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What About Vestments for Pastors?

By ARTHUR CARL PIEPKORN

(Concluded)

III

The church's feeling that those who minister at her altars should be vested in white—although colored overvestments might be worn—is ancient and persistent. This feeling is based not merely upon esthetic considerations and upon the custom of the period but also upon the symbolism of the Sacred Scriptures (Matt. 17:2; 28:3; Mark 9:3; 16:5; Acts 1:10; Rev. 3:5, 18; 4:4; 7:9, 14; 15:6; 19:8). This symbolism, of course, does not constitute any prescription.

The original white vestment, the *tunica* of the ancients, is the alb (from the Latin *alba*, "white"). In the classic shape which it assumed in the church, it is an enveloping garment of white linen, very generously cut, coming up to the base of the neck, falling to the ankles, girded at the waist, slit down the front as far as necessary to accommodate the head, with fairly narrow sleeves, and without lace or other adornment except "apparels." These apparels may be pieces of embroidery or brocade attached to the alb at the front and back of the skirt and just above the wrists on the sleeves. They may also take the earlier form of orphreys completely encircling the skirt and the sleeves at the hem. The apparels on the skirt may be about 7 by 14 inches, those on the sleeves about 3 by 8. Their use in the Church of the Augsburg Confession, both in Scandinavia and in Germany (where they were called *Parure*), can be documented down to the middle of the 17th century after the Thirty Years' War. The lace insertions and borders seen on Roman Catholic albs are a piece of poor taste which even Roman Catholic liturgiologists deplore and condemn.

With the alb is worn an amice, the neckcloth of ancient times. It may be described as a linen napkin or as a broad, short linen scarf. The amice has been appareled since the 12th century and was decorated in other ways before that. It is put on by folding

back the appareled edge, laying the amice on the head, tying it in place with tapes across the breast and around the waist and pushing it back collarwise after the other vestments have been put on. Dimensions vary, but the classical amice is about 25 by 36 inches. If the tapes are made 72 inches long, they can be passed around the neck before being crossed on the breast. The apparel is most attractive when it is about 3 by 18 inches, attached close to the edge. The Latin Church has corrupted the amice so that it is barely recognizable; Rome dropped the apparels in the 16th century. Accordingly, a properly cut and properly appareled amice is both historically correct and emphatically non-Roman Catholic.

The cincture about the waist of the alb has taken many forms. A good type is a tasseled white hemp rope about twelve feet long, although a cincture may also be of silk or wool and of any color.

A development of the alb is the surplice, which needs neither amice nor cincture. In the north of Europe, where chilly churches called for fur-lined robes in service time, the logical solution to the requirement that the ministers of divine service be dressed in white was to devise a vestment that would go on over (*super*) a fur coat (*pelliceae*). The surplice (*superpellicium*) should be very generously cut and should properly fall nearly to the ankles; the abbreviated forms which we so often see, and which sometimes look more like maternity smocks than ecclesiastical vestments, are borrowed directly or via the Protestant Episcopal Church from degraded Roman forms. The sleeves may be as narrow as those of the black gown, or they may be so full that the bottom of the sleeve falls to the hem of the surplice. The top of the sleeves should be at least long enough to fall to the wrists and may be long enough to come eight inches beyond the finger tips. The yoke should be oval rather than square. Apparels on the front and back of the surplice just above the hem can be extensively documented in Lutheran history. Smocking at the yoke adds a decorative touch.

Another vestment similar to the alb is the rochet. In form it was originally an ungirded and unappareled alb with somewhat tighter sleeves (since it was often worn under the alb). We also find it with skirt and wrist apparels like an alb, and sometimes with a second set of apparels at breast height front and back.

Other forms are the sleeveless rochet and the "winged rochet." The "sleeves" of the latter are like surplice sleeves slit down the front all the way from the shoulders to the wrists. In the 17th-century type of rochet, as it developed in the Church of the Augsburg Confession, these "wings" are attached in such a way that they conceal the armhole slit. Judging by the iconographic evidence, more surplices worn by Lutherans have been of this sleeveless type than of the type with sleeves. In addition to being a distinctively Lutheran type of officiant's vestment, the sleeveless surplice gives the wearer a degree of freedom that the sleeved type denies him. The sleeveless type, however, even more so than the sleeved type, must be ankle-length or very nearly so at least.

