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Clothes

"Where is our acknowledgement of God
if our thoughts are fixed on the glamour of our garments?"
John Calvin, *Golden Booklet of the True Christian Life*

I've been clearing out some clothes. Some, old and worn; others that don't fit me; ones I don't like anymore. Our church runs a "Nearly New" shop, and the best of the clothes will go there. Some will be binned or taken to a "rag store". And others I'll decide on later. I'm fortunate to be able to decide about clothes, for I know that many have no such choice. The people in Gaza, for example, or those whose homes have been destroyed by an earthquake or a fire, or those in our own country living in poverty. Let's not take our over-stocked wardrobes and drawers for granted.

But there's another aspect of clothes in my mind today, prompted by a piece I've just reread from *The Prophet* by the Lebanese spiritual writer, Kahil Gibran. Alongside beautiful reflections on marriage, children, friendships, sorrow, houses, and much more besides, he has little piece about clothes. It begins with this:

> *And the weaver said: "Speak to us of Clothes." And he answered, "Your clothes conceal much of your beauty, yet they hide not the unbeautiful. And though you seek in garments the freedom of privacy, you may find in them a harness and a chain. Would that you could meet the sun and the wind with more of your skin and less of your raiment. For the breath of life is in the sunlight, and the hand of life is in the wind."*

There is much in that and in the rest of this section (as there is in all of Gibran's writing) that could be usefully explored here. But I'll confine myself to one thought. This *isn't* a call to us to run naked in the rain or strip off in the midst of a storm. But it *is* a suggestion that the clothes we wear can be a concealment of "much of your beauty". The real "me" and "you" needs to be released from the harness and chain of "persona", the outward projection of what we think we are or what we want people to believe we are. Perhaps if we meet the sun and the wind (and you can take any divine metaphor from that as you wish) with no barriers in the way, we might find a beauty within us that we never even knew was there.

A prayer for today

I pray that there will be no barriers – clothes or otherwise –
between the real me and the real God. Amen

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