

CONSTRUCTION OF ROBES AND GARMENTS

by
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Robes and garments have been part of the Christian Church scene since its inception, but I fear that the true principles of the operation and use of these garments is fast becoming unknown in this day and age. The purpose, reasons, and use of all ritual garments has been a science since the ancient of times, but once again the mundane world tends to dismiss this all too lightly. I'm afraid that the Christian Church in the last hundred years has been one of the worst offenders in this field.

It seems to be that what we do not understand we dismiss and throw out, usually with the statement that it was only symbolic anyway. Such is the case with the traditional robe design and construction.

We now have robes of new synthetic materials which are lighter, easier to clean, and supposedly modernistic aesthetic lines. Unfortunately they are completely useless to assist in the Angelic energies that flow in the church services; in fact in some cases they actually oppose them. Do not be deceived by the fact that the ecclesiastical garment and robe manufacturers pump out these modern useless articles by the score, for they only give what the people will buy. I am not decrying these manufacturers, for among them are many honest and true toilers who try their best to give value for money, and any good maker of any article will look to the market trend and supply what they think the people want. When any garment is being made, it is up to the person who orders the garment to make clear to the maker exactly what is required. Sadly few of the Clergy really know what is required of proper garments and their use and purpose. This is tragic for the reason that so many devout and true Clergy limit themselves greatly for the lack of just a little knowledge.

The information on the basic robes and garments in Leadbeater's Science of the Sacraments is quite correct, but in the actual making of these garments there is a little more to it. One of the major considerations should be the choice of the correct material to do the job. It cannot be stressed enough how important this is. Synthetic materials should be avoided and natural fabrics should be used. It is a waste of space to list fabrics here as it has been most accurately dealt with in the Science of the Sacraments. Another of the important things to plan when constructing a garment is that there should be as few seams as possible, for each seam is a potential impedance to Angelic energy flow. In the sewing of all seams the choice of thread should be compatible with the material being sewn. If ever in doubt use silken or metalized thread and you can't go wrong. Once a seam has been sewn this is not the end of the matter, for to stop the seam from being an impedance to the Angelic energies, the seam should then be cross sewn at the ends. This will then create a conducting path across the seam for the energies flowing through the garment. If you can cross sew in more places than the ends of the seams without spoiling the appearance of the garment, then by all means have the extra insurance of good flow afforded by these cross sewings. All seams should be given this cross sewing at least at the ends of the seams.

In garments where there are to be orphreys, these orphreys should be continuous and no breaks in them should be tolerated. Where they must be joined great care should be taken to ensure that the join should be neat and without any gap, and most importantly be cross sewn in the manner just described. Care should also be taken that the junction of the orphreys on the back of chasubles should cover the fourth thoracic vertebra, and the front junction should be likewise at exactly the same level. This is because of the fact that the fourth thoracic

vertebra, front and back is a power source of the body and the orphreys should all radiate from this point. The design on the back of a chasuble is completely up to the designer, and any design is acceptable providing that the design is constructed of metalized material and covering the correct area namely the fourth thoracic vertebra. Many of our nice modern designs on copes, capes, mitres and Chasubles, have dispensed with the orphreys, and this renders them as useful as an eleventh toe behind the left ear.

In the construction of stoles the inclusion and placing of the crosses and the fringes must be given primary consideration, for they are of the utmost importance in the role they play.

In the making of cassocks, black should be avoided as the effect of the black creates a force that is no longer desirable for the present-day Clergy. In bygone days the black was used by the Clergy to absorb the negativity of the people, and then transmute it to a positive force and then radiate it back out to the congregation.

Sadly this knowledge has been forgotten by all but a few, and there are very few who even know why they should be wearing the black let alone know how to transmute it. If the knowledge to transmute this negative force is not known, it is far better for the Clergy concerned to avoid black altogether.

The Australian Church of Antioch does not use black in any of its garb as it serves no useful purpose now, and it is undesirable from the point that it does absorb negativity so readily. In cassocks we prefer violet for our Clergy, and scarlet, rose violet, or bright red for Bishops.

The Church of Antioch also does not recommend black for normal shirts as worn by Clergy. There are many colours available for clergy shirts, and our Clergy are free to choose these colours according to their own wishes, except for the rose violet and close colours reserved for the use of Bishops. This is not only for our own identification, but it is also falling into line with other denominations in a universal colour reserved for Bishops. This allows us to recognise Bishops of other denominations and therefore give them the respect their office is entitled to. (Notice I said their office is entitled to, for most Bishops would agree it is their office and not themselves that the respect is due.)

Of course this does not interfere with female members of the Clergy from having some frilly lacework, or some such feminine niceties adorning their shirts. In actual fact what effects I have seen on the shirts of female Priests so far has been in very good taste and most becoming to them.

In the making of Humeral veils or vimpas it is imperative that they be made of the correct material, and consecrated especially for the role they are to play, and if both of these conditions are not scrupulously adhered to there is no point in bothering to have them at all.

In some Churches there is the trend to use a combination Cassock, Alb, chasuble. These are quite permissible for use in the service of Prime, Complin, Vespers, Funerals or Marriages, but certainly not the Mass. This single garment cannot have the same effect as the properly designed garments, and are indeed greatly lacking in the proper power carrying ability. Once again the modern trend is (to quote the old saying) to throw the baby out with the bath water. In spite of all these trends the old tried and true design for garments is still the most efficient of the lot.

In manufacturing an Amice, the design must be a snug fit around the neck, for the purpose of this is to completely block leakage of forces. This will only be achieved if it is a perfectly snug fitting Amice. More often than not the same material as the Chasuble is used for the Amice, but if linen or silk is used, it would be perfectly acceptable providing it still meets the necessary definition for a snug fit.

A word here about the Maniple. The Maniple should be made so that it does not slither up and down the arm. A small press stud or button can be used to good effect here. Another way is to use an elastic loop to fit around the wrist. Apart from that point all Maniples can be made as per Leadbeater's instructions. As a point of interest, the Maniple is normally worn on the left wrist, but if the celebrant is left handed and blesses with the left hand then it should be worn on the right wrist.

At the Australian Church of Antioch we do not regard the Biretta as an important garment and of consequence we tend to overlook it more often than not. There is no objection to its use but if worn it should be violet in colour, and most certainly not black as is most often used elsewhere. As stated before black has no use in the Australian Church of Antioch in any of our garments.

As Clergy members must bear the costs of their own garments (and good lasting garments are extremely expensive) we must try to keep in mind that some of our best Clergy members may be of very limited funds. Because of this we regard Dalmatics and Tunics as unnecessary expenses, as when the Clergy member passes the Subdeacon and then Deacon mark, they are left with unusable garments.

The same effect can be obtained with the sensible use of a stole so this expense is therefore not warranted. Of course if candidates wish to go to this expense there is no objection to their doing so, but it seems a needless waste when it is for such a limited period. I have no doubt that some Clergy wish to remain at a Subdeacon or Deacon level and it might be that to those people such an expense would not be a waste.

In any case remember it is up to the person having the garments made to inform the maker of their requirements, so that their garments will be properly functional. This does not mean that a garment has to be hideous and ugly. With a little thought much can be achieved in eye-pleasing design and remain perfectly efficient and functional.

Remember, to the Clergy the ritual garments are the tools to do a job efficiently. Badly designed tools never produce a perfect result. We at least owe it to God to put forward our best effort possible to produce as good a result as we can.