The variations of alb, surplice, and rochet are almost without number, differing from period to period and from place to place. J. Wickham Legg even describes a quite widely used white linen "surplice" shaped like the ancient *paenula* (which we shall meet below when we talk about the chasuble).⁷

Among the more conventional shapes of alb, surplice and rochet we find extensive assimilation to one another. We also find adaptations to accommodate wigs, slits in front ranging from 17 inches to the entire length of the vestment, all kinds of devices for securing these slits, and all kinds of sleeves. Writing in 1829, Adolph Henry Gräser, rector of the Evangelical parish of Spielberg in Prussian (Ducal) Saxony, describes the final debasement of the surplice in the Lutheran Church of Germany: "In the Protestant Church a new vestment evolved . . . the so-called surplice (*Chorbemd*), which the clergy wore at distribution of Holy Communion and at other official acts over their customary black priest's gown. It consisted of two gathered, ankle-length pieces of white linen, which, like the chasuble, hung down in front and in back and were held together only with a draw-string (*Zug*), with which they were secured about the neck. Similar surplices are still worn by the clergy of the Episcopal Church in England, and they continue to be customary in many Protestant churches of Germany, although they are quite rare in Saxony and are not found at all in Prussia, where highest authority has prescribed the plain priest's gown as

⁷ J. Wickham Legg, *Ecclesiological Essays* (London: De La More Press, 1905), pp. 49—56.

the garb of the Evangelical clergy.”⁸ (In a footnote, however, he declares that in 1823 an exception was made in Prussia permitting the use of the surplice in churches in which it had still been in use in 1811.)

In restoring the white vestment in our church today, one should sedulously avoid certain current fashions: the short and ugly cotta, hardly falling to the hips; the abbreviation of surplice and rochet to a point where they do not even reach the knees; insertions and borders of lace and net; the reduction of the generous folds which should mark these vestments to the skimpily cut dimensions that are now all too common.

The use of a white vestment as normal service garb for the clergy of the Church of the Augsburg Confession is well documented. Prior to the Thirty Years' War, when the celebrant wore the white vestment and chasuble at celebrations of Holy Communion, he sometimes wore only the white vestment at ante-Communion—the technical term for “The Morning Service Without Communion” that begins on page 5 of *The Lutheran Hymnal*. Following the Thirty Years' War, the white vestment was often reintroduced into the Church of the Augsburg Confession as a symbolic protest against Calvinism. We find it as late as 1810 in Nuremberg, 1833 in the deanery of Weissenfels, and 1865 in Swabia, and it survived in more or less constant use down to the present century in Leipzig and its environs (“the Saxon alb”), in Lusatia (among both Germans and Wends), in Weimar, in Königsberg, in Württemberg, in Thuringia, in Transylvania, in a few churches in Berlin, in Iceland, Sweden, Finland, Hungary, Slovakia, Denmark, and Norway, and among the American daughter churches of the three last-named groups. It was sometimes retained at least for Holy Communion after it had been dropped for other services. From Dr. Karl Edward Vehse's book, *Die Stephan'sche Auswanderung*, we know that the Saxon Pilgrim Fathers of 1839 used it in St. Louis during the early period. It was likewise in customary use among the Wendish Lutheran parishes of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in Texas until 1860 at least.

The surplice was not restricted to the officiant. In the painting

⁸ Adolph Henry Gräser, *Die römisch-katholische Liturgie* (Halle: Frederick Ruff, 1829), I, 237, 238.

which the Rev. Hans Jepsen gave to Thorslunde Church (near Copenhagen), of which he was the parish priest, in 1561, the assistant pastor (deacon) who administers the chalice wears a sleeveless rochet, and so does the curate baptizing a child at the font in the picture's background. The diocesan synod of Roskilde, Denmark, in 1564 ordered "decent" surplices for all assistant clergy. We have referred to the woodcut of the preacher in surplice and square cap which illustrates the Third Commandment in the Leipzig edition of blessed Martin Luther's Small Catechism printed by James Berwaldt in 1565; the same book illustrates the First Petition of the Our Father ("where the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity") with a picture of a preacher who wears a sleeveless rochet over his black clergy gown. The white surplice is reported as being worn by the boy servers in St. Nicholas' Church, Leipzig, in 1650, and in Silesia and Lusatia for over 200 years more.

