinful state is both free and inevitable, however, deserves brief exploration.

That man must act is inevitable; how he acts is not. Freedom, as Karl Rahner has said, is fundamentally a matter of self-actualization, "a capacity for subjectivity",[10] the capacity to be someone, and not only to do something. Adam and Eve, in their

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[8]Ibid., pp. 25-26.

[9]Ibid., p. 56.

[10]Karl Rahner, Foundations of Christian Faith, p. 93.

choice, were deciding who they would be, and in the opening of their eyes they discovered what they were, together with their responsibility for their acts. Man cannot, even by clothing himself or hiding among the trees, escape from the guilty situation which is his existence. He is "a Being threatened radically by guilt"[11] and therein he is radically anxious.

The radical nature of guilt and its concomitant anxiety is explored by Martin Heidegger in his work Being and Time. For Heidegger, guilt is inherent in man's "thrownness", that is, in the fact that he exists in a particular situation not willed by him. Man is guilty by the very fact of having to make choices, to reject possibilities. Guilt is not a matter of having done wrong, but of having chosen. Yet choosing is what authentic man must do. He must, then, recognize and accept himself as guilty; acceptance of Being-guilty is a condition of authenticity.[12]

Genesis III:7 recounts the first reaction of Adam and Eve to their guilt: an attempt to hide. This may be seen as man's effort to evade his guilt, to flee into the illusory security of the world, to deny his responsibility. The two hear the voice of conscience but refuse to listen to it. They recognize their nakedness (vividly symbolic of the dependent helplessness which is basic to being thrown into this world), but instead of accepting it they undertake a cover-up. This is man's great opportunity missed.

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[11] Ibid.

[12] Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, p. 333.

The guilty awareness symbolised by awareness of their naked state is the necessary precondition for a movement into authenticity. In the somewhat difficult language of Heidegger himself,

> In uncanniness, Dasein stands together with itself primordially. Uncanniness brings this entity face-to-face with its undisguised nullity, which belongs to the possibility of its ownmost potentiality-for-Being.[13]

The opening of man's eyes to his nakedness/nullity, his awakening to guilt, can actually be the occasion for his birth as an authentic Being.

The new awareness of Being is also productive of anxiety in that it inevitably involves, or makes known, the possibility or threat of non-Being. Man, whose eyes are simultaneously opened to know <u>that</u> he is and <u>what</u> he is, knows at the same time that he may cease to be. From this threat there is ultimately no escape except in death--the fulfillment of his anxiety.

Reading verse 7 in this light resolves the difficulty regarding the death which the Lord God said would follow eating the fruit: only as Adam and Eve come to know their Being and their individuality (see Chapter Four, above) do they know that peculiarly human form of dying, the apprehension of non-Being and the extinction of individuality. Indeed, knowledge of Being and fear of dying are aspects of one process, that attainment of anxious self-awareness which may be called the birth of humanity.

Adam and Eve do not want this rebirth. It is a fearful

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[13] <u>Ibid.</u>

experience for them, and they hide themselves and their anxiety behind the defensive masks of clothing--that is, they fall further into the world of concealment and inauthenticity. Anxiety can have saving power, but only if it is acknowledged, faced, owned, not if the anxious one tries to counter his fear.

Jean-Paul Sartre, also, has emphasized the intrinsically fearful character of man's condition, thrown as he is into a world of alien people and things, and (despite his rejection of the Judaeo-Christian religious tradition) has seen the significance of Genesis III:7 as a synopsis of man's response to that condition. He writes:

> Shame is the feeling of an original fall, not because of the fact that I may have committed this or that particular fault but simply that I have "fallen" into the world in the midst of things and that I need the mediation of the Other in order to be what I am.
>
> Modesty and in particular the fear of being surprised in a state of nakedness are only a symbolic specification of original shame; the body symbolizes here our defenseless state as objects. To put on clothes is to hide one's object-state; it is to claim the right of seeing without being seen; that is, to be pure subject. This is why the Biblical symbol of the fall after the original sin is the fact that Adam and Eve "know that they are naked".[14]

It is such a powerful symbol, Sartre believes, because it encapsulates the complex and terrifying sense of being looked at by another person to whom one is an object of perception. To know that one is naked is to know that one is an object as well as a

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[14]Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, pp. 288-289.

subject, that one is acted-upon as well as acting, that one's subjective world is not all there is. Such knowledge, while it enlarges the scope of the subjective world, is still threatening:

> But the other existence which thus reveals itself is, at the same time, annihilation of myself as subject; and such an annihilation I am bound to try by every means in my power to overcome. Therefore, between myself as subject and the other who sees me as object, between my freedom and its destruction in another's possession of me, there arises a circle of conflicts which constitutes...the whole pattern of possible inter-subjective relationships.[15]

The opening of Adam's and Eve's eyes is the opening of the possibility of relationship; their clothing themselves is their apprehensive reaction to that possibility.

