

VESTMENTS OF THE ROMAN RITE

by

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*A paper read at the annual meeting
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Francis Cardinal Bourne (d. 1935) presiding.*

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BY ADRIAN FORTESCUE

THERE is an apparent paradox about our Roman rite which is really the profoundest truth, the deepest conviction to which its study brings us. If there is one idea which the ignorant stranger would carry away from seeing a Roman High Mass, it is that the whole rite is *theatrical*. He may think it effective, impressive, full of symbolism; but he will miss in it the simplicity people associate with the time of the first Christians. He will conclude that the Church of Rome, appealing to the senses, has substituted a gorgeous pageant of ritual for the austere simplicity of an earlier age. The strange sonorous language, the sumptuous vestments, the cloud of incense, beautiful music, elaborate ceremonies — all this, whether a man likes it or not, will seem a thing done deliberately for effect, dramatic or theatrical. We hear that accusation continually. Rome is supposed to dazzle her subjects and to attract converts by the splendour of her rites. That is why she does them. She knows the weakness of the heart, and appeals deliberately to the senses. So a Low Church clergy-man will say that no doubt it is all very fine and effective, but that he prefers apostolic simplicity. The Apostles had none of all this. He prefers, as they did, to proclaim the Gospel message simply, without a lot of probably pagan ritual. The objection cannot fail to amuse us, when we remember how little of splendour there is in our poor country missions. As for attracting converts, we know, on the contrary, that the loss of the far more sumptuous services of High Anglicanism is one of the sacrifices most of them have to make, for the sake of being members of the Church of Christ.

But the point on which I would insist is that that idea is fundamentally wrong. Whether you like symbolic ritual or not, the Roman rite is essentially *not ritualistic*. There has been a tendency

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towards ritual for its own sake in the Church; but it never obtained at Rome. If you want symbolic ritual you must go to the Eastern rites. They have plenty of it. Symbolism and deliberate ornament suited the expansive Eastern mind. They loved stately processions and gorgeous rites. The old Gallican rite, too, was grand and full of mystic ceremonies. Tendency towards what we may call *ornamental ritual* cropped up again in the Middle Ages, in the derived mediaeval rites. But never at Rome. The stern Roman mind did not want, did not understand these things. The Roman rite has always been exceedingly plain, almost bald. Nothing was ever done for effect. There was no real ritual - at any rate, none for its own sake. In the Roman Mass whatever, was done was done for some perfectly practical reason, done in the simplest way, only reverently and decently. We have no gorgeous procession at the great entrance, as in the Byzantine rite; no such dramatic anticipations as their *Cherubikon*. If you want an accusation against our rite, it should be the exact opposite of what people say. If anything, it might be called dull, in its Puritanic simplicity. It is true that we have three or four examples of purely symbolic ritual, such as the ceremonies of Candlemas, Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, and the Creeping to the Cross on Good Friday. But these are not Roman. They are all that the reformed Missal of 1570 has kept of prolific developments made north of the Alps in the Middle Ages. They now give occasional variety to the stern simplicity of the pure Roman rite, without really spoiling its character. They represent a wise concession on the part of the Pope's Commission in 1570. This abolished the great number of such added ornaments and gave us back, on the whole, the simplicity which is characteristic of Rome. As a general rule you may use as a sure test the principle that any detail which is consciously symbolic or deliberately ornamental is not originally Roman. The character of ancient Rome - stern, plain, sensible, rather than poetic - shows in the Roman rite, just as Eastern effusiveness shows in Eastern rites. And the reason why much of our ritual now seems ornamental or symbolic is not that it was so meant originally, but because of the conservative instinct of liturgy. These things were once done in this way because

it was the simplest, most natural way to do them. Then this way became connected with sacred things, hallowed by association in people's minds; and so it was kept unaltered, while fashions of secular life gradually changed. Eventually people forgot the simple origin of what they saw in church; it had become strange to them, and they thought our mystic reasons for it, just as they found mystic reasons for the simplest coincidences in the Bible. But really our ceremonial and customs are not *symbolic* so much as *archaic*. A man in full armour would now seem to be dressed up to represent some symbolic idea. But we know that armour was originally an entirely practical defence to its wearer.

All this applies conspicuously to the vestments we wear in church. A priest vested for Mass seems to be robed in garments full of mystic meaning. It has seemed so for many centuries, Mediaeval liturgists loved to explain by mystic interpretations these vestments, sacred by so long an association with the Mass. They represent the virtues which should adorn a priest, or the garments worn by our Lord in his Passion, and so on. Now, I would not for a moment speak without respect of such interpretations. They to have become historical. Moreover, the process is quite natural and legitimate. Constantly a thing, begun for some practical purpose, acquires later a symbolic meaning. Once the celebrant at Mass washed his hands because they were soiled during the long offertory act, the handling of loaves and flasks of wine brought up by the people. He does so still, but the ceremony has become a symbol of inward purity: *Lavabo inter innocentes*. So the symbolic idea now attached to our vestments has a legitimate place. We think of it every time we say the little prayers as we put them on. On the other hand, one may as well know the facts, especially as these facts also contain a most inspiring idea. Vestments did not begin as symbols. They were once articles of ordinary dress. They are kept because of their age-long associations