To summarize, once more stressing that vestments belong to the realm of things indifferent:

1. The white vestment is a legitimate service vestment in the Church of the Augsburg Confession.

2. It may be worn over a black clergy gown or over a cassock. Basically there is no reason why it may not be worn over the clergyman's conventional street dress, with no other vestment underneath, since both the black clergy gown and the cassock are actually only street garb. Such a vestment would be far preferable to the white clergy gowns that have been introduced here and there for summer use, which merely reproduce in white material the conventional black clergy gown. Where the traditional white surplice or rochet is thus used for the sake of comfort in hot weather, without a gown or cassock underneath, the material should be heavy linen (to be as opaque as possible), a clerical vest and collar should be worn, and the white vestment should be as long as a conventional clergy gown. It may be remarked here, however, that specially made cassocks and surplices have long been worn by missionaries in hot climates; the two vestments together weigh as little as nine ounces.

3. The vestment may be either a surplice or a rochet. Generally speaking, a surplice or a sleeveless rochet is preferable for the

officiant, as well as for an assistant, lay or clerical. The white vestment is traditionally made of linen, but where necessity or convenience demands, another material can be used. In laundering linen vestments, bluing and starch should be avoided.

4. Generally speaking, the longer and fuller the vestment the better. While as early as the 16th century we find these vestments in the form of both the rochet and the surplice (*Chorroock, Messeskjorte, mässkjorta*) coming only an inch or two below the knee, this must be regarded as an already debased form. Far more graceful and far less likely to wrinkle when the wearer sits down is the surplice or rochet which reaches to the ankles or to six inches from the floor at least. Such a surplice, designed for a man of average height, should be from four to four and a half yards around at the hem; so would be a well-designed alb. These observations apply to the white vestments worn by clergymen, lay assistants, servers, and male choristers alike. Surplices (of any size or shape, including "cottas"), rochets, and albs are male garb; women should not really wear them.

5. If Lutheran traditions are taken seriously, *a stole should NOT be worn with the surplice* for Holy Communion, the Morning Service without Holy Communion, matins, vespers, "preaching services," the Litany and other processions (for an exception see below), or non-Eucharistic devotions. Official pronouncements of other Lutheran church bodies in this country notwithstanding, the present widespread vogue among us of surplice plus stole (both often poorly designed, even when elaborately decorated) is an ill-considered importation into the Lutheran Church of an Anglican compromise that even Anglican liturgiologists disapprove and that is without real warrant in historic Lutheran practice. (The oft-cited "fact" that one of the first Lutheran clergymen to receive holy orders in this country, blessed Justus Falckner, was invested with a stole by a Swedish provost vested in surplice and stole, is quite irrelevant, even if it were true. For one thing, the vestments actually used are not too certainly identified, and it is almost completely certain that stoles were not worn by anyone participating in the service. Second, there is no evidence that Falckner thereafter ever officiated in either surplice or stole.) A stole may properly be worn with a surplice by an ordained clergyman when

he baptizes, solemnizes holy matrimony, ordains, or hears confessions and administers holy absolution publicly or privately. It may also be worn by an ordained clergyman participating in a procession or a service at a special occasion (ordination, dedication, synod) where it is desired to identify the ordained clergymen as such, or by an ordained clergyman (other than one of the three sacred ministers at the Holy Eucharist) who assists in the distribution of the Holy Communion when the circumstances of place and number of communicants require more than one pair of clergymen to distribute the sacred species. In this last case the three sacred ministers should wear Eucharistic vestments. Except for the liturgical deacon at the Holy Eucharist, a stole should never be worn by an unordained person, whether a lay assistant about the altar or a chorister, male or female.

6. At the solemn administration of Holy Baptism, holy confirmation, holy matrimony, or holy ordination, as well as at processions and for solemn matins and vespers, a cope may be worn over the white vestment.