Sartre also recognizes the special character of shame before God--the shame which caused Adam and Eve, even after they had covered themselves from each other's sight, to hide from Yahweh among the trees. This "fear of the Lord" is

> ...the recognition of my being-an-object before a subject who can never become an object...I exist alienated and I cause myself to learn from outside what I must be.[16]

When their eyes are opened, the man and woman can see the chasm which separates them from God; they can see that their relationship to him is one of fundamental inequality, for God cannot be objectified as they so painfully are objectified by each other To know God

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[15]Marjorie Grene, Dreadful Freedom, p. 65.

[16]Jean-Paul Sartre, op. cit., p. 290.

is to fear Him, for it is to be vividly aware that His Being is beyond human comprehension and that one's own being is pathetically finite in contrast.

Earlier, Søren Kierkegaard, too, had drawn attention to the alarming, dread-full, finiteness of man. Anticipating Niebuhr, Rahner, Heidegger and others, he spoke of anxiety as having its source in the possibilities man faces: "dread is freedom's reality as possibility for possibility".[17] It is only when Adam and Eve have made their first choice, when they have 'sinned', that their eyes are opened to their alarmingly free though finite, naked, state. It is not that they have made a particular decision, but that they must make decisions, must in embracing any possibility reject others, which is fearful:

> In dread there is the egoistic infinity of possibility, which does not tempt like a definite choice, but alarms and fascinates with its sweet anxiety.[18]

The sexual shame or embarrassment in which anxiety manifests itself in Genesis III:7 is particularly poignant because of its rational inexplicability:

> For this reason the dread in bashfulness is so prodigiously ambiguous. There is not a trace of sensuous lust, and nevertheless there is a sense of shame. At what? At nothing.
>
> And yet the individual may die of shame, and a wounded bashfulness is the deepest

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[17]Soren Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, p. 38.

[18]Ibid., p. 55.

> pain because it is the most inexplicable thing of all.[19]

This particular form of anxiety, like all others, is bound up with man's sense of guilt, his conviction that he is responsible for what he is. When he sees his nakedness, he sees himself as a finite and imperfect creature ("A perfect spirit cannot be conceived as sexually differentiated")[20] and dreads being held accountable for that self. Yet he cannot escape his freedom and thus his accountability: this is his anxious situation. Only when he sees himself as he really is does man become fear-filled and, at the same time, capable of authentic existence. When he sees that he is naked, not just by nature or naturally, as animals are, but as one who can choose, has chosen, and is responsible for his existence, he enters the uniquely human experience of anxiety. In Kierkegaard's words,

> If he were a beast or an angel, he would not be able to be in dread. Since he is a synthesis he can be in dread, and the greater the dread, the greater the man.[21]

Only man knows that he is naked; only man is free; only man can be anxious.

The dual nature of anxiety--that, like reason, it is both man's burden and his glory--has been recognized by existential psychologists as well as by philosophers. Rollo May, for one, sees

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[19] Ibid., pp. 61-62.

[20] Ibid., p. 71.

[21] Ibid., p. 139.

anxiety as "evidence that a psychological or spiritual battle is going on"[22] and, like Kierkegaard and Heidegger before him, he describes the battle as being between the self on one side and annihilation on the other. That the battle is being fought, i.e., that one is anxious, is evidence that the self has not succumbed; in a world in which the self is constantly threatened, anxiety is a sure sign of self-hood. In the Genesis story it was the sure sign that Adam and Eve had attained a new status: "the first evidence of their knowing good and evil was in their experiencing anxiety and guilt".[23]

May, like Rank and others, sees the pre-Fall state of innocence as equivalent to man's pre-birth life in the womb. As such, it was less than fully human; to be devoid of anxiety is to be forever a foetus, cushioned and protected, and utterly dependent on its environment. When he takes his first gasping breath of air, crying anxiously as he does so, the infant achieves a separate existence. Similarly,

> On the positive side, this eating of the tree of knowledge and the learning of right and wrong represent the birth of the psychological and spiritual person...this is the day when man the human being was born.[24]

The analogy between physical birth and the birth of humanity breaks down, ultimately, because the infant is passive in the birth

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[22]Rollo May, Man's Search for Himself, p. 39.

[23]Ibid., p. 156.