Jews had symbolic vestments. It may seem strange that early Christians had none. It is, however, a fact. There is no hint of special dress for clergy in the first centuries. This comes very gradually and quite insensibly. It was not that bishop and priest

chose special garments, but that they kept a more old-fashioned costume, while in ordinary life fashion changed. The first hint of special dress for Mass is only that the celebrant should wear clean and handsome garments - as you put on your best clothes for any solemn occasion. Origen¹ incidentally mentions white, the most dignified and solemn colour in ancient eyes, as suitable for use in church. The Apostolic Constitutions describe the celebrant as clothed in a "spendid robe"² at the altar - merely his best clothes. It is not difficult to understand how insensibly older forms of garment were kept for use in church. Soon special articles of dress, handsome white ones, would be put aside for use at the altar, as people keep Sunday clothes. These would wear out much less quickly, would be handed on to the bishop's successor after his death. We know that vestments, kept with care and used only for Mass, last for centuries. So an older, and therefore a more old-fashioned garment would still be used in church after fashion had gradually modified the shape of daily clothes. The particular garment would have associations, it would be the very one worn by the last bishop, his successor would put it on with reverent memory of his father in God. Then its shape would have associations too. When at last a new one had to be made it would be cut, or rather folded, as was the old one. And so at last, when fashion had changed considerably, the old shapes had acquired such associations in the minds of people that they were looked upon as the traditional, the only right ones to wear at the altar. So in the early Middle Ages at last the process became stereotyped and the old forms of dress were fixed for use in church. It is all really no more wonderful than the parallel case of regiments and various court dresses. And it gives us a most wonderful symbol and witness of the unbroken continuity of the Church from the days when these garments were worn in daily life.

The question of our vestments and their origin is a curious chapter of archaeology. It has been much studied of late, notably in

1. In *Lev. hom.*, iv. 5 (P.G., xii. 337, D.).

2. Ap. Const., viii., xii. 4.

Germany by Mgr. Wilpert¹ (who, however, lives in Rome) and Father Joseph Braun,² S.J. A factor that now enters with great advantage is the study of the vestments of other rites in the East. This was too long neglected. Their vestments look very unlike ours. But in tracing them back we find that they too bring us to the various articles of dress in the Roman Empire, say of the third and fourth centuries, from which ours too come. Each Byzantine, Coptic, Abyssinian, Armenian, even Nestorian vestment corresponds to one ours. It is a most curious case of parallel development. Difference of taste in embroidery and of practical convenience in cutting away awkward parts accounts for the different development. The East as well as the West suffered, during a bad artistic period, in the beauty of its historic vestments. And in the East as in the West there is now good hope of a return to more ancient and more beautiful forms.

The situation then is this. With one possible exception (the amice), every vestment now worn by a Latin priest, every one worn by a Latin bishop (except the mitre), represents an article of ordinary Roman dress, such as was worn by Christians all over the Empire in the second, third and fourth centuries. And, conversely, every article of their dress, except the toga, remains in the form of an ecclesiastical vestment.

I will tell you what the garments are.

The toga has gone altogether. That is significant. The toga could be worn only by Roman citizens, and most Christians were not Roman citizens. It was an aristocratic garment, a symbol of national pride. It did not suit the people who stood for a universal Church which gave equal rights to slaves, freedmen, barbarians. Tertullian wrote a playful treatise defending the usual Christian cloak, the poor man's dress (the *pallium*) against the lordly toga. He writes: "Rejoice, O pallium, and be glad! Thou hast adopted a better

1. *Die Gewandung der Christen in den ersten Jahrhunderten*, Köln, 1898.

2. *Die priesterlichen Gewänder des Abendlandes*, Freiburg, 1897; *Die pontificalen Gewänder des Abendlandes*, ib., 1898 ; *Die liturgische Gewandung im Occident u. Orient*, ib., 1907 ; *Handbuch der Paramentik*, ib., 1912.

philosophy since thou didst begin to cover Christians."¹ He would triumph now to see what has happened. The poor *pallium*, since Christians wore it, survives as the most honoured symbol in Christendom; the sign of metropolitan jurisdiction, around which a whole ritual and a whole literature² has gathered. And the proud toga, just because Christians did not or could not wear it, has disappeared from the face of the earth. All the other articles of late Roman dress remain.

Let us take a priest's Mass vestments as he puts them on.

The *amice*, I have said, is the only one which is not strictly of the Roman dress. It is a piece of clothing that only late began to be considered a vestment. The mediaeval amice was simply a hood to cover the head and ears in a cold church. It was worn as a headdress in choir, and lowered at the altar or when people bowed. But there is some doubt as to whether the hood idea is really the origin of the amice. Its name (*amictus*, from *amicire*) suggests rather the idea of *wrapping around*. At the ordination, when the bishop puts it on the subdeacon, he says that it means the "chastening of the voice." For these and other reasons Braun thinks that it had its origin rather in a scarf to protect the throat³. The mediaeval amice often had a very beautiful ornament in the so-called *apparel* - a narrow band of embroidery tacked to its upper edge. When the amice was let down over the chasuble this formed a kind of collar round the neck. You may see a very fine example of this in the figure of William of Wykeham on his tomb at Winchester. The Armenians, who since crusading times are considerably Romanized in many points, have kept the amice with its apparel. If you see an Armenian bishop (whether Uniate or Gregorian) vested, you will notice what looks like a high collar round his neck. It is the apparel of his amice. No other Eastern rite has the amice. But I have always noticed that the Byzantine clergy, before putting on their vestments, take a handkerchief and tuck it round their neck - a

1. Tertullian, *De Pallio*, 6 (P. L., ii., 1050).

2. See, for instance, H. Thurston, S.J., *The Pallium*, C.T.S., 2d.

3. Braun, *Die liturgische Gewandung*, PP. 45-47.

curious example of the idea of the amice not having developed into a liturgical vestment.