7. At matins, vespers, and similar offices the ordained participants may distinguish themselves from similarly garbed laics in surplices by wearing stolewise the black scarf described above. It should be remarked, however, that this practice, like that of wearing the hood over the surplice in choir and for preaching, cannot be documented for the continental Lutheran Church. Bands, if worn with the cassock or gown, fall over the outside of the surplice. Pectoral crosses or crucifixes of any size or material should not strictly be worn over the surplice, except by dignitaries entitled to this distinction.

IV

The next step for a Lutheran parish beyond the simple white vestment is not surplice and stole, but the combination of surplice (or sleeveless rochet) and chasuble. In many, ultimately in most, parts of the Church of the Augsburg Confession, the white vestment and chasuble were used long after maniple, stole, cincture, and amice were allowed either to fall into disuse or were specifically abolished by official ukase. Thus quite by accident a use was established in the Church of the Augsburg Confession in Denmark,

Norway, and parts of Germany that corresponds almost exactly with very early Christian practice. In a famous sixth century mosaic in the Church of St. Vitalis in Ravenna, we see the Archbishop Maximian, with a hand cross, and two clerks, one with a book, the other with a censer. All three wear white linen vestments, ankle length, uncinctured, with narrow decorative *clavi* and full sleeves, not at all unlike decently long surplices or rochets in appearance. The bishop wears an olive-green chasuble (and, as the special mark of his archiepiscopal dignity, the white pallium).

This use survived well into the 18th century (and even later) in many parts of Germany. Caspar Calvoer, himself *General-superintendent* of Klausthal-in-the-Hartz, speaks of the general use of both vestments among Lutherans.⁹ Friedrich Lochner cites instances — cases of the use of both vestments in Dresden in 1721 and in Nuremberg in 1730.¹⁰ In the course of the next decade the zealously unionistic soldier-king Frederick William I of Prussia banished these vestments in his domains along with the other distinctive external marks of the Lutheran Church; in 1740, however, the more tolerant Frederick the Great permitted their restoration in a number of Berlin parishes. We find the chasuble in use in Hamburg until 1788. In 1795 a prominent “Enlightened” parson, Gottfried Benjamin Eisenschmid of St. Saviour’s Church, Gera, inveighed against their continued use, describing them as “theatrical garb which dates entirely from the Dark Ages of worship.”¹¹ In 1797 the city of Nuremberg sequestered and sold the rich embroidered, gem-studded chasubles and dalmatics of St. Sebald’s and St. Lawrence’s churches.

The use of chasubles survived nevertheless in Leipzig until 1795, in Zwickau until 1796, in Halle until 1802, in Nuremberg until 1810, in Hanover until 1817, in Grimma until 1825, in Dresden until the early part of the last century, in Zorbau-bei-Weissenfels until 1832, and in two Transylvanian parishes until the 1860s. The use of the surplice (or alb) and chasuble has survived in

⁹ Caspar Calvoer, *Rituale ecclesiasticum*, Part II (Jena: John Christopher König, 1705), pp. 505, 507, 510.

¹⁰ Friedrich Lochner, *Der Hauptgottesdienst der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1895), p. 20.

¹¹ *Geschichte der vornehmsten Kirchengebräuche der Protestanten* (Leipzig: J. A. Barth, 1795), pp. 310—312.

the churches of Sweden, Finland, Iceland, Denmark, and Norway down to the present. In 1685 the *Ritual* of the church in the then united kingdoms of Norway and Denmark prescribed a black undergarment, white vestment, and chasuble at the Holy Eucharist. The priest is directed to vest at the altar after the last stroke of the bell and to unvest during the closing hymn. The chasuble is to be removed whenever the priest leaves the altar for the font, the pulpit, the litany desk, etc. At a Sunday or festival morning service without Holy Communion the chasuble is not resumed after the sermon. The combination of chasuble and surplice has continued in use here and there in the American daughter churches of the churches of Norway and Denmark.

The white vestment can be the alb with amice and cincture. In place of the alb, a surplice or sleeved rochet of ankle length or nearly so may be worn; these two vestments gradually displaced the alb-amice-cincture combination during the 16th and 17th centuries.

