



preface

Human beings, like all mammals, are born into the world without clothing. But unlike other mammals, we are swaddled in clothes from the moment of our birth and spend most of the rest of our lives in various forms of dress. We get dressed for many reasons: to protect ourselves from elements such as cold weather and sun, to cover up parts of the body out of modesty, to express ourselves in colors and styles, to follow trends and external standards of beauty and fashion. Clothing is both a basic necessity *and* an expression of the human spirit. What we wear conveys our creativity *and* our conformity to ideals and standards we did not create. Though we may not accept the mantra that “clothes make the person,” our dress often does reveal much about ourselves. Some of us may pay more attention to what we wear than others, but all of us are affected and shaped by practices of dress and adornment. Many of us, however, have not considered clothing to be a practice of faith.

In this elegant and accessible book, Michele Saracino urges us to think otherwise. Practices of dress have much to contribute to Christian faith (and vice versa). Saracino urges us to examine more closely the customs that govern what we wear and consider more directly the places where

our clothing is made and the people who weave and knit its fabrics. She begins by considering the “mirror moments” that begin our days, the questions we pose to ourselves as we get dressed. By attending to these moments and our responses to them, she reframes some fundamental themes of human personhood in the Christian tradition: vulnerability and relatedness, sin and redemption, anxiety and hope. Along the way, she also suggests that the incarnation—Word becoming flesh and dwelling among us—is a form of dress. In the flesh of Jesus, we see that clothing is meant not so much to cover up as to make us vulnerable and open to one another. And that recognition causes us to see all things clothed anew.

David H. Jensen