The *alb* is the universal liturgical under-garment in all rites. It is simply the old *tunic*, which everyone wore under his other clothes - our shirt.¹ There were two tunics: a short one reaching to the knees, worn by workmen and soldiers, and the long *tunica salaris*, worn by philosophers and persons of dignity who were not doing active bodily work. It is a long shirt down to the feet with sleeves. The constant traditional material is white linen, which could be washed. In the West it was only for a time, in the later Middle Ages, that coloured silk or velvet albs came into use. The name *alb* is an adjective with the noun left out - *tunica alba*, the white tunic. It was made full and hung in long straight folds from the girdle. Certainly no garment could be more dignified than a long plain white linen alb down to the feet; nor could any make a finer background for the coloured vestments worn over it. The original tunic had two long stripes of purple down it called *clavus*. These disappeared when they began to be considered proper to the dalmatic. Instead, *apparels*, squares of embroidery front and back, were sewn to the alb at the bottom, all through the Middle Ages - sometimes to the sleeves too. One may perhaps say that the alb needs no ornament, that its long white folds are finer than anything else could be. But if you do adorn an alb at all, no ornament could be so effective as well-designed apparels. You may see their effect in any old picture, statue, or glass from the twelfth century on. The special advantage of the apparel on alb and amice is that it gives you an opportunity of breaking the colour scheme and so of making the colour of the vestments stand out more brilliantly. There is no law of colour for apparels. Put deep red apparels with a white or gold chasuble, gold and purple apparels with red vestments, blue with green vestments, black with purple, and you will make gorgeous effects. I quote St. Thomas of Canterbury's alb (in the cathedral treasury of Sens)² as a specially fine specimen of an apparelled alb.

1. Braun, *Die liturgische Gewandung*, PP. 57-92.

2. Illustrated in Braun, *Die liturgische Gewandung*, P. 74.

The old tunic was *girdled* - bound round the waist with a belt or sash of some kind. It was considered slovenly, effeminate, disrespectful, to go about with your tunic loose. People spoke scornfully of the "discincti Afri" - "ungirdled Africans" - who, barbarians in a hot climate, neglected the decencies of dress.¹ Our girdle, then, comes down to us with the alb. It may be coloured. In Rome it is often of the colour of the day.² But I doubt how far this is an artistic advantage. For one thing, you hardly ever see the girdle at all. A clean white rope, with very moderate tassels, seems the obvious thing. Beware of big bunchy tassels, that knock against the knees and make ugly lumps under the chasuble or dalmatic. St. Charles Borromeo's rule is that the girdle be seven cubits (about three yards) long.³ His rules for vestments⁴ represent a very sober and decent Renaissance compromise, at any rate better than the further cutting down of the eighteenth century. The *surplice* and *rochet* are simply albs rather shortened, worn without girdles. They arise about the tenth century as convenient substitutes for the full tunica talaris. The thirteenth Roman Ordo (under Gregory X., 1271-1276) mentions the surplice.⁵ At first they reached almost to the feet. St. Thomas Becket's rochet would come well below the knees.⁶ As late as the time of Sixtus IV. (1471-1484) the surplice reached almost to the ground, as may be seen in the picture of him receiving Platina, in the Vatican. Fra Angelico's picture of St. Lawrence's ordination shows beautiful surplices, reaching to well below the knees, with wide sleeves. From the Renaissance the shortening of the surplice began. St. Charles tried to stop this process, and ordered it to reach half-way between the knees and the feet.⁷ It is astonishing how modern the little cotta to the waist is. Illustrations of the Pontifical at Venice in the eighteenth century

1. So the *Passio SS. Perpetua et Felicitatis*, ed. P. F. dei Cavalieri, P. 42, 2.

2. Braun, *op. cit.*, 101. The Congregation of Rites prefers that the girdle be of linen (Jan. 22, 1701,; *ib.*, 101).

3. *Acta eccl. mediolanensis* (Milan, 1599), 626.

4. See the *Acta eccl. mediol.*, passim.

5. P.L., lxxviii. 1105. The Pope at his proclamation wears a *camisia* (surplice) under the stole and cope.

6. Illustrated in Braun, *Die liturgische Gewandung*, p. 133

7. *Acta eccl. mediol.*, 635.

still show long full surplices without lace;¹ and France and Germany have never brought the surplice above the knee. I need hardly point out that artistically the beauty and dignity of this garment are entirely a matter of long, full folds. A long surplice falling in folds, with wide sleeves - one, in short, made according to St. Charles's rules - is an exceedingly handsome garment.

All Eastern rites have a vestment, called in Greek *stoicharion*, which is the old tunica, our alb or surplice. It reaches below the knee, but is now always made of coloured stuff with embroidery, so that it looks more like a dalmatic to us.