The chasuble has had a great variety of shapes in its long history. Originally, as we have seen, it was an all-enveloping protection against rain and weather, worn without distinction of rank or sex. As an ecclesiastical vestment, its theoretically simplest form — which, however, cannot be documented historically — is a plain circle about 10 feet across, with a hole 10 inches in diameter for the head to pass through. In the ancient tradition the only ornamentation is a narrow orphrey of white or purple around the outside perimeter. When made up in a soft silk like China silk or parachute material, it is an exceedingly beautiful and graceful vestment. Its simplicity accords well with our rite and cultus, and it is distinctively non-Roman Catholic. It almost demands an alb and amice, however.

Even in ancient times both the secular and, later, the liturgical chasubles were somewhat bell-shaped. As time went on, the sides of the chasuble were cut down, and its shape was slightly modified until it assumed the form known as the "Gothic" chasuble. Whereas originally it had been almost innocent of decoration, except for narrow border orphreys, it now began to become the subject of extensive embroidery. Vertical orphreys in the center front and rear were elaborated into Psi-shaped or Latin crosses. The point

where the arms of the cross joined was often decorated with a symbol. In the course of years the diminishing area of the vestment tended to be made stiffer and stiffer and to be more and more covered with elaborate embroidery until the celebrant had become almost an ecclesiastical sandwich man. This was the general situation throughout northern Europe at the end of the 15th century, and the conventional red and green Danish-Norwegian chasubles, with their rectangular shield shapes front and back and their gigantic Latin crosses in gold, as they are still in use, are largely indistinguishable in design (except in details) from those that are catalogued in every collection of late medieval Northern European textile art. Yet even here there are exceptions; for instance, the silver brocade chasuble given in 1582 to the Church of St. Nicholas in Flensburg (Slesvig-Holsten) is almost without ornament.

Thus a parish which is prepared to take the next step after the surplice has the choice of at least three kinds of chasubles: the primitive *paenula*, the medieval "Gothic," and the Scandinavian. The latter two should be 50 inches from the neck opening to the bottom (rear). Initially, at least, only one chasuble need be purchased. White is a good color—so is gold, or red, or part-colored. Later, additional chasubles in the liturgical colors can be secured.

When the celebrant wears a chasuble with a white vestment, assistants may wear a sleeveless rochet, a sleeved rochet, or a surplice with or without a delmatic over it.

The acquisition of a chasuble as the next step after the surplice thus has a number of advantages. It is simple and convenient. It adds the specifically Eucharistic vestment, the chasuble, to the general service vestment, the alb. Furthermore, it is distinctively Lutheran. While this writer has seen not only Roman Catholic and Anglican but even Methodist, Reformed, Presbyterian, and Congregationalist clergymen officiate in surplice and stole, the combination of white vestment and chasuble is in modern times a distinctly Lutheran use.

V

Finally we come to the fullest Lutheran use: Eucharistic vestments for Holy Communion, cope for processions and solemn

offices, surplice and stole for non-Eucharistic services, and surplice for choir offices.

It is of Eucharistic vestments that paragraph 1, Article XXIV of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, speaks when it says of our church: "The customary public ceremonies, the series of lessons, of prayers, *vestments*, and other like matters, are preserved among us." It is Eucharistic vestments which so offended the South German Reformed theologian, Wolfgang Müsslin (Musculus), when he visited Wittenberg in 1536 and saw the service in St. Mary's Church. It is with reference to these that blessed James Andreae, chief author of the Formula of Concord, approvingly stipulated in 1586 at his debate with Theodore Beza at Montbéliard (Mömpelgard) that the chief churches in Saxony "retain until now the whole panoply of vestments which in past years they used in the celebration of the Roman Catholic Mass."¹² It is these to which Adam Rechenberg's *Hierolexicon reale* of 1714 refers when it says: "The vestments common and proper to all Evangelical priests are amice, alb, cincture, maniple, stole, and chasuble."¹³

We have discussed most of the vestments involved — the alb, the amice, the cincture, and the chasuble. Of the stole it need be mentioned only that when celebrating Holy Communion the celebrant wears the stole crossed on his breast, the part depending from the right shoulder over that depending from the left, with the stole held in this position at the waist by the ends of the cincture. If good medieval models are followed, the stole will be 2½ to 3 inches in width and about 108 inches long. The shorter and wider stoles worn by Roman Catholic priests over their surplices for sacramental rites are a degraded development that we ought not to copy. When worn with a surplice of decent length, the long Eucharistic stole is graceful and appropriate for all rites. The cross at the yoke and crosses at the tips are not ancient conventions and can be omitted or replaced by other symbols.

The maniple remains to be discussed briefly. This is a narrow

¹² *Acta colloquii Montis Belligartensis* (Tübingen: George Gruppenbach, 1587), pp. 403, 404.

¹³ *Hierolexicon reale*, II (Leipzig and Frankfurt: J. H. Klosius, 1714), 1680.

band of silk, usually matching the stole in material and design, worn over the left arm. It is presumably the survival of a napkin worn across the arm by servants, although it had become an official badge of consuls and other high officials of the empire long before the church took it over as a vestment in the sixth century. We find it at the end of the Middle Ages throughout the territory that was presently to become Lutheran. It was, however, the first Eucharistic vestment to be dropped in our church. The reason must be a subject of conjecture; it is not unlikely that a major contributing cause was the inconvenience entailed by the *short* late medieval maniple, which was constantly getting in the way of the celebrant at the altar. In restoring Eucharistic vestments in our circles, however, there is no reason for omitting it. Care should be taken that the maniple is sufficiently long so that its end will always hang below the edge of the mensa while the celebrant handles the sacred vessels and the sacred elements. Dimensions of 2½ inches in width and 44 inches in length (so that when laid over the arm it will hang down about 22 inches, including the fringe) will be very satisfactory. When the celebrant is also the preacher, he removes the maniple and usually the chasuble as well, especially if the latter is a heavy one, before the sermon, and resumes them before the offertory.

The ancient rite contemplated three sacred ministers at the celebrations of the Holy Eucharist — celebrant, deacon or gospeler, and subdeacon or epistoler. The latter two wore substantially the same vestments as the celebrant, except that the deacon had on a dalmatic in place of a chasuble and wore his stole "deaconwise" over his left shoulder and under his right arm, while the subdeacon wore a tunicle and no stole at all. There is no reason why dalmatics and tunicles should not be revived in parishes that have use for them, since they too come under the general term "vestments" of Article XXIV of the Apology and, as we have seen, were in actual use in the Church of the Augsburg Confession at least until the end of the 18th century. Where this is done, care should be taken to distinguish the two by restoring to the dalmatic its characteristic big sleeves and by decorating the tunicle somewhat less elaborately. When a dalmatic and tunicle are not available, as well as during the penitential seasons when "folded chasubles"

were prescribed for deacon and subdeacon, it is perfectly proper for the celebrant to wear a chasuble and for the other two to minister in cinctured albs, amices, and maniples (and in the case of the deacon, a stole). A visiting clergyman who assists the pastor at a celebration of Holy Communion by administering the chalice and by taking the other parts assigned to the liturgical deacon (reading the Gospel, etc.) would properly be so vested.

A cope is not a Eucharistic, nor even a clerical, vestment. It is worn by laymen as well as by clergymen as a vestment of dignity for processions in and out of doors and for solemn occasions other than the celebrations of Holy Communion. Like the chasuble it has been debased through overelaboration and stiffening. Since in the form in which it was taken over into the European Lutheran Churches it exhibits most of the worst features that make modern copes so ugly in spite of the splendor of their decoration, it would accord better with the simplicity of our American Lutheran liturgical tradition to return to the 14th-century type of cope, which was actually a mantle of silk or other rich material, with a high morse, narrow orphreys, and a real hood of the same material as the cope (rather than the flapping shield of the modern cope), or with no hood at all. Such a cope depends for its effect upon the gracefulness of the folds and the beauty of the material rather than upon elaborate embroidery, brilliant borders, and jeweled clasps of precious metals.

St. Louis, Mo.