[24]Ibid., p. 157.

process, whereas Adam and Eve choose their change of status. Indeed, it is the very fact of their choosing which makes their spiritual birth possible. Nicolas Berdyaev says that "Man rejected the bliss and wholeness of Eden and chose the pain and tragedy of cosmic life in order to explore his destiny to its utmost depths."[25] No superhuman force, according to Genesis, was responsible for the couple's eating of the fruit; rather, they weighed the words of God and of the serpent and decided. The fear which awakens alongside the knowledge of good and evil is a product of man's decision:

> The genesis of spirit, of consciousness, of valuation and distinction, inspires us with unreasoning and groundless fear--fear of the mystery of the divine life from which man has fallen away. Exile from paradise provokes terror which may increase with man's spiritual growth...Man's fear of God is his fear of himself, of the yawning abyss of non-being in his own nature.[26]

Nakedness, as we have seen in previous chapters, is vividly representative of the inadequacy of man, his child-like helplessness and vulnerability. Recognizing his nakedness, man becomes frighteningly aware of the uncertainty of his hold on life. But the greater his awareness of this, the greater his "spiritual growth". Shame and anxiety are the birth-pangs of authenticity.

Paul Tillich sees anxiety as preceding the moment described in III:7. He says that man

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[25]Nicolas Berdyaev, The Destiny of Man, p. 36.

[26]Ibid., p. 41.

> ...stands between the preservation of his dreaming innocence without experiencing the actuality of being, and the loss of his innocence through knowledge, power and guilt. The anxiety of this situation is the state of temptation. Man decides for self-actualization, thus producing the end of dreaming innocence.[27]

The end of dreaming innocence is not, however, the end of anxiety; rather, the anxiety is intensified when the choice has been made. To the anxiety of temptation is added the fearful experience of the estrangement or alienation symbolised by the clothing with fig-leaves. In that act of clothing, man tries to deal with his fear, but in a self-defeating way, and with totally inadequate means. This is typical of man's response to anxiety:

> He tries to make absolute a finite security or a finite certainty. The threat of a breakdown leads to the establishment of defenses, some of which are brutal, some fanatical, some dishonest, and all insufficient and destructive; for there is no security and certainty within finitude.[28]

Hegel, too, saw the devastating nature of the alienation which increases with man's feeble efforts to overcome it. He said:

> It is in...separation or disunion...that the subject takes on a definite character and conceives of itself as the extreme of abstract Being-for-self, of abstract freedom; the soul plunges into its depths, into its absolute abyss. This soul is the undeveloped monad, the naked monad, the empty soul devoid of content.[29]

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[27]Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 36.

[28]Ibid., p. 73.

[29]Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, Vol. III, p. 63.

But the soul must plunge into the abyss before it can rise; man must know himself naked and feel himself afraid in that nakedness before he can accept the clothing that God will give him. The fearful freedom with which man is confronted is also (say the religious existentialists) the gateway to the state in which he need fear no evil. Never again, as the Biblical text so clearly teaches, can man be naked and unashamed, but in accepting his nakedness and shame he prepares himself for a new life.

Chapter III of Genesis tells of the transition from innocence to knowledge, in which "the eyes of them both were opened and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons". Chapter III of the book of Revelation reiterates the vital character of that fearful knowledge:

> For you say, I am rich, I have prospered,
> and I need nothing; not knowing that you
> are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked.
> Therefore I counsel you to buy from me
> gold refined by fire, that you may be rich,
> and white garments to clothe you and to
> keep the shame of your nakedness from being
> seen, and salve to annoint your eyes, that
> you may see.

In the first and last books of the Bible, in subsequent Jewish and Christian thought and in some of the most profound secular reflection, it is man knowingly naked and afraid who has hope for his life, who can see and accept his freedom and his possibilities.

CONCLUSION

In the introduction to this study it was noted that at a first reading verse 7 of Genesis III "is apparently quite incongruous with the preceding and succeeding verses" (p. 3). After the many layers of meaning, literal and symbolic, in the text have been examined, the genius of the imagery is so evident that the original impression of incongruity may be forgotten. Nevertheless, it is worth remembering and reviewing the fact that whereas verses 1-6 have prepared the reader for Adam's and Eve's acquisition of divine knowledge and/or their death, what actually happens is on the surface completely different.

We have seen that beneath the surface of III:7 lie depths of linguistic and psychological associations which bind the verse with exquisite cunning to its context. The probability is, however, that we would not have been induced to probe these depths were it not for the startlingly prosaic quality of the surface. Genesis III:7 thus provides a shining illustration of a device which has both literary and metaphysical importance: reference through the most mundane to the most heavenly--the use of what T. S. Eliot has called the "objective correlative".[1] The first man's and woman's recognition of their nakedness is the objective correlative of their

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[1]T. S. Eliot, in 20th Century Poetry and Poetics (ed: Gary Geddes), p. 493.

divinity and their death.