The *maniple* ("mappula, fano") was originally a handkerchief carried in the left hand or thrown over the left arm, much as a waiter carries a napkin over his arm. It occurs - in the First Roman Ordo (seventh century), still made of white linen.² Pictures of the ninth and tenth centuries show it carried in the left or sometimes right hand.³ Soon after that the maniple became a mere ornament, was made of coloured silk and embroidered. St. Edmund of Canterbury's maniple at Pontigny is a fine example of a thirteenth-century one.⁴ It is altogether about four feet long and three to four inches wide. Besides the greater beauty of a long, narrow maniple, it is much more convenient. A short, broad one with fringe is liable to reach over the altar and get in the way of the vessels. If it is long it hangs down comfortably in front of the altar. Eastern rites have no maniple. Their *epimanikia* (a kind of cuff on either arm) are really gloves, with the part for the hand cut away.

The *stole* is the Roman *lorum*, a long scarf worn by magistrates and officials, as a sign that they are in office much as a modern policeman wears a band round his arm. It occurs in the same way as a sign that a clerk is performing some official duty, in East and West, certainly since the fourth century. St. Charles wanted the

1. Much the same form, from the edition of 1520, may be seen reproduced in Thurston, *Lent and Holy Week* (Longmans, 1904), p. 90.

2. P.L., lxxviii. 937, 940, etc. 3. Braun, *OP. Cit.*, 262, 533.

4. *Ib.*, 538.

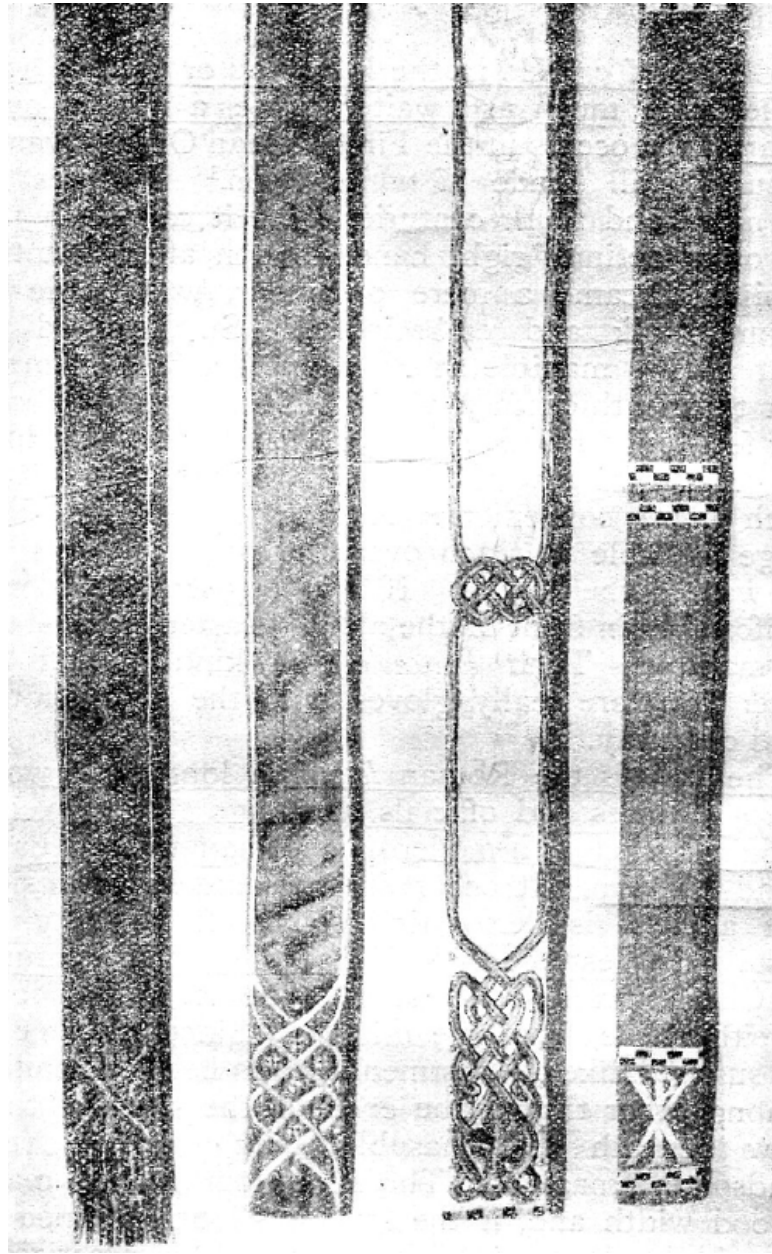


Fig. 1. STOLES.— 1. (from the left). Made of bright scarlet silk, lined purple, edged, fringed and embroidered with gold thread. 2. Purple, lined the same colour, embroidered in toned white (ivory colour) with flowers of the same colour having scarlet centres and green petals. 3. White stole. 4. Stole belonging to chasuble in fig. 2.

stole to be seven feet long on either side, from the middle.¹ Since his time it has suffered, like all vestments, from being curtailed. Among other things, the ends of the stole, if they show beneath the chasuble, may make a very handsome ornament. Three or four inches make a good width and, if the stole is slightly shaped in the middle, do away with the unsightly practice of turning it inside out at the neck. The only place where the stole or maniple need have a cross is in the middle, where it is kissed. Mediaeval stoles and maniples suggest all manner of beautiful designs along their whole length, with perhaps specially handsome panels - a City of God or an Agnus Dei - at the ends. To make panels of fine embroidery, or a continuous interlacing pattern, all along a narrow band is a most interesting problem for a designer. The stole and maniple may be most beautiful ornaments, but they do not gain in appearance from being spayed out at the ends or from having fringe.²

The *dalmatic* is, as its name implies, an article of dress from Dalmatia. It came to Rome in Diocletian's time, and became very popular, as being more comfortable than the toga or pallium. For a long time it was worn by secular people too. The dalmatic in which Charles the Great is said to have been crowned may be seen at Rome.³ It is, of course, merely another tunic worn over the first, as you put an overcoat over your coat. So it is, in origin, a reduplication of the alb. The dalmatic has kept the *clavus*, the long stripes down front and back, which the alb lost. The subdeacon's *tunicle* is merely a slightly shortened dalmatic. These vestments suffered less than the others during a bad artistic period. One would only suggest that they might be rather longer and fuller, and that we might keep the historic difference between dalmatic and tunicle by making the dalmatic the longer of the two.⁴

We come to the *chasuble*, concerning which very much might be said. I can only suggest one or two points here. The chasuble is the

1. *Acta eccel. mediol.*, 626.

2. For the stole see Braun, *op. cit.*, 562-601.

3. Illustrated in S. Beissel, S.J., *Altchristliche Kunst u. Liturgie in Italien* (Freiburg, 1899), P. 279.

4. For the dalmatic and tunicle see Braun, *op. cit.*, pp. 247-302.

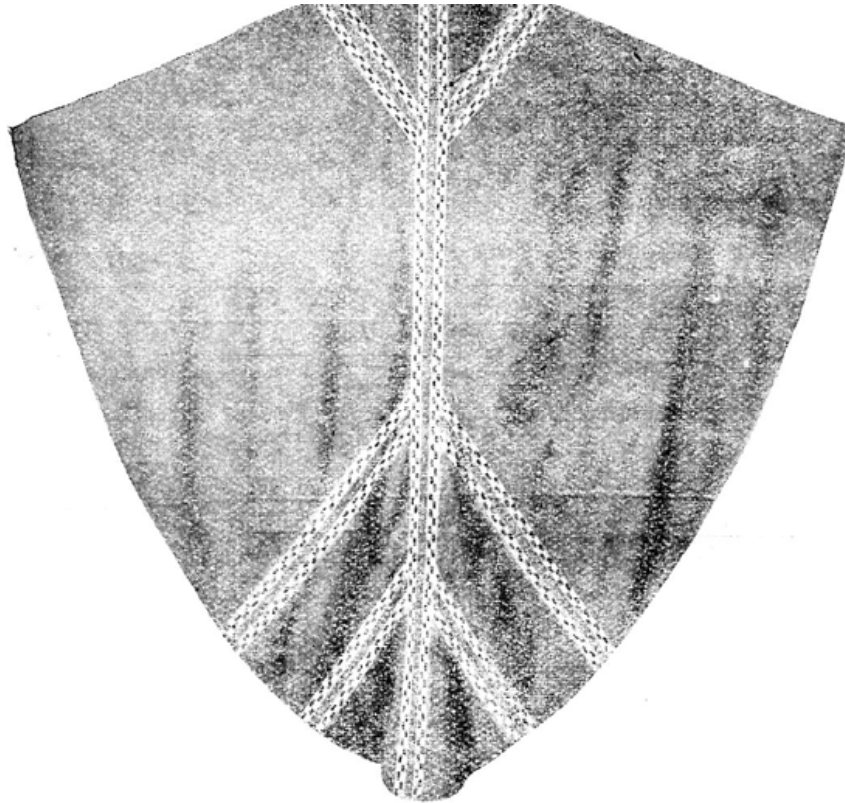


Fig. 2. PURPLE CHASUBLES.— Made of a warm purple silk, very soft in texture, lined in bright green. Ornament of black-and-white-chequered braid. The lines of this braid follow those of St. Thomas of Canterbury's chasuble at Sens. This is the cheapest vestment that can be made.

old *phainolion*, *paenula* or *planeta*, a huge weather-cloak, originally with a hood, which covered the whole body on rainy days. Its origin is the same as that of the *cope*.¹ In Tirol they still wear great waterproof cloaks, with a hole to put the head through; these are true chasubles. We hear of the *paenula* as a liturgical dress since the fourth or fifth century. Before that it was known as a common garment. The soldiers on Trajan's Column at Rome wear chasubles with hoods. At Ravenna the mosaics in S. Vitale show the bishop Maximian (sixth century) wearing a tunic with a *clauus*, a splendid great *paenula* and a white *pallium*.² The *planeta* was long not a sacerdotal garment; Roman acolytes wore it. The deacon and subdeacon still wear folded *planetae*. It was at first a huge cloak, like a bell, reaching to the feet all round. St. Bernard's chasuble is still of this form.³ The name *casula* (a little house) and the formula at the giving of the chasuble at ordination imply this. It is still ordered to be held back by the deacon and subdeacon at Mass, lest it fall over the celebrant's hands. Then it began to be cut back, a process which has continued till the old ample cloak has become unrecognizable. St. Charles tried to stop this, and forbade it to go above the elbows.⁴ It is again remarkable how modern the form we generally see is. In the Minerva at Rome there is a tomb of a priest of the seventeenth century, and on it his brass shows an ample vestment down to the wrists. Then vestment-makers, the bad taste of Baroc times, the mistaken idea of covering the vestment with stiff gold bullion that would not fold, reduced the chasuble to its

1. The Cope (*cappa*, *pluviale*) is nothing but the old large chasuble divided in front, so as to be easier to put on, and then joined again by a clasp (the *morse*). Illustrations of the eleventh century show it so divided at that time (Braun, *op. cit.*, p. 318). But the undivided *paenula*, as being the older form, was kept for more solemn functions, such as Mass. The divided *paenula* (our cope) took its place on less important occasions, and so began to be considered a separate vestment (*ib.* pp. 306-358). The Eastern rites still know no distinction between these two garments. They have shortened the *phainolion* considerably in front, whereas it reaches down to the feet behind. But they have not cut it right through like our cope. And they use the *phainolion* both for cope and chasuble, as we should say.

2. Braun, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

3. At Hildesheim; illustrated in Braun, *Die priesterlichen Gewänder*, p. 154.

4. An illustration of St. Charles's chasuble (in St. Mary Major at Rome) may be seen in Braun, *Die liturgische Gewandung*, p. 190.

present state.¹ How dignified, manly, and splendid the old ample form was, you may see on any mediaeval tomb or picture. William of Wykeham's tomb will show you a form of this, as of all vestments, that leaves nothing to be desired. I would also point out that the Roman rite, as it stands, always supposes a large chasuble falling in heavy folds around the celebrant. When we were ordained the bishop gave us a chasuble, and said it means charity - as charity is to cover over everything.² The ministers at Mass are told to hold back the chasuble from the celebrant's hands, and on fast days they ought to take chasubles, plainly long and limp, and fold them across their shoulders.

Nor is there any law about the ornament you put on a chasuble. It is a magnificent chance for the designer. You may have a bar of rich embroidery up the front and back, a wide collar of ornament, or you may powder your chasuble with a pattern. And you may make a most beautiful vestment with no embroidery at all, but with a little very simple braid (not gold braid), trusting to the rich heavy silk, the fine colour, and the folds to make a really dignified garment.

The chasuble is the great question in designing vestments. One does not want Pugin chasubles. Pugin's designs are Gothic revival, and we have got past Gothic revival now. It is possible to make something better than that, a chasuble which is convenient, beautiful, and really satisfies our Roman rite.

I will say nothing about the special Pontifical vestments, lest I keep you too long. Only let me just notice what is one of the most interesting developments of all. A man in Rome, who was not a Roman citizen, wore, instead of the toga, a *pallium*. The pallium was simply a curtailed toga. It was a broad piece of stuff, thrown over the left shoulder and brought round in front under the right arm. You may see it constantly in catacomb paintings; it has survived

1. Already at the end of the sixteenth century Stephen Durant laments that the chasuble was "so cut away and deformed in a new shape that, if it be compared with the old casula, whence it is derived, it hardly deserves its name" (*De Ritibus Eccl. Cathol.*, Koln, 1592, P. 326). How much more would he say that now!

2. In the ordination service in the Roman Pontifical.

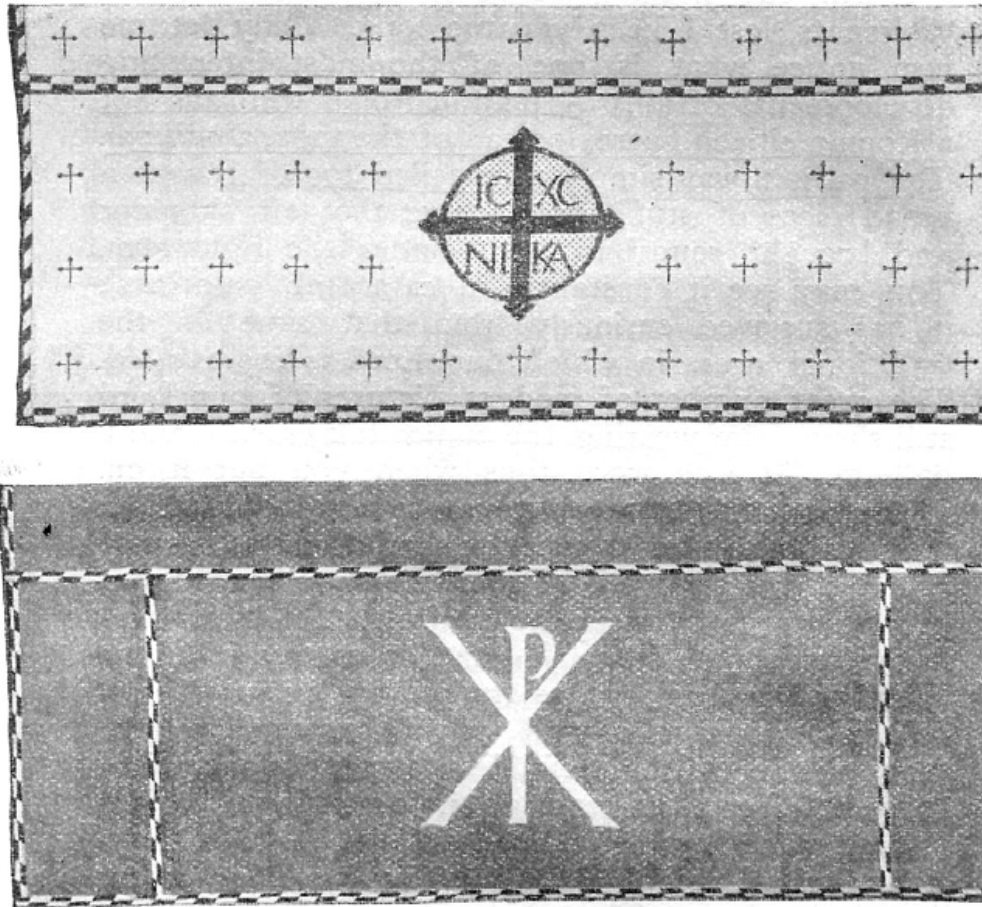


Fig. 3. FRONTALS.— Above, white canvas embroidered with scarlet silk. Below, grey-purple linen embroidered black and white.

curiously from that time as the traditional dress in which our Lord is represented. The great number of modern pictures of our Lord still show Him wearing the tunica talaris (alb) and a pallium. It was worn thus when you put it on. When you did not wear it you carried it folded in a long strip and thrown over the shoulder, much as one would throw an overcoat over the shoulder. So it became a regular ornament of dress. So it survives in the Byzantine *'omophorion*, and so we see it in the West, and reverence it as the symbol of our Metropolitan's jurisdiction and of his union with the Apostolic See. Wonderful development of an ancient garment! Tertullian was right in foretelling a glorious future for the humble pallium.

Nor will I keep you by saying anything about liturgical colours. The whole idea of a sequence colours is late, and purely Western. It arose gradually and almost insensibly. Even to the end of the Middle Ages colours were in a very loose state. Every diocese, almost every church, had its own customs.¹ Our present rule dates from the revived missal of 1570. It is exceedingly clear and admirable, except that we have perhaps rather too much white. If white were kept for our Lord, our Lady, and virgins, and if we had one more colour (say the old saffron) for confessors and matrons, it would perhaps add dignity to the highest colour by making it rarer. But this is only a vague aspiration towards what, maybe, the Congregation of Rites might some day allow.

Does this account of the origin of our vestments seem prosaic and uninspiring? It is at any rate certainly the true one, and why should we not know the truth? And there is a consideration which does not lack inspiration. To me, more than fanciful symbolic interpretations, the true idea appeals enormously. Namely: these vestments, they are but a little detail of ritual, yet they too are a wonderful witness of our unbroken continuity. Here, too, the old Church is the one thing in the world which has kept unchanged a custom of the old world. To me it is a most inspiring reflection that, while empires and kingdoms have tumbled down, while

1. For England see E. G. C. Atchley: "On English Liturgical Colours," in *Essays on Ceremonial*, edited by Vernon Staley (London, 1904), PP. 89-176.

language and custom of every kind have changed beyond recognition, still day by day the humblest Catholic priest in the remotest mission stands at his altar dressed in the garb of old Rome. If Ambrose or Augustine or Leo came back now they would find hardly a single thing in our world intelligible. Our language, dress, manners, even food, would be utterly barbarous and strange to them. And then, if they wandered into a Catholic church, there and there alone they would be at home. They would see the sacrifice they offered still shown forth in the same way. They would recognize the prayers and understand the language that they used. And as they gazed from the barbarous clothes of the congregation to the altar they would see at least one man dressed as they were. They would recognize the tunica talaris girt, the lorium, the mappula on his left arm, and I think - I hope - that they would recognize that he wore over all a planeta, as they had done. So the ghosts of the mighty men who spread the name of Christ throughout the dying Empire would know that, in spite of all changes, their Church still stands, after sixteen long centuries.

Let me end by suggesting to you, on the broadest lines only, the principles which should guide us in designing and making vestments.

There are three principles we must observe: *Obedience* to the rules, practical *convenience*, and *beauty*. These are the principles that guide all things made for use in church.

Of the first I need say little, because it is the most obvious of all. In making vestments, or anything else for a church, we must first know and obey all the laws, rubrics, and directions which affect it. These matters are lawful objects of episcopal or Papal legislation. The Church makes rules about them in the rubrics of the official books, in decrees of the Congregation of Rites, sometimes in special diocesan laws. A complete, loyal obedience to all such acts of authority is a matter of course, in this as in all other points of Church law. But obedience - I insist, an entire obedience - to law still leaves us considerable liberty in details.

My second point is no less obvious - practical *convenience*. Vestments are made to be worn. They must fulfil this purpose, and be possible, easy, convenient to their wearer. They must not get in the way nor hinder him in any liturgical function.

It is about the third point, *beauty*, that I would say a word in conclusion. No one will dispute that, as far as we can, as far as our taste and the money at our disposal will allow, we should make vestments not only correct and convenient, but also *beautiful*. Shall we not in all things that belong to the service of God look to beauty, artistic excellence, as an ideal too? *Dilexi decorem domus tuae*. We feel that in architecture, painting, metal-work. Does it not apply just as much to vestments? But what is beauty in vestments? Will you say that it is merely a matter of taste - that one cannot dispute about taste? Not quite. That would apply equally to church-building, paintings, mosaic, and so on. There are canons of beauty admitted by every artist, every person of good taste. Now, in any garment one of the first canons is that its beauty depends fundamentally not on embroidery or added ornament, but on its material, shape, and especially on folds. Large garments falling in massive folds are dignified and beautiful. Garments cut short, stiff, flat, of bad outline, are ugly. A man in massive folds of rich material looks manly, dignified, and fine. A man in tights looks ridiculous. That is one chief reason why we see the only hope for beauty of vestments in a return to the older tradition, in which they were large and fell in fine folds. In the eighteenth century a desolating wave of bad taste passed over Europe. It gave us Baroc churches, tawdry gilding, vulgarities of gaudy ornament instead of fine construction. It passed over clothes, and gave us our mean, tight modern garments. And it passed, alas! over vestments too, and gave us skimped, flat vestments of bad colour, outlined in that most impossible material, gold braid, instead of the ample, stately forms which had lasted till then. This question of vestments is not an isolated one. It is part of a general issue which runs through all ecclesiastical art and music. We do not like Baroc vestments any more than Baroc architecture or Baroc music. The reform of music came first. We still thank God for it. And there are signs of the

same movement in the other arts. The same tendency that has already given us back the old full neums of plainsong, instead of the skimped, degraded forms we used to hear, now tends to a return to the older full shapes of vestments. For these curtailed shapes are not the historic ones which came down hardly modified for so many centuries. They are a quite modern example of Baroc taste. Must we, when we have expelled that deplorable period in everything else, still keep it in this one case? Nor is what I say the fad of one or two archaeologists. As far as I know, *every* student of historic liturgy (I name especially Mgr. Wilpert and Father Braun), and *every* artist and person of artistic taste, wants to restore a fuller, more ample, more ancient form of vestments. In Rome too. I am confident that the same movement which restored plainsong will go forward, is going forward, at Rome,¹ and will apply these principles to other points as well. Dismiss from your minds the idea that it is a question of *Roman* shape or *Gothic* shape. That puts the whole issue in a false light. It is not a question *of place*, but of *period of time*. These modern shapes are not specially Roman; they came in at the same time nearly everywhere. And the older shape was used at Rome just as much as everywhere else. Rome is full of pictures and monuments which show that Popes wore the same large vestments as everywhere else in the West, till Baroc taste swept over Rome too. Let us be as Roman as possible always. But in artistic matters let us look to Rome's good artistic periods. It would be absurd to defend mangled plainsong and operatic music as Roman. It is just as absurd to claim the name of the ancient city for only one period of her long artistic development. Skimped chasubles, gold braid, and lace are not Roman ; they are eighteenth-century bad taste.

Nor do we want to restore any one period of the past, as you would in a scene in a pageant. That is absurd too. Gothic revival is dead. It is first a question of artistic beauty, though historic associations count also. And beauty demands a return to a tradition of larger, ampler shapes. No artist in the world would doubt that.

1. Quite lately the Pope presented the Abbot of Subiaco with a chasuble made in the ancient full form.

Ask anyone if the pictures we have of mediaeval bishops do not represent most beautiful dress. It is quite possible, observing all laws, to restore such a type of vestment now (not necessarily Gothic; on the contrary, the earlier the better).

There is no rule of *absolute uniformity* in vestments, any more than in other points of ecclesiastical art. We do not build all our churches on one plan, nor make all our chalices on one model. So, within the rules, the artist must be allowed some freedom in designing vestments. There are a thousand possibilities. Mediaeval documents supply endless suggestions of beautiful design. The artist will not copy any one of these, any more than an architect reproduces exactly a mediaeval church. He will study and appreciate them. Then he will design for himself; and the better an artist he is, the finer his design will be.

And do not think that a beautiful vestment must be covered with embroidery. Embroidery may be most beautiful. But nearly all now is very bad; not because it is badly worked, but because it is badly designed. If you want embroidery you must get an artist, a real artist, to design it. Plenty of people can work it. But, meanwhile, you can make most beautiful vestments with no embroidery at all. A fine, rich, heavy silk of a good colour, well shaped and falling into massive folds, will make as splendid a vestment as one could see. But whatever your vestment is, ask yourself candidly these three questions: Is it correct according to rule? Is it convenient? and Is it really beautiful? It ought to be all three if it is to go into the house of God.

And may I venture to add this? If all over the Church we, who really care for these things, now see hopeful signs of them, nowhere can one look forward to a high standard of beauty in God's service with more confidence than in this diocese and under the shadow of Westminster Cathedral. What our metropolitan church has already done to set a high standard you already know. The effect of the ideal held up to us throughout the diocese by the Cathedral can be seen on every side. When we stand under the cupolas of this church, which has really marked an epoch in modern architecture, when among the shafts of its beautiful

columns we hear the ravishing music, already famous throughout Christendom, we cannot but thank God that, at any rate in Westminster, a better day has already dawned for those who love the dignity of our venerable Roman rite. And when, if I may venture in this presence to speak of this, when we see that these things too are dear to the heart of our Bishop, that he spares no care to make his cathedral worthy of the cause for which it stands, then we cannot doubt that the clergy and the faithful of Westminster will follow their pastor in this as in all matters; that spreading out, as it should do, from the bishop's throne, love of our liturgy and of its historic ornaments will make the service of the Catholic Church in this diocese worthy of its splendid past, worthy of Him to whom it is offered, and a not unworthy foretaste of the beauty of that other house of God, whose walls are of jasper and streets of fine gold, where there is a seven-branched candlestick, a golden thurible, and a great crowd in white garments who sing: *Salus Deo et Agno*.