A distinction must here be made between symbol and correlative. A symbol points to something beyond itself; a correlative is that 'something beyond', made objective or concrete. Adam's and Eve's knowing their nakedness is not, in Genesis III:7, a symbol of their situation but rather an embodiment of it. Recognition of nakedness is an objective correlative of man's sexual, intellectual, moral and existential situation; indeed, it may be argued that it is the objective correlative, the perfect concrete instance of man's glorious predicament. As with the greatest poets, the author's genius lies not only in his skillful choice of a metaphor but even more in his recognition of reality and his rendering this thematic. Verse 7's element of surprise is essential to the theme, for it reminds us forcefully of the unity of our world, in which the spirit can only be known in the flesh, the heavenly in the mundane.

It is remarkable that some significant post-enlightenment treatment of this text has been secular rather than religious: Immanuel Kant in the eighteenth century, for example, and Rollo May and Jean-Paul Sartre in this, have recognized the psychological and philosophical insight of the Scripture narrative. As revolutions have taken place in man's perception of himself and his world, with the resulting reappraisal of theology and biblical interpretation, the status of Genesis III as foundational for modern as well as ancient Western thought has come to be ever-more appreciated. The text has not only endured and withstood the assaults of science and historical criticism, it has actually been discovered as a

source of truth by writers who stand outside the religious tradition.

In the first chapter of the study we saw that even the most literal interpretation of the words of verse 7, if it is to do any justice to the intent of the author, must include reference to a new state of awareness, to cunning or subtlety, to a sense of the divine presence, and to associations with hostility and a curse. Subsequent chapters have explored these elements in greater depth, one or more of them playing an important part in every discussion of the verse. Whether the narrative has been considered in terms of man's history and culture, his sexuality, intelligence or morality, one theme has recurrently appeared: the tension in which man always exists and must exist if he is to be truly human, the tension between the two aspects of his being, beast and angel, and the two aspects of his world, life and death. That tension is manifest in the uniquely human phenomenon of anxiety, and it is the contention of this paper that the interpretation of Genesis III:7 in terms of anxiety is the most complete and satisfying, and that it can take account of what is most worthwhile in other approaches.

Chapter Two examined the attitudes to nakedness which have prevailed in Hebrew and other cultures. It was seen that for adult people of almost all times, the unclothed human body has recurrently represented man's helpless, dependent and shameful state--shameful in a way that has to do with a kind of failure for which man feels accountable. The existentialists, in their explorations of the nature of anxiety and guilt, have illuminated the connection in verse 7 between nakedness and shame; they have shown us that we are

rightly afraid when naked, not only for physical reasons but because we feel responsible for the inadequacy we perceive in our selves and because we cannot face the threat to our being which the knowledge of our nakedness poses.

When we looked (in the third chapter) at the interpretation of the verse in terms of sexuality, we saw that the chief elements of that interpretation have been the disunity of sexually-differentiated humanity and the failure of man's spirit to control his body. Alienation and estrangement are pervasive themes of existentialist thought, and from Kierkegaard through Sartre there has been a continuing concern with the problems of the body, articulated in a manner which does justice to the Augustinian example. The importance of sexuality in any philosophy of human existence is in no more danger of being overlooked by existentialist thought than it was by the writer of Genesis III.

The sense of estrangement from nature, and the body-mind problem posed ever more urgently by man's development or acquisition of reason, were further examined in Chapter Four. Here it was seen that the characteristic which makes man most obviously different from the rest of nature, his rational capacity, is both a blessing and a curse, a glory and a shame. To be able to think, and to be aware of one's self as an individual, enables and enobles man in a multitude of ways, but it simultaneously opens the way to a consciousness of limitation and weakness, and above all to the anxiety which accompanies the knowledge of good and evil.

In the fifth chapter we saw that the interpretation of

III:7 in terms of emergent morality emphasizes this paradox which is at the heart of human existence, for morals are, as Tennant has said, both stepping stones and fateful rocks on the way to man's fullfilment of his Being. To become moral at all is to become isolated from the natural world to an even more uncomfortable extent than in becoming rational, for now a sense of 'ought' transforms man's existence. The further dimension of spirituality, of religion which transcends morality, makes man a creature of soaring aspiration and abysmal failure; it terrifies him with the sight of what he is.

The last chapter of the study and this conclusion have, it is hoped, shown that when Genesis III:7 is interpreted as an account of man's beginning struggle with anxiety, not only is the particular text and context illuminated but so to some degree is human existence. We anxious humans can feel, in our fear, a kinship with those first humans described in Genesis, and with the writer himself. We can appreciate the depths of his insight into the human situation and his genius in conveying it to his readers. That insight will not ease, indeed it may heighten, our anxiety, but we will remember with hope that to be naked and afraid is the <u>condition</u> of human